Higher Education and Research Bill 2016 (HC Bill 4) Evidence Briefing

The British & Irish Modern Music Institute (BIMM) has been a leading provider of specialist, vocationally-based Higher Education courses at Honours Degree level focused on contemporary music and the associated industry for over thirty years. We expect to enroll around 6,000 students for the 2016/17 academic year. We are highly popular as a result of our focus on securing jobs for our graduates in the music and wider creative arts industry. We have long-established partnerships with three UK universities: Bath Spa University (since 2008), the University of Sussex (since 2002) and the University of West London (since 1995). BIMM’s courses at its four UK colleges – Brighton, Bristol, London and Manchester – are designated for student finance under the designated entity BIMM Limited.

HC Bill 4 looks at Higher Education in all its guises, including provision from alternative providers (APs). BIMM serves as an exemplar in the AP space and therefore due to our expertise in the area, we have prepared a short briefing for the Higher Education and Research Bill Committee. We have outlined below our thoughts and insight on the different aspects of the Bill. We have created a ‘traffic light system’, which easily identifies legislative amendments that i) we welcome (green) and ii) we feel there is scope for further additions to what has been proposed in the Bill (amber).

If you have any questions about the below points, BIMM would be happy to provide further information, including giving oral evidence to the Committee, should that be helpful.

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<th>Issue and relevant section of Bill</th>
<th>Overview</th>
<th>Suggested Amendments</th>
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<td>Powers of Secretary of State to obtain information or advice</td>
<td>The Bill introduces a more open and transparent higher education sector. BIMM supports this greater level of data transparency as this will allow students to make a more informed choice about their future. BIMM recognises the value of collating student data and collected statistics on graduate outcomes and student satisfaction even before the requirement to do so via Key Information Set (KIS) in March 2016. However, it is important that the data collection processes are not overly onerous on HEIs as this could take resource away from teaching and student support.</td>
<td>BIMM supports steps to ensure that students have access to greater levels of data, however we do warn against an overly onerous data collection processes. Processes that are overly time consuming will restrict teaching resource and limit future innovation.</td>
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<td>Powers to grant degrees and powers in relation to “university” title</td>
<td>BIMM welcomes the introduction of measures to raise educational standards through wider competition and choice within the sector. The BIMM Group celebrates our innovative way of teaching and our close links to the creative industries. BIMM, like many non-traditional</td>
<td>BIMM supports these elements of the Bill and believe that they will encourage innovation and student choice within the higher education sector.</td>
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universities, offers students a genuine choice when they are selecting the best higher education course for them. By allowing new, high quality providers to enter the higher education space the Bill will ensure that higher education institutes (HEIs) are forced to innovate and deliver the highest quality teaching and facilities in order to continue to attract students.

Establishment of the Office for Students and the Regulatory Framework

HC Bill 4, Part 1, 1-2 and 67

BIMM supports the introduction of the Office for Students (OfS) and welcomes its responsibility for promoting quality and value for money, and encouraging competition.

However, we are concerned that the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) will constrain creativity and innovation by imposing a one-size-fits-all definition of teaching excellence.

Additionally, we believe that there needs to be a far more flexible approach to measuring non-continuation rates within the TEF. Given the nature of the creative arts sector, a number of BIMM students are successful in securing employment before completing their course, with a small but significant percentage securing sustainable roles within the music industry.

It is essential that the Government takes into account the wide and differing range of provision across the higher education sector and celebrates success in all of its different forms.

In this way, the OfS should be encouraged to acknowledge that diversity in higher education provision is a great strength of the UK and therefore this should be fairly represented in the regulatory framework.

About BIMM

With colleges in London, Brighton, Manchester, Bristol, Dublin, and Berlin, BIMM delivers fully-validated BMus (Hons) and BA (Hons) degree courses to currently c.6,000 students. Each of these cities has a strong heritage in contemporary music and an active local music industry. Our degree level courses are designed
and delivered by current music industry practitioner who are therefore best placed to prepare students for working in the sector.

In January 2016, we secured a successful outcome from our first Higher Education Review (HER) by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), receiving a commended judgement for the quality of learning opportunities, one of only a small number of APs to receive a commended judgement in the 2015/16 HER cycle. In addition, the review identified four areas of good practice:

- The extensive use of music industry practitioners in course design and development.
- The use of music industry professionals in providing masterclasses, guest lectures, mentoring and careers advice to support student learning.
- The engagement of staff at all levels in the preparation and consideration of annual monitoring reports.
- The diversity of work placement opportunities, supported by highly informative guidance in handbooks for staff, students and employers.

Since 2012, BIMM has been a member of UCAS and, in line with Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) funded universities, we receive the majority of our applications in the period January to March, with 83% of all applications received by the end of January.

We pride ourselves on the value for money that we offer students, our fee level is £6,300 for all of our degree courses. BIMM has a long and proud history of supporting talented musicians and music professionals into the creative industries. As a result of our specially designed courses, which include popular music performance, music production, music business, music journalism, and events management, we produce high calibre graduates, the majority of whom progress into the music and broader creative industries. Our alumni statistics reveal that approximately 65% of our graduates progress into the music industry, which employs over 100,000 people across the UK and is a major UK export industry, contributing over £4 billion per year to the economy. Of particular note, recent BIMM alumni include high profile artists James Bay, George Ezra, Izzy Bizu, and Tom Odell.

If you wish to receive any further information, or would like to talk about BIMM’s thoughts on the HE Bill in further detail, including arranging a visit to one of our colleges, please contact Louis@gkstrategy.com.