

Accreditation Operating Policy



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JAMES' Accreditation Operating Policy

This document identifies the operating framework and expectations to be placed upon the process of industry accreditation of education.

[This is the evolution of the process started in 1998].

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Made up of dedicated audio industry professionals, JAMES' role is to create and maintain supportive links between education and the entertainment and media industries. We wish to ensure that many years of professional experience are not lost to future generations.

Within our course accreditation process we ensure that education leaders are aware of the need to train and send into the workplace skilled practitioners from as varied a background as possible.

JAMES welcomes into our industry, professionals with the right level of experience, industry knowledge and education, regardless of gender, religion, race or cultural identity.

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BACKGROUND

The longstanding Industry bodies:

MPG (Music Producers Guild)

MMF (Music Manager Forum) artist and business management

AMPS (Association of Motion Picture Sound)

MIA (Music Industries Association)

ABTT (Association of British Theatre Technicians)

UK Screen Alliance (UK Film and Television Production and Post Production Companies)

are committed to recognise and support those educational institutions that develop courses and programmes of study that will educate and train individuals in the skills and attributes required for the ongoing success of our industry.

***JAMES' Higher Education Accreditation [started in 1998] and Further Education Accreditation** schemes are recognised by those bodies as the preferred method by which industry can support education and identify those courses that are able to produce suitably trained and qualified potential employees and individuals for the future.*

The industry members of JAMES and endorsing industry bodies have combined their experience and expertise to bring a concerted approach to this process. Course accreditation and approval is valid for 3 years, at which point re-accreditation will be necessary and is available for both public and private sectors in the U.K. and internationally.

THE PROCESS ENVIRONMENT

Vocational education aims to produce individuals with the background and skills required by employers. At this point in time there is no legal requirement for vocational courses to be accredited by the industry they aim to serve. Industry accreditation for our sector is a voluntary submission by those believing they deliver a programme of education that is likely to meet industry expectations and wish to be recognised as such.

JAMES represents the interests of its industry body organisations, operating a scheme by which those organisations can be assured that individuals who have successfully completed an accredited course are likely to have the basic understanding and skills they require.

The criteria for JAMES Accreditation are based on current and related National Occupational Standards.

JAMES accreditation is seen as a rigorous, confidential yet supportive process by which education providers and students can be assured of the value to industry of a course. It is also seen as a partnership through which industry can feed back in to education and support the development of courses that are relevant to industry requirements and survival.

THE PROCESS

The criteria for HE and FE Course Accreditation has been set and agreed by the Directors of the organisations that make up JAMES, after consultation with their members, academics, working professionals and employers practicing in the industry. The accreditation process is managed and developed by the JAMES executive committee.

The process centers upon three phases.

An Initial Evaluation
The Course Accreditation
The Final Report

'Initial Evaluation' is a process that filters submissions for accreditation. Over a period of time, sometimes many months involving several conversations and visits, the 'Initial Evaluation' will then require a written submission from the institution along with a small fee. Based upon this information, a judgment can be made as to the suitability of the submission. Thus for a small financial outlay an institution can identify potential areas of concern within a submission. Weak submissions will be supported and encouraged to address those concerns or alternatively hold back from committing to the expense and work involved in the full Course Accreditation phase.

THE ACCREDITATION PROCEDURE IN BRIEF:

- A university or college will apply for course accreditation and our accreditation team will assist the application process.
- Documentation is sent to JAMES for an 'Initial Evaluation' described above.
- Having completed an 'Initial Evaluation', the decision whether to proceed with full accreditation is agreed between JAMES and the institution.
- Further 'In Depth' and detailed documentation is now required from the Institution.
- Two or more JAMES assessors [1] will then visit [2] and complete a report to send back to our accreditation committee.
- The accreditation committee will then review the feedback and a confidential report, including recommendations, will be collated.
- A starting date for the Course Accreditation will be notified.
- From this date JAMES logos and other marketing materials can be used to promote the course.

[1] JAMES Assessors JAMES trained assessors and the accreditation committee members are working professionals with the experience and knowledge to evaluate the industrial relevance of a course. Assessors are required to complete a statement regarding their industry experience and any past or current education links and they are governed by a separate 'Terms of Reference' document.

[2] Visit Procedure A formal visit is an integral part of the accreditation process and a pool of visiting assessors supplements the members of the accreditation committee.

Assessors meet and interview the course team as well as past and present students. Information provided by educational establishments will include syllabuses, past examination papers and project reports and recent external examiner reports. The assessors will need to examine and report on items set out in the support documentation that is specific to each type of course.

THE FINAL REPORT

The final report includes supportive recommendations on how the course content, equipment and links with industry could improve the value of the education experience to the student. This also provides a vehicle for the course team to gain support from industry for any investment changes they have identified. Which also may help the course team with future plans and development of the course.

The report provides a mark against which future developments can be measured. The report and associated materials should be archived for a minimum of 5 years.

ACCREDITATION AWARDS

Awards fall in to the following categories.

a) Accreditation for 3 years

b) Provisional Accreditation can be given for a shorter period, possibly one or two years. This may be the case when it is obvious that a new course is being started with great enthusiasm and it is not obvious how the course will develop and whether staff policy ensures future quality.

Provisional Accreditation may also be awarded with an agreed understanding that certain recommendations made in the report are put in to place within an agreed time frame that is less than 3 years.

c) Accreditation deferred until recommendations made are in place

In all cases it will be necessary to review accreditation and revisit the establishment periodically, possibly every 18 months. Accreditation levels will be reviewed by JAMES in the light of experience.

It will be necessary to state the month and year up to which accreditation is granted and in the event of a negative decision by the Committee, this should include a time after which reapplication can be made.

A suitably constructive letter containing the accreditation committee's decision is sent to the department concerned with a copy for the Director or Principal.

The confidentiality of the committee and the assessors' deliberations must be observed.

Appropriate certificates, logos and guide for their use will be sent out.

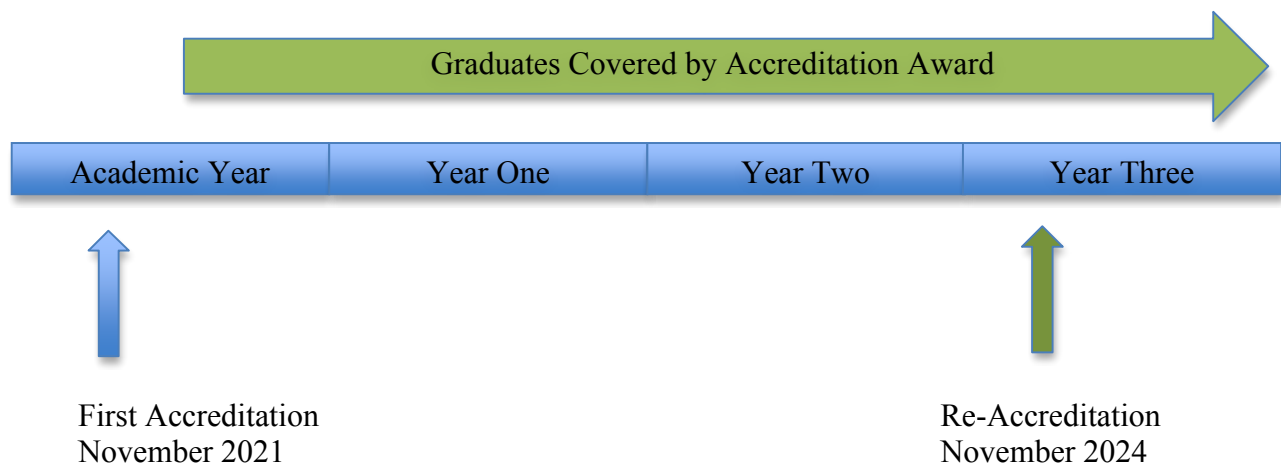
ACCREDITATION PERIODS COVERED. [See Example Timeline below]

Successful course accreditation will last for 3 years. Students graduating in the year of the award and the following 3 years will have completed a 'JAMES accredited' course.

Re-accreditation of accredited courses must be arranged for a date that sits within the same calendar month as the original award [unless agreed otherwise by JAMES].

Failure to arrange Re-accreditation in the relevant month will affect ALL those students graduating in following years. Those students will NOT have completed a JAMES accredited course, even though they will have started one.* This information will be published on the JAMES web site and course listings and ALL use of JAMES logos by the institution on their web site and marketing material relating to the course must cease. Failure to do so will be seen as a gross misrepresentation to students and other interested parties.

*[*This is a requirement of PSRB's (Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body) by DiscoverUNI and HEFCE to make sure future prospective students are not misled by out of date information].*



ACCREDITATION OF DIFFERENT COURSE TYPES

Where there is "modularisation" and/or "semesterisation" of courses and qualifications and as the discipline of sound engineering, audio post production, music technology and performance is so wide, it may be necessary for the committee to accredit courses of different types and of different lengths.

We will make sure that when courses are presented to prospective employers, the aims and objectives of the course will be clearly indicated, so that employer members can assess whether graduates from a particular course are suitable for their needs.

Any courses that are a part of a franchise agreement must be processed as separate applications and must be individually subjected to the full accreditation process. No awards or rights will pass automatically between them.

THE ROLE OF THE 'JAMES ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE'

The Accreditation Committee is accountable to the JAMES executive

The Committee comprises of six JAMES officer roles.

Chair – Vice Chair – Executive Director – CAO – Marketing Director – Events Director. Additional input may be sought from the Academic Advisory Group (AAG) and the accreditation assessors when appropriate.

The committee is responsible for:

Agreeing and implementing changes to the process in line with the needs of the Industry members. The committee must unanimously agree to proceed with any changes.

Overseeing the process including;

- Assessing suitability of applications for accreditation
- The selection of suitably experienced industry assessors
- The selection individuals to be on the review panel
- Ensuring the process is carried out in line with the Operation Policy
- Accepting the final report from the review panel
- Adjudicating where the final report highlights concerns and recommending follow up actions
- Making the final award decision
- Monitoring and applying due diligence over the duration of each award
- Agreeing action where the spirit or rules of the award are broken

The accreditation administration (including the application process, visit arrangements, choice of assessors for each assignment, final report writing, accreditation confirmation) is organised by a "working group" accountable to the Accreditation Committee and thus to the Executive.

THE ROLE OF THE JAMES ACCREDITATION REVIEW PANEL

The Review Panel will consist of 2 or 3 individuals selected to be involved with specific accreditation events.

The panel will include JAMES assessors (other than those selected to be directly involved with the accreditation visit) and possibly selected industry individuals with specific knowledge and background to the course under review.

The review panel is responsible for;

- Reading the final accreditation report and responding in a timely manner
- Monitoring the standard of application of the accreditation process
- Raising questions or issues that may be of concern regarding the process or the content of the report and,
- Sending any questions to the report compiler or the visiting assessors
- Accepting the final report to be passed on to the accreditation committee for publication.

JAMES GOVERNANCE STATEMENT:

A Higher or Further Education course that has been successfully accredited by JAMES carries an independent, industry relevant, measure of the ability of an institution to deliver the course/s as described in the prospectus at the date of inspection.

JAMES accreditation criteria are based on current National Occupational Standards for the relevant sector.

Within our course accreditation process we ensure that education leaders are aware of the need to train and send into the workplace skilled practitioners from as varied a background as possible.

JAMES welcomes into our industry, professionals with the right level of experience, industry knowledge and education, regardless of gender, religion, race or cultural identity.

JAMES expects our representatives and visiting assessors to act and behave in a respectful manner and we expect the same in return. All conversations and information provided will be held in confidence.

The Accreditation Procedures include;

- Inspection of facilities and equipment, as well as technical and academic support
- Reviewing the Course/s content for relevance to industry and good practice
- Ongoing awareness & interaction with current industry practices
- An emphasis on 'Transferable Skills' that can be used in the larger workplace
- Evidence of a healthy balance of academic and industry experience in the team
- Continuing skills development & industry links of the course team
- Student collaboration across disciplines and between other relevant courses

After the accreditation award date, JAMES places responsibility on the institution to inform of any changes that take place that may affect the course/s or the delivery. The accreditation process is renewed after a period of three years and reviewed after 18 months.

Industry Accreditation of any course will not guarantee successful graduation and successful graduation will not guarantee employment in a chosen career.

REPORT AND FEEDBACK

JAMES is very interested to learn about academic experiences relating to our accredited courses. The positives as well as the negatives

If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of a learning experience or have any complaints regarding a course or how it was delivered, it is vital to contact the university or college directly. You may not be in possession of all the relevant facts and there may be very sound mitigating circumstances. Institutions have well established complaints procedures that must be followed in order to resolve a concern and these procedures are taken very seriously.

JAMES will not be able to act directly on behalf of any individual or specific case.

However if you copy to JAMES any correspondence, we will keep a record of any complaints in order to identify re-occurring issues. We will use any such information in a confidential yet constructive manner.

Contact admin@jamesonline.org.uk or accreditation@jamesonline.org.uk

DEFINITIONS

Academic Advisory Group

Course leaders and staff from University institutions are regularly invited to attend the Advisory Group to give feedback on course/industry developments and to maintain a dialogue on JAMES' operating procedures and policies.

HE Course Accreditation and FE Course Accreditation

The process and governance for both of these schemes is similar. The main difference between them is that HE courses are usually written and validated by a university and **accreditation** looks at content as well as delivery and delivery environment.

FE courses are usually based upon the delivery of pre- scripted units written and approved by awarding bodies such as Edexcel and 'City and Guilds'. In this case **FE accreditation** concerns itself with the balance and delivery of the units within the course as well as the delivery environment.

Validation and Accreditation

Assessors must be aware of the academic requirements of relevant validating bodies. Since validation and accreditation are distinct operations there will be a difference in emphasis between them.

Validation can be looked upon as being concerned mainly with academic standards and keeping of the rules of the validating body, whilst industry accreditation is concerned not only with the course content, and its relevance to prospective employers, but with the environment in which the course is delivered.

The environment also includes the outlook and experience of those who deliver it, with particular reference to the sound engineering, audio post production, music technology, media and music businesses experience within the course team.

Normally assessors will be examining the records of at least two outputs of students from a course and they will wish to ensure that the graduates or diplomats have satisfied the academic requirements in line with the requirements of employers.

However, assessors may take part in the validation process of a new course or the review of an existing course. It is sometimes confusing when different government bodies and educationalists interchange the expressions validation and accreditation.

Our Mission: Creative Industries Supporting Education

JAMES considers education and training to be vital in nurturing tomorrow's talent. Our initiatives are designed to facilitate the highest standards thus ensuring that many years of Audio industry experience are not lost to future generations. This is achieved by our Higher Education course accreditation and Further Education schemes.

Industry Accreditation: A Confidential and Supportive Process

Our Accreditation and Approval schemes indicate that education courses will satisfy the demands and expectations of employers including the needs of an increasingly freelance workforce.

Industry Accreditation is concerned with;

- Integration and relevance of subject matter.
- The infrastructure to deliver the stated course objectives.
- Plans for the evolution of the course.
- The impact of new technologies and the exclusion of obsolete material.
- Adequate coverage of the fundamental principles of sound, acoustics, technology, engineering, music production, computers and software implementation.
- Adequate relevant resources and the availability of resources to students.
- Intellectual challenge.
- Appropriate assessment methods.
- Pastoral care of the students.
- Preparation of students for work in interdisciplinary teams.
- The employability of successful students.
- The industry and academic experience of teaching staff.
- Adequate equipment service and back-up facilities.
- Industry links.
- The environment in which the course operates.

Who benefits from Accreditation?

- Industry
- Students & Parents
- Institutions
- Course Leaders and their teams
- Government bodies

What are the benefits of Accreditation?

- Assists employers to know which courses are consistent with industry & their employment needs.
- Students and Parents are assured of a course's value and relevance to industry
- Education providers are assured of a course's relevance to industry and the potential employability of their students
- Government are provided a measure of the vocational value of a course

Accredited courses cover;

- Sound Recording
- Music Technology
- Music Production
- Live Sound
- Lighting
- Audio Post Production for Film and Television
- Audio for Games
- Song writing & Performance
- Artist and business management
- Courses from levels 3 to 8 of the National Qualifications Framework and Levels C, I, H, M, D of the Framework for Higher Education.
- Equivalent courses in the private sector.