

AEC Institutional and Programme Review Scheme



AEC Institutional Review Visit to the
Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music of the National University of Singapore

12-14 April 2010

**YONG SIEW TOH
CONSERVATORY
of MUSIC**

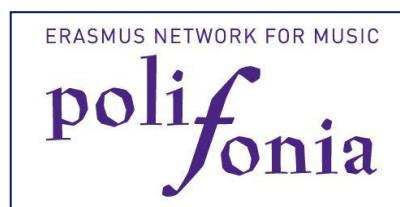
Review Committee:

**Harald Jorgensen (chair), Former Rector of the Norwegian Academy of Music, Oslo
Mellasenah Morris, Dean/Deputy Director of the Peabody Institute, Johns Hopkins University**

**Daniel Sher, Dean of the College of Music, University of Colorado at Boulder
Mist Thorkelsdottir, Dean of the Music Department, Reykjavik Academy of the Arts**

Secretary:

Linda Messas, Project Manager at the European Association of Conservatoires



Introduction

The visit to the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music (YSTCM) was undertaken in the framework of the *AEC Institutional and Programme Review Scheme*, a service offered by the AEC to its member institutions in order to assist them in their quality improvement activities.

For the first time in the history of this Scheme, the international group of experts reviewing the institution included two American representatives in order to complement the European perspective on the YSTCM with an American perspective. The international group of experts used the AEC Framework Document *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Music Education: Characteristics, Criteria and Procedures*, a set of common European standards and procedures for the external review of institutions and programmes in higher music education. Based on the visit and the materials sent to the team beforehand, the present report was produced.

The Republic of Singapore is an island country situated in the Southeast Asian region of the Asian continent between Malaysia and Indonesia's Riau Islands. This city-state is the world's fourth leading financial centre and a cosmopolitan world city, playing a key role in international trade and finance. With a population of 5 million people including Chinese, Malays, Indians, Caucasians, and Asians, Singapore is a vibrant and multi-cultural city.

The YSTCM was established in 2001 through an agreement between the National University of Singapore and the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University. The Conservatory started to operate in 2003 and has 29 full-time faculty and 23 part-time faculty, teaching a total of 204 students (195 undergraduate and 9 graduate diploma students).

During the review visit, the Conservatory was represented by the Director, Bernard Lanskey and the Deputy Director, Craig de Wilde. The members of the Committee were chair Harald Jorgensen (former Director of the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo), Mellasenah Morris, Dean/Deputy Director of the Peabody Institute, Johns Hopkins University, Daniel Sher, Dean of the College of Music, University of Colorado at Boulder and Mist Thorkelsdottir, Dean of the Music Department, Reykjavik Academy of the Arts. The Secretary was Linda Messas (Project Manager at AEC).

The Committee would like to express its thanks to the Conservatory for the organisation of the visit and for welcoming the Committee in such a friendly and hospitable way. Conservatory staff members remained at the disposal of the Committee during the whole visit and contributed to the establishment of an atmosphere of sincere and fruitful cooperation in which many issues – current situation, problems, strengths and weaknesses - were discussed.

The Committee would like to express its appreciation for the hard work done by the Conservatory in preparation of the AEC visit with the production of its self-evaluation report. This in-depth analysis of the institution has helped the Committee to get a comprehensive overview of the Conservatory and has been of great help to the reflections and discussions before, during and after the visit.

Schedule for the AEC Review Visit in Singapore

Sunday 11th April 2010

Time	Session	Participants	Place
19:00 –	Dinner	Review Committee and Prof Bernard Lanskey (Director)	Yacht Club

Monday 12th April 2010

Time	Session	Participants	Place
12:15 – 13:15	Monday Noon Recital	Review Committee	Concert Hall
13:15-14:30	Lunch	Review Committee Bernard Lanskey Assoc Prof Craig De Wilde (Deputy Director) Prof Lai Choy Heng (Vice Provost, National University of Singapore)	KR50 (located next to the Conservatory)
14:30-16:00	Preparatory meeting	Review Committee	Conference Room
16:00-16:30	Break	Review committee	
16:30-18:00	Meeting with the management of the institution	Review Committee <u>Management team and senior academic faculty</u> Bernard Lanskey Craig De Wilde Rachel Tang (Senior Associate Director) Assoc Prof Ho Chee Kong (Head of Composition) Assoc Prof Chan Tze Law (Associate Director, Ensembles and Professional Development) Prof Thomas Hecht (Head of Piano Studies) Assoc Prof Qian Zhou (Head of Strings)	Conference Room
18:00-19:00	Guided tour - Review of the facilities (studios, concert venues, practice facilities, libraries etc.)	Review Committee <u>Management team</u> : Bernard Lanskey, Craig De Wilde, Rachel Tang	
19:15-21:00	Dinner	Review committee <u>Representatives of the institution</u> : Craig De Wilde, Ho Chee Kong, Chan Tze Law, Rachel Tang	Brasil Churrasco, Gillman Village, Lock Road

Tuesday 13th April 2010

Time	Session	Participants	Place
09:00– 10:15 (08:15 pick up from hotel)	Meeting with students	<p>Review committee <u>Students</u> Abigail Sin (Piano, MUS4, Singapore) Khoo Hui Ling (Piano, MUS4, Singapore) Maria Immaculata Setiadi (Piano, MUS4, Indonesia) Golnar Shaari (Clarinet, MUS2, Iran) Lu Bing Xia (Cello, MUS3, China) Hsien Jou, Rose (Violin, MUS3, Taiwan) Lucas Osborne (Trombone, MUS3, Australia) Derrick Lim (Percussion, MUS3, Singapore)</p>	Conference Room
10:15- 10:45	Break		
10:45- 11:45	Meeting with administrative and support staff members	<p>Review Committee <u>Administration</u> Rachel Tang (Senior Associate Director, Finance & Resources) Ng Kok Koon (Head of Music Library) Joanne Soh (Manager, Academic Studies) Tan Wei Boon (Associate Director, Admissions & Student Affairs) Jenny Ang (Associate Director, Concerts & Events) Adeline Wong (Lecturer/ Assistant Director, External Relations) Dorothy Koh (Assistant Director, Strategic Planning and Research)</p>	Conference Room
12:00- 12:45	Meeting with members of the relevant boards	<p>Review Committee <u>Members of relevant boards</u> Tan Thiam Soon (Vice Provost, National University of Singapore) Lai Choy Heng (Vice Provost, National University of Singapore) Goh Yew Lin (Chairman, Governing Board)</p>	Conference Room
13:00– 14:00	Lunch	Review committee	Sun Bistro, Staff Club
14:00- 15:00	Review committee meeting	Review committee	
15:00- 16:00	Session on research/ teaching and learning	<p>Craig De Wilde Assoc Prof George Hess (Music Technology) Assoc Prof Steven Miller (Sonic Arts) Dr Anne Marshman (Music History) Dr Peter Edwards (Theory and Composition) Qin Li-Wei (Head of Cello Studies)</p>	Conference Room

16:00-16:40	Visit of classes / or concert Chamber music coaching Senior recital (Flute) Visiting Artist Dr Clive Robbins presents <i>Aspects of Improvisation and Composition In Creative Music Therapy</i> Music in the Global Context (General Education Module)	Review Committee Members of T'ang Quartet (Quartet-in-Residence) Zhang Zejing Dr Clive Robbins (Nordoff-Robbins Centre for Music Therapy) Ty Constante (Ear-training, World Music and Professional Development)	3-7pm, Ensemble Room 4.30pm, Concert Hall 4pm, Recital Studio 3-5pm, Seminar Room 8/ Orchestral Hall (TBC)
16:40-17:00	Break		
17:00-18:30	Meeting with faculty	Review committee <u>Faculty</u> Zuo Jun (Head of Violin Studies) Dr Tony Makarome (Music Theory) Ty Constante (Ear-training, World Music and Professional Development) Dr Kawai Shiu (Music Theory) Zhang Manchin (Head of Viola Studies) Albert Tiu (Assistant Professor, Piano)	Conference Room
18:30-19:00	Wrap up meeting of the review committee	Review Committee	Conference Room
19:15-21:30	Dinner	Review committee <u>Representatives of the institution</u> Bernard Lanskey Qian Zhou Goh Yew Lin Priscylla Shaw (Governing Board member) Mervin Beng (Governing Board member)	Min Jiang restaurant, Rochester Park

Wednesday 14th April

Time	Session	Participants	Place
09:15-10:30 (08:30 pick up from	Meeting with representatives of the profession	Review Committee <u>Representatives of the profession</u> Anthony Brice (General Manager, Singapore Symphony Orchestra) Sharon Son (Orchestra Manager, Singapore Symphony Orchestra) Michelle Yeo (Programming Officer, Esplanade Theatres on the Bay) Meera Vijayendra (Vice President, Director, Attractions and Touring, IMG)	Conference Room

hotel)		Artists) Yap Shu Mei (Principal, Mandeville Music School)	
10:30- 11:00	Break		
11:00- 12:00	Extra session if needed by the experts (possibly meeting with the Leadership of the institution)	Review Committee <u>Leadership of the institution</u> Bernard Lanskey	Conference Room
12:00- 13:30	Lunch		KR50
13:30- 14:30	Meeting with former students	Review committee Michael Tan (Lecturer, Singapore Polytechnic) Chong Wai Lun (Ensembles Manager, Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music) Wilson Ong (Trombonist, Band Instructor) Low Jia Hua (Orchestra Manager, Singapore Festival Orchestra)	Conference Room
14:30- 16:30	Committee meeting - Preparation of the feedback meeting and of the report	Review Committee	Conference Room
16:30- 17:00	Feedback to the institution	Review Committee <u>Leadership of the institution</u> Prof Tan Eng Chye (Deputy President & Provost, National University of Singapore), Bernard Lanskey, Craig De Wilde, Rachel Tang <u>Governing Board members</u> Goh Yew Lin, Priscylla Shaw, Pang Siu Yuin, Mervin Beng	Conference Room
19:00	Dinner	Review committee	Il Lido, Sentosa

1. Mission and vision

1-a. What is the statutory context in which the institution operates?

The Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, initially called “Singapore Conservatory of Music”, was established in 2001 through an agreement between the National University of Singapore (NUS) and the Peabody Institute of The Johns Hopkins University [self-evaluation report, p. 1]. NUS wished to “add to its divisions and departments a music conservatory” and Peabody to “render its assistance in the creation and operation of a conservatory of music in Singapore” [Agreement for the Establishment of the Singapore Conservatory of Music (2001), p. 1]. After a review of the initial agreement in 2007, both parties decided to continue their collaboration “so that YSTCM [would] be internationally recognised in the musical community” and Peabody committed to continue supporting YSTCM in several areas such as curriculum development, student recruitment, faculty and staff development and contribution to Singapore’s cultural life [Agreement for Collaboration (Dec 2007), p. 1].

The initial agreement indicates that the Conservatory “shall be run as an autonomous Faculty within NUS” [p. 1] and provides for the establishment of a Governing Board whose members will be appointed by the Minister of Education to provide strategic directions for the operation of the Conservatory [pp. 1-2]. The role, composition and responsibilities of the Governing Board as well as the duties of the Conservatory Director are described in the Charter of the YSTCM, agreed upon by NUS Board of Trustees and by the Minister for Education [Charter of the YSTCM, NUS].

The relationship with Peabody was described in very positive terms and reported as having shifted from a situation in which Peabody strongly influenced the development and operation of the Conservatory to a situation in which Peabody has the role of a strategic partner [meeting with the management team and senior academic faculty]. The Governing Board is also considered as a critical friend overseeing the activities of the Conservatory and the University provides the Conservatory with an increasing support in terms of procedures and policies, e.g. with regard to recruitment matters [ibid.]. The shift in the relationship with the University was described as presenting some occasions of ambiguity and it was mentioned that further clarification of precise issues of governance might be valuable [ibid].

The Committee supports the view that the governance structure of the Conservatory needs to be clarified, with regard to the current situation but also to the future relationship with the University. The statement declaring that YSTCM is an autonomous school of the NUS can be difficult to understand, not only for external constituencies, but even for those engaged in the decision-making and budget-allocating process. The Committee would therefore recommend that a document is developed, that would further clarify the lines of authority, reporting, governance, management, budget allocation, and policy, for the benefit of all concerned. Such a document would ensure that the relationships between the involved bodies are stable and not endangered by changes among the persons in charge.

1-b. What is the institution’s mission, aim or goal and how are they being reviewed?

The vision of the institution is “To be Asia’s International Conservatory”; its mission “to be a focal point for musical activity, exchange and research, both for Singapore and the Asia-Pacific region, contributing to Singapore’s global position” [self-evaluation report, p. 1]. Based on an analysis of

the opportunities offered to the Conservatory as well as of the challenges it has to face, the following priorities were developed for the Conservatory:

- “To promote activities and relationships which ensure that the Conservatory, its faculty and students are heard internationally in contexts of appropriate standing
- To continue to develop a sense of shared institutional identity which builds on the foundational principles of the Conservatory
- To give greater depth and some regional identity to the educational programme; connect this closely with the strategic ambitions of NUS
- To ensure that students have the requisite skills to lead change in the region in terms of artistic development
- To engage with Singaporean and Asian communities in musical and cultural interchanges” [Opportunities/Challenges/Priorities: to Sing and Be Heard (2008)].

The Conservatory is not only considered as an educational institution but also as responsible for developing the art form in Singapore and in the region [meeting with the management team and the senior academic staff]. The vision stated above is understood in various ways by the different representatives of the institution: some referred to the ambition of maintaining/increasing the high proportion of international students and teachers, some to the ambition of building a global awareness on the basis of numerous partnerships with institutions at international level; others referred to the fact that the teaching language is English and to the unique mix of Asian cultures accessible to the students in Singapore and [meetings with the management team, with the Board members and with the faculty]. The challenge to be locally relevant was also mentioned, as well as the ambition of the Conservatory to gradually involve Asian tradition [meeting with the management team and the senior academic staff].

The Committee received several explanations for the meaning of the Conservatoire’s vision (all rich and relevant). The Conservatory is encouraged to clarify its identity both for internal and external purposes and to reflect on the reason(s) for and the importance of being Asia’s international Conservatory. The Committee would also like to suggest that the Conservatory’s identity could be described in terms of congruity with the University mission. The Committee feels that introducing Asian musical cultures in the programmes could represent a way to ensure a distinctive identity to the Conservatory and an incentive for European and American students to study in Singapore; the Conservatory may wish to consider studying further this aspect and is encouraged to look, for example, into deepening its co-operation with the University Cultural Centre situated close by or with other local community and professional organizations in Singapore whose focus is more strongly on Asian musical cultures. The Committee did not look into the way the mission is reviewed but found evidence in the faculty meetings’ minutes that the Conservatory’s vision and mission had been discussed with the faculty. Finally, the Committee would also like to suggest a focus on the mission when considering any new initiative or curricular direction.

1-c. What are the goals of its educational programmes?

The Conservatory offers a Bachelor of Music (Honours) programme (four-year programme) designed to “prepare performing and creative musical artists for a diverse range of relevant graduate or professional opportunities, both in the Asia-Pacific region and around the world. The programme aims to help students achieve musical excellence in their specialization by developing self-

awareness, intuition, imagination and a capacity for effective communication”[YSTCM Student Handbook 2009/2010, p. 1].

This programme is supported by two ancillary programmes:

- The Young Artist Programme, designed to prepare teenage students who demonstrate outstanding performance abilities for admission to the undergraduate programme [YSTCM Prospectus 2009/2010, p. 47];
- The Graduate Diploma (two-year programme), designed to “provide specialized training for a small number of accomplished graduate level performers who wish to pursue more performance-intensive outcomes” [self-evaluation report, p. 2].

The Conservatory may wish to consider relating the expressed goals of the BMus programme to the learning outcomes it has developed for this programme (see section 2.1). Regarding the Young Artist Programme, the Committee did not find in the available documentation a clear goal for this programme and would like to suggest that the Conservatory formulates one in order to facilitate the communication around it.

1-d. How do the curricula/programmes address the institutional mission?

As the review focused on the BMus programmes, only this programme is considered in the following sections.

The programme is modular-based and comprises the following elements:

- 1) Major study: students can major in classical musical performance (piano and orchestral instruments - strings, wind, brass, percussion), composition and recording arts and science. This element also includes modules in ensemble studies and professional development for all students.
- 2) Academic Studies in Music: in the first two years, students follow courses in Musical Concepts & Materials, Communicating About Music and Music History.
- 3) General education requirements: in line with NUS policy to provide students with a “well-rounded education”, students are expected to undertake general education modules, which they can choose from among the University's offerings. Examples of such modules are: Critical Thinking, Art and Identity, Patrons of the Arts, Technology and Artistic Innovation and The Art of Rituals and Recreation.
- 4) Electives: students have the choice between several electives, including cross-faculty module options and are advised to undertake electives mostly in the final two years [YSTCM Prospectus 2010, pp. 43-45].

A major curriculum review was undertaken in 2007-2008 in order to give more flexibility to the training provided to students: the programme is now based on 2 years of core curriculum followed by two years of electives in parallel with the major study [session on research/teaching and learning]. In all meetings with staff members, the importance of training complete persons with a broad range of skills and abilities was highlighted as well as the aim of the Conservatory to extend the narrow vision students may have of ‘the musician’; such an ambition is for example achieved through the inclusion of chamber music aspects in the education of soloists and orchestra musicians. The training offered at the Conservatory also focuses on problem-solving and practical learning through projects [session on research/ teaching and learning]. Students indicated having been

encouraged to explore different areas of musicianship in the framework of activities such as conducting, composing and musical outreach and having grown holistically as musicians [meeting with students]. Former students shared their appreciation of the balanced educational programme they had been offered and felt equipped for a broader perspective than performance only [meeting with former students].

Given the scope of the mission and vision of the Conservatory, which rather address the role of the Conservatory as cultural point than as educational centre, the Committee referred to the objective related to the Conservatory's establishment as a university-based model of education: "in this model, students must have a very high level of achievement and potential in music, and also must meet higher academic requirements" [Review and proposal for a new agreement (Dec 2007), p. 1]. The Committee shares the impression that the Conservatory's undergraduate programme addresses this objective and supports the Conservatory's view regarding the importance of a well-rounded education. In addition, the Committee would like to encourage the Conservatory to develop the interaction with other arts form.

1-e. Does the institution have a long-term strategy?

Following discussions held at the 2010 Faculty Retreat in January 2010, strategic directions and a work plan for the annual years 2009/2010 to 2011/2012 have been developed, focusing on the following issues of stabilisation:

- "Ensuring that the conservatory meets the Ministry of Education's targets for 2012 in relation to student numbers and mix, faculty projections and institutional profile;
- Taking forward faculty relationships in relation to promotion and tenure and in terms of formal communication/ dialogue and line management channels;
- Engaging with Singaporean, regional and international communities;
- Evolving an institutional identity which is well grounded in the strengths listed in the "To Sing and Be Heard" paper and which is predicated on world-class quality and a distinctive and relevant local identity" [Settling Into Steady State (2010), p. 2].

The Committee supports an expansion of the Conservatory's curriculum, but recommends first of all to the Conservatory to develop a well-defined plan for enrolment management based on physical, financial and people resources.

2. Educational processes

2.1 Programmes

2.1-a. Do the programmes take into account the various aspects of the 'Polifonia/Dublin Descriptors' (PDDs) and/or the AEC learning outcomes?

The curriculum review mentioned earlier was undertaken in 2007-2008 in response to several newly identified needs, including the needs to adapt the programme structure to NUS undergraduate guidelines, to change the modular weighting, to improve students' preparation for the profession, to increase students' elective choice and to introduce an additional major in Recording Arts and Science [annex 4 – YSTCM Proposed revisions to BMus Curriculum Structure for consideration by UCEP (April 2008), p. 33]. The AEC Learning Outcomes have been used in the review process [self-evaluation report, pp. 3-4]: indeed, they were circulated to the faculty and used as a basis for the discussion regarding learning outcomes for the BMus during the Faculty retreat and following faculty meetings [minutes of faculty meeting - 28 January 2008].

Although the Conservatory is not subject to the implementation of the Bologna process principles, the Committee found evidence that the Director follows the ongoing European developments and is well-informed about the PDDs and the AEC Learning Outcomes. It is clear to the Committee that the BMus programme takes into account the various aspects of the PDDs and AEC learning outcomes: the latter have directly been used during the curriculum review process, the education at the Conservatory is student-centred and learning outcomes for each BMus modules have been formulated.

2.1-b. Where appropriate, is there a connection/progression between the various cycles?

The 'Graduate Diploma in music performance' programme is designed for students having obtained a Bachelor of Music degree [YSTCM Prospectus 2010, p. 49]. It was set up in the first year of the conservatory's existence to ensure a pathway giving further opportunities to successful graduates [extra session with the Director] and currently counts nine students [self-evaluation report p1]. Regarding the BMus programme itself, former students commended the quality of the education they had received at the BMus level and felt well-prepared when pursuing their studies at MA level in prestigious music institutions abroad [meeting with former students].

The Committee did not focus on the Graduate Diploma curriculum and is therefore not in a position to comment on the progression from the BMus programme to the Graduate Diploma programme. The above comments of former students indicate that the progression from the BMus programme to second-cycle programmes offered in prestigious institutions abroad is possible.

2.2 Delivery

2.2-a. How is the institution utilizing different forms of teaching supporting the delivery of curricula/ programmes?

A wide range of teaching forms are used, such as one-to-one teaching, chamber music, ensemble and orchestral classes/rehearsals, lectures and interactive seminars, practical training in e.g. in sight singing, aural recognition, activities in group (including group composition and performance of music theory and composition exercises), training through projects in external community settings,

as well as masterclasses by visiting artists [self-evaluation report, p. 5]. In the detailed module description, the modes of teaching and learning are indicated for each module: Thus, the module “Communicating about Music I” is taught in “small group tutorials that incorporate musical listening, discussion, student presentation and informal listening tests” [annex 5 – B(Mus) Module Descriptions]. Faculty members indicated that they were encouraged by the Director to experiment with their teaching and adapt their teaching methods [meeting with the faculty]. They also underlined the strong integration of theory and practice/performance in the Conservatory programme with the aim to make students understand the relevance of all the theoretical aspects within their performance [ibid]. Finally, the frequent and increasing use of information technology for teaching purposes, such as softwares and blogs, was mentioned and staff members referred to the concept of the inverted classroom with students implementing in the class the knowledge they have gained outside the Conservatory [ibid].

Based on the information provided in the material and on the experience of a few brief visits of classes, the Committee had the impression that various teaching methods are used in order to contribute to training holistic musicians and that the teaching forms are chosen for a specific module following a consideration of students expected learning outcomes. The integration of technology and projects into the learning experience seemed thoughtful, intense and rigorous to the Committee.

2.2-b. What role does research play within the curricula/ programmes?

The self-evaluation report suggests that the results of the research led by the various faculty members are introduced in the curriculum or used in the framework of teaching and learning strategies [self-evaluation report, p. 6]. The development of eLearning initiatives is mentioned [ibid.]. Faculty members indicated that they were guiding students towards performance-based research and assisting students to inform their performance through research [meeting on research / teaching and learning].

Several teaching staff members are active researchers (see section 4.1) and the Conservatory is encouraged to ensure that the results of this research are fed into the curriculum. In addition, the Committee would like to recommend to the Conservatory to define further or more rigorously what it considers as research and explore different ways to increasingly introduce students to research activities.

2.2-c. How are the students offered opportunities to present their work?

The Conservatory considers performances as essential in its students’ education [Prospectus 2010, p. 11]. Students benefit consequently from many performance opportunities, ranging from weekly recitals and concerts, such as the “Monday noon recitals”, to chamber music concerts series and large ensemble concerts, as well as outreach activities in the local community [self-evaluation report, p. 6]. Specific information regarding performance opportunities per department is given in the Conservatory Prospectus: for example, all wind, brass and percussion players perform regularly with at least one of two large ensembles, the Conservatory Orchestra and the Conservatory New Music Ensemble [YSTCM Prospectus 2010, p. 27] and all third year composition students undertake an orchestral composition, which is read by the Conservatory Orchestra [YSTCM Prospectus 2010, p. 35]. Students confirmed the abundance and diversity of performance opportunities and their accessibility to all students [meeting with students].

The Committee was pleased to attend a Monday noon recital. Based on the various concert information brochures and on the conversation with students and former students, the Committee would like to commend the exceptional opportunities students are offered to present their work, which certainly train them to perform in professional conditions.

2.2-d. Are there formal arrangements for students to receive academic, career and personal guidance?

Detailed information is given in the self-evaluation report on the three points of contact providing students with such guidance:

- The Admissions and Student Affairs Office assists newly-entering students with matters related to student life, accommodation and student welfare. It organises the freshmen orientation programme including meetings with the faculty;
- The Academic Affairs Office provides academic counselling for students and assists them with their degree and enrolment requirements;
- The Professional Development Office provides students with professional and career advice, e.g. by conducting interviews with all 4th-year students [self-evaluation report, p. 8].

In addition, faculty members are formally designated as Tutors [self-evaluation report, p. 8]. When asked about the strength of the Conservatory, students mentioned the high degree of accessibility of faculty members as well as the careful attention given to each student [meeting with students].

The Committee was able to notice during the visit the high amount of personal attention and care each student is given. The small size of the Conservatory certainly enables the institution to closely follow its students and the Committee encourages the conservatory to perpetuate this trend.

2.3 International perspectives

2.3-a. Does the institution have an international strategy? 2.3-c. Is the institution participating in international partnerships?

The Conservatory's vision ("To be Asia's international conservatory") is rather explicit regarding the international ambitions of the Conservatory. Various elements make the Conservatory 'international by nature' since its foundation: as mentioned in section 1, it was established through an agreement between NUS and Peabody, which was the starting point of a close partnership with Peabody in areas such as curriculum development, student recruitment and opportunities and faculty staff and development [Annex 1b – Review and Proposal for a new agreement (2007), pp. 4-5]. The agreement was planning the recruitment of "gifted students from around the world" [ibid, p. 3], which resulted in a high proportion of international students currently enrolled at the Conservatory (80%) [self-evaluation report, pp. 8-9]. The high proportion of international faculty is also mentioned as a fundamental aspect in the identity of the Conservatory [ibid].

Strategic discussions regarding a "more mature global awareness" have taken place within the Conservatory and in relation to its environment (multi-cultural Singaporean context, NUS policy of promoting student international exchange and project, etc) leading to the production of the paper "Towards a Strategy for International Partnerships for the Conservatory (March 2009)" [ibid.]. The paper analyzes the opportunities and challenges related to the establishment of formal partnerships (aiming at developing student and staff exchange), and specifically identifies potential partner

institutions in Australia, Asia, Europe and North America, some of them being already affiliated with NUS through university-level connections [Annex 6 – “Towards a Strategy...”]. Thus, the Conservatory is hoping to formalize two partnerships with the Guildhall School of Music & Drama in London and the Lausanne Conservatoire, Switzerland.

In addition to partnerships established with professional organisations in the neighbouring countries (see 7.2), relationships with associations bringing together higher music education institutions in Europe, the US and Australia (AEC, NASM and NACTMUS) have been developed and the Conservatory has contributed to the development of SEADOM (the South East Asian Directors of Music) as a forum for the regional exchange of ideas and awareness [self-evaluation report, pp. 8-9].

The international character is obviously omnipresent in the Conservatory’s development. The Committee welcomes the Conservatory’s strategy to develop partnerships in Australia, Asia, Europe and North America aiming at the exchange of students and staff, as such exchanges could also represent a way to increase the recruitment numbers of students from these various parts of the world. The Committee was impressed by the clear vision the Conservatory staff members have regarding where the Conservatory stands and which partnerships are needed for its further international development. The strategic paper, the new partnerships currently in development and the efforts of the Director to establish and maintain contact with networks of institutions in the world give clear evidence of the Conservatory’s pro-activity on the international scene.

2.3-b. To what extent is the international strategy reflected in the curricula/ programmes offered?

Several elements in the programme reflect the importance of the international dimension:

- High proportion of international students and staff members (as mentioned above);
- Flexibility of the curriculum to cope with a range of ambitions and linguistic capacities [self-evaluation report pp. 8-9]; in addition, an intensive English course programme is offered to new students before the course starts [meeting with the faculty].
- Space in the curriculum to develop students’ awareness of the musical cultures present in South-East Asia [ibid.];
- Numerous visits of international artists performing masterclasses or recitals in the Conservatory (141 international visitors from 27 different countries in 2009-10) [ibid.];
- Student and staff exchange, as well as combined performance projects organised together with Peabody Institute: so far 6 students and 2 faculty members have been involved in exchange on an annual basis.
- Encouragement and financial support for faculty and students to be involved in short-term international projects including seminars, festivals, competitions and masterclasses (in 2009, 9 faculty members received assistance to attend 10 international events, while 56 students were funded to take part in 70 projects) [ibid.]; students confirmed the strong financial support offered to travel abroad [meeting with students].

The international dimension is enshrined in the programme and the Committee was impressed by the financial support available for students to develop international experience. The Conservatory is encouraged to undertake a regular systematic review of international standards as it assesses its curriculum to assure its graduates will maintain a competitive edge in seeking higher degree studies and job opportunities. The Committee was surprised to hear that graduating international students were required by the Government to work for three years in Singapore (in order to compensate for

the tuition fees they had been offered). Even if this appears not to be applied rigorously to music at the moment, the Committee would encourage the Conservatory to protect itself against such a requirement being enforced.

2.4 Learning assessment

2.4-a. What are the main methods for assessment and how do these methods support teaching and learning?

The self-evaluation report [pp. 10-11] gives a comprehensive overview of the assessment methods used in the Conservatory programmes, including:

- Performance, in particular in the major study areas (orchestral instruments, composition, piano), in the form of recitals, solo and ensemble performances as well as on a continuous basis by their teacher; students are also required to perform their composition assignments in groups;
- Written assignments such as programme notes, essays, reflections on their experiences;
- Oral assignments such as performance/lecture presentations;
- Various assignments in Music Theory and Music History and Humanities such as aural training examinations, theory exercises, harmony and counterpoint exercises, composition exercises, repertoire examinations, critical thinking exercises;
- Projects/ Participation in events.

The module description includes information on the type of assessment associated to each module and gives a percentage breakdown for each continuous assessment between the following components: Tutorial/seminars; Laboratory; Test; Others (such as projects) [annex 5 – B(Mus) Module Descriptions].

Based on the written documentation, the Committee is able to confirm that several assessment methods are used to evaluate student level. The precise definition of assignments per module as well as the development of assessment criteria based on skills and competencies students should achieve (see section 2.4-b) indicate that assessment is designed to support teaching and learning. The Conservatory may wish to consider mapping all assessment elements against the learning outcomes of the programme (or the AEC Learning Outcomes): this exercise could help the Conservatory ensure that all learning outcomes are assessed and that any potential over-assessment is avoided. In addition, the possibility of combining assessment elements could be explored.

2.4-b. What kind of grading system is being used in examinations and assessments?

The Conservatory uses the following grading system: A, Excellent / Level Public Performance; B, Very good / Serious Student Performance; C, Satisfactory/ Acceptable Student Performance; D, Poor/ Marginal Pass and E, Unsatisfactory. The grading system is supported by detailed assessment criteria sometimes distinguishing between A+ from A and A- [Annex 8 – Criteria for Assessment], which are made available to students [extra meeting with the Director].

The Committee commends the use of assessment criteria based on students' achievements and would like to encourage the Conservatory to continue using such tools.

3. Student qualifications

3.1 Entrance qualifications

3.1. In what ways do the entrance requirements assess the artistic, technical, academic and mental capacities of the applicants to accomplish the various aspects of the study programmes within the expected timeframe?

In addition to formal academic requirements (such as a High School Certificate) and a mental and health check-up, candidates are interviewed and auditioned (except those applying for the composition major who are only interviewed) [self-evaluation report, pp. 12-13]. Auditions last 20-30 minutes and the performances are assessed by Conservatory staff members on the basis of the assessment criteria used for the undergraduate major performance; they also include an assignment to assess the candidates' sight-reading skills [ibid]. Interviews aim at assessing the candidates' suitability for the programme [ibid]. The faculty indicated a dramatic increase of the quality of applicants in the last years [meeting with the Faculty].

The Conservatory selects the best students but also takes into account in the admission decision the candidates' potential to grow as well as the degree of cultural diversity they will be able to bring in the student body [extra session with the Director]. Regional auditions are conducted in several countries outside Singapore to increase international recruitment: New Zealand (Auckland), Australia (Melbourne, Sydney), China (Beijing, Shanghai, Sichuan, Wuhan, Guangzhou), Thailand, Hong Kong, Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur), Vietnam (Hanoi) and Taiwan (Taipei) [YSTCM website – How to apply]. In order to increase the number of Singaporean students, the Conservatory has established the Young Artist Programme for outstanding teenage students "expected to be enrolled in Singapore schools" who do not fulfil the academic requirements [YSTCM Prospectus 2010, p. 47].

The Committee found the entrance qualifications thoroughly described and in line with requirements in place in other higher music educations in the world, enabling the Conservatory to check the applicants' artistic, technical, academic and mental capacities.

3.2 Employability

3.2-a. Is there a policy for data collection on alumni?

As the Conservatory relies on its graduates to enhance the reputation of the Conservatory through their activities, it is "committed to maintaining a proactive position" in collecting data on alumni [self-evaluation report, pp. 13-14]. Thus, an alumni database has been developed and is regularly updated, which includes information such as contact details as well as current occupation and/or area of advanced study; it currently contains 93 names, as the first students graduated in 2007 [ibid]. In addition, University questionnaires are also sent to all graduates [ibid.]. However, alumni are not at this stage involved in quality assurance and enhancement systems [self-evaluation report, p. 26]. The former students mentioned their involvement in the Conservatory through recitals they are invited to give as well as their willingness to mentor current students interested in their experience and to contribute to the Conservatory's promotion; they also highlighted their ability to use the Conservatory's concert facilities at a preferential rate [meeting with former students]. Other ways in which the Conservatory manages to preserve contact with the graduates include the privileged

relationship with their former major teacher, the organisation of alumni activities and the production of newsletters and publications for alumni [self-evaluation report, pp. 13-14].

The Committee supports the tools created by the Conservatory and the initiatives it has undertaken to maintain the contact with alumni already in its first years of graduate production/existence. The Committee would like to encourage the Conservatory to continue with its efforts in this field; the consultation of the AEC Handbook on alumni policy¹ might be helpful in that regard. In addition, the Committee would like to recommend that alumni are directly involved in curriculum developments, for example through feedback questionnaires on the education received in the Conservatory or through regular meetings.

3.2-b. Are graduates successful in finding work/building a career in today's highly competitive international music life?

Information on the three cohorts of students who have graduated so far shows that several graduates were able to join prestigious institutions in the rest of the world to continue their studies, and to obtain positions in regional and national professional orchestras in Singapore, China, Malaysia, New Zealand and the United States [self-evaluation report, p. 14].

In order to assist future graduates with building a career, the Conservatory offers modules in the field of "Professional Skills and Awareness", which were adapted during the curriculum review in 2008 to reflect the current professional music environment [self-evaluation report, p. 18]. A compulsory "Introduction to Professional Development" introduced first year students to basic understanding and concepts related to the music industry, and an elective "Business for Musicians" module provides third year students with knowledge of the music profession and how to prepare themselves for entry into the professional world [YSTCM Student Handbook 2009/2010, pp. 16, 53 and 56]. In the "Introduction to Professional Development" module, students are required to e.g. produce a portfolio, develop tools and improvisational skills to perform and conduct interactive music activities and take on a leadership role for organising and presenting a final project [Annex 8 – Criteria for Assessment – Professional Development].

The Ensembles and Professional Development Office is involved with conducting formal interviews with all fourth-year students to assist them with their plans after graduation and provide them with professional and career advice and coaching [self-evaluation report p8]. Some students interested in cultural management can also apply for the position of student assistant within the various Conservatory offices, such as the Concerts and Events Office [Meeting with Administrative and Support staff]. Finally, students interested in teaching have the opportunity to follow the "Introduction to Pedagogy", to be introduced to various approaches to teaching music to young children [YSTCM Student Handbook 2009/2010, p. 57].

Representatives of the profession indicated that the Conservatory's students were very well prepared for orchestra auditions, had strong foundations in technique and for some of them an impressive instrumental level [Meeting with the Profession]. However, professional organisations indicated some possible changes in the education of students at the Conservatory which would in their view help students to better fulfil professional expectations:

¹ The AEC Handbook *Today's Student: Tomorrow's Alumnus – Cultivating Good Alumni Relationships in Conservatoires* (2007) can be found online at <http://www.bologna-and-music.org/employability>.

- Students aiming at becoming orchestra musician could have more knowledge of orchestra music.
- The need for students to diversify their skills and play a broader repertoire was raised; the importance of developing abilities to e.g. improvise and play gigs was mentioned, as well as the need for students to work on their stage presence.
- Many students will enter the teaching profession and need to be trained and prepared in order to develop pedagogic skills and an educational vision, e.g. not only by attending lessons but by teaching themselves, for example in the framework of placements.
- Students could benefit from courses regarding the wider elements of performance, such as how to market themselves, write resumes, etc [ibid.].

Although the Committee did not have the opportunity to discuss in detail statistical information on the Conservatory's graduates, the available data indicates good results in terms of employment and further studies. The Committee recognises the efforts of the Conservatory to offer students an effective preparation for the professional life and would like to commend the work of the Ensembles and Professional Development Office, which provides individual support to students. However, while this preparation is commended by the profession in terms of the instrumental level, the Conservatory may wish to consider developing further some other aspects of students' preparation to the profession, such as administrative issues (taxes, employment contracts), self-marketing (CV, self-promotion) and teaching. The Conservatory is encouraged to look into the comments made by the professional organisations and, when relevant, to adapt its programmes accordingly. In addition, it seems to the Committee that the expertise present within and outside the Conservatory could be even further utilized in the Professional Development courses: staff members of the External Relations and Concerts and Events Offices and of professional organisations such as concert venues and festival organisers could be invited to share their experience with students.

3.3 Equal opportunities

3.3. To what extent are equal opportunities taken into consideration?

Since the establishment of the Conservatory, the gender ratio has been almost 50/50 [self-evaluation report, p. 14]. The meritocratic approach of the country and the University is mentioned in the self-evaluation report [p. 14].

Regarding the statistics on student numbers in terms of gender ratio and countries of origin as well as the clear assessment criteria and the education free of charge (see section 5.2), it seems that all students are given equal opportunities. However, the Conservatory may wish to develop a short policy statement with principles in terms of equal opportunities which would be implemented/used as background principles in for example staff and students recruitment procedures.

4. Teaching staff

4.1 Artistic and scholarly qualifications

4.1-a. Are members of teaching staff active as artists and/or scholars/researchers?

All full-time artist and academic faculty are required by NUS regulations to be active as artists and/or scholars/researchers and the part-time artist faculty all hold full-time positions in either the Singapore Symphony Orchestra or the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra [self-evaluation report, p. 15]. Most biographies indicate a regular involvement at international level, with the artist faculty invited for performances, masterclasses and festivals around the world and the academic faculty being invited to present their research at international conferences [YSTCM Website – Faculty]. Numerous faculty members are involved in books, articles and composition publications and in CDs recordings.

The Committee found the profiles of artist and academic faculty to be very strong and found clear evidence of their activity as artists and/or scholars/researchers at the international level.

4.1-b. Is there an institutional policy and practice to support and enhance the teaching staff's artistic and scholarly/research production?

The self-evaluation report mentions the Conservatory's "strong focus to constantly strive to improve the various performance and research outputs of its faculty" [p15]. In practice, the Conservatory's teaching staff benefits from funding and in-kind support from both the University and the Conservatory through its staff development budget:

- Full-time faculty are also provided up to 90 days of academic leave per year (as part of a 12-months contract) to pursue their individual research, creative, and/or performance projects [self-evaluation report, p. 16];
- Artist faculty can request the Conservatory's support for their performance projects including concerts, festivals, tours, and related activities [ibid., p. 15];
- Research grants can be obtained through the Conservatory's Research Committee for various research activities such as presentations at meetings of scholarly societies, publications of text-based research and original compositions, and CD recordings [ibid]. In addition, funding is reserved by the University for research activities of the Conservatory staff [self-evaluation, p. 16].

The University also encourages the artistic and scholarly activity of the Conservatory's teaching staff by announcing the various research opportunities and other relevant information on its website and by requiring the full-time faculty to maintain an on-line portfolio "ePortfolio" with their research outcomes and relevant activities, which is assessed annually [ibid.]. Finally, the realisation of international projects by the faculty is facilitated by the specific University calendar: as the University runs two short semesters in the summer, faculty can teach during the summer and go away on the first semester [Extra session with the Director].

The Committee was impressed by the support provided by the University and the Conservatory to enhance the teaching staff's artistic and scholarly/research production. The budget dedicated to supporting faculty projects is significant and the amount available for each staff member exemplary.

4.2 Qualifications as educators

4.2-a. Does the institution ensure that all members of the teaching staff have appropriate qualifications as educators?

Specific degrees in education are not a requirement in Singapore for full-time artist and academic faculty at tertiary-level institutions [self-evaluation report, p. 16]. When recruiting new teaching staff members, the Office of Human Resources at NUS focuses on professional and academic qualifications and the Conservatory essentially on professional qualifications [ibid]. However, some Conservatory staff members hold specific education degrees and full-time faculty undergoes both yearly peer reviews and formal appraisals from the Directorate and senior faculty.

The recruitment process for full-time faculty is rigorous and extensive. The Committee strongly supports the Conservatory's effort to address the candidates' educational experience and abilities during the process.

4.2-b. Are policies and strategies in place for continuing professional development of teaching staff?

Three schemes are in place to help the Conservatory's teaching staff to maintain and upgrade their qualifications as educators:

- Every new faculty member is offered a programme of induction training with information on their teaching and professional duties [self-evaluation report, p. 17].
- Faculty members are encouraged (and for those with less than the equivalent of three years full-time teaching experience required) to attend education programmes for faculty offered by the Centre for Development of Teaching and Learning (CDTL) of NUS and all costs associated with these courses are covered by the Conservatory's staff development budget [ibid]. The CDTL also offers education consultation and assistance to faculty, and encourages educational innovations and initiatives as well as reflection on the concepts of teaching and learning [Website CDTL – Functions].
- “The Directorate and senior faculty serve a mentoring role for the faculty, particularly during the peer review, performance appraisal, and promotion and tenure application processes” [self-evaluation report, p. 17].

Although the Committee did not require detailed information on the actual amount of teaching staff members applying for CDTL courses, the Committee found in the self-evaluation clear evidence of the University policy and of the Conservatory practice to provide teaching staff with continuing professional development opportunities regarding their qualifications as educators.

4.3 Size and composition of the teaching staff body

4.3-a. Is the number of teaching staff adequate to cover the teaching volume and curriculum within a frame of acceptable quality?

The Conservatory has 29 full-time faculty and 23 part-time faculty, teaching a total of 204 students (195 undergraduate and 9 graduate diploma students) and the teacher-to-student ratio ranges from 1:1 in studio class settings to 1:81 in the lecture setting [self-evaluation report, p. 16]. Faculty members underlined the value of part-time staff contribution to the musical development in the conservatory and the fact that no difference was felt between part-time and full-time staff or between faculty members of various statuses [Meeting with faculty].

The number of teaching staff seems adequate to cover both teaching volume and curricula and the Committee was impressed by the feeling shared by the faculty that they form a team: the committee did not notice any separation based e.g. on their rank but only a uniformity of dedication to the education of students. Regarding the composition of the teaching staff, the Committee would like to draw the attention of the Conservatory representatives to the risk that, as many staff members started to work at the Conservatory at approximately the same time, they might also leave the institution at the same time. The Conservatory may wish to consider studying this matter.

4.3-b. Does the composition of the teaching staff allow flexible adaptation to new professional requirements?

Since the Conservatory started to operate in 2003, the number of teaching staff members has doubled (from 23 to 52), which resulted in an expansion of the range of expertise gathered within the Conservatory [self-evaluation report, pp. 17-18]. The Conservatory hired for example a Music Director to lead the student orchestra, and a string quartet as resident quartet to teach ensemble classes [ibid]. The teaching staff in its current disposition is therefore supposed to be “responsive to the new developments and professional requirements in the industry” [ibid]. It is assisted in this purpose by the faculty members specialist in information technology. The Conservatory also has the possibility to hire new faculty members, for example to head the new Vocal Studies programme, due to begin in 2010/2011.

It seems to the Committee that the composition of the teaching staff allows flexible adaptation to the new professional requirements within the current curriculum. The introduction of new programs will require a review of teaching staff size/scope.

5. Facilities, resources and support

5.1 Facilities

5.1-a. Are the building facilities (teaching and practice studios, classrooms, rehearsal places, concert venues, etc.) adequate to support curricula/programmes requirements?

The Conservatory moved in 2006 into a “17,400 square meter state-of-the-art building”, which includes several performance and rehearsal spaces (“a world-class 600 seat concert hall, built specifically for classical music performances, 6 ensemble rooms and an orchestral rehearsal hall”); a high number of rehearsal spaces (“more than 80 sound-proof and temperature controlled studios and practice spaces); several teaching spaces (“five music computer labs, smart classrooms, a world-music workshop”) and a music library [self-evaluation report, pp. 18-19].

The Committee was impressed by the exceptional building facilities, which are without any doubt adequate to support curricula/programmes requirements.

5.1-b. Are the instruments (pianos, organs, percussion, etc.) of a number and standard adequate to support curricula/programmes requirements?

Information is available in the self-evaluation report on the piano inventory (thirty-three Steinways and forty-nine Yamahas) and on a collection of around 60 rare stringed instruments (the Rin collection) lent to the Conservatory students [self-evaluation report, p. 19]. In addition, the Conservatory owns musical instruments including orchestral instruments available in the practice rooms as well as for students’ loan [YSTCM Prospectus 2010, p. 13].

The Committee was impressed by the quality of the instrument inventory available to students (and particularly the Rin collection), which is an exceptional strength of the Conservatory.

5.1-c. Are the computing and other technological facilities adequate to support curricula/programmes requirements?

The computing and technological facilities are exceptional strengths of the Conservatory: in line with the description of facilities made in the self-evaluation report [p. 19], the Committee was able to visit teaching spaces equipped with Macintosh computers, MIDI keyboards and software as well as rooms equipped with video projectors, iMac computers, DVD players, visualisers, surround sound systems and video conferencing. Internet access is easy and several computers are available for students. In addition, the Conservatory staff and students can make use of the recording studio (connected to 3 concert venues in the building). Students expressed their great satisfaction regarding the technological equipment [Meeting with students].

5.1-d. Is the library, its associated equipment (listening facilities, etc.) and its services adequate to support curricula/programmes requirements?

The collection of the music library is listed in the catalogue of the University library available online to all NUS students [self-evaluation report, p. 19]. The music library contains a collection of approximately 6,300 books, 15,000 scores, 7,600 CD/DVDs and 170 journals and provides students with an online access (from any location) to electronic journals, encyclopaedias and indexes/abstracts [ibid.]; scores are also accessible online [Meeting with Senior Administrative Staff]. The Conservatory is strategically building up the collection, for example with the acquisition

of works from local composers, as well as according to teaching needs expressed by the faculty members [ibid.]. The library provides student with an additional study space including listening and viewing stations for CDs/DVDs. The use of the library by students is closely studied and initiatives are undertaken to promote it [ibid.].

Following a short visit to the music library, the Committee felt that the library and its associated equipment and services are adequate to support curricula/programmes requirements. However, if the Conservatory plans to develop postgraduate courses in the future, the library provision would need to be expanded accordingly.

5.2 Financial resources

5.2-a. What are the institution's financial resources and are they adequate to support curricula/programmes requirements?

Funding for the operating budget is allocated to the Conservatory through the University by the Ministry of Education, and is based on the number of students enrolled [self-evaluation report, p. 20]. The Ministry's annual support amounts to just under \$10 million Singapore dollars (SNG) for the year 2009/2010 [ibid]. In addition, the Conservatory is able to offer full scholarship (including fees and living support) to all admitted students and to undertake special performances and projects thanks to an endowment of approximately \$100 million SNG composed of a \$50 million dollar gift from the Dr. Yong Loo Lin Yong family, the same amount offered by the Singapore government, as well as corporate donations.

Although the Committee did not have time to look in detail into the Conservatory's financial situation, it felt that compared to several music education institutions in the world currently facing financial cuts, the Conservatory is allocated an amount which enables a substantial investment in students and staff professional development (e.g. through international activities) and seems sufficient to support the current programmes requirements. The fact that full scholarship is offered to students is certainly an important asset in students' recruitment.

5.2-b. Is there long-term financial planning?

The Conservatory's budget is planned by the Government for five years independently from the University's planning process [meeting with the management team]. In addition, plans to continue offering full scholarships to all admitted students will be adequately supported through the University's annual spending rule on the Conservatory's Endowment Fund [self-evaluation report, p. 20]. The objective of the Conservatory is to reach a steady state after the first years of rapid transformation [Annex 5 – Settling into Steady State, p. 1]. This includes meeting the Ministry's targets for 2012 in terms of student numbers [ibid., p. 2] and therefore ensuring a steady income from the Ministry (based on the number of students) [meeting with the management].

The Committee did not study the long-term financial situation of the Conservatory. As mentioned in section 1, the governance structure could be clarified in terms of budget allocation in order to prevent any potential loss of financial autonomy of the Conservatory in the future.

5.3 Support staff

5.3-a. Is the technical and administrative staff adequate to support the teaching, learning and artistic activities?

Under the authority of the Director and Deputy Director, senior administrative staff members assisted by administrative and support staff members operate in the following fields/offices:

- Academic Affairs, i.e. the organisation of timetables and examinations and the coordination of activities related to changes in the curriculum;
- Finance and Resources , i.e. budget and funding issues, as well as building and facilities;
- Admissions and Student Affairs, i.e. daily student affairs, counselling (also regarding financial help for students), admission procedures;
- Concerts and events, i.e. management of the Conservatory events (300 every year), of the visiting artists, a well as production and publicity of the events and external hire of concert venues;
- Director's Office, bringing together the managers responsible for ensembles and professional development, external relations (including relations with the media and alumni) as well as strategic planning and research (i.e. planning the concert calendar and supporting research activities)[Meeting with Administrative and Support Staff and Annex 12 - Organisational Chart Administrative Staff].

Administrative staff members expressed themselves in positive terms about their work and indicated a high degree of discussion and cooperation within the administrative offices, described as a team, as well as with the faculty. The participation of administrative staff members in the different committees, such as the Curriculum Committee and the Performance Committee, enhances this cooperation [Meeting with Administrative and Support Staff].

The administrative and support staff members are dedicated, understand and embrace the mission of the Conservatory, work together and communicate in a successful and quite collaborative manner, including with the faculty.

5.3-b. Are policies and strategies in place for continuing professional development of technical and administrative staff?

The Conservatory benefits in this matter from University programmes for its administrative and support staff, both on the campus and externally: training sponsorships are granted for staff to attend external programmes and the University has established an Administrative Staff Exchange Programme with overseas universities [self-evaluation report, p. 21]. Most of the Administrative Staff of the Conservatory met by the Committee had been on exchange at the Peabody Institute or at other institutions and confirmed the University support [Meeting with Administrative and Support Staff].

The Committee welcomes the support of the University regarding the professional development of the Conservatory's administrative and support staff. In order to enable its staff members to meet colleagues from all over the world and exchange ideas and good practices, the Conservatory may wish to consider the participation of its staff to meetings of international associations, such as the International Association of Music Libraries (IAML).

6. Organisation and decision-making processes and internal quality assurance system

6.1 Organisation and decision-making processes

6.1-a. How are the curricula/programmes and the teaching and learning processes supported by:

- *the organisational structure of the institution?*
- *decision-making on curricular affairs?*
- *decision-making on strategic affairs?*

As mentioned in section 1.1, the Conservatory has been established as an “autonomous Faculty within NUS” with a self-governing board appointed by the Government and responsible for “provid[ing] strategic direction and oversight on the development and management of the Conservatory in furtherance of its objectives in education, scholarship and music performance”. The current organisational structure of the Conservatory is as follows:

- The Director line-manages the artistic staff as well as the Director’s office (including Ensemble and Professional Development officers, External Relations officers, Strategic Planning and Research officer), the Finance and Resources Office, the Admissions and Student Affairs Office, and the Concerts and Events Office [Annex 12 - Organisational Chart].
- The Deputy Director line-manages the academic affairs officers as well as the academic faculty [Annex 12 - Organisational Chart].
- Senior faculty members head the various artistic departments [self-evaluation report, p. 22].
- Faculty meetings are organised involving either all full- and part-time faculty (artist and academic) or only full-time artist faculty [ibid.].
- A structure of committees and sub-committees has been established to manage the following issues (in addition to ad hoc committee targeting specific temporary issues): performance, curriculum, research, faculty promotion and tenure as well as resource [ibid.]. Faculty members indicated that some staff members prefer not to be involved in Committees and therefore have a reduced possibility to influence decision-making; but, part-time faculty have the same opportunity than full-time staff to be involved in Committees [Meeting with the faculty]. Faculty members also indicated that the decisions were made at the level of the Committees.

Regarding the curriculum and strategic affairs:

- The Governing Board is responsible for “considering major strategic issues of curriculum planning” [self-evaluation report, p. 23].
- At the University level, strategic decisions are made during the Senate Meetings and Deans’ Meetings, which are attended by the Conservatory Director [ibid.] and all the academic programmes go through the Provost office [Meeting with members of the Governing and NUS Boards]. To ensure a proper communication between the University, the Governing Board and the Conservatory, both the University’s Provost and the Conservatory Director are ex-officio members of the Governing Board [ibid.].
- At the Conservatory level, the Conservatory’s Curriculum Committee has nine members and addresses student issues for each cohort groups, such as attendance to classes and plagiarism, and deals with feedback on events organized within the Conservatory, schedule of classes and assessments, proposals for new modules and curriculum changes, student handbook, student representation in the Conservatory, etc. [Annex 13d – Curriculum Committee

Minutes]. The Curriculum Committee reports to the University via its chairman who serves on the University Committee on Educational Policy (UCEP) and on the Board of Undergraduate Studies (BUS) [self-evaluation report, p. 23].

The decision-making processes seem to work well and the structure in committees enables a proper involvement of the Conservatory's staff members in these processes and a close follow-up of students. The distribution of responsibilities between the Governing Board and the University in terms of decision-making regarding the Conservatory issues is not clear to the Committee and all stakeholders might benefit from a written document outlining this distribution.

6.1-b. Is there a long-term strategy for the improvement of the organisational decision-making structures?

The organisational decision-making structures are considered as working well, with a “cross-referencing within the three upper levels - the NUS, the Conservatory’s Governing Board, and the Singapore Ministry of Education (MOE) – provid[ing] the relevant checks and cross checks with regard to policy compliance, transparency, and accountability” [self-evaluation report, p. 24]. However, the Conservatory is planning to develop strategies in the long-term to further organise the process and make it more efficient.

The Committee would like to encourage the Conservatory to develop such strategies.

6.1-c. Is there a risk management strategy?

There is a University Crisis Management Policy aiming at “assist[ing] the University community in coping with the anticipated needs generated by a crisis, so as to deliver a quick and effective response to the situation, to protect lives, property and the reputation of the University” [self-evaluation report, p. 24]. The Conservatory can benefit from the support of several University organisations such as the Office of Legal Affairs and the Occupational Safety and Health Management (OSHE) to implement the University policy and was required to assign an Incident Commander responsible for overseeing and coordinating response operations in case of an incident [ibid].

The Committee found in the self-evaluation report evidence that a risk management strategy is in place at University level and that the University support in this matter benefits the Conservatory.

6.1-d. How is information being published and made transparent for students and staff?

Different channels are used to communicate information about decision-making processes to students and staff:

- Activities such as student orientation and faculty retreats are regularly organised [self-evaluation report, p. 25].
- A student handbook is published yearly with information on matters such as the administration and faculty, the facilities and the list of courses [YSTCM Student Handbook 2009/2010]. The faculty also indicated that a faculty handbook was being developed [Meeting with the faculty].
- Regular meetings of the Committees mentioned above are held and students meet the Director twice in the semester [meeting with students].

- The website is continuously updated and students and staff are informed through regular email updates [self-evaluation report, p. 25].

The Committee welcomes the use of a wide range of communication channels to inform and keep students and staff updated on the Conservatory's matters. It is not clear to the Committee how all faculty members are informed following the decisions taken by each Committee during their regular meetings but the system in place seems to work well. Based on the conversations held, the Committee had the impression that the exact role of the Governing Board was not known to all faculty members; the Committee could also not find in the Conservatory publications straightforward information on the organizational structure of the Conservatory, on the functions of the Governing and NUS Boards and on the way they interact, nor on the decision-making processes with e.g. the Committee structure. The Conservatory may wish to consider looking into the possibilities to communicate about these issues on the website and in its publications.

6.2 Internal quality assurance system

6.2-a. What reference is made to national and local legislative requirements with regards to quality assurance (where appropriate)?

The Conservatory implements the quality assurance policy formulated and monitored by the University [self-evaluation report, p. 25]. This policy, called "educational quality assurance" is focused on three aspects: programme quality, teaching quality and outcome monitoring and relies respectively on:

- committees overseeing the curriculum development process, including the Board of Undergraduate Studies (BUS), the University Committee on Educational Policy (UCEP), and the Senate,
- student feedback on teaching and a review by a visiting committee,
- several surveys about employment and collection of feedback from employers and alumni, as well as awards granted to students and staff [NUS website – Office of the Provost].

Indicators such as graduate activities, number of staff going through tenure, drop-out rates and entrance examinations success rate are used in the process and also looked at by panels of external evaluators appointed every five years to review the University's departments [Feedback meeting].

6.2-b. What quality assurance and enhancement systems are in place for the continuous improvement of curricula/programmes and the learning environment? 6.2-c. How are staff, students and former students involved in these quality assurance and enhancement systems?

In line with the University policy mentioned above and under the oversight of the University, the quality assurance system of the Conservatory focuses on the following aspects:

- 1) Programme quality: The Conservatory's Curriculum Committee meets on a bi-weekly basis to review the curriculum, propose new modules and amendments to existing modules, and discuss specific issues with relation to programme content and delivery [self-evaluation report, p. 25]. Teaching staff members are involved in the process through the involvement of some of them in the Curriculum Committee, through regular staff meetings as well as through the annual retreat of the Conservatory faculty [ibid., p. 26].
- 2) Teaching quality: Two student feedback sessions chaired by the Director are conducted every semester and any significant changes to the curriculum are directly discussed with students during ad hoc meetings [self-evaluation report, p. 26]. Students shared their feeling

that the Conservatory is very interested to hear them and mentioned other opportunities they have to give feedback such as online questionnaires provided by NUS to assess teaching at the Conservatory as well as the future attendance of student representative(s) at selected staff and curriculum committee meetings (ongoing process to establish a formal body) [Meeting with students]. Faculty members receive a copy of the questionnaires, which form part of their annual appraisal [Extra session with the Director]. Furthermore, yearly peer reviews are undertaken for full-time staff [self-evaluation report, p. 16], which represent an additional way to check the quality of teaching and encourage staff members to assist each other in improving their teaching.

- 3) Regarding outcomes monitoring, alumni are not involved at the moment in the quality assurance and enhancement process and although contacts have been established with professional organizations, their feedback is not systematically collected (see section 7.2). The promotion and tenure process can however be considered as an element of the outcomes monitoring process.

The Committee found evidence that many actions in the field of quality assurance (QA) are being undertaken and of the Conservatory's efforts to involve staff and students in the process. However, the system in place seems focused on curriculum and teaching while the Committee feels that many other issues are involved in quality such as organisation, management, facilities, international perspectives etc. These issues might currently be looked at by the various Conservatory Committees; however, in order to give more visibility to quality assurance issues and ensure that all possible aspects of quality are taken into account and looked at in a consistent way, the Committee would like to recommend to the Conservatory the establishment of a QA Committee meeting regularly to oversee all QA activities. As mentioned in section 3.2, the Committee would like to stress the importance and usefulness of collecting and analysing graduates' feedback on the education they received at the Conservatory.

6.2-d. To what extent are these systems:

- *used to improve the educational programmes?*
- *continuously analysed and reviewed?*

As mentioned above, student feedback is communicated directly to the faculty and monitored by the Directorate [self-evaluation report, p. 26]. All Committee minutes encompass a column mentioning the person or the office responsible to take action for each specific point and report on the outcomes of the action decided during the previous meeting.

Based on the discussion and the available material, the Committee had the impression that the feedback collected and the decisions made within the Conservatory Committees are used to improve the educational programmes. The Committee supports the Conservatory's initiative to formally involve students in the QA process. The Committee did not look in detail into existing procedures to review the quality assurance system itself and the establishment of a QA Committee (as suggested above) could be a possible way to ensure that the QA system itself is regularly reviewed.

7. Public interaction

7.1 Influence on cultural life

7.1. Is the institution involved in the development of cultural and musical activities internationally, nationally and regionally?

The Conservatory has developed a range of activities at the national level:

- Approximately 300 public concerts, masterclasses and events per year are organised, with annual attendance figures of approximately 24,000 [self-evaluation report, p.28]. Students indicated that most events were open to the public and free, which makes the Conservatory open to the Community and attracts audience [Meeting with students].
- Several outreach activities have been developed in cooperation with various stakeholders, in particular with schools such as the School for the Arts and the NUS High School as well as with local communities and museums. Thus, Conservatory students are required every second semester to organise outreach activities with pupils in the schools [Meeting with the management of the institution].

At the international level, the Conservatory undertakes common events and concerts in cooperation with the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra and other orchestral organizations in Hong Kong, Taiwan and China and works on developing interactions with schools in Asia, in particular in China, South Korea and Taiwan but also in India [self-evaluation report, p. 28]; Board members commended the work of the Director to build cooperation at national and international level [Meeting with members of the NUS and Governing Boards]. The Conservatory also sponsors international projects, such as the Performer's Voice Symposium (hosted in October/November 2009) and a youth orchestra for the Youth Olympic Games in Singapore (to be hosted in August 2010).

The need to educate the audience in Singapore was mentioned as well as the need to teach Singaporean children to enjoy learning, playing and listening to music [Meeting with representatives of the profession]. Within the actual context, in which pupils seem to see the development of musical skills as a requirement to obtain a degree, the important role the Conservatory's students could have in sharing their art and in teaching music differently was highlighted [ibid].

Based on the various discussions and documentation, it was evident to the Committee that the Conservatory is highly involved in the development of cultural and musical activities internationally and nationally. The Committee would like to encourage the Conservatory to continue with these activities and forms of cooperation, which also help students acquiring experience in these matters and taking initiative. In addition, as there are many music schools with a high number of children studying music but a great lack of qualified music/instrumental teachers, the potential role of the Conservatory in the production of "audience-educators" and music/instrumental teachers could be given consideration.

7.2 Interaction with the profession

7.2-a. How does the institution communicate and interact with various sectors of the music profession in order to keep in touch with their needs?

The proactive attitude of the Conservatory in “nurturing and maintaining its connections to the professional music industry” is highlighted in the self-evaluation report and a list of the organizations with which the Conservatory has ongoing outreach programmes and professional partnerships is given [self-evaluation report, p. 29].

Regarding outreach programmes, relationships described as “evolving partnerships” exist with:

- Singapore National Youth Orchestra
- National Arts Council and Ministry of Education, i.e. for example with various schools and local people’s organizations / community centres
- Singapore Music Teachers’ Association
- Singapore Chinese Youth Orchestra
- Malaysian Philharmonic Youth Orchestra [ibid].

Regarding the professional partnerships, strong links exist with:

- The Singapore Chinese Orchestra and the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra: collaborative events are organized [self-evaluation report, p. 28].
- The Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO): there is an ongoing dialogue in the field of programming, as SSO’s guest artists are invited to perform and give masterclasses at the Conservatory [Meeting with representative of the profession]. In addition, as SSO considers the Conservatory as a source of free-lancers for the orchestra, both organisations are in contact to reflect on the education of orchestra musicians [ibid] and student placements have been established for the Conservatory’s students [self-evaluation report, p. 28]; the need for a more formal scheme providing students with the opportunity to be exposed to ensemble playing at a high level and take part in SSO’s performances was mentioned [Meeting with representative of the profession]. Finally, a natural connection between both organisations results from the fact that some full-time orchestra members teach at the Conservatory [ibid].
- The Arts Centre *Esplanade*: a constant communication exists between the Esplanade and the Conservatory and two concerts of four performed at the Esplanade involve the Conservatory, with the aim to provide a platform to students with assistance in marketing and backstage. The Esplanade also presents compositions of the Conservatory’s students [ibid].
- The arts management company *IMG Artists*: in the framework of the Singapore Sun Festival produced by *IMG Artists*, high level soloists and orchestra invited for the festival give masterclasses at the Conservatory. In addition, Conservatory students are given opportunities to perform [ibid].

The Committee supports the Conservatory’s view that the links with the profession are of outmost importance and would like to commend the Conservatory’s initiatives to ensure that strong relationships are in place with the relevant professional organisations. Such relationships increase the Conservatory’s visibility and its influence on cultural life but also contribute to training students at a professional standard. Although the focus of the Conservatory is on performance, the Committee would like to encourage the Conservatory to develop links with music schools in order

to provide students who have chosen electives in the pedagogical field with teaching placement opportunities.

7.2-b. Is there a long-term strategy for the development of the links with the profession?

The self-evaluation report mentions the Conservatory's work to "nurtur[e] and maintain" its connection with the profession [p. 29], but also its "ambitions for further development includ[ing] establishing stronger contact with Australasian organizations and with key Korean festivals, as well as developing further connections with organizations in mainland China" [self-evaluation report, p. 27]. Representatives of the Singapore Symphonic Orchestra indicated their willingness to look into stronger ties with the Conservatory [Meeting with representatives of the profession].

Although the importance of developing and maintaining links with the profession is recognized by the Conservatory, no specific strategy seems to be in place regarding the development of these links in the future. In order to ensure that the links with the profession are long-lasting and not subject to personal involvement or relationships between the representatives of the different organisations, the Conservatory may wish to consider formalising the various partnerships: bilateral agreements could be signed establishing for example the framework of the cooperation with the Conservatory. In addition, the Conservatory would greatly benefit from the establishment of a formal involvement of the professional organisations in the curriculum development process, involving structured feedback, as part of a comprehensive quality enhancement system.

7.3 Information to potential students and other stakeholders

7.3-a. Is the published information consistent with what the institution offers in terms of educational programmes?

Information to potential students and other stakeholders is published on the Conservatory's website as well as in the form of several hardcopy materials, e.g. a prospectus, calendar of concerts and events, a twice-annual newsletter, and the student handbook.

The Committee found both types of information sources well-designed, comprehensive and containing relevant and clear information on the Conservatory. The published information on the BMus corresponds to the Conservatory's offer. It is however not clear to the Committee if students (potential and current) have access to the detailed module description (in the format of annex 5 – Module Descriptions for Modules in BMus Programme). Some information appeared to be lacking on the website such as the modules taught by the Conservatory's teacher and their appointment date. In addition, the Committee would like to suggest that the page regarding "department studies" provides the visitor with a list of the departments rather than giving information on the strings department, and that the Conservatory's faculty is listed for each department.

7.3-b. What are the communication strategies for the publication of information?

The Conservatory's strategy is to "provid[e] the necessary information regarding curriculum, teaching and learning, programmes and events [...] and communicate[s] the necessary information for a variety of contexts" [self-evaluation report, p. 30]. Publications are produced in collaboration

between the relevant administration officers e.g. External relations and Concerts and Events Offices with the help of students active as photographers, and printed externally.

The Committee found that the published information was well-designed for specific target groups (potential students, potential audience, and potential partners) and would like to encourage the Conservatory to further develop its communication strategy towards each target group.

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8. Summary

This summary contains two sections; firstly a list of items which stand out as being particularly strong when evaluated against the AEC criteria, secondly an outline of some of the areas in which there seems to be potential for further development.

Strong points

- **Students.** Students are on a high level of talent and ability and are articulate and positive about their opportunity and experiences at the Conservatory.
- **Students' development and opportunities.** The Conservatory gives extensive support to students so that they can present the work to an audience. In addition, students expressed that they received mentoring and a high degree of individual attention from an accessible faculty. Students receive multiple experiences each year in solo, chamber, and large ensemble performances. Often, these include funding in support of international travel to festivals and other performance-related events.
- **Faculty.** The faculty is still influenced by a pioneering attitude and a will to cooperate and work as a team. The Committee found the profiles of artist and academic faculty very strong and found clear evidence of their activity as artists and/or scholars/researchers at the international level. In addition, the Committee was impressed by the support provided by the University and the Conservatory to enhance the teaching staff's artistic and scholarly/research production.
- **Administrative staff.** The Conservatory has a administrative staff that covers all relevant areas of support for the teaching, learning and performance activities that goes on in and outside the institution. They work well together as a team.
- **Support from the University and the Governing Board.** The Conservatory benefits from a high degree of support and understanding from NUS and the Governing Board, as well as from people and organisations outside the university campus.
- **Leadership.** The Conservatory enjoys a leadership that gives both students and teachers a combination of structure and freedom in an atmosphere that encourages entrepreneurship and collaboration.
- **Facilities and financial situation.** The Conservatory has an exceptionally good building and equipment situation and its financial situation appears to be sufficient for its present tasks.
- **Public interaction.** The Conservatory has taken important steps to partner with other cultural entities and professional organisations in the community.
- **International strategy.** The Conservatory has a clear vision of where the Conservatory stands and which partnerships are needed for its further international development. The strategic paper, the new partnerships currently in development and the efforts of the Director to establish and maintain contact with networks of institutions in the world give clear evidence of the Conservatory's pro-activity on the international scene.

Potential for development

- **Institutional identity.** The YTSCM presents itself as “Asia’s International Conservatory”. What does this mean and suggest, and why is it important to be Asia’s international conservatory? In talks with staff and students the Committee has been given different interpretations of this statement. In the written material there are also references to a local and regional identity, and a strong relationship to Singapore is emphasized. How can these different contexts for an institutional identity be reconciled? There is a need for a comprehensive

description that clarifies the issue of institutional identity, an issue of great importance both for the internal identity and the external perception of the institution.

- **Lines of authority and decision-making.** The Conservatory has important reporting relationships with several entities: the Ministry of Education, the Governing Board, and the National University of Singapore, of which it is declared a part. The founding Charter declares that "the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music is established as an autonomous school of the NUS." This statement can be difficult to understand, not only for external constituencies, but perhaps even for those engaged in the decision-making and budget-allocating process. It is also important to note that at present, the Conservatory enjoys a remarkably collaborative relationship with all of these. In fact, the individuals involved share a common understanding of the mission, purpose and needs of the Conservatory, and are supportive. This presents perhaps the ideal time in the history of the Conservatory for the institution to develop a document that would further clarify the lines of authority, reporting, governance, management, budget allocation, and policy, for the benefit of all concerned.
- **Curriculum expansion.** The Conservatory has developed a curriculum that addresses the core elements of undergraduate studies in performance, composition and recording arts degrees, while offering sufficient flexibility for elective courses in areas of particular interest. As the Conservatory considers additional breadth in its offerings, the demands of the field and the current resources on campus and in this community suggests conducting and pedagogical skills development as especially relevant in the community context, while world music may be a program that can attract students from other countries. As with any new directions, it is recommended that appropriate constituents assist in the decision-making process and in the development of courses, experiences, and outcomes assessment. It is to its benefit that the Conservatory has a well-defined plan for enrolment management based on physical, financial, and people resources.
- **Quality assurance.** There are several quality assurance mechanisms in place, especially related to curriculum development and teaching quality where the Curriculum Committee has a central role. Other aspects of quality assurance work is, however, not so easy to identify. One simple way to gain more oversight and perhaps transparency would be to put all the quality assurance factors into the hands of one committee, for instance the Senior Faculty Group. This will signal to the institution and the University that quality assurance is given high priority. In addition, the Conservatory is encouraged to involve both alumni and professional organisations in the quality assurance work.
- **Research.** The Committee would like to recommend to the Conservatory to further define what it considers as research and explore different ways to increasingly introduce students to research activities.
- **Assessment.** The Conservatory may wish to consider mapping all assessment elements against the learning outcomes of the programme (or the AEC Learning Outcomes).
- **Interaction with the profession.** In order to ensure that the links with the profession are long-lasting and not subject to personal involvement or relationships between the representatives of the different organisations, the Conservatory may wish to consider formalising the various partnerships: bilateral agreements could be signed establishing for example the framework of the cooperation with the Conservatory.