



WISEAMP (Women in Sound Engineering and Music Production)

Phase I Evaluation Report

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the WISEAMP project

WISEAMP (Women in Sound Engineering and Music Production) is a training programme for women in the north-west of England, based at the School of Sound Recording (SSR) in Manchester and supported by the European Social Fund (ESF). Prior to the establishment of WISEAMP, a report was published by Adele Smaill (2005) following a research project entitled “Regional Equality in Music” (REM). The project, also funded by the ESF, was commissioned by the SSR and conducted by Smaill in collaboration with the University of Salford.

Central to the REM research was a set of in-depth interviews with DJs and sound engineers of both genders. Findings from the interviews were combined with a literature review and an analysis of representations of women in the specialist music press and analysis of data from educational/ training participants and providers. The REM project also included two introductory weekend workshops for women on DJ skills and two on sound engineering, all run by the SSR, free of charge. The REM report documents the success of this “taster” and the participants’ interest in further training of a similar nature:

“On their evaluation forms, most participants indicated an interest in further women-only private courses on topics such as computer music, music technology, audio engineering and music production, although some expressed concerns about affordability” (Smaill 2005, p. 32).

The key outcomes of the REM research are findings about the causes of women’s under-representation in occupations focused on music technology and a set of recommendations for addressing this form of occupational segregation. The recommendations are practical, and many refer to aspects of education, training and employability for women.

When WISEAMP was proposed, a subset of these recommendations was adopted to be addressed directly through the development and running of a new women-only training programme in sound technology. This programme would provide an accessible, relevant, vocational and free-of-charge provision for the up-skilling of women working or aspiring to work or study further in sound technology.

1.2 Structure of the WISEAMP training

The WISEAMP training was set up in 2005. It consisted of three phases. Phases 1 and 2 were the main training programmes and Phase 3 was a set of supplementary activities.

Phase 1 training ran for twenty-six weeks, from October 2005 to May 2006, on a part-time basis. It offered modules to thirty women in digital sound production, studio techniques and studio design.

The Phase 2 training ran for twenty-six weeks from May to October 2006 (also part-time), providing a similar training programme to an entirely different cohort of thirty women, offering modules in digital sound production, studio techniques, and synthesis and MIDI.

The Phase 3 training will be the business-oriented component of the course, centred around a series of business-oriented sessions, a re-mixing demonstration, and an all-day live sound workshop given by various speakers and facilitators in November 2006. It will be offered to participants from both cohorts who will return for sessions of their own choosing.

1.3 Evaluation of the WISEAMP project

1.3.1 About the evaluation

An evaluation of the WISEAMP programme was commissioned by the SSR from PALATINE, the Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Dance, Drama and Music. It has been undertaken by Dr David Pearson, a researcher within PALATINE at Lancaster University, and Dr Sadie Williams, an evaluation consultant in the Department of Educational Research at Lancaster University.

1.3.2 Aims of the evaluation

Central to the aims and objectives of WISEAMP was the subset of recommendations from the REM Report (Smaill 2005) which WISEAMP had explicitly set out to address. One of the main purposes of this evaluation, therefore, was to establish how far the WISEAMP project had addressed these aims and objectives. The subset of recommendations is outlined in 1.4 below.

1.3.3 Additional objectives of the evaluation

The evaluation also sought to examine the extent to which WISEAMP's outcomes impact (or are expected to impact) on the low level of females in the technical side of the audio engineering sectors in the north-west of England by looking at the women's career pathways. Careers in the arts and creative industries are particularly complex and often fragmented. For individuals working in these areas, "portfolio" careers are becoming increasingly common, as opposed to continuous "jobs for life" (Brown 2003 includes a review of evidence about this trend). It is important that the effects of WISEAMP are understood in the context of this employment market.

The evaluation also looked at the operational success of the project, in terms of the SSR's success in delivering the training. This included looking at SSR delivery targets (recruitment, retention, achievement, attendance) in relation to the achieved figures.

1.3.4 References

Brown, Ralph (2003) "Graduate Employment in the Performing Arts." PALATINE. [http://www.palatine.ac.uk/sitefiles/career_fsheets1.pdf]

Smaill, Adele (2005) "Challenging Gender Segregation in Music Technology: Findings and Recommendations for Music Education and Training Providers in the North-West." A report for the School of Sound Recording's Regional Equality in Music Project, University of Salford.

1.4 Aims of the WISEAMP project

One of the key aims of the WISEAMP project was to fulfil an important subset of recommendations from the REM report. This subset relates to the provision of women-only courses. These are the recommendations:

Recommendation 1 Considerations in venue choice

- Selected venues should be accessible to public transport (since a higher proportion of women than men rely on public transport). If students are not provided with pay phones, phone services to call a cab or a friend/ family member providing transport services should be available.
- Entrances to the building, permitted outdoor smoking places and car parks should be well lit in order to help ensure personal safety. The venue should be accessible to those with disabilities.
- Women's toilets within the venue should be well-lit, lockable, in good repair, clean, fitted with toilet paper dispensers and an adequate (and regularly restocked) supply of toilet paper.
- They should also be fitted with bins for sanitary products, rubbish bins, washbasins (with hot and cold water as well as soap), mirrors and vending machines that sell sanitary products.
- There should be adequate facilities for the numbers of women students and staff expected to use the facility.
- Especially for full-day courses, students should have access to tea and coffee making facilities.

Recommendation 2 Scheduling considerations

- Women's access to ongoing courses will be improved if timetabling is scheduled around the other varied demands on their time.

Recommendation 3 Instructional considerations

- Women-only courses should be taught by paid women instructors where possible. This undermines the association of technical competence with masculinity and provides women students with visible role models.
- Class sizes should be kept small in order to maximise access to equipment and individualised attention.

- Courses should incorporate information about self-employment, professional development, potential funding opportunities and networking.

Recommendation 4 Post-course support

- Given women's under-representation, organisations should offer various kinds of post-course support.

Recommendation 5 Networking and mentoring

- Establish and fund a "women students' network" in order to promote peer mentoring. Participants could be invited to participate in efforts to recruit more women students.
- Establish a formal mentoring network, matching interested students with more established DJs and sound engineers. Encourage alumnae to become involved as mentors.

Recommendation 6 Student resource packs

- Develop resource packs about funding opportunities, arts career advisory services (such as that run by Metier) and organisations that provide support and advice for new businesses in the creative and cultural industries (for example, Shell LiveWire).

1.5 Structure of the WISEAMP evaluation reports

The evaluation of WISEAMP is presented in three reports, corresponding to each of the three phases of the WISEAMP training programme.

This first report includes the detailed findings relating to the Phase 1 training, including the findings from an impact study which was conducted four months after the end of the Phase 1 training.

The second report, to be completed in January 2007, will present the findings from the evaluation of Phase 2 of the WISEAMP training.

A short annexe to the second report will follow in the spring of 2007, covering the findings of the impact study of the Phase 2 training. Like the Phase 1 impact study, this will present the data collected four months after the end of the Phase 2 course.

The third report, also to be completed in January 2007, will be an account of the evaluation of Phase 3 of the WISEAMP training.

2 Executive summary

2.1 Overview

The WISEAMP project has been a successful initiative and has provided a useful learning experience for women in sound technology. The women taking part in the course have gained skills and knowledge, gained confidence and made useful contacts.

Most of the women have also been able to use the skills which they have gained on the course in their current work. The common pattern for their careers has been that of developing a portfolio set of activities and the course has made a useful contribution to this area. The main effect has been to facilitate and improve the opportunities and skills which they exercise within their existing work pathways. The course has also helped them develop the confidence to take the initiative in building their own careers within this field.

There appears to be a strong demand for courses like this one and the women who took part were appreciative of what they had gained. The findings from the evaluation suggest that courses like this are important in helping women to develop careers in sound technology and that such courses could have a key role in helping to reduce gender inequalities in this professional area. The results indicate that the main barriers which women perceive in this field are not mainly barriers experienced in the workplace but rather lie in the lack of opportunities available to women to develop the appropriate skills. WISEAMP has made a successful start at helping to overcome these barriers and to provide courses that are appropriate for women in this field.

2.2 Meeting the objectives

Overall, the WISEAMP project has met its aims and objectives and has been successful in providing a free, relevant and practical programme for women working to develop their skills and employability in sound technology.

The design of the course was valued and participants felt that the course had met its objectives and that it suited their needs. They were positive about the tutors, who were seen as having given them plenty of support, and as knowledgeable, well-prepared and well-organised. The course materials were also highly praised. Participants would however like more resources to be available online.

The main benefits of taking part were meeting people and networking, and developing skills and knowledge. Participants had also made useful contacts in the industry. Most felt that having done the course had been useful when looking for work. Participants particularly valued the skills they had gained in ProTools, recording and mixing, as well as acoustics, microphone techniques, studio design and the experience of a studio environment. Participants would however have valued the opportunity to have a professional placement.

Some concerns were voiced and these included lack of studio time, studio scheduling problems, faulty equipment, lack of equipment, software not functioning properly, and classrooms and studios sometimes being cold.

2.2.1 Objective 1: Considerations in venue choice

The venues were easily accessible for the participants. However, there were problems with the heating and the vending machines. Crèche facilities would also have been welcomed by a small number of participants.

2.2.2 Objective 2: Scheduling considerations

The course was scheduled at convenient times for the participants.

2.2.3 Objective 3: Structural considerations

The findings of the evaluation do not support the idea that courses such as this need to be taught by female instructors. On the contrary, many participants thought it was a distinct advantage to have male instructors, as this facilitated their ability to interact with men in this professional context. It was however important that the participants were female-only. Class sizes were suitably small.

2.2.4 Objectives 4 (post-course support), 5 (networking and mentoring) and 6 (student resource packs)

These objectives are not yet achieved and will be part of the third phase of the project. A subsequent evaluation report will refer to these in more detail.

3 Methods

3.1 Introduction

The method chosen for evaluating each of the phases of the WISEAMP training was the semi-structured self-completion questionnaire (containing a mixture of closed and open-ended questions). This method provides an efficient means of reaching a good proportion of participants and is well suited to the collection of factual data about participants and their training, as well as opinions about the training and its impact.

Two questionnaires were designed for Phase 1 of the training; the same two questionnaires were also used for Phase 2. The first questionnaire was an expanded version of the internal WISEAMP course evaluation form created by Vicky Hipkiss and the School of Sound Recording. Into this were inserted some new questions designed at Lancaster. This questionnaire was used both by Vicky Hipkiss for internal evaluation purposes and by the Lancaster team for their evaluation. The Lancaster evaluation team also wanted to ask participants some confidential questions, particularly relating to the important topics of employability, employment experience and gender. Therefore, a second questionnaire was created at Lancaster and approved by Vicky Hipkiss before the two questionnaires were distributed by the

SSR. An envelope was provided to enable participants to return the Lancaster questionnaire anonymously.

3.2 Data collection

3.2.1 Phase 1 data collection

For Phase 1, questionnaires were distributed on a “take-away” basis, which relied on participants completing the questionnaire and returning it by post. The response rate was 13 out of 30 course participants (43%). In the following weeks, further letters and questionnaires were sent to all participants who had not responded as an attempt to increase the response rate. Unfortunately this follow-up phase did not result in any additional responses.

Four months after the completion of the Phase 1 training, in early September 2006, a short questionnaire was distributed to all participants to follow up their progress since the end of the Phase 1 training. The questionnaire covered topics such as professional development and the participants’ thoughts about the relationship between the WISEAMP training and their employability. A second follow-up was sent later in the month to non-responders. The overall response rate for this impact survey was 9 out of 30 course participants (30%).

3.2.2 Phases 2 and 3 data collection

The methodology for Phases 2 and 3 will be described in subsequent reports.

3.3 Data analysis

A database was created for the processing and analysis of all the data, using Excel spreadsheet software at Lancaster. This enabled both the quantitative and qualitative data to be easily stored, retrieved and manipulated for analysis. The closed-ended data are presented in tabular form throughout the reports; the open-ended data are analysed using content analysis.

4 Operational success of the project and characteristics of respondents to Phase 1 survey

4.1 Operational success of the project

4.1.1 Recruitment

The SSR target was to recruit 30 participants to Phase 1 and 30 Participants to Phase 2. This was achieved for both phases.

4.1.2 Application and acceptance on to the training

The table below shows the number of applications and acceptances onto the Phase 1 training. The high number of applications indicates that there is considerable demand for the WISEAMP programme.

Table 1: Application and acceptance

	Applications	Acceptances
Phase 1	52 (100%)	30 (58%)
Phase 2	80 (100%)	30 (38%)

4.1.3 Completion of the training

The table below shows the completion rates for the training. Completion for Phase 1 was just over two thirds of those who started. Completion for Phase 2 was just under two thirds.

Table 2: Completion

	Starters	Leavers	Completers
Phase 1	30 (100%)	9 (30%)	21 (70%)
Phase 2	30 (100%)	12 (40%)	18 (60%)

4.1.4 Attendance at the training

Data on attendance were not available at the time of writing this report.

4.2 Characteristics of respondents to Phase 1 survey

4.2.1 Geographic area

Nearly all the respondents came from the Manchester area. Out of 13 respondents, 11 came from Greater Manchester, 1 from Lancashire and 1 from Cheshire.

4.2.2 Gender

This was a course for women only and all respondents were therefore female.

4.2.3 Age

Respondents were spread fairly evenly over the age groups. There were no respondents in the older group (45 or over).

Table 3: Ages of respondents

<25	25-34	35-44	45+	Total
4	6	3	0	13

4.2.4 Disability

None of the respondents reported having any disability.

4.2.5 Current occupation

Most respondents were in full-time paid employment, as shown in the table below.

Table 4: Current employment status

	No.
In full-time paid employment	7
In part-time paid employment	3
Self-employed	1
Caring for children or other dependents	1
Registered unemployed	1
Total	13

Respondents were asked what their current or last paid employment was. Many had portfolio careers with elements of freelance work, rather than a single profession that can be clearly categorised. Overall, the largest category of work was music-related (especially music teaching), followed by administrative work of various kinds, and work in areas of health or therapy.

Table 5: Current or last paid employment

	No.
Music-related (including teaching/ education)	6
Administration/ project management	4
Health-related/ therapeutic professions	2
Record shop manager	1
Science/ technology	1
Librarian	1

Note: Some respondents had more than one occupation and some had none

4.2.6 Qualifications

Of the 13 respondents, 9 were graduates, of whom 2 also had a Masters degree and 1 had a doctorate. There were 4 who stated that they had other professional qualifications of some kind.

4.2.7 Ethnicity

All the respondents identified themselves as white (10 as “white British” and 3 as “white – other”).

5 Findings from the survey

5.1 Reasons for taking part in the course

Respondents were asked what their main reasons were for coming on the course. Responses are summarised in the table below. The most common reason for taking part in the course was a desire to gain technical skills (especially in recording, sound engineering and production). ProTools was mentioned by most of the respondents who identified technical knowledge or skills as a motive. Several mentioned a desire to know how to record themselves or others. Three respondents mentioned a desire to meet like-minded people or to make contacts or friends.

Table 6: Reasons for taking part in the course

	No.
Develop recording/ sound engineering/ production skills/ technical knowledge (especially ProTools)	11
Networking/ meeting people/ making friends	3
Develop technical confidence	1
Do something interesting and creative	1
Gain qualification	1

5.2 Aspects of the course

5.2.1 Venues and timing

All the respondents found the locations easily accessible and all but one found that the training was scheduled at convenient times. However, most respondents (9 out of 13) had encountered other barriers to attendance. The most common reason given for this was work commitments; family and other personal commitments were also stated. Although less than half of the respondents felt that the provision of the training was family-friendly, this was primarily because many of the respondents were not sure about the question and stated that they did not have children. Significantly, those who did have children commented that the course and tutors were flexible and sympathetic to the needs of parents, though one mentioned that getting studio time that was compatible with child care was problematic; another mentioned the lack of a crèche. There were mixed comments about the facilities and environment; a recurring comment was that the operation of the vending machines was unpredictable.

Table 7: Venues and timing

	Yes	No	Neither/ not sure	No reply	Total
Locations of the training were easily accessible for me	13 (100%)	-	-	-	13 (100%)
The training was scheduled at times that were convenient to me	12 (92%)	-	1 (8%)	-	13 (100%)
There were other barriers that made my attendance difficult/ impossible	9 (69%)	3 (23%)	1 (8%)	-	13 (100%)
The provision of the training was family-friendly	5 (38%)	-	7 (54%)	1 (8%)	13 (100%)

5.2.2 Gender aspects of the course

As shown in the table below, most respondents (77%) felt it was important to be part of a female-only student body. However, less than a quarter of respondents (23%) felt that it was important to have female tutors.

Table 8: Gender issues

	Agree/ agree strongly	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree/ disagree strongly	Total
Being part of a female-only student body was important to me	10 (77%)	1 (8%)	2 (15%)	13 (100%)
Having a female tutor was important to me	3 (23%)	2 (15%)	8 (62%)	13 (100%)

Their comments reinforced this, showing that the support of an all-female group was valued, while most preferred to have both male and female tutors (some stated that the level of experience of the tutors was more important to them than the gender).

It definitely worked being an all-female group, it was less intimidating and we were all supportive of each other. It was also inspiring to see women actively being successful in the music industry.

An experienced tutor is more important than gender. I did find it quite inspiring and supportive being part of a female only student body.

I would just like to say that the men who taught us were very cool and helpful and it also helped me to learn to interact and act confidently around men with a high level of technical skill. I'd say it's very important for WISEAMP to be taught by men and women for this very reason!

5.2.3 Design of the course

All respondents were very positive about most aspects of the design of the course. Notably, all respondents felt that the course had met their expectations; the majority found that the course had met the objectives they had had from the start of the course and that it suited their needs. Most were also satisfied with the assessment methods, range of subjects covered, and intensity of the timetable. Respondents were slightly less satisfied with pace of the course and the balance between presentation and practical exercises. The comments from this part of the questionnaire reinforced this, suggesting that more practical work at an earlier stage of the course might have been helpful.

Table 9: Design of the course

	Agree/ agree strongly	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree/ disagree strongly	No reply	Total
The course met my expectations	13 (100%)	-	-	-	13 (100%)
The course met the objectives I had at the start of the course	12 (92%)	1 (8%)	-	-	13 (100%)
The course content suited my needs	12 (92%)	1 (8%)	-	-	13 (100%)
I feel that the assessment methods were fair and accurate	12 (92%)	-	1 (8%)	-	13 (100%)
The range of subjects/ topics was appropriate	11 (84%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	-	13 (100%)
The timetable provided enough time to meet the course objectives	9 (69%)	4 (31%)	-	-	13 (100%)
The pace of the course was correct	8 (62%)	4 (31%)	1 (8%)	-	13 (100%)
The balance between presentation and practical exercises was effective	6 (46%)	4 (31%)	2 (15%)	1 (8%)	13 (100%)

5.2.4 Tutor skills

All respondents felt that they had received enough tutorial assistance and nearly all that the tutors were knowledgeable, well-prepared, gave well-organised presentations and taught to the right level of skill.

Table 10: Tutor skills

	Agree/ agree strongly	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree/ disagree strongly	No reply	Total
There was sufficient assistance offered during classes	13 (100%)	-	-	-	13 (100%)
The tutors were knowledgeable in the subject matter	12 (92%)	-	1 (8%)	-	13 (100%)
The tutors were well prepared for the class	12 (92%)	1 (8%)	-	-	13 (100%)
All tutors gave clear, well-organised presentations	12 (92%)	1 (8%)	-	-	13 (100%)
The tutors taught to my level of skill	11 (84%)	2 (15%)	-	-	13 (100%)
I feel I received sufficient additional support from my tutor	11 (84%)	2 (15%)	-	-	13 (100%)

5.2.5 Ratings of course modules

Digital Sound Production and Studio Techniques were both rated very highly; Studio Design was rated slightly less highly, as shown in the table below.

Table 11: Ratings of course modules in terms of quality of delivery and relevance to participants' career aims (scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is low and 5 is high)

Module Title	1 (Low)	2	3	4	5 (High)	No reply	Total
Digital Sound Production	-	-	-	7	6	-	13
Studio Techniques	-	-	1	6	6	-	13
Studio Design	1	1	3	4	-	4	13

5.2.6 Most valued aspects of the training

Respondents were asked what they liked most about their training experience. The most common responses were meeting people and networking, and developing skills and knowledge. Responses are summarised in the table below.

Table 12: Things they liked most about their training experience

	No.
Meeting people/ networking	8
Developing skills/ knowledge/ learning	7
Developing confidence	3
Environment/ culture/ atmosphere/ helpful people	3
Practical/ performance work	2
Variety of subjects	2
Creative licence allowed on projects	1
Learning with women	1
Free of charge	1
Working as a team to record and make our own record	1

5.2.7 Least valued aspects of the training

Respondents were also asked what they liked least about their training experience. The two biggest areas of concern were lack of studio time and studio scheduling problems, and faulty equipment or lack of equipment.

Table 13: Things they liked least about their training experience

	No.
Not enough studio time/ studio scheduling problems	4
Faulty equipment/ lack of equipment	3
Lectures aimless and impractical/ training sometimes disorganised	2
Cold classroom/ noisy workmen	2
Lack of time in studio	1
Studio design module	1
Doing assignments as a group	1
Balance of practical and theory (more practical time needed)	1
Projects (had been unaware prior to the course that she had to do them!)	1
Long wait for results of second module	1

5.2.8 Suggestions for additional topics

Respondents were asked what additional topics they would have liked to be included on the course. There were very few suggestions. Three respondents indicated a desire for more training in mixing/ mastering; two respondents mentioned more training in live sound engineering; and two mentioned Cubase.

Table 14: Additional topics they would have liked to be included in the course

	No.
More mixing/ mastering/ critical listening to different types of production	3
Live sound engineering	2
Cubase	2
More information about managing studio data/ file saving/ using data in different software	1
Industry/ self-employment	1
Logic	1
Dance music production	1
Building a studio from scratch (excluding the wall construction)	1
Using Reason software	1

Respondents also gave some very positive additional comments. Here is one example:

Very satisfied with the course, the material, the tutors and the studio facilities. Course has exceeded my expectation and hope!

5.2.9 “Train the trainer” sessions

Some respondents found the “train the trainer” sessions useful, but some did not. This is shown by the table below which separates those with previous experience of training or facilitating the learning of others from those without. Just under half of the respondents found the sessions useful, about a third felt that they had increased their skills in training/ facilitating the learning of others.

Table 15: “Train the Trainer” sessions

Agree/ agree strongly*	Previous experience**	No previous experience**
I found the sessions useful	4	2
The sessions have increased my skills in training/ facilitating the learning of others	4	-
The sessions have increased my confidence in training/ facilitating the learning of others	3	-
Combined with the technical knowledge I have learnt on the course I feel I have the skills to train/ facilitate the learning of a range of groups including single and mixed gender groups	4	1

*This table shows the numbers who agreed or agreed strongly with each statement

**Indicates whether or not respondents had previous experience of training/ facilitating the learning of others

Comments showed a range of reasons for the lack of satisfaction in these sessions. These included lack of confidence in putting the skills they were learning into practice from both those with and without previous experience. From those with previous experience, there was a feeling that they were not learning anything new, or, simply, distaste for “this kind of class.” There were also some positive comments about the sessions.

5.2.10 Facilitating learning

Only one respondent stated that she had, as a result of the project, facilitated the learning of others. However, some comments suggested that the respondents had not yet had opportunities to facilitate the work of others since WISEAMP.

Table 16: Facilitating learning

	Agree/ agree strongly	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree/ disagree strongly	No reply	Total
As a result of the project I have facilitated the learning of others e.g. allowed others to work shadow me, instructed others on Pro Tools etc.	1 (8%)	5 (38%)	5 (38%)	2 (15%)	13 (100%)
As a result of the project I have work shadowed individuals	1 (8%)	5 (38%)	4 (31%)	3 (23%)	13 (100%)

5.3 Resources and facilities

5.3.1 Use of course materials/ resources

All respondents were very positive about the course materials and resources. All agreed that these were easy to understand and complemented the learning objectives.

Table 17: Course materials/ resources

	Agree/ agree strongly	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree/ disagree strongly	Total
The workbooks/ handouts were easy to understand	13 (100%)	-	-	13 (100%)
The workbooks/ handouts complemented the learning objectives	13 (100%)	-	-	13 (100%)
I used the workbooks/ handouts as a reference	12 (92%)	1 (8%)	-	13 (100%)

5.3.2 Accessibility of course materials

Respondents were asked if the course materials/ resource packs were made available to them in a way that was accessible and useful. All respondents said that they were. Many would have liked course information to have been available via a website. 38% would have liked the actual content of the material to be more accessible or useful.

Table 18: Accessibility of course materials

	Yes	No	Neither/ not sure	Total
Course materials were made available in a way that was accessible and useful	13 (100%)	-	-	13 (100%)
It would have been useful for more course information to have been available via a website	8 (62%)	2 (15%)	3 (23%)	13 (100%)
Course materials/ resource packs might have been more useful or more accessible	5 (38%)	6 (46%)	2 (15%)	13 (100%)

Comments reinforced the evidence that the course materials and resources were highly appreciated, both in and out of the classroom and studio. Some indicated that more material – especially via the Internet – would have been useful. However, respondents indicated that resources were always provided by email when requested.

5.3.3 Usage of online forum

More than half the respondents had used the online forum.

Table 19: Usage of online forum

	Yes	No	Total
Used online forum	8 (62%)	5 (38%)	13 (100%)

Comments showed that those who did use it found it useful mostly as a central point for the exchange of information – particularly announcements about gigs. Although this was useful, some respondents commented that it could have been used more but needed to develop more. Some of those who had not used the forum commented that they did not know what it was for, had no need for it, or were not familiar with using the Internet in this way.

5.3.4 Training facilities

Opinion was divided about the adequacy of the facilities. Respondents stated that the equipment and software did not always function properly. However, the classrooms were considered by most respondents (62%) to be suitable environments for learning. Four people commented that the classrooms and studios were too cold at times.

Table 20: Training facilities

	Agree/ agree strongly	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree/ disagree strongly	Total
The classroom was a suitable environment for learning	8 (62%)	3 (23%)	2 (15%)	13 (100%)
The software functioned properly	7 (54%)	3 (23%)	3 (23%)	13 (100%)
The equipment used was kept in good working order	6 (46%)	5 (38%)	2 (15%)	13 (100%)
The studio equipment always functioned properly	4 (31%)	4 (31%)	5 (38%)	13 (100%)

All respondents agreed that the staff at the Ina Centre were helpful, that the environment felt safe and that they were treated fairly. One commented: “I’ve always enjoyed my time at the Ina Centre!”

Table 21: Staff and working environments

	Agree/ agree strongly	Total
Generally, I feel that the staff at the Ina Centre were helpful	13	13
I feel that I worked in a safe environment	13	13
I feel that the staff treated me fairly and without discrimination.	13	13

5.3.5 Ways in which WISEAMP might be improved for the future

Respondents were asked an open-ended question about whether there were any ways in which WISEAMP could be improved in the future. There were few suggestions and these are summarised in the table below.

Table 22: Ways in which WISEAMP could be improved

	No.
Better organisation and structure	3
More practical training	3
More specialism/ advanced topics	2
Better equipment and availability of studio space	2
More experienced ProTools tutors	1
Longer modules	1
Sort out the Studio Design module	1
More work with male students for “real-world” experience	1

5.4 Effects of the course

5.4.1 Activity arising from the course

Most respondents were aware that there would be further activities and were planning to take part. About a third of respondents were not aware of any further activities being available after the course had finished. Two were considering doing a

foundation degree to build on what they had learned from WISEAMP. However, one of these two stated that she would not be able to afford it; the other was considering Manchester Metropolitan University and University of Manchester. Those who said they were not considering a foundation degree also raised problems of affordability as well as a feeling that they had already studied enough and/ or wanted to develop through work and with income.

Table 23: Ongoing activity

	Yes	No	Don't know	Total
Are you aware that there will any further activities be available in connection with the training after the course has finished?	9 (62%)	-	4 (31%)	13 (100%)
If there are further activities in relation to the training, will you plan to take part?	9 (62%)	1 (8%)	3 (23%)	13 (100%)
Are you considering doing a Foundation Degree to further the knowledge, skills and techniques you developed through WISEAMP?	2 (15%)	11 (85%)	-	13 (100%)

5.4.2 Anticipated effects of WISEAMP on future careers

All respondents felt that WISEAMP had given them confidence to pursue work in sound technology. Nearly all felt that the course had helped them progress towards their career aims and that it had helped them learn technical skills that they would apply to their career.

Table 24: Effects of WISEAMP on future careers

	Agree/ agree strongly	Neither agree nor disagree	Total
The course has given me confidence to pursue work in the areas of sound technology	13 (100%)	-	13 (100%)
The course has helped me progress towards my career aims	12 (92%)	1 (8%)	13 (100%)
I have learnt technical skills which I can apply to my future career	12 (92%)	1 (8%)	13 (100%)

Respondents reported having gained a number of technical skills from the course. These were:

- Studio/ recording/ mixing/ production/ mastering/ arranging techniques
- Use of ProTools
- Organising sessions
- Treating a room acoustically/ improving the sound
- Microphone placement

5.5 Benefits of the course

5.5.1 Achievement of aims

Respondents were asked if the course had given them what they wanted. All but one answered “yes” to this question. Many provided additional comments, which showed that respondents’ goals had mostly been to develop skills or confidence in various technical areas (such as ProTools, recording and mixing). Significantly, two respondents also stated that one of the important things they had gained was the learning of things which could be built on in their future work and activities. Here are some direct quotations from respondents:

The course met and even exceeded my expectation. I learned the state-of-the-art music software; I learned how to use professional studio software, hardware, as well various aspects of digital music production, processing and recording, mixing and marketing.

My main goal was to gain confidence and learn technical skills so I could advance my music writing and production at home, and I have achieved this. I'm also doing other creative things like learning to DJ.

I did very well in the ProTools module – better than I had anticipated and I really enjoyed the recording techniques module – I discovered that I love mixing, and I wasn't sure initially that I would understand or enjoy the course as much as I did.

5.5.2 Skills gained

Respondents were asked what were the main knowledge, skills and techniques that they had developed through WISEAMP. All thirteen respondents provided positive comments to this question. Eight mentioned ProTools as an important area of skills they had gained. All thirteen listed various technical skills or the confidence to use these skills. The main skills gained were:

- Recording
- Mixing
- Acoustics
- Microphone techniques
- Studio design
- General experience of working in a studio environment

5.5.3 Relationship of course to current work

Respondents were asked if they were using any of these skills in their current work. The majority (nine) said that they were. The remainder were not. Those who were using the skills gained mentioned ProTools, recording, producing and mixing as the main ones.

It was clear that many of the individuals were developing “portfolio” careers in a mixture of paid and voluntary areas of work. This work involved the use of their new

skills and included live performance, training others how to use ProTools, teaching and other non-profit areas as well as specific studio work.

5.5.4 Value of a professional placement

Respondents were asked if they thought they would have benefited from a professional placement opportunity during the training. More than half the respondents thought that they would have benefited from a professional placement.

One comment was:

I hadn't thought about that as an idea, but I would like an opportunity like that. It would be an extremely valuable learning experience – and I'd be able to use the skills I've learnt, and continue to gain knowledge.

5.5.5 Benefits from participating in the course

All respondents agreed that they had gained knowledge, skills, and confidence in themselves. All respondents also reported having learnt a lot from the tutors on the course. Nearly all said they had benefited from sharing experiences with the other students and planned to keep in touch. More than half reported that they had made useful contacts in the industry and had gained confidence in applying for work. Almost half felt that what they had learnt on the course had been useful when looking for work.

Table 25: Benefits from participating in the course

	Agree/ agree strongly	Neither agree nor disagree	Total
I have gained knowledge/ skills	13 (100%)	-	13 (100%)
I have gained confidence in myself	13 (100%)	-	13 (100%)
I have learnt a lot from the tutors on the course	13 (100%)	-	13 (100%)
I have benefited from sharing experiences with the other students	12 (92%)	1 (8%)	13 (100%)
I plan to keep in touch with some of the people I met on the course	12 (92%)	1 (8%)	13 (100%)
I have made some useful contacts in the industry while I have been on the course	8 (62%)	5 (38%)	13 (100%)
I have gained confidence in applying for work	7 (54%)	6 (46%)	13 (100%)
What I learnt on the course has been useful to me when looking for work	6 (46%)	7 (54%)	13 (100%)

5.5.6 Main benefits

Respondents were also asked an open ended question about what had been the main benefits to them of the WISEAMP course. The main benefits mentioned were knowledge and skills, confidence, and meeting other female contacts in the profession.

Table 26: Main benefits

	No.
Knowledge/ skills	7
Confidence	5
Meeting other female musicians/ artists	4
Studio time/ use of equipment	3
Friends/ contacts	3
Great tutors	2
Experience	1
Possible future work at SSR	1
Developing creativity	1
Qualification	1

Some comments were:

Acquisition of new knowledge (theory and practice) and skills. Access to state-of-the-art software and equipment, working with other women in similar situations.

The confidence to know that I am capable of using studio equipment and recording software.

5.6 Employment-related issues

5.6.1 Applying for work in sound technology

Respondents were asked if they were currently applying for work in sound technology. Five said they were currently applying for work and eight said that they were not.

Those who were currently applying were asked for details of the work for which they were applying. Those who were in the process of applying for work were applying in the following areas:

- Teaching music production
- Voluntary work in a studio
- Sound technician training

Those who were not applying for work were asked why not. Respondents gave the following reasons:

I feel that I need to “shadow” some sound engineers before I take the plunge.

I do not want to pursue it as a career at this moment in time. It is recreational although I may pick it up again professionally later.

I already have a casual job working as sound assistant at [named employer].

I'm concentrating on making music, and I already have a job. I wouldn't want to work as a professional sound engineer – I just like knowing about it and being able to do it.

As much as I would like to work in sound technology my financial and personal circumstances are currently taking precedence.

I work full time already and have financial obligations that require me to stay out at the moment. However, I hope to change careers at some point in the future possibly by working part-time in both fields.

Busy setting up hypnotherapy business!

Those who were applying for work were asked if they would have applied for these posts if they had not been doing the course. More than half (60%) of those who stated that they were applying for work said they would have applied anyway, but 40% said they would not have applied without having done the course. One respondent who would have applied for the work anyway felt that she could do the work, but lacked skills in recording live performance and wanted to improve these skills. One respondent who would not have applied for the work without having done WISEAMP felt that she lacked skills and knowledge; another felt she lacked qualification in sound engineering.

Table 27: Whether respondents would have applied for the posts if not doing the course

	No.	%
Yes, would have applied anyway	3	60
No, would not have applied	2	40
Total	5	100

5.7 Gender issues

5.7.1 Views about gender issues

Nearly all respondents felt that a course such as WISEAMP will help to reduce the male dominance of the profession. Most also felt that it is lack of the right skills rather than other barriers that makes it harder for women to succeed in sound technology than for men. More than half felt that family responsibilities make success in sound technology harder for women and that women do not have the same opportunities as men to develop skills. Less than half felt that gender issues are a barrier when trying to gain entry to work in sound technology or that prejudice in the workplace makes it harder for women to succeed in sound technology. Few said that they found it difficult being in a male-dominated workplace and nearly all respondents felt that there was no disadvantage to having male instructors.

Table 28: Views about gender issues

	Agree/ agree strongly	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree/ disagree strongly	Total
I think that courses such as WISEAMP will help to reduce the male-dominance of the profession	12 (92%)	-	1 (8%)	13 (100%)
It is lack of the right skills that makes it harder for women to succeed in sound technology than for men	9 (69%)	3 (23%)	1 (8%)	13 (100%)
It is having family responsibilities that makes it harder for women to succeed in sound technology than for men	8 (62%)	5 (38%)	-	13 (100%)
I think women do not generally have the same opportunities to develop skills in sound technology as men do	7 (54%)	6 (46%)	-	13 (100%)
I think gender issues are a barrier when trying to gain entry to work in sound technology	5 (38%)	3 (23%)	5 (38%)	13 (100%)
It is prejudice in the workplace that makes it harder for women to succeed in sound technology than for men	4 (31%)	7 (54%)	2 (15%)	13 (100%)
I find it difficult when I am in a male-dominated workplace	3 (23%)	3 (23%)	7 (54%)	13 (100%)
I feel that it was a disadvantage that some of the instructors were male	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	11 (85%)	13 (100%)

5.7.2 Personal experience of gender barriers

Respondents were asked if during their training or work in any area of sound technology they had ever felt that their experience of the work or training had been different because of being a woman. Of the thirteen respondents, eight indicated that they had experienced this kind of difference. The examples given below show a range of experiences. The most common kind of experience mentioned by several of the respondents was a feeling that women need to work harder to “prove” themselves. Lack of confidence was also seen to be a common experience among women, sometimes fuelled by patronising comments and attitudes from men. The respondents’ own words help to illustrate these experiences (some details have been changed or removed for anonymity):

I have been extremely patronised by certain men I have worked with. On the other hand I have also been mentored by some fantastic male engineers. I've realised the men I have been patronised by felt challenged and jealous of any work so, I try not to let it bother me. I feel sorry for them instead of being angry and upset.

When we were doing our mix project, we brought in a saxophonist for the session. I had researched microphone placement for recording saxophone and instructed the performer to stand in a certain place. He refused initially, saying that he knew more about it and had never heard such nonsense.

However, I was proved right in the end when we were checking the levels – he ended up standing where I'd told him to in the first place. I doubt there would've been any dispute if I'd been male.

I have been in situations where I was the only female in the band, recording in a studio run by men. I was discouraged (and even shouted at) from touching any equipment and no one wanted to explain anything – I was the “singer” – this was when I was 19 and experiences like this knocked my confidence, though I may not have realised it at the time.

Three further responses that stood out from the others included a mention of positive discrimination, a denial of prejudice being a major problem, and an experience of prejudice from personal contacts but not from professionals. One person also mentioned the physical demands of work in sound technology.

Only in a positive way – because you stand out, and men like to show women how to do things if you ask nicely!

No, in my experience you are treated like a girl when you act like one.

Although I have been in many studios/ gigs I have never felt any prejudice from professionals, I've felt more sexism from male studio people who I personally know. There has been, however, a distinct lack of females.

5.7.3 Reasons for sound technology being a largely male occupation

Respondents were asked what they thought were the reasons for work in sound technology being male-dominated. All thirteen respondents had something to say about this.

Most responses refer to sound technology as a masculine domain and/ or the values that children are exposed to which reproduce gender differences from early childhood. Several “masculine” dimensions to the profession are perceived, including the “beery” and “laddish” culture of sound engineering, the physical challenges of the work, and the notion that men are simply more interested in technical, engineering work. Comments from two respondents even appeared to reinforce the division: “they [men] are better at remembering technical/ mechanical stuff” and “blokes are naturally good at techy stuff”.

However, some respondents saw hope in changing attitudes and practices surrounding the early social conditioning and education of children. One commented:

I don't think women are encouraged early on in the home or school to think of sound technology as a career option. Hopefully things will start to change as computers are being used by children as young as five and six. So attitudes towards using technology will be less about gender and more about ability and skills.

Respondents also refer to the burden of family responsibilities and the lack of childcare. One mentioned the need for women to have a secure job (presumably as

opposed to a high-risk career of constant change, unsociable hours and regular travel – all characteristics of work in sound technology). Confidence, courage and determination were also mentioned as essential qualities that women need in order to “break into” this traditionally male profession.

5.7.4 Barriers facing women in sound technology

Respondents were asked what they thought were the biggest barriers that women face in succeeding in sound technology. Again, all thirteen women responded and the responses reinforced the comments from the previous question about sound technology being a male occupation. Here, respondents focused more on the personal challenges of being confident, facing patronising colleagues, and trying to “fit in” and be accepted. One illustrated her perception of the culture:

People not taking [women’s] technical abilities seriously - a “boys club” atmosphere which can be intimidating – the perception, particularly in live engineering, that the job is done by very laddish, sleep-deprived, beered up, coked up, stubbly Neanderthals.

A distinction can be made between actual lack of knowledge or skills (often as a result of lack of opportunity) on the one hand and problems relating to a lack of confidence and men’s perceptions of women’s deficiencies in technical skills on the other. It is clear that WISEAMP is helping to address both sets of problems, by initiating education and experience for the participants – opportunities which have often been unavailable to women in the past – and at the same time helping the women to boost their confidence. However, the barriers of misperception of ability, prejudice, fear and lack of confidence are perhaps deeper and more difficult to address, as the responses to this question suggest.

5.8 Other comments

There were a number of other comments relating to the fact that the training did not carry any accreditation of any kind.

Finally, there were some very positive views.

Give more hours studio time – or allow you to save hours up, was difficult to get all three group members together and then book studio time. I REALLY enjoyed the course and found it very valuable.

I would just like to say that the men who taught us were very cool and helpful and it also helped me to learn to interact and act confidently around men with a high level of technical skill. I'd say it's very important for WISEAMP to be taught by both men and women for this very reason!

I feel it is an extremely good cause and it has benefited all who attended it. I also feel it doesn't matter if men teach on the course as it is a male dominated area, it is good to have a balance of female and male teachers.

Very pleased with the course, the material, the tutors and the experienced gained.

6 Results of the impact study

6.1 Introduction and overview

The impact study followed up participants some months after they had completed the course in order to find out to what extent, if at all, their employment situations had changed and whether they regarded WISEAMP as a contributing factor to any of the changes.

The results of the impact study show that WISEAMP continues to be useful to respondents after the completion of the course and that it has provided them with relevant learning which is improving their job prospects in the area of sound technology.

Four months after the completion of their training, most of the respondents are using the skills, knowledge, confidence and contacts acquired during their WISEAMP training in the course of their current employment. In addition, some of the respondents have already gained new posts in areas of sound technology since doing the course; others are finding the energy and confidence to develop further their creative technology skills in their spare time and to apply for additional work.

6.2 Employment and career development in relation to the WISEAMP training

All nine respondents from the impact survey were currently in employment. Their areas of employment are shown in the table below.

Table 29: Current employment

	No.
Administration/ project management	5
Music-related (including teaching/ education)	4
Health-related/ therapeutic professions	1
Software development	1

Note: Some respondents had more than one occupation

Respondents were asked whether their employment situation was the same as it was when they completed or left the WISEAMP course. Five stated that it was the same; four said it had changed. These four respondents provided comments, which suggested positive changes: two had gained additional work or work experience in music-related fields, one had gained a new post and one had upgraded to full-time work. One of the five whose employment situation was the same made this comment:

I am looking to change my career and do something related to the skills learned during the WISEAMP course.

Respondents were then asked whether taking part in the WISEAMP course had made any difference either to their current work or to the changes in their employment. All respondents indicated that taking part in WISEAMP had influenced their current or planned employment, or how they work. The table below provides a summary of responses.

Table 30: Influence of WISEAMP on current work or changed employment

	No.
Developing skills/ knowledge/ learning	6
Developing confidence	4
Actively pursuing work that is more related to musical interests and skills developed through WISEAMP	3
Making contacts and friends	2
Ability to pass ProTools skills onto others	1
Investigating doing a live sound engineering course	1
Had a good result from a co-writing/ co-production project	1
More options for future work and a knowledge base to build on	1

Respondents were asked whether they were currently looking for additional employment. Eight of the nine respondents said that they were. Here, all the comments indicated a desire to move into more musical and/ or creative work.

When the respondents were asked whether WISEAMP had helped them in looking for work, six answered that it had. Again, they referred to a boost in confidence, experience, contacts and a greater awareness of and desire for opportunities beyond their current or past work.

6.3 Value of WISEAMP

Finally, respondents were asked whether, now that some time had passed, they thought it was worthwhile to have done the WISEAMP course. All respondents answered “yes” to this question. Most of them reinforced this reply with additional comments about how they had valued WISEAMP. Here are three examples:

Definitely! I see it as the first of many steps in changing my career and doing something I am really passionate about and I care for: music!

It was free, it was very useful to me and enhanced my skills, good networking opportunities and a great course with good varied subjects.

Best thing I've done in ages! Met great people, learned more than I expected, and gained the confidence to put myself forward for song-writing projects – I sing and write for two bands now and have been asked to help with several other projects, so it has definitely been beneficial.