

Music Quality Enhancement

MUSIQUE

INTERNAL  
REGULATIONS

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## Glossary of terms

AEC	Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen
DEQAR	Database for External Quality Assurance Reports
EASPA	European Alliance for Subject-Specific and Professional Accreditation a Quality Assurance
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EMU	European Music Schools Union
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education.
ESG	European Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area
MusiQuE	Music Quality Enhancement, The Foundation for Quality Enhancement and Accreditation in Higher Music Education
Pearle*	Pearle* Live Performance Europe, the European Federation of Music and Live Performance Organizations

## Introduction

**MusiQuE - Music Quality Enhancement** is an external evaluation agency dedicated to the continuous improvement of the quality of higher music education across Europe and beyond and, through its accreditation, quality enhancement and advisory services, to assisting higher music education institutions in their own enhancement of quality.

MusiQuE has been created by the following three organisations, which have become MusiQuE's direct partner organisations:

- the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC)
- the European Music Schools Union (EMU)
- Pearle\* Live Performance Europe, the European Federation of Music and Live Performance Organizations

Through such a stakeholders' model, MusiQuE is able to involve in its governing body, as well as in its procedures, not only representatives of higher music education institutions but also stakeholders from the profession and the cultural sector, such as:

- music schools, which employ higher education graduates, but also train students at pre-college level (before they enter professional education), and reach out to society at large, from children to adults;
- national associations of orchestras, ensembles, theatres, festivals and other music organisations and venues.

These internal regulations describe on the one hand MusiQuE's structure, governing bodies and decision-making process and, on the other hand, its services, procedures and the internal and external quality culture mechanisms it has in place.

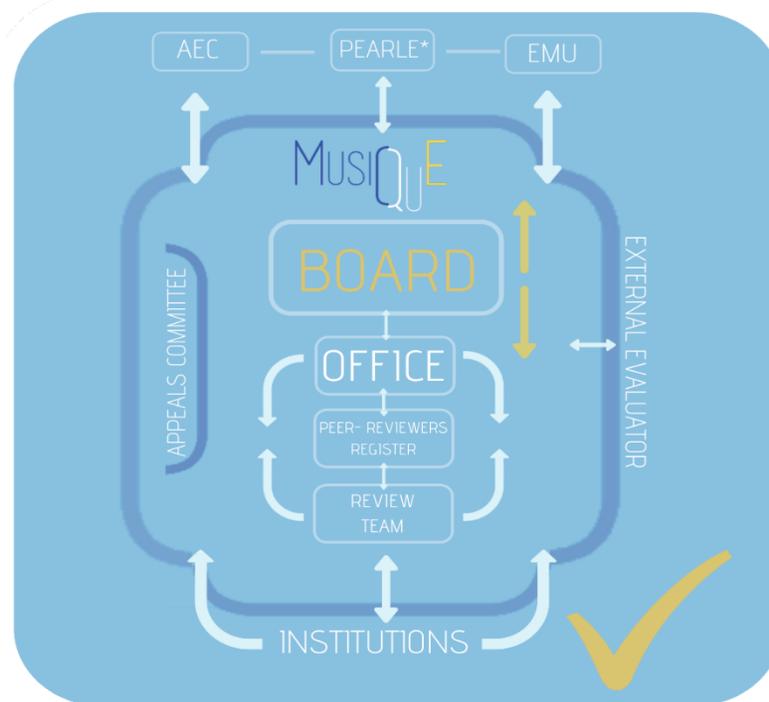
## 1 MusiQuE structure

MusiQuE is established as an independent foundation under Belgian law. Initially founded in The Netherlands in 2014, MusiQuE established itself formally in Belgium in 2019. Its current seat of operation is in Brussels, Belgium.

Its structure comprises four elements:

- The MusiQuE Board (consisting of a minimum of 5 members, including a student)
- The MusiQuE Office, which carries out the work determined by the Board
- A Peer Reviewers Register of experts who form the teams that carry out the reviews commissioned by the Board.
- An Appeals Committee

The following diagram summarises MusiQuE’s structure:



The MusiQuE Board, the MusiQuE Office and the Peer Reviewers Register are described in Sections 2, 3 and 4 respectively. The role and function of the Appeals Committee is briefly described in Section 5 below, and further detailed in [MusiQuE’s Complaints and Appeals Procedure](#).

## 2 The MusiQuE Board

The MusiQuE Board is responsible for all decision-making and for commissioning the actions related to the operations of MusiQuE. It is therefore the key entity in MusiQuE's structure and its composition, roles and responsibilities have a critical bearing on the effective and appropriate functioning of MusiQuE.

### 2.1 Composition

The MusiQuE Board is composed of a statutory minimum of five members, including a student member. The Board may decide to increase its size, if deemed necessary for MusiQuE's activity or when a new organisation becomes partner of MusiQuE.

The MusiQuE Board decides on its own composition on the basis of proposals by its partner organisations. The mandate of Board members is of 3 years with the possibility of renewal for another 3 years, except for the student member whose term cannot be renewed.

The proportion of Board members representing higher music education institutions shall be in an absolute majority. Therefore, with the Board's minimum composition of five members, three will have been appointed from the higher music education sector (based on proposals by AEC) - including the student, and two representing the profession and other levels of education (based on a proposal by EMU and a proposal by Pearle\*). A balance in terms of geographical origin, musical background and in terms of gender will be sought wherever possible.

Regardless of the organisation that nominated them, the Board members' responsibility is dedicated to MusiQuE; they serve on the Board in their individual capacity and not representing any organisation or institution. Furthermore, a Code of Conduct has been developed for MusiQuE Board members which is signed by each Board member upon nomination, together with a declaration of independence which states that, once appointed, MusiQuE Board members serve MusiQuE and not the organisation that nominated them.

The Board may name further organisations able to nominate one Board member each, where this is felt to add to the inclusiveness and range of expertise represented across the Board. The majority of members representing the sector of higher music education should be maintained, possibly by increasing the size of the Board.

#### 2.1.1 Criteria for Board membership

##### 2.1.1.1 General criteria

The candidates should:

- have a good knowledge of professional musical life and/or of higher music education, if possible at international level
- have experience of or interest in evaluation and/or accreditation procedures
- be proficient in English (minimum C1 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages)

- be a critical thinker, solution-oriented and open-minded to various perspectives and methods

#### 2.1.1.2 Additional criteria for Board members proposed by the AEC

In addition to the general criteria, the prospective Board members proposed by the AEC should:

- be listed on the MusiQuE Peer Reviewers' Register and have been involved in MusiQuE review procedures
- not be current members of AEC Council (if appointed, they should not simultaneously hold the office of MusiQuE Board member and AEC Council member at any point within either mandate)

#### 2.1.1.3 Additional criteria for Student Board members proposed by the AEC

In addition to the general criteria the candidates for the Student seat on the MusiQuE Board should:

- be enrolled in a master's or a doctoral programme in an AEC member institution. If the studentship of the Student Board Member has come to an end before the expiry of their term in the Board, they will retain the status of Board Member for the remaining of their mandate.
- be involved in the student association/union/other equivalent body in their institution and, as a result, be experienced in representing other students in decision-making processes
- be listed on the MusiQuE Peer Reviewers' Register and have been involved in MusiQuE review procedures
- ideally, have international experience (project, course, ERASMUS year, etc.)
- not be involved in the AEC Student Working Group

### 2.1.2 Consultation process with partner organisations

#### 2.1.2.1 Consultation process with AEC

Candidates for the MusiQuE Board representing higher music education – this includes the student position - are proposed to the MusiQuE Board by the AEC Council, following a call for applications and a validation of the proposal by AEC General Assembly.

The sequence of events is as follows:

- When a seat becomes vacant on the MusiQuE Board, an open call for applications is launched by the MusiQuE Office, including the criteria to be met by the candidates and disseminated to the AEC membership.
- Interested individuals submit their applications to MusiQuE Office by a given deadline, after which the MusiQuE Office prepares a compilation of applications.

- The MusiQuE Board considers the applications and pre-selects candidate(s). The compilation of applications and the MusiQuE Board's shortlist of candidates are submitted to AEC Council for feedback.
- AEC Council prepares a draft recommendation, that has to be endorsed by the AEC General Assembly. The endorsed recommendation is communicated to the MusiQuE Board for final decision.
- The MusiQuE Board selects and appoints the candidate(s). Although the MusiQuE Board considers the recommendation from the AEC Council, this recommendation is not binding.
- The MusiQuE Office informs the successful applicant and the AEC Council of the outcome.
- The mandate of the member of the Board begins from the next meeting of the Board.

#### 2.1.2.2 Consultation process with EMU

Candidates for the MusiQuE Board are proposed to MusiQuE by the EMU Board, following a call for applications.

The sequence of events is as follows:

- When a seat usually occupied by an EMU-nominee becomes vacant on the MusiQuE Board, a call for applications is launched by the MusiQuE Office, including the criteria to be met by the candidates.
- The EMU Board decides how wide the call will be disseminated and, based on the applications received, prepares a draft recommendation with one or more candidates for the MusiQuE Board.
- The MusiQuE Board selects and appoints the candidate(s). Although the MusiQuE Board considers the recommendation from the EMU Board, this recommendation is not binding.
- Following the decision, the MusiQuE Office informs the successful candidate and the EMU Board of the outcome.
- The mandate of the member of the Board begins from the next meeting of the Board.

#### 2.1.2.3 Consultation process with Pearle\*

Candidates for the MusiQuE Board are proposed to MusiQuE by the Pearle\* Board, following a call for application.

The sequence of events is as follows:

- When a seat usually occupied by a Pearle\* nominee becomes vacant on the MusiQuE Board, a call for applications is launched by the MusiQuE Office, including the criteria to be met by the candidates.
- The Pearle\* Board decides how wide the call will be disseminated and, based on the applications received, prepares a draft recommendation with one or more candidates for the MusiQuE Board.
- The MusiQuE Board selects and appoints the candidate(s). Although the MusiQuE Board considers the recommendation from the Pearle\* Board, this recommendation is not binding.
- Following the decision, the MusiQuE Office informs the successful candidate and the Pearle\* Board of the outcome.
- The mandate of the member of the Board begins from the next meeting of the Board.

## 2.2 Roles and responsibilities

The MusiQuE Board will undertake the following activities:

Concerning all MusiQuE services and procedures:

- Monitor the overall quantity of these services and their planning, taking into account the human and other resources of MusiQuE
- Respond to any consultation requested by the MusiQuE Office on matters related to the contracting and the delivery of MusiQuE services and procedures
- Assess and approve proposals for Peer Reviewers selected from the Register by the MusiQuE Office for each review procedure and advisory process, based on the relevance of their expertise
- In the case of procedures conducted on the basis of another set of standards than the MusiQuE Standards, review and approve the mapping of standards and the merged set of standards prepared by the MusiQuE Office
- Review all reviewers' reports before these are first submitted to the institution for the accuracy check and once they are finalised, and notify the applicant institution in writing about the final outcome of the review or advisory service requested:
  - In the case of MusiQuE Quality Enhancement Reviews, the Board:
    - ensures the overall quality of the report and its consistency with the other review reports;
    - ensures its relevance to the review standards;
    - issues a formal decision accompanying the final report, by which it confirms that the institution, programme or joint programme have been reviewed by MusiQuE;
    - monitors the follow-up process, with the support of the MusiQuE Office.
  - In the case of accreditation procedures, the Board:
    - ensures the overall quality of the report and its consistency with the other review reports;

- checks if the justifications listed by the review team for each standard support the proposed level of compliance with that standard;
- takes the final formal decision on the accreditation of the institution/programme/joint programme based on the proposal of the Review Team;
- when a decision for conditional accreditation has been taken, agrees and approves the conditions set to the institution
- monitors the follow-up process relating to conditions and recommendations formulated in the report, with the support of the MusiQuE Office
- In the case of consultative visits and benchmarking projects, the Board:
  - ensures the overall quality of the reports and their relevance to the applicable review standards or, where the case, the expectations of the institution or programme visited or benchmarked.
- Receive complaints and requests for appeals from institutions and decide whether they meet the grounds for their formal acceptance; subsequently activate the Appeals Committee following the steps described in MusiQuE's Complaints and Appeals Procedure and communicate the result of the complaint or appeal to the institution

#### Concerning the Peer Reviewers' Register

- Monitor the Peer Reviewers' Register and strive to maintain equal engagement amongst peers listed on the Register
- Periodically promote across the AEC, EMU and Pearle\* memberships (and those of any additional organisations who may be invited to join the Board) for new individuals to apply to be listed on the Register
- Review applications for the Peer Reviewers' Registers to determine their suitability for inclusion on the Register
- Respond promptly to situations where peers outside the Register are suggested by the MusiQuE Office in the composition of a certain Review Team, either in response to particular needs of the institution that can only be addressed by a niche expertise, or following suggestions by the applicant institution when national regulations allow.
- When alerted by the MusiQuE Office of problems related to the reviewers, seek confidential feedback from Chairs of Review Teams and/or the Secretary appointed by MusiQuE on the performance of individuals within the Review Teams
- Review the Register every three years (including in terms of evaluating the continuing suitability of individuals)
- Contribute to the preparation and delivery of the annual Training for Peer Reviewers

#### Concerning internal quality assurance of MusiQuE

- Convene twice a year to monitor the status of ongoing MusiQuE activities, assess how effectively MusiQuE operates, and discuss possible pathways for further enhancement of MusiQuE's internal quality culture

- Consider the analysis of feedback questionnaires filled in by institutions and reviewers and approve appropriate actions for improvement to be taken by the Office (e.g. revision of the guidelines for institutions and peers, of the content and format of the training workshops, of the templates used in various procedures, of the MusiQuE standards applicable to certain procedures, etc.)
- Consider ways in which the consistency of the reports can be assured (for example by ensuring that they follow a certain template that is consistent throughout MusiQuE procedures and that the levels of compliance are consistently assessed within a report and in the various reports)
- In consideration of the above and of any other relevant information, appoint an External Evaluator, independent of the operations of MusiQuE, who will review material documenting MusiQuE's activity and compliance with the ESGs; meet with the External Evaluator once a year for direct feedback and discussion; consider the comments and recommendations of the External Evaluator and approve appropriate actions for improvement to be taken by the MusiQuE Office
- In the event of a formal complaint being received from an institution involved in a review procedure, determine the validity of the complaint, activate the complaints procedure, if deemed necessary, as described in MusiQuE's Complaints and Appeals Procedure, and subsequently inform the complainant of the result; consider how the feedback provided by the institution through its complaint can be considered for the further development of MusiQuE policies and procedures.
- Prepare for cyclical external reviews.

#### Concerning staff and financial matters

- Monitor the recruitment and performance of staff
- Monitor and decide upon financial issues such as annual budgets and pricing policies
- Approve the annual accounts
- Periodically review the business plan prepared by the MusiQuE Office

#### Concerning further development, external relations and communication

- Produce the Strategy paper and action plans in cooperation with the MusiQuE Office, and monitor the progress made in their implementation
- Approve the annual report on MusiQuE's activity for the year prepared by the MusiQuE Office
- Ensure regular formal cooperation with the Board/Council of each of the partner organisations and that members of the latter are informed about the work of MusiQuE and have the opportunity to suggest improvements to the system, extension of its scope, and any other initiatives (for example through annual meetings between MusiQuE leadership and the leadership of each partner organisation)
- Initiate new activities deemed to be consistent with the vision and mission of MusiQuE and achievable within existing and anticipated resources
- Keep under consideration ways in which the MusiQuE activities might be encouraged to expand, develop and evolve at international level

- Every two years, commission an individual well experienced in higher music education, and in quality assurance activities within this sector to produce a trend analysis
- Contribute to the communication and dissemination of information about MusiQuE activities, including representing MusiQuE - individually and, where appropriate, collectively - at relevant events
- Sign cooperation agreements with other quality assurance and accreditation bodies/agencies

### **2.2.1 Independence of Board members**

Each Board member is asked to sign a declaration of independence acknowledging that they serve in a personal capacity to further the interests of MusiQuE only and not those of any other organisation.

### **2.2.2 Special roles within the MusiQuE Board**

The Board includes a Chair, and a position that cumulates the roles of Secretary and Treasurer. The Chair, and the Secretary and Treasurer are elected by the Board for as many years as they remain members of the Board (maximum 6).

### **2.2.3 Decision-making processes**

Each Board member has one vote. All decisions are taken by a simple majority of members present. In case the vote cast is even, the Chair shall have a casting vote.

### **2.2.4 Level of commitment and financial arrangements**

Board members are expected to:

- participate in 2 regular Board meetings per year (i.e. meetings of 1.5 to 2 days, excluding travel) and in 3-4 online Board meetings per year (i.e. meetings of 2-3 hours)
- prepare thoroughly for these meetings (i.e. 1 day of preparation per online meeting and 2 days of preparation for a regular meeting)
- respond to requests by email (e.g. 2 full days per year)

All travel, accommodation and subsistence expenses are covered by MusiQuE.

### 3 The MusiQuE Office

The MusiQuE Board depends for its effective functioning on the continuous support provided by suitably qualified individuals.

The MusiQuE Office is responsible for:

Support for the MusiQuE Board

- Prepare and follow-up on MusiQuE Board meetings
- Implement the decisions reached by the MusiQuE Board and advise the Board on issues requiring its decision
- Develop and implement strategies to ensure that the MusiQuE Board stays well informed about the needs and expectations of higher music education institutions
- Advise on the revision process of the MusiQuE standards and ensure that their relevance to MusiQuE's procedures is maintained
- Prepare all the documentation necessary to ensure a smooth decision making process with regard to all policy and strategy documents whose production, revision or approval fall under the responsibility of the Board (Strategy paper, action plans, business plan, pricing policies, etc. - see section 2.2. above)
- Prepare all documentation necessary to support the Board in fulfilling its responsibilities related to MusiQuE services and procedures (see section 2.2. above)

Coordination of MusiQuE services and procedures and of the Quality Assurance Support Desk

- Manage the requests for review procedures and advisory services submitted to the MusiQuE Board, thus enabling the Board to ensure that the overall timetable and workload related to these activities is appropriate to the staffing and other resources available
- Send offers to institutions, based on their requests for proposals, setting out the specificities of the procedure, its purpose, language, as well as the overall timeframe and the costs of the procedure
- Select a shortlist of profiles from among the peers listed in MusiQuE Peer Reviewers Register that are deemed suitable to respond to the specific needs of the applicant institution, and present them to the Board, ensuring that the peers selected for a particular procedure form a well-balanced and qualified team, or hold the specialised expertise to conduct the procedure in question
- Where necessary, seek the approval of the Board for a reviewer not yet listed on the Register whose special expertise is needed to complete the team, or to respond to particular needs defined by the applicant institution
- Provide support to institutions during the self-evaluation process or the process leading to the production of requested documentation, if necessary
- Perform a preliminary check of the self-evaluation report to ensure it follows the MusiQuE guidelines (e.g. coverage of all MusiQuE Standards, size, list of annexes and how they are referenced)

- Cooperate with the institution and the Review Team, the ‘critical friend’, or other type of advisor, in planning and preparing for the site visit, where such a visit is part of the MusiQuE procedure the applicant institution has selected
- Brief the Review Team, the ‘critical friend’, or other type of advisors, on the specificity of the applicable procedure, if required.
- Organise an online training for Review Team members, for critical friends or other advisors, if required.
- Perform a preliminary check of the report and coordinate the approval process by the Board and the factual accuracy check by the institution.
- Submit the final report to the institution with the formal decision by the MusiQuE Board and ensure its publication on the MusiQuE website, where applicable.
- Coordinate the follow-up process, where applicable
- Register complaints and appeals, where the case, and notify the Board on the necessity to take appropriate measures
- In the case of procedures undertaken jointly with national quality assurance agency, coordinate the cooperation process (exchange of practices, comparison of standards, of templates used, etc.)
- Act as first resource for the Quality Assurance Support Desk and refer to appropriate experts where relevant

#### Maintenance and update of the Peer Reviewers Register

- Keep the Peer Reviewers Register updated and prepare suggestions for the Register’s revision every three years
- Handle all applications in cooperation and consultation with the MusiQuE Board
- Organise and prepare training sessions for Peer Reviewers, and make all necessary arrangements for their delivery

#### Finances

- Handle invoices/receipts and payments and keep an accurate evidence and balance of accounts for all incoming and outgoing payments
- Maintain a clear overview of the MusiQuE budget and prepare MusiQuE annual accounts
- Prepare budgets and offers for the review procedures
- Keep up-to-date records and explanatory notes ensuring that clear communication of the financial situation is available to the MusiQuE Board at any given moment

#### Public interaction, communication and external relations

- Prepare MusiQuE’s annual report
- Contact the expert commissioned by the Board to conduct the trend analysis
- Maintain and develop the MusiQuE website
- Monitor the calls for Board members, and suggestions for the revision of standards and procedures
- Maintain regular contact with the partner organisations AEC, EMU and PEARLE\*

- Represent MusiQuE at national and international events and in meetings where appropriate, contribute to information sessions and presentations
- Contribute to the publication of articles for conferences and journals (for example about subject-specific quality assurance or about good practices that may be relevant to other stakeholders) [see <http://www.musique-qe.eu/documents/articles>]
- Keep up-to-date with the latest policy developments in quality assurance for higher education, including through but not limited to participation in relevant meetings and active engagement with European and international quality assurance networks (EASPA, ENQA, INQAAHE, etc.), quality assurance agencies and other relevant stakeholders from the higher education sector

#### Internal Quality assurance

- Systematically distribute and collect the feedback questionnaires from institutions and programmes reviewed, from Peer Reviewers, and from participants to MusiQuE events (e.g. Training for Peer Reviewers)
- For each Spring Board meeting, prepare an analysis of the feedback questionnaires and propose to the Board a list of actions aimed at enhancing the services provided based on this analysis; at each Autumn Board meeting, inform the Board on the progress on the actions and changes undertaken and share a first feedback on any new approach tested in the preceding year
- Alert the Board if elements from the answers given by the Peer Reviewers to the feedback questionnaires reveal issues within the Review Team or in relation to the attitude of one or another of the Peer Reviewers
- Continuously reflect on possible ways to improve the functioning and work of the Office and of the services provided to institutions
- Maintain regular contact with the external evaluator and prepare the documentation to be submitted to the evaluator
- Assist the Board with the preparations of the cyclical external reviews

The MusiQuE Office is housed in the AEC Office, where both organisations make use of a shared pool of staff members. All members of the MusiQuE staff are formally employed by AEC, but they clearly differentiate between their work for the two organisations. Clear agreements on independence and confidentiality are described in the AEC-MusiQuE agreement and the AEC-MusiQuE staff convention (renewed every two years).

## 4 Peer Reviewers Register

Peer Reviewers form the teams that carry out the reviews commissioned by the Board. MusiQuE works with a pool of competent review and accreditation experts, listed in the MusiQuE Peer Reviewers Register. They are usually recruited from among AEC, EMU and Pearle\* memberships.

### 4.1 Criteria for acceptance onto the Register

Each peer-reviewer listed on the Register should have:

- an appropriate qualification (degree or professionally-oriented diploma) and recognised expertise in areas relevant to higher music education
- broad knowledge of the teaching and learning models and methods relevant to higher music education
- international experience that provides a basis for making international comparisons
- been trained through a training for Peer Reviewers delivered by MusiQuE

In addition, potential members of the Register representing the higher education sector should meet the following requirements:

- have experience in quality assurance in higher music education
- have experience in the development, design, provision and evaluation of higher education programmes in music.

Students applying for the Register should:

- be enrolled in a higher music education programme<sup>1</sup>
- demonstrate proficiency in English (minimum C1 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages<sup>2</sup>), or in another language in the rare cases where the language of the procedure will be other than English
- ideally, be involved in the student association/union/other equivalent body in their institution and, as a result, be experienced in representing other students in decision-making processes
- have an international experience (project, course, ERASMUS year, etc.) during their studies that provides a basis for making international comparisons
- be critical, solution-oriented and open-minded to various perspectives and methods

#### 4.1.1 Admission procedure

Interested individuals who meet the above requirements and are willing to act as Peer Reviewers for MusiQuE review procedures and consultancy services should apply to MusiQuE by filling in an online form for Peer Reviewers ([available on MusiQuE's website](#)).

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<sup>1</sup> Upon acceptance in the Register, students will remain listed as MusiQuE Peer Reviewers for 2 more years after graduation.

<sup>2</sup> See [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/CADRE1\\_EN.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/CADRE1_EN.asp).

All applications are considered by the MusiQuE Board during its ordinary annual meetings or, where deemed necessary, during its additional online meetings.

The Board will evaluate the suitability of the applicant's profile based on the criteria set out above, as well as on the needs of maintaining a balanced Register (in terms of gender, geographical spread, languages spoken, etc.).

Applicants will be informed by email about the decision reached by the Board within three weeks after its meeting.

#### **4.1.2 Data collected and data confidentiality**

The data collected through the online form for Peer Reviewers ([available on MusiQuE's website](#)) refers on the one hand to the specific skills, level of expertise, knowledge, experience, professional and artistic background and, on the other hand, to personal details such as country of origin, professional and personal postal address, and other contact details that are treated as sensitive information.

In full compliance with GDPR requirements and [MusiQuE's privacy policy](#), a short professional profile of the peers may be shared with institutions undergoing a review procedure if so requested, but under the condition that this data is treated with confidentiality. The consent for this type of data to be shared with third parties is collected from the peers through the online application form to the Register.

Personal data, such as contact details and personal address, provided by applicants is treated as sensitive confidential data by the MusiQuE Board and the MusiQuE Office. As such, it is not included in the types of data that can be shared with third parties.

In the case of a joint procedure with other national quality assurance and accreditation agencies, the full profile of reviewers may be provided to the national agency. In this case, the consent of the Peer Reviewers is collected in advance.

#### **4.1.3 Maintenance of the Register**

The composition of the Register is reviewed by the MusiQuE Board every three years (including in terms of evaluating the continuing suitability of individuals).

As a preliminary to this exercise, regular updates are being conducted by the MusiQuE Office as follows:

- All peer reviewers are invited to update their profile and to manifest their wish to remain or, where the case, to withdraw from the Register as a preamble to the invitation to register for the annual MusiQuE Training for Peer Reviewers
- When the results of the feedback questionnaire sent to Peer Reviewers after a review procedure indicates that there might have been some problems within the Review Team, the Office (and if necessary the Board) will seek confidential feedback from the Chair and/or the Secretary of Review Team on the performance of individuals within the Review Team, with the aim to bring this information to the Board for its evaluation.

## 4.2 Training for peer-reviewers

MusiQuE organises an annual training for current Peer Reviewers and for potential peers and students who have expressed their interest to join the Peer Reviewers' Register. In addition, in specific cases when Review Teams include peers who are not listed in the Peer Reviewers' Register (see section 4.3.2), the MusiQuE Office provides an online training for peers external to the MusiQuE Register at the start of the review procedure.

### 4.2.1 Annual Training session for Peer Reviewers

This annual training is delivered by MusiQuE Board members, the MusiQuE Office and by experienced MusiQuE Peer Reviewers and its purpose is threefold.

Firstly, the training aims to ensure an adequate level of knowledge, across the Peer Reviewers Register, with regard to MusiQuE standards, processes and procedures as well as to the latest policy developments in quality assurance and higher music education. The content of the training workshop is thus structured around these themes.

Secondly, the training is seen as an instrument to create a community of MusiQuE peers and to cultivate a sense of belonging that would nurture an exchange of lessons learnt and experiences gained in previous MusiQuE procedures, and would consequently enhance the effectiveness of teamwork in future reviews. Moreover, the training methods employed are aligned to this purpose, combining plenary session with group work, role plays, simulations and other instruments meant to foster networking and know-how exchange.

And, thirdly, the training represents a platform for recruiting new Peer Reviewers from among the AEC, EMU and Pearle\* constituencies, using the AEC Congress as a forum where these publics may overlap and connect. In this regard, the training is organised annually as a pre-Congress workshop and it is open for registration to all participants to the AEC Congress. As such, the training may also be attended by staff members of higher music education institutions - experienced or not - who are a) interested in becoming Peer Reviewers for MusiQuE in the future, b) motivated to reflect on their experience and practice as Peer Reviewers or c) have a general interest in quality assurance and accreditation in conservatoires.

As the acceptance in the Peer Reviewers Register is conditioned by the attendance to at least one MusiQuE Training for Peer Reviewers, the workshop is also open for applicants to the MusiQuE Register whose candidature is still pending approval.

### 4.2.2 Online training for Peer Reviewers

During procedures that require a specific type of expertise not covered by the Peer Reviewers Register, MusiQuE may launch a call for proposals and disseminate it across the constituencies of AEC, EMU and Pearle\* in order to cover particular needs of the institution applying for a review. If the peers recruited in such a context cannot benefit from the training for peers delivered by MusiQuE in the opening of the AEC Congress, an online training is provided either individually or in small groups, depending on the number of new peers who require such training.

The online training covers the same themes as the MusiQuE Training Workshop, centred around the MusiQuE processes, procedures and standards. In addition, it is adapted to fit the particular features of the procedure for which the peers have been selected - e.g. the national context in which the review unfolds, the mapped standards that constitute the framework of assessment in certain joint accreditation or quality enhancement reviews, the roles and the code of conduct for peers applicable to that procedure, if different from that of MusiQuE. During the online training the peers also have the opportunity to ask for specific clarifications related to materials they received in direct connection to the procedure for which they have been selected.

The training is delivered one on one, or in a small group where applicable, through a video conference platform. The peers are provided with the general reader for peers included in the package for participants in the MusiQuE Training Workshop, and with additional materials referring to the particular procedure for which the training is being provided.

### 4.3 Selection of Peer Reviewers in MusiQuE procedures

#### 4.3.1 General principles

For all MusiQuE procedures, the general principles that apply in selecting the peers from amongst the Peer Reviewers Register to act as members of Review Teams, as critical friends<sup>3</sup> or simply as advisors in tailor-made consultative visits, are as follows:

- the particular needs of the applicant institution<sup>4</sup> in terms of specialised expertise (e.g. expertise in jazz, in early music, in composition, etc.) and on the number of peers<sup>5</sup> necessary to conduct the procedure appropriately are addressed; in case of joint procedures with national quality agencies, specific requirements might need to be taken into account concerning the composition and selection of Peer Reviewers, and these will be clearly set in the cooperation agreements.
- an overall balance with respect to specialised knowledge in terms of institutional management and governance, artistic and academic management, and artistic and professional experience across the review team shall be ensured.
- knowledge of the country-specific system of higher music education and of the legislation applicable in that country will be addressed where possible and as appropriate.
- Peer Reviewers assigned on a procedure will have been professionally active principally outside the country in which the institution is located and are not in a position of conflict of interest<sup>6</sup> with the applicant institution.

<sup>3</sup> See section 6.3 for further details about the Critical Friend Review procedure.

<sup>4</sup> In some cases, where the national regulations require, the institution is also consulted in the selection of peers appointed to conduct the procedure chosen by the applicant institution.

<sup>5</sup> For quality enhancement reviews and accreditation procedures, a minimum of 5 Peer Reviewers are considered for a review team, including the Chair, the Secretary and the student peer. In case of tailor-made advisory services - e.g. consultative visits, benchmarking exercises or variations of the Critical Friends Review, a single peer-reviewer may be tasked to conduct the procedure.

<sup>6</sup> See section 4.3.3 Conflicts of interest.

- where more than one peer-reviewer is assigned to conduct a procedure, the MusiQuE Board is to make sure that, although some familiarity with the national system of the country of the applicant institution is desirable, an international perspective can be properly conveyed by the review team; in this regard, diversity in terms of nationality and geographical profile across the Review Team is to be ensured.
- all Peer Reviewers appointed to conduct MusiQuE procedures shall be proficient in English; except in rare cases, the language of the review and the documents provided by the institution shall be in English<sup>7</sup>, unless agreed otherwise between MusiQuE, the institution and the Review Team.

### 4.3.2 Process

Once a contract for a certain MusiQuE procedure has been signed with the applicant institution, depending on the institution's specific needs, the MusiQuE Office will preselect from among the Peer Reviewers' Register the profiles that best fit the pre-defined requirements. A wide range of factors are being considered during this preselection: the number of peers needed, the areas of expertise identified by the institution, the profiles of the peers (level of experience in reviewing institutions, languages spoken, etc.) as well as gender balance. More emphasis will be put on the collective level of competence and experience of the team than on individual competences and experiences. Hence, where appropriate, a team may also include a newcomer in order to allow for an element of training / learning-by-doing to take place.

The proposal is then submitted for approval to the MusiQuE Board and it should include at least two names for each type of expertise considered necessary for the exercise or, when a Review Team is being composed, two names for each position in the panel (Chair, Secretary, or regular peer). This is meant to ensure that, in case of unavailability of certain peers, the composition of the panel will not be delayed. The Board members agree on the final proposed composition of the Review Team either during their regular meetings or by email, depending on the timeframe of the procedure. In the event of contradictory views, the Chair of the Board is asked to make the final decision.

Having in mind the subject specificity and the small world of higher music education, institutions may be allowed to suggest experts deemed suitable to conduct the procedure. Furthermore, if the required profile for experts is not covered by peers from the Register, the MusiQuE Office may conduct a call for proposals and suggest to the Board an expert outside of the Register. However, the MusiQuE Board has full discretion on the final decision regarding the Review Team composition, the appointment of a critical friend, or of other advisors as per the specific procedure implemented. Following the Board's approval, MusiQuE Office will ensure that appropriate training is provided for the new recruit(s) either during the MusiQuE annual training or through an online training prior to the site visit (see section 4.2 above).

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<sup>7</sup> At the same time, it is essential that institutional representatives have the opportunity to express themselves in the language of the country where the review is being conducted. It is therefore recommended that the Review Team include at least one member who is able to understand/speak the language in question. In cases where it is felt necessary, the institution will be asked to hire (provide) a translator

Student members are considered as equal members of the Review Team. They are selected from among the students listed on the Peer Reviewers Register, taking into account that they be enrolled on a programme at least at the level of studies being considered during the review (e.g. the student recruited for a review concerning Bachelor programmes will be enrolled in a Bachelor's, Master's or Doctoral programme). Recently graduated students (up to 2 year upon graduation) can be included and considered as student members Review Teams. The MusiQuE Office selects the student based on the expertise required. In case of unavailability of the students listed in the Register, the MusiQuE Office will contact representatives from higher music education institutions for support in identifying alternative student profiles. Should students not listed in the Peer Reviewers Register, they too will either take part in the MusiQuE annual training or will undergo an online training prior to the site visit.

### 4.3.3 Conflicts of interest

A conflict of interest may arise from past, current or planned association between an expert and members of the institution. It is the responsibility of all parties (MusiQuE, the reviewers and the institution) to make an immediate disclosure should they become aware of a potential conflict of interest.

Once the MusiQuE Board has decided on the composition of the Review Team, or on the appointment of critical friends or other types of advisors to conduct a specific procedure, the MusiQuE Office will formally invite the selected peers to take part in the procedure (see section 4.3.4 below). The invitation includes a short questionnaire meant to prevent any possible conflicts of interest - namely that the peers have no direct or indirect affiliations, nor have they maintained such connections or ties with the institution / programme to be assessed during the past five years. In cases of doubt, where a connection of some sort is acknowledged but is either slight or well in the past, the MusiQuE Board will be consulted as to whether it disqualifies the individual.

At this stage, peers will also be asked to sign a "Declaration of Honour" certifying that they are free of conflicts of interest and they agree with the code of conduct included in the MusiQuE Guidelines for Peer Reviewers.

Subsequently, the institution is also asked to point out any potential conflict of interest from its own perspective and can ask that a peer-reviewer be replaced or removed, if duly justified. In cases when the institution has been involved in the discussions on the Review Team's composition (depending on the national regulations), such a consultation is not applicable.

### 4.3.4 Formal appointment of the Peer Reviewers

Once approved by the MusiQuE Board to conduct a specific procedure, the selected Peer Reviewers receive an invitation message from the MusiQuE Office where the procedure and its context are presented in detail. The invitation includes:

- A briefing paper mentioning the type of procedure to be conducted, the working language, an overview of the responsibilities related to the role of peer-reviewer within the respective procedure, and an indicative timeframe of the procedure

- The MusiQuE Guidelines for Peer Reviewers
- The questionnaire designed to reveal any possible conflict of interest and the related declaration of independence by which the peers are asked to certify that they are free of conflicts of interest and that they are willing to comply with the MusiQuE Code of Conduct included in the Guidelines for Peer Reviewers.

Depending on the availability of Peer Reviewers and on their answers to the questionnaire, the MusiQuE Office confirms their participation to the procedure and informs the applicant institution accordingly.

## 5 Appeals Committee

The provision of appropriate opportunities for appeal is an important feature of any quality assurance procedure. *MusiQuE Complaints and Appeals Procedure* describes in detail the routine opportunities within the process for correcting factual errors, as well as the more exceptional paths of action open to an institution that considers it has genuine cause to contest the judgement delivered through a review report.

An institution that underwent a MusiQuE procedure can submit an appeal when it considers that the statements in the evaluation report constitute a flagrant misjudgement and all other means of obtaining what is considered as a just outcome have been exhausted. To this purpose, MusiQuE uses an Appeals Committee, formed of one standing member and one individual appointed in response to each specific appeal, chosen for their specialist knowledge in relation to the issues raised.

The standing member of the Appeals Committee is appointed by the MusiQuE Board for a fixed term of three years (renewable once), based on a proposal by AEC. The standing member of the Appeals Committee should be experienced in quality assurance processes and, for the period of his or her appointment, may not participate in MusiQuE reviews. The member of the Appeals Committee specially appointed for a particular appeal is chosen by the MusiQuE Board based upon any specialist knowledge required. He or she must not be connected with the institution that has submitted the appeal but may be an active member of the MusiQuE Register of Peer Reviewers.

The rules and procedures by which the Appeals Committee conducts its work are further detailed in the document *MusiQuE Complaints and Appeals Procedures* available [here](#).

## 6 MusiQuE procedures

### 6.1 Characteristics for quality assurance in higher music education

Music shares many common features with other disciplines in terms of assessment and quality assurance at higher education level. However, in order for a quality assessment procedure to be accurate as well as fair, it is necessary to consider the individual discipline's special characteristics. This section describes features which should be taken into account in quality assurance and accreditation reviews in higher music education.

To be effective in reviewing professional music schools and conservatories with respect to music content and institutional mission, the review procedure should<sup>8</sup>:

- I. Respect the content and nature of music and their relationships to education and training in music at the professional level.
  - Recognize music as a unique, nonverbal means of communication, discourse, and insight.
  - Respect music as a medium for intellectual work expressed both in music itself and in words about music.
  - Work with a conceptual understanding of the elements in the content of professional music study including, but not limited to, performance, composition, musicianship, music theory, music history and repertoire, and pedagogy.
  - Exhibit understanding and respect for the multiple ways these elements are ordered, prioritised, and integrated to develop and synthesize the artistic, intellectual, and physical capabilities of students.
- II. Respect the fundamental characteristics of education and training in music at the professional level.
  - Recognize and support the necessity of curricula that include one-to-one tuition, ensembles, courses, and final projects such as recitals and compositions.
  - Recognize fundamental necessities for time allocations that grow from the nature of music and music learning, including the time requirements for developing the integration of artistic, intellectual, and physical knowledge and skills.
  - Understand the necessity of resources essential to music study such as expert specialized personnel, facilities conducive to various types of instruction, and financial support.
  - Be able to connect issues of financial allocation to necessities regarding time and resources.
  - Understand that students must demonstrate significant levels of artistic and technical mastery in order to be admitted.

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<sup>8</sup> Statement from the document [Characteristics of an Effective Evaluation System for Music Schools and Conservatoires](#) produced by AEC and the U.S. based National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) in the framework of the project collaborated on a project entitled "Music Study, Mobility and Accountability" conducted in 2002-2004.

- Recognise that musical, instrumental, vocal, or compositional technique—while essential for entrance, continuation, and graduation—enable high levels of artistry but are not a substitute for artistry.
- III. Respect the nature, achievements, aspirations, and structures of individual institutions.
- Conduct evaluations with respect for, and in light of, the various missions, goals, objectives, and methodologies chosen by the individual institutions.
  - Have a sophisticated understanding of how music schools and conservatories are the same and how they are different.
  - Respect the fact that various structures and approaches to music and music study work effectively and produce outstanding results.
  - Understand both individual and group responsibilities for the development of musical and educational quality.
- IV. Maximize the use of evaluation systems and methods consistent with the nature of music, music study, and the operation of music schools and conservatoires.
- Recognise the intense evaluation and assessment pressures that come from the public nature of music performance and composition.
  - Respect that the concept of multiple effective approaches extends into teaching and learning as well as to matters of interpretation in performance and aesthetic accomplishment in composition.
  - Understand the continuous, moment-by-moment evaluation and assessment essential to both the preparation and presentation of performances and to the composition of music. In music, assessment is integrated continuously into the work as well as being applied to completed work.
  - Make use of high levels of expertise in music, music teaching, the operation of education and training institutions, and the relationships among the three. Peer evaluation is essential for credibility in reviews of music schools and conservatoires.
  - Describe in advance the purpose of any review and the specific criteria on which the evaluation is to be based. Do not attempt to conflate artistic and educational criteria with economic and market criteria.
  - Make clear to all evaluators that the focus is on functions to be served, rather than methods to be employed.
  - Have protocols indicating that individual evaluators are to make judgments about effectiveness with regard to the criteria chosen for the evaluation and not on personal preferences regarding choices in areas where there are many correct answers.

## 6.2 Basic principles of the MusiQuE review procedures

MusiQuE review procedures are based on the twin principles of their being designed from a subject-specific perspective and conducted by peer reviewers with specific subject expertise and an international background.

The services offered by MusiQuE are conceived as offering an important service to higher music education institutions, aimed at assisting them in their quality enhancement activities. Although its accreditation procedures necessarily involve assessing the performance of institutions against a set of standards, this same principle of assistance in quality enhancement applies even in this context.

The role of peers is at the core of the system. Their expertise is combined with an intimate understanding of the realities that apply in higher music education institutions. They are perfectly placed to engage with the procedures, delivering their judgements in a spirit of constructive dialogue with the institution, its leaders, teachers, students and administrative staff, thus emphasising the peer-to-peer aspect of all MusiQuE procedures<sup>9</sup>.

The expertise of the peer reviewers is primarily as teachers within their discipline, but many of them also possess significant administrative experience and understand the issues of higher music education from this perspective as well. In general, Review Teams are assembled in such a way that the individual expertise of each team member complements that of the others.

The other most important constituency within higher music education institutions is that of the students. Students are systematically included as members of the Review Teams assembled under the procedures organised by MusiQuE. The role of students is the same as that of the other peer reviewers, and their perspective is equally valued.

MusiQuE conducts its review procedures in a manner that is characterised by the following principles:

- Respecting the special characteristics of higher music education and the contexts and traditions in which music is created
- Encouraging higher music education institutions to reflect on their own practice, development and challenges
- Assisting them in the enhancement of their quality by focusing on learning and experience-sharing
- Striving towards a higher level of objectivity (through the involvement of international review teams)
- Bringing a European/international dimension to the procedure
- Striving for the improvement of higher music education as a whole

### 6.3 Types of review procedures conducted by MusiQuE

MusiQuE provides the following services:

Within the scope of (and therefore in compliance with) the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG):

- Quality enhancement reviews for institutions, programmes and joint programmes

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<sup>9</sup> Faithful to its principle of assisting higher music education institutions in their quality enhancement activities, MusiQuE's procedures are not conceived as top-down, management-driven exercises but more as an engagement of equals.

- Accreditation processes for institutions, programmes and joint programmes
- Bilateral collaborations with national and international quality assurance agencies

Outside the scope of the ESG due to the specific and/or limited nature of the service or due to a focus of the service on levels of education other than higher education:

- Quality assurance support desk for institutions
- Evaluations of research activities
- Reviews of pre-college institutions and programmes
- Consultative visits
- Coordination of benchmarking projects

The various types of review procedures offered by MusiQuE are described below in a detailed manner. Any aspect of the procedures might, however, be altered and adjusted to the specific needs of institutions or (joint) programmes. MusiQuE review procedures aim to be flexible and are designed in such a way that they can be easily adapted to different circumstances. MusiQuE will therefore be open to consider in consultation with the institution or (joint) programme and in compliance with the ESG where relevant, how the services described below can be reshaped in order to fit better to its specific needs and national context.

### 6.3.1 Quality enhancement reviews for institutions, programmes and joint programmes

#### Regular QE Review

Under this procedure, higher music education institutions have the opportunity to engage in a Quality Enhancement Review, i.e. a peer-review visit, either for the whole institution or focused on one or more programmes, which results in an advisory report.

##### 6.3.1.1 Objectives:

- To provide the opportunity for higher music education institutions to choose to be evaluated through a procedure devised and implemented by those with specialist knowledge and understanding of such institutions
- To offer a procedure that is intrinsically international in its outlook and in the range of countries from which experts are drawn
- To stimulate the process of internal reflection on quality issues and, where relevant, to assist institutional leaders in implementing quality-related reforms
- To bring fresh ideas and wider perspectives into institutions, encouraging the principle of ‘many correct answers’ to questions concerning the pursuit of quality in higher music education
- Under certain circumstances, to serve as a ‘rehearsal’ for an impending formal review event and, in the process, to furnish the institution with evidence, in the form of impartial external evaluation, that may then be used for its self-evaluation report

### 6.3.1.2 Process

- The institution is asked to prepare an analytical self-evaluation report, which is sent to the Peer Reviewers at the latest a month before the site visit.
- The Peer Reviewers (at least four persons, including a student), accompanied by a Secretary, conduct a site visit of a minimum of 1.5 days for a programme review and 2.5 days for an institutional review, during which they meet members of the Management Team, of the Academic, Artistic and Administrative Staff, Students, Representatives of the Profession, etc., and have the opportunity to visit classes and lessons, and attend concerts/recitals.

### 6.3.1.3 Outcome

- The outcome is an advisory report, highlighting good practice and including a set of recommendations for further improvement, written by international specialists in the relevant musical fields.
- The report is published [on the MusiQuE website](#).

### Critical Friend Review

In this innovative approach to external quality enhancement reviews, annual visits by ‘critical friends<sup>10</sup>’ to various departments or programmes are combined with a modified version of MusiQuE’s regular review visit. A ‘Critical Friend Review’ has the following objectives, in addition to those pertaining to the regular quality enhancement review, listed above:

- To link the internal and external quality assurance cycles in a manner which better integrates these within the quality culture that institutions are aiming to achieve.
- To bring a more content-driven focus to external quality assurance processes
- To increase the relevance of the quality enhancement processes to students and teachers, since the results of the visit and the feedback are more specific, more personal and more recognisable.

Further details about the Critical Friend Review procedure are included in the Handbook for Critical Friend Review, produced by MusiQuE and available on the MusiQuE’s website.

## 6.3.2 Accreditation procedures for institutions, programmes and joint programmes

It is central to the rationale of MusiQuE that higher music education institutions should also have the opportunity to engage in formal accreditation procedures coordinated by it. This would mean that, in countries where evaluation and accreditation bodies other than the national agency are authorised to operate, institutions could combine with a MusiQuE quality enhancement review the accreditation procedure required by law. Under these circumstances, the subject-specific and enhancement-

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<sup>10</sup> A ‘critical friend’ is a respected professional peer whose visit focuses entirely on the performance of a specific programme, section or department.

oriented process would not be an additional burden for the institution, over and above its national accreditation obligations, but would fulfil the two functions in one exercise.

Any such procedure will continue to be subject to the national legislative framework where the institution is located, and to other factors of suitability.

#### 6.3.2.1 Objectives

- To provide a procedure that satisfies the legal obligations in terms of accreditation as described in the national regulation of the country in question and which conforms to the ESG
- To provide the opportunity for higher music education institutions to choose to be evaluated through a procedure devised and implemented by those with specialist knowledge and understanding of such institutions
- To offer a procedure that is intrinsically international in its outlook and in the range of countries from which experts are drawn
- To stimulate a process of internal reflection on quality issues and to bring fresh ideas and wider perspectives into institutions, encouraging the principle of ‘many correct answers’
- To deliver a procedure which, although its primary purpose may be to fulfil a legislative requirement, can be of genuine benefit and enhancement to the institution, its teachers and students, both in the debate and reflection it stimulates and in the changes that it may initiate

#### 6.3.2.2 Process

- As with the Quality Enhancement Review, the institution is asked to prepare an analytical self-evaluation report, which is sent to the Peer Reviewers at the latest a month before the site visit.
- The Peer Reviewers (at least four persons, including a student), accompanied by a Secretary, conduct a site visit of a minimum of 1.5 days for a programme review and 2.5 days for an institutional review, during which they meet members of the Management Team, of the Academic, Artistic and Administrative Staff, Students, Representatives of the Profession, etc., and have the opportunity to visit classes and lessons and attend concerts/recitals.

#### 6.3.2.3 Outcome

- The outcome is a report, written by international specialists in the relevant musical fields, which, in addition to highlighting good practice and including a set of suggestions for improvement, concludes with a formal recommendation as to the awarding of accreditation.
- The report is published [on the MusiQuE website](#).
- The report may call for accreditation without any recommendations or conditions, accreditation with recommendations only or accreditation subject to certain conditions, whether on their own or in addition to recommendations.

- Any conditions will be framed in such a way that the outcome required and the timescale in which it should be achieved are clear, although, as far as possible, the institution will be given autonomy in terms of the methods by which it achieves the necessary outcome(s).
- If conditions have not been met in the set timeframe, the recommendation will be not to accredit the institution. Under such circumstances, a clear set of remedial steps will be outlined to guide the institution in the reforms considered necessary. The institution will then be free to re-apply for accreditation after a period of one year.

### **6.3.3 Bilateral collaborations with national and international quality assurance agencies**

An alternative to a review process conducted solely by MusiQuE is for MusiQuE to operate in collaboration with a national or international quality assurance agency through a merged set of standards and procedures. This option is especially attractive for institutions wishing to benefit from the joint expertise of:

- a national agency and a subject-specific and internationally-based agency. Both MusiQuE and national quality assurance agencies have their own strengths, expertise and accumulated history; it makes obvious sense to combine these in a complementary way.
- two international subject-specific agencies complementing each other when institutions provide education in other artistic fields than music.

#### **6.3.3.1 Objectives of bilateral collaborations with national quality assurance agencies**

- To provide the opportunity for higher music education institutions who are obliged to work within their national system, or who find positive benefits in doing so, to choose to be evaluated through a process which combines the best of both approaches. It does this by offering a procedure that is both attuned to national priorities and informed, in its design and delivery, by those with specialist knowledge and understanding of such institutions
- To offer a procedure that, while respecting national patterns and priorities, is intrinsically international in its outlook and in the range of countries from which experts are drawn
- While observing appropriate formality in the proceedings, to stimulate a process of internal reflection on quality issues and to bring fresh ideas and wider perspectives into institutions, encouraging the principle of ‘many correct answers’
- To deliver a procedure which, although its primary purpose may be to fulfil a legislative requirement, can be of genuine benefit and enhancement to the institution, its teachers and students, both in the debate and reflection it stimulates and in the changes that it may initiate

### 6.3.3.2 Process of bilateral collaborations (with national and international quality assurance agencies)

- Once a request of proposals is received, MusiQuE checks if the potential partner agency is listed on EQAR, in order to know if it will need to ensure ESG compliance of the parts of the work performed by the agency
- A collaboration agreement is signed outlining the steps of the procedures and the responsibilities of each party
- A comparison is made of the (inter)national agency's standards with those of MusiQuE – except when the national agency has expressed a preference to work with the MusiQuE Standards rather than its own standards. Arising out of this exercise, a merged set of standards is produced ensuring that no aspect found in either of the separate standards is omitted. Generally, the level of correspondence between standards is found to be high, and the comparison process results in enhanced mutual trust and, from time to time, a productive sharing of practice. The joint framework of assessment thus created, is subjected to the approval of the agencies' Boards or general management at the beginning of the review process.
- The selection process of experts is also characterised by cooperation. The final review team seeks to blend subject-specific expertise with a familiarity with any particular national circumstances. Precisely how this is done, and the division of responsibilities such as Chairing amongst members of the finally constituted panel will be subject to negotiation but, again, the guiding principle will be one of equality between the partners.
- The contact with and support to the institution is handled by one of the partners (in order to facilitate the process for the institution)
- The organisation of the site visit is handled by one of the partners (in order to facilitate the process for the institution and the Review Team)
- The checking process of the report is usually performed by both agencies, and the final report is normally approved by both agencies
- The follow-up procedure is agreed on by both agencies
- The complaints and appeals procedure is agreed on by both agencies

### 6.3.3.3 Outcome

- The precise outcome will depend upon the nature of the cooperation but will always take the form of a report written by international specialists in the relevant musical field.
- The report is published [on the MusiQuE website](#).
- The fulfilment of any recommendations or conditions will be subject to the procedures of the national agency or, where the legal framework allows, to the collaboration agreement between the agencies involved.
- In the case of accreditation procedures:
  - Although terminology may vary, the report will conclude with a call for accreditation without any recommendations or conditions, accreditation

with recommendations only or accreditation subject to certain conditions, whether on their own, or in addition to recommendations.

- As with MusiQuE's own procedures, there will generally be a possibility that accreditation might be withheld when conditions are not met in the timeframe set, in which case, appropriate remedial steps would be outlined.

### 6.3.4 Quality Assurance Support Desk for institutions

As a complement to the procedures operated by MusiQuE, its staff and experts also provide targeted advice on quality assurance procedures to higher music education institutions. The main 'portal' to this advice is the MusiQuE Quality Assurance Support Desk. For most of the year, this exists in 'virtual' form as a space on the MusiQuE website for submitting by email a specific query. The MusiQuE Office can offer specific guidance in relation to MusiQuE tools/guidelines (including the MusiQuE Standards) and, where appropriate, will provide references to sources on internal and external quality assurance. The MusiQuE Office can also organise, on request, a preparatory visit to explain how an institution can apply for a review undertaken by reviewers from the MusiQuE Peer Reviewers Register.

Finally, the MusiQuE Quality Assurance Support Desk is available in concrete form at the AEC's Annual Congress and, by request, at the annual meetings of EMU and Pearle\*. Delegates can bring their inquiries directly to MusiQuE Board and Office in a face-to-face interaction, which can then be followed up by email, etc. if necessary.

### 6.3.5 Evaluations of research activities

These evaluations aim to provide an analysis of research objectives and results within the higher music education context. They are based on a dedicated evaluation framework developed by MusiQuE, the MusiQuE Framework for the Evaluation of Research Activities in Higher Music Education Institutions, derived from the MusiQuE Standards for Institutional Review.

These evaluation procedures are structured in four domains of investigation:

1. the profile of the research activities or research institute/unit
2. their organisation
3. the quality of the research activities' results and
4. the impact of these results

#### 6.3.5.1 Objectives

A MusiQuE review of research activities aims at providing:

- An analysis of the implementation of the research mission or objectives of the institution within the context of the development of research into-and-through artistic practice;
- An analysis of the specific research outcomes generated in response to these objectives or mission and of their relevance within the European and international landscape of research into-and-through artistic practice;

- An international benchmarking of the impact and significance of these outcomes in relation to the broader music sector on the basis of the aforementioned analyses and the opinion of experts in the field;
- The formulation of a review of any strategic plans for research drawn up by the institution or research institute/unit for the forthcoming years in light of the specific artistic context within which this institution or research institute/unit operates
- A general conclusion written by international experts from the field, on the impact of the research activities, with recommendations for enhancing the quality of these activities.
- If applicable, a follow-up analysis of recommendations formulated during previous reviews and an outline of the evolution that the institution or research institute/unit has made subsequently.

#### 6.3.5.2 Process

- The institution is asked to prepare an analytical self-evaluation report, which is sent to the Peer Reviewers at the latest a month before the site visit.
- The Peer Reviewers (at least four persons, including a student), accompanied by a Secretary, conduct a site visit of a minimum of 1.5 during which they meet members of the Management Team, of the Academic, Artistic and Administrative Staff, Pupils, Representatives of the Profession, Parents etc., and have the opportunity to visit classes and lessons, attend concerts/recitals and study research outcomes.

#### 6.3.5.3 Outcome

- The outcome is an advisory report, highlighting good practice and including a set of recommendations for further improvement, written by international specialists in the relevant musical (research) field.
- The report is published [on the MusiQuE website](#).

### 6.3.6 Reviews of pre-college institutions and programmes

Under this process, pre-college institutions and programmes have the opportunity to engage in a Quality Enhancement Review, i.e. a peer-review visit which results in an advisory report. These quality enhancement reviews of pre-college institutions and programmes are based on a specific set of standards, the Standards for Pre-College Music Education, which aim to guide pre-college music education providers in evaluating their activities and enhancing quality.

#### 6.3.6.1 Objectives

- To provide the opportunity for pre-college institutions and programmes to choose to be evaluated through a procedure devised and implemented by those with specialist knowledge and understanding of such institutions
- To offer a procedure that is intrinsically international in its outlook and in the range of countries from which experts are drawn
- To stimulate the process of internal reflection on quality issues and, where relevant, to assist institutional leaders in implementing quality-related reforms

- To bring fresh ideas and wider perspectives into institutions, encouraging the principle of ‘many correct answers’ to questions concerning the pursuit of quality in pre-college music education

#### 6.3.6.2 Process

- The institution is asked to prepare an analytical self-evaluation report, which is sent to the Peer Reviewers at the latest a month before the site visit.
- The Peer Reviewers (at least four persons, including a student), accompanied by a Secretary, conduct a site visit of a minimum of 1.5 during which they meet members of the Management Team, of the Academic, Artistic and Administrative Staff, Pupils, Representatives of the Profession, Parents etc., and have the opportunity to visit classes and lessons, and attend concerts/recitals.

#### 6.3.6.3 Outcome

- The outcome is an advisory report, highlighting good practice and including a set of recommendations for further improvement, written by international specialists in the relevant musical fields.
- The report is published [on the MusiQuE website](#).

### 6.3.7 Consultative visits

Under this process, a MusiQuE Reviewer provides advice to the institution in relation to matters concerning (e.g.) governance or quality assurance. The MusiQuE Standards are used as internal check-list by the Reviewer during the site visit and the reporting format is free and based on the needs of the institution. In practice, the MusiQuE Peer-reviewer is asked to act as a consultant and is put in direct contact with the institution in order to ensure that she/he understands well the mission and prepares adequately.

#### 6.3.7.1 Objectives

- To provide institutions or programmes with advice on specific areas they have identified, such as governance or quality assurance

#### 6.3.7.2 Process

- The institution is asked to explain in details its needs and expectations for the consultative visit and to provide existing supporting material and documents.
- The Reviewer conducts a site visit of a 1-2 days (in agreement with the institution) during which the Reviewer will meet with relevant institutional representatives and stakeholders.

#### 6.3.7.3 Outcome

- The outcome is a confidential advisory report written by an international specialist with relevant expertise, based on the needs of the institution, identifying challenges and proposing solutions, and including a set of recommendations for further improvement.

### 6.3.8 Coordination of benchmarking exercises

MusiQuE can be commissioned by an institution to conduct a benchmarking exercise on its behalf. The method of benchmarking is proposed as a tool for quality enhancement and for internationalisation. It involves choosing appropriate partners at international levels, evaluating and comparing the practices and/or performance of the institution with those of its partners, and sharing best practice. The benchmarking questions (or points of reference) are derived from the MusiQuE Standards.

#### 6.3.8.1 Objectives

- To improve performance based on the comparison between institutions / departments / programmes that share common objectives and operate under comparable conditions
- To provide institutions with a process that is based upon internationally recognised standards and principles

#### 6.3.8.2 Process

- The commissioning institution and MusiQuE jointly agree on partner institutions that will join the benchmarking.
- MusiQuE and the commissioning institution jointly agree on a set of benchmarking questions (derived from the MusiQuE Standards).
- All benchmarking partner institutions including the commissioning institution share information and data with MusiQuE, based on the benchmarking questions.
- The external expert proposed by MusiQuE analyses the information and data collected (in some cases this step is complemented by site visits to all partners) and produces a benchmarking report.

#### 6.3.8.3 Outcome

- The outcome is a confidential benchmarking report written by international specialist(s) with relevant expertise, highlighting challenges and good practices identified in each partner institution, identifying challenges and proposing solutions, and including a set of recommendations for further improvement.

## 6.4 Conflicts of interest

When an institution to which MusiQuE has provided any of its services in the previous years, requests another service from MusiQuE, the following principles apply:

- When the service initially provided is a consultative visit, MusiQuE will not carry out any external quality assurance (within the scope of the ESG) of the same unit (e.g. institution, faculty, department or study programme) to which it has provided the consultative visit, and this for a period of six years. In addition, the reviewers who have conducted a consultative visit will not be selected for any external quality

assurance activity requested by the institution where the consultative visit has taken place.

- When the service initially provided was not a consultative visit, the MusiQuE Board first considers whether any conflict of interest would arise, that might compromise the result and quality of the service to be provided. If no potential conflict of interest is found, the MusiQuE Board approves the request for this new procedure. A fresh Review Team will normally be composed.

## 6.5 Responsibilities of institutions and reviewers in MusiQuE procedures

All MusiQuE procedures assume shared responsibilities between all parties involved, as follows:

The institution/programme applying for a MusiQuE procedure will:

- Designate a contact person (upon signing the contract for the MusiQuE procedure the institution chose to undergo) who will be responsible for all contact with the MusiQuE Office in relation to the procedure in question.
- Organise the self-evaluation process or, where the case, the process circumscribed to the production of the necessary documentation requested by the ‘critical friend’, or other type of advisor, as presented in MusiQuE Guidelines for Institutions made available for applicant institutions at the beginning of the procedure.
- Depending on the national regulations and the type of procedure chosen, suggest specific profiles and expertise that should be taken into account by the MusiQuE Office and Board in the composition of the Review Team, in the selection of the critical friends, or of other advisors assigned to conduct the procedure.
- Provide any additional documentation requested by the MusiQuE Office on behalf of the Review Team or, where applicable, on behalf of the ‘critical friend’, or other type of advisor, that is deemed necessary for the preparation of the site visit, or for the benchmarking exercise, respectively.
- Cooperate with the MusiQuE Office in planning and implementing the site visit, where a site visit is part of the procedure.
- Supply the Review Team, the ‘critical friend’, or the advisor conducting the procedure with all information required during the site visit, where a site visit is included in the procedure.
- Provide factual comments to the draft review report or, where applicable, the advisory report, as requested by the MusiQuE Office.

The Review Team, the critical friend, or the advisor assigned to conduct a specific MusiQuE procedure will:

- Study the documentation provided by the institution and the tools provided by the MusiQuE Office related to the procedure (guidelines for peers, code of conduct, applicable standards, analysis templates, report templates, guiding questions etc.) and conduct the evaluation or the benchmarking exercise accordingly .

- Produce or contribute to the production of the review report, or of the advisory report where applicable.
- Address or, where applicable, support the Secretary of the Review Team to address the comments to the Draft Report made by the MusiQuE Board or by the institution.
- Comply with all other protocols related to the procedure, including the clause of confidentiality.
- Transfer to MusiQuE the intellectual property of all works created in relation to the procedure.

The roles and responsibilities of the reviewers are detailed in the MusiQuE Guidelines for Peer Reviewers.

The roles and responsibilities of the MusiQuE Office and the MusiQuE Board in relation to the procedures laid out in this section have been detailed in Chapter 2. The MusiQuE Board and Chapter 3. The MusiQuE Office above.

## 7 Review standards

MusiQuE is working on the basis of the following sets of standards, which have been designed to meet different institutional needs:

- Standards for Institutional Review, to be used for reviews covering the whole institution (IR)
- Standards for Programme Review, to be used for the evaluation of one or more programmes within an institution (PR)
- Standards for Joint Programme Review, to be used for the evaluation of a study programme jointly developed by several partner institutions from different countries (not necessarily leading to a joint degree) (JPR)
- Standards for Classroom Music Teacher Education Programmes to be used for the evaluation of music teacher training programmes (CMTEPR)

In addition, MusiQuE has developed standards and evaluation frameworks for its procedures and activities outside the scope of the ESGs as follows:

- Framework for the Evaluation of Research Activities Undertaken by Higher Music Education Institutions
- Standards for Pre-College Music Education to be used for evaluations of pre-college music institutions and programmes

All the above sets of standards are available online at <http://www.musique-ge.eu/documents/musique-standards>.

Depending on the context and aim of the review procedure, one of these sets of standards will apply. This set will then be used by the institution to write its self-evaluation report and compile supportive evidence, by the Review Team during the site visit to structure and inform its fact-finding exercise and by the Review Team after the site visit as a basis on which to assess the institution / programme / joint programme and build the review report.

MusiQuE Standards are equally used outside review procedures, as a tool of reference for reviewers and institutions alike partaking in consultative visits or benchmarking exercises tailor-made to fit specific needs.

All sets of standards share a common philosophy and address similar areas; their differences lie in the way that they are specifically tailored to the review task in question.

With the exception of the evaluation framework for research activities which contains 8 standards distributed across 4 domains of investigation, each set of standards is divided into three columns as follows:

- The first column 'Standards' lists the 17 standards to be met, in the context of a self-evaluation process but mostly of an external evaluation process. These standards are distributed across

the 8 themes/domains of enquiry listed below and serve as threshold (minimum) standards. The domains are as follows:

1. Institutional Mission, Vision and Context/Programme's Goals and Context
  2. Educational Processes
  3. Student Profiles
  4. Teaching Staff
  5. Facilities, Resources and Support
  6. Communication, Organisation and Decision-making
  7. Internal Quality Culture
  8. Public Interaction
- The second column 'Questions to be considered when addressing this standard' includes, for each standard, a series of questions, which aim at facilitating the understanding of each standard and at illustrating the range of topics that could be covered by that standard. The function of these questions is not that they all should be answered separately in detail, but rather that they should provide guidance to the issues possibly addressed in the self-evaluation process in relation to each standard. These issues may differ according to the institutional context and the review procedure being used.
  - The third and last column 'Supportive material/evidence' should not be seen as an obligatory list, but rather provides examples of the kinds of supporting material which an institution team could provide to the Peer Reviewers as evidence of good practice.

Institutions and programmes to be reviewed will receive an indicative template for their self-evaluation report based on the MusiQuE standards. Each of the 17 standards listed in the first column needs to be addressed, while the second and third columns are meant as guidelines for the self-evaluation process.

## 7.1 Revision of standards

It is crucial that the MusiQuE standards should undergo continuous development to ensure that they remain reflective of the current reality of higher music education and of the artistic professions, respond to any further evolution of the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and answer the changing needs of institutions and of society.

The Revision of the standards is under the responsibility of the MusiQuE Board. The revision of the standards is a process that takes place every 4 years.

The following process is in place to guarantee that review of the standards is done in an appropriate and transparent manner.

- The Board approves the Plan for the revision of the Standards proposed by the MusiQuE office, including the timeframe of the revision process.
- The Board appoints a Working Group (WG), which will normally include a minimum of 6 members as follows:

- One member of the Board (Charing the WG)
- One member of the Office
- 2 Peer Reviewers from the Register (1 of them should be a student)
- One representative of an EMU member organisation
- One representative of a Pearle\* member organisation.
- The MusiQuE Office prepares terms of references for the WG members to which they are asked to commit, which explain the scope of the work, the sets of standards to be revised, the reference documents to be used in the process, and the timeframe, and proceeds to composing the WG based on the recommendations of the Board.
- The WG prepares draft revised versions of the Standards and submit them to MusiQuE's Board; following comments from the Board, the WG will adjust the draft revised versions.
- A consultation phase is organised, where the Proposal for Changes to the Standards is shared with all MusiQuE Peer Reviewers on the Register, representatives of all reviewed institutions and constituencies of AEC, EMU and Pearle\*.
- The WG adjusts the draft revised versions of the Standards based on the consultation and submits the Final Proposal for changes to the Standards to the Board.
- The Board makes the final decision on the Proposal to the Standards.
- The MusiQuE Office communicates the revised Standards with the partners, the Peer Reviewers from the Register and institutions that are to be reviewed by MusiQuE in future and publishes them on the MusiQuE website.

## 7.2 MusiQuE standards and the European standards for internal quality Assurance

The Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) have been developed in 2005 and revised in 2015 by the key stakeholders in the field of quality assurance at European level: the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the European Students' Union (ESU), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and the European University Association (EUA). A major goal of these Standards and Guidelines is to contribute to the common understanding of quality assurance for learning and teaching across borders and among all stakeholders. One of the principles they are based on is the primary responsibility of higher education institutions for the quality of their provision and its assurance.

The first part of these standards (Part 1) aims to provide higher education institutions with standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance. When the first set of criteria for institutional review in higher music education was developed in 2007, Part 1 of these standards and guidelines were considered as a reference tool (in their 2005 version).

The MusiQuE Board has the responsibility of ensuring that the MusiQuE Standards are in line with Part 1 of the ESG. In this regard, the Board performs regularly a mapping of the MusiQuE Standards against Part 1 of the ESG. This mapping is included among the reference documents shared with the Working Group responsible for the revision of the MusiQuE Standards.

## 8 Report and outcomes

This chapter broadly refers to MusiQuE procedures conducted by Review Teams composed through the process described under Section 4.3 above. Reports produced by critical friends within the Critical Friends Review procedure, or by peers assigned to conduct consultative visits or other types of MusiQuE procedures tailor-made to fit particular needs of an institution, while they follow the same pathway for approval by the MusiQuE Board, may be subjected to a shorter timeline depending on the quantity and quality of the materials provided by the institution for the specific exercise, on the length of the site visit where applicable, and on the deadlines agreed with the institution for the respective exercises.

### 8.1 Review report

The Review Team will draft a report, normally in English and within eight weeks of the site visit. This report will be based on all the information made available to the Review Team through the institution's own self-evaluation report and on insights gained during the site visit.

#### 8.1.1 Structure and creation process of the draft report

The first version of the draft report is prepared by the Secretary, building on written contributions made by the other Review Team members. The report follows a template that reflects the applicable framework of assessment. More broadly, all reports contain the following elements:

- Table of Contents
- Introduction (information on the context of the review, and key data on the institution/programme and composition of the Review Team)
- Analysis of how each standard is met:
  - Description of the situation in the institution or programme, based on elements from the self-evaluation report and on findings from the site visit properly referenced
  - Analysis of the situation and related recommendations
  - Statement assessing the compliance of the institution/programme/joint programme with the standards that represent the framework of assessment for the procedure in question.
- Final conclusion
- A summary of the compliance with standards and related recommendations; in case of accreditation procedures, the conditions imposed for each standard, if applicable.
- A list of relevant annexes, as deemed necessary for the procedure in question.

In the case of an accreditation procedure, the Review Team is asked to conclude its report with a proposal to the MusiQuE Board concerning the accreditation of the institution/programme/joint programme that has been reviewed. The proposal should be expressed as follows:

*“Based on the institution's/programme's/joint programme's compliance with MusiQuE standards, it is proposed that the institution/the (joint) programme be accredited/ be accredited with conditions/should not be accredited”.*

Within six weeks after the site visit, the Secretary is expected to send the draft version of the report to the other members of the Review Team, who will be given two weeks to provide their input and feedback. The revision process of the draft version is organised internally by each Review Team. The final draft of the report is subject to the Chair's approval and, subsequently, it is submitted to the MusiQuE Office for scrutiny.

### **8.1.2 Statement on the institution's/programme's compliance with the standards**

For each MusiQuE standard, compliance needs to be assessed by the Review Team as follows:

- Fully compliant - A standard is fully compliant when the approaches, structures or mechanisms relevant to that standard are fully implemented in a coherent and consistent way.
- Substantially compliant - A standard is substantially compliant when the standard is in place, while minor weaknesses have been observed but the manner of implementation is most effective. In such cases Review Teams are asked to include a recommendation as to how full compliance can be achieved.
- Partially compliant - A standard is partially compliant when the standard is in place, while significant weaknesses have been observed or the manner of implementation is not sufficiently effective. In such cases Review Teams are asked to include a recommendation as to how full compliance can be achieved or a condition.
- Not compliant - A standard is not compliant when the approaches, structures or mechanisms relevant to that standard are lacking or implemented inadequately. In such cases Review Teams are asked to include a strong recommendation or a condition.

The verdict on compliance should be duly justified.

### **8.1.3 From draft to final report: approval and decision-making process**

Once the Draft Report has been approved by the Chair, it is submitted to the MusiQuE Office. Here the Draft Report is checked for relevance and consistency with the applicable framework of assessment, for language and compliance with the enhancement-led focus of MusiQuE procedures, for the relevance and substantiation of the arguments provided in support for the Review Team's decision on compliance levels. The Secretary and the Review Team will address the preliminary comments by the MusiQuE Office as they see fit. Following these amendments, the Draft Report is submitted for the approval of the MusiQuE Board.

In turn, the MusiQuE Board will consider whether the draft report is consistent and relevant to the applicable framework of assessment, and whether the Review Team's analysis and argumentation for each standard support its decision with regard to levels of compliance. Comments and recommendations by the MusiQuE Board issued in this phase will be addressed by the Review Team. The dialogue between the MusiQuE Board and the Review Team in this process will be mediated by

the MusiQuE Office until an agreement is reached with regard to the version of the report that will be submitted to the institution for the accuracy check.

Once the comments by the MusiQuE Board are addressed by the Review Team, the MusiQuE Office invites the institution to comment on the factual accuracy of the Draft Report within a maximum of four weeks since the reception of the report. The factual comments submitted by the institution will be shared by the MusiQuE Office with the Review Team. A further amendment of the Draft Report aimed to ensure factual accuracy will be thus implemented by the Review Team, making sure that consistency between the corrected factual information and the conclusions drawn is maintained.

Subsequently, the revised report is submitted again to the MusiQuE Board for the final endorsement or, in the case of accreditation procedures, for the formal decision on the accreditation of the institution/programme/joint programme based on the proposal of the Review Team. With the endorsement or formal decision of accreditation issued by the MusiQuE Board, the review report can be considered final and the review procedure closed.

## **8.2 Review outcomes and consequences**

### **8.2.1 Outcomes of a MusiQuE quality enhancement review**

In the case of a Quality Enhancement Review, the result of the procedure is the final report itself, which includes the list of standards met, substantially met and not met, highlights the institution's/programme's strong points, and provides advice and suggestions/recommendations for change.

The institution will receive a letter from the MusiQuE Board stating that the institution/programme/joint programme has been reviewed by MusiQuE with reference to the MusiQuE standards and procedures and referring to the summary of compliance with standards. The letter will also inform the institution about the possibility of a follow-up process, involving the filling in of a follow-up template within 6-12 months after the delivery of the final report (see section 9).

### **8.2.2 Outcomes of a MusiQuE accreditation procedure**

In the case of an accreditation procedure, in addition to the report and advice, the result will include a decision on the accreditation of the institution/programme/joint programme, with the following possibilities:

- Accreditation
- Conditional accreditation
- Institution/programme/joint programme not accredited (in cases where there is non-compliance with a significant proportion, usually defined as six or more, of the 17 standards or, exceptionally, when non-compliance is less substantial than this, but the extent and seriousness of the conditions needing to be met is such that the Review Team deems it unrealistic for them to be fulfilled within the maximum period allowable – see below).

In all these cases, additional recommendations may be developed by the Review Team in order to assist the institution with its further improvement.

Where the decision is to grant accreditation, this will be for a period of 6 years unless national legislation sets a different interval. In this case, the institution receives the decision with the accreditation results, as well as accreditation certificates.

Where conditions are attached to accreditation, the institution will be given a period of 12 months to show that the conditions have been fulfilled (with adjustments to national contexts if the requirements are different) by filling in the follow-up template (see section 9.11). In exceptional, well justified cases, this period can be shortened or extended (to a maximum period of two years).

If, by the expiry of the maximum period allowed, an institution that has been given conditional accreditation fails to show that the conditions have been fulfilled, the MusiQuE Board will make an evaluation of progress achieved and, on that basis, take one of the following three actions:

- authorise a further extension to allow the fulfilment of any remaining conditions
- call for a team of 2 people from the initial review team to visit the institution a second time, at the cost of the institution, to determine ‘in situ’ whether the condition has, in practice, been fulfilled or is close to fulfilment
- in extreme cases, withdraw the conditional accreditation. If this should be the Board’s decision, the institution has available the same courses of action to redeem matters as an institution not granted accreditation at the original decision (see below).

Where the decision is not to grant accreditation, clear reasons should be given. An institution is free to re-apply for accreditation after a period of one year. In such a case, a new self-evaluation document is required (but may be largely focussed on how the institution has addressed the previous reasons for withholding accreditation), and a new Review Team will be assembled.

## 8.3 Publication of results

### 8.3.1 Process

MusiQuE makes a clear distinction between its activities within the scope of the ESGs and its activities outside the scope of the ESGs. Subsequently, all reports resulting from activities outside the scope of the ESGs include a statement in this regard and, where not subject to a confidentiality clause, they are published on the MusiQuE website, but [in an area clearly separated](#) from the reports of the quality enhancement and accreditation procedures. Concurrently, the institutions undergoing a quality enhancement or an accreditation procedure conducted by MusiQuE are compelled to act in full compliance with ESG 2.6., and agree with the publication of the reports resulting from such procedures, together with the formal decision issued by the MusiQuE Board in relation to these reports. MusiQuE publishes all reports resulting from activities within the scope of the ESGs [in a designated section of the website](#) and on the Database for External Quality Assurance Reports (DEQAR).

Reports are being uploaded on the MusiQuE website at the end of the procedure, when the final report is sent to the institution.

In case of accreditation procedures where conditions are formulated, the extent to which these conditions have been fulfilled is checked after 12 months, during the follow-up process. The follow-up report and the related decision issued by the MusiQuE Board will be also published after having been officially communicated to the institution.

The institution is entitled, and encouraged, to use the summary of the report's findings, or extracts from it, in any responsible way that it sees fit – as part of the evidence base for formal quality assurance procedures or, where relevant, in its own institutional publicity and internal quality assurance processes.

### **8.3.2 The use of MusiQuE label**

The MusiQuE label can be used for a maximum period of 6 years only by institutions that have undergone a quality enhancement review, or an accreditation procedure for which a decision of accreditation has been issued by the MusiQuE Board. Where conditions are attached to accreditation, the institution is given a period of 12 months (with adjustments to national contexts if the requirements are different) to act on the conditions imposed. After re-assessment through a follow-up procedure, the MusiQuE label can be used should the Board decide that the conditions to receive accreditation have been fulfilled.

### **8.3.3 The use of EQAR label**

Institutions reviewed by MusiQuE may not make use of the EQAR label even though the registration on EQAR is an attribute of MusiQuE. As such, the EQAR label is used as follows:

- on MusiQuE's website: it appears on all pages (bottom of the page, under "Quality Assurance Networks"). The list of services provided by MusiQuE on its website clearly distinguishes between activities within and outside the scope of the ESG.
- on the accreditation certificates issued by MusiQuE.

## 9 Follow-up procedures

While not compulsory except for accreditation procedures where a decision of conditional accreditation was issued, the follow-up process has been embedded in the design of most MusiQuE procedures and services, regardless if these are implemented within or outside the scope of the ESGs. As such, with minor exceptions (e.g. benchmarking exercises), a follow-up procedure is included in the cost and among the services listed in offers extended to all institutions applying for services provided by MusiQuE. Given that MusiQuE consistently applies the same general principles for all its procedures, the section herein addresses the follow-up procedure in relation to quality enhancement reviews and accreditation procedures which form insofar the largest body in the MusiQuE portfolio.

### 9.1 Process

In order to assist visited institutions in implementing the recommendations listed in the review report, and to enable MusiQuE to assess its impact, a paper-based peer-reviewed follow-up procedure is offered to all institutions reviewed by MusiQuE.

[A three-column template](#) has been developed as a tool to facilitate the follow-up process, as follows:

- The issues pointed out by the Review Team as elements to be developed/ further developed are listed in the first column. In the case of an accreditation procedure, the conditions imposed by the Review Team as well as the recommendations are listed.
- The second column, initially empty, is to be filled in by the institution with short reports of the actions undertaken for each element of improvement/each condition and each recommendation announced by the Review Team. In cases where the institution has not followed one or more conditions or recommendations, the reasons for this will need to be explained in this column.
- The third column, initially empty will include the comments of the Review Team on the reports drafted by the institution in the second column.

The template is sent to the institution together with the letter informing the institution of the MusiQuE Board's endorsement of the review report or of the accreditation decision. The letter also indicates the deadline by which the template needs to be sent back to the MusiQuE Office. In the case of accreditation procedures where formal conditions have been imposed, the accompanying letter stresses the crucial importance of observing this deadline and the potential threat of accreditation being jeopardised if satisfactory reporting on the fulfilment of the conditions is not made by that deadline.

### 9.2 In the case of quality enhancement reviews

There are no conditions, but only recommendations in the case of quality enhancement reviews; the follow-up process is therefore voluntary. Institutions are still systematically asked to fill in the

MusiQuE follow-up template within 1 year and to provide evidence of what has been improved during that period. An extension of the deadline may be requested by the institution.

The MusiQuE Board will consult the Review Team which conducted the initial review of the institution/programme. One or more members of the team will be asked to study the template filled in by the institution, as well as the evidence provided, and to fill in the third column of the follow-up template with comments and, if appropriate, further recommendations.

The MusiQuE Board will endorse the follow-up report and send it back to the institution with a letter by the Board.

The costs related to this follow-up procedure are included in the initial offer that has been signed by the institution.

If it is felt by the Review Team or the MusiQuE Board that the material is not sufficient to assess the fulfilment of the conditions then, subject to the agreement of the institution, a team of two individuals from the initial Review Team will be asked to visit the institution a second time at the cost of the institution. The same additional action can be implemented at the request of the institution itself if it wishes an actual site visit as part of the follow-up process.

### **9.3 In the case of accreditation procedures**

In the case of an accreditation, there are 2 levels of follow up: recommendations and conditions.

#### **9.3.1 Recommendations**

The recommendations will be clearly listed in the reviewers report and will need to be addressed by the institution in its self-evaluation report at the next renewal of accreditation. In addition, it is systematically proposed to the institution that the follow-up procedure applied to any conditions made by the Review Team also applies to the recommendations made. The procedure detailed below will therefore apply to the recommendations as well as the conditions.

#### **9.3.2 Conditions**

The follow-up template will list all the conditions formulated by the Review Team. The institution will have up to 1 year to provide evidence that the conditions have been implemented and to complete the follow-up template accordingly. In exceptional circumstances, the MusiQuE Board may shorten or extend the deadline.

- The MusiQuE Board will proceed as for voluntary follow-up procedures: the template will be sent to the Review Team, who will study all the material and fill in the third column “sur dossier” to assess whether the conditions have or have not been met.
- The MusiQuE Board will then consider the completed template and recommendation by the peer-reviewer(s) and decide whether the conditions have been met or not.
- If it is felt by the Review Team or the MusiQuE Board that the material is not sufficient to assess the fulfilment of the conditions, a team of 2 reviewers from the initial Review Team will be asked to visit the institution a second time at the cost of the institution.

- If the evidence “sur dossier” suggests that the conditions have not been met, the Board may offer an extension of the deadline, arrange a follow-up visit as above or, in extreme cases, withdraw conditional accreditation as described in 8.2.2.

#### **9.4 Periodicity of review procedures**

In as much as internal quality assurance processes should be continuously undertaken to ensure a constant care for quality and a constant improvement of all provisions, external review procedures should additionally take place at regular intervals.

The period of time between two reviews will inevitably vary, as MusiQuE operates all across Europe, with different periods set by national regulations. All institutions choosing MusiQuE for their review will be encouraged to be reviewed every six years: the institution will normally be approached by the MusiQuE Office in the fifth year following the last review with a proposal to start a new review procedure. However, when the interval between two reviews set by the national legislation is shorter or longer than six years, it is this interval which will be taken as a reference and the timing of the approach from MusiQuE staff will be adjusted accordingly.

## 10 Quality assurance of MusiQuE and its procedures

As with any organisation that practises a policy of continuous quality enhancement, MusiQuE operates both internal and external quality assurance procedures, the former being integrated into its everyday working and the latter being implemented at periodic intervals.

### 10.1 Internal quality assurance

The key focus of internal quality assurance for MusiQuE is upon its review procedures: how they are run, how they are perceived by institutions and by Review Teams and how they can be improved. MusiQuE employs a variety of feedback mechanisms and, on an annual basis, draws up a report informed by this feedback so that its actions to implement continuous enhancement are transparent and readily available to interested parties.

#### 10.1.1 Feedback mechanisms

Once the final report has been sent to the institution by the MusiQuE Board, feedback questionnaires are sent by the MusiQuE Office to the reviewed institutions as well as to the reviewers.

Questionnaires addressed to reviewed institutions aim at collecting feedback on:

- The institutional experience of producing the documentation (number of persons involved in the production of the self-evaluation report, ownership of the process, difficulty in collating the documentation, relevance of the questions to the institution/programme, usefulness of the self-evaluation questions and process, usefulness of the MusiQuE material, etc.)
- the composition, efficiency and professionalism of the Review Team
- the clarity of the report
- the relationship of the MusiQuE procedure to the national accreditation context and framework

Questionnaires addressed to Review team members aim at collecting feedback on:

- the adequacy and usefulness of the documentation produced by the institution and of the supporting material provided by MusiQuE
- the composition of the Review Team, the allocation of tasks within the team and the relevance of the briefing received
- the relevance and clarity of the MusiQuE standards
- communication with the other review team members and with the institutions' representatives
- the post-review process
- matters related to languages and translation

When MusiQuE cooperates with other external quality assurance agencies, joint versions of these questionnaires are produced together with the partner agency in order to collect feedback on the joint procedure.

Once every year, usually between January and March, the MusiQuE Office compiles all results of the questionnaires received following procedures coordinated in the previous year and makes an analysis of any trends discernible in these results. The results, their analysis and a set of proposed actions for improvement are then considered by the Board, which also has access, if required, to the original questionnaires. The Board, normally at its Spring meeting, decides on any actions that it believes should be undertaken to improve the procedures. Any suggestions to change the Standards will be fed into the process for the revision of the standards.

If answers given by the Peer Reviewers to the feedback questionnaire, or direct contact with the Office reveal issues within the Review Team or in relation to the attitude of one of the reviewers, the following procedure applies:

- After informing the Director of MusiQuE, members of the MusiQuE Office investigate the matter further by contacting the respondent to the questionnaire, and possibly other members of the Review Team concerned, in order to understand the issue. The matter may be pursued by the Director of MusiQuE.
- If deemed necessary, the Director will inform the Board, either verbally at the following Board meeting, or by email.
- Where there is found to be an issue, action will be taken to prevent another occurrence of the problematic situation. The Office may, for example, add notes in the Peer Reviewers' Register concerning relationships between some reviewers, who should not serve together on the same team again; the Office or the Board may act to remind a peer-reviewer of his/her obligations in relation to the guidelines and Code of Conduct; or, if the issue warrants this, the Board may even remove a peer-reviewer from the Register.

MusiQuE also collects feedback on the training for Peer Reviewers delivered annually, through an online feedback questionnaire addressed to all participants immediately after the training session. The results of this questionnaire are compiled and considered first by the Board at its following meeting, and by the Working Group in charge of preparing the annual training session.

## 10.2 External quality assurance

### 10.2.1 External evaluator

An external evaluator is appointed by the MusiQuE Board to review material documenting MusiQuE's activity, as well as to monitor the compatibility of the system with the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). The evaluator should be independent of the operations of MusiQuE and may come from within or outside the music education sector.

The external evaluator is appointed for 2 years (renewable once for 2 years) and is in charge of producing an annual evaluation report with comments addressed to the Board. Where relevant, the annual report produced in the following year by the Board will make reference to recommendations from the previous external evaluator's report and how these have been addressed. In addition, the MusiQuE Board will normally meet the External Evaluator once a year.

The reports of the external evaluators are published [on the MusiQuE website](#).

### 10.2.2 External reviews

MusiQuE wants to be accountable to its users and stakeholders. For this purpose, MusiQuE undergoes an external review every five years, in line with the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). This external review will also aim at being listed on the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR). The MusiQuE Board is in charge of preparing for external reviews.

## **11 Public interaction**

### **11.1 Trend Analysis**

The most important public interaction in terms of content is through the period analysis of trends carried out by MusiQuE. This trend analysis is just one of the many elements that are put into the public domain through the use of the MusiQuE website, newsletters and other modes of communication.

Every two years an individual well experienced in higher music education, and in quality assurance activities within this sector, is commissioned to produce a trend analysis. This analysis uses samples of MusiQuE review reports (all types of procedures) and focuses on identifying trends in the recommendations expressed by the Review Teams and how the performance of institutions and programmes has been assessed by these teams for each MusiQuE standard.

### **11.2 Annual Report**

The MusiQuE Board is in charge of producing and publishing an annual report on all its activities for the year.

The annual reports produced by the MusiQuE Board will form an important part of the evidence trail scrutinised by the External Evaluator (see below) and used in the compilation of the self-evaluation report that the MusiQuE Board will prepare as part of periodic external reviews.

### **11.3 Communications**

#### **11.3.1 MusiQuE website**

MusiQuE's website is the main tool used for regular communication and transparency. Information about MusiQuE's structure, mission and vision, services and key documents are available and easily reachable online. MusiQuE also regularly publishes news items and announcements. Finally, the website is the platform where the reports of the MusiQuE procedures are regularly uploaded and available.

#### **11.3.2 Communication through the partners**

MusiQuE's policy on regular communications with and through the partners with their members is agreed separately with each partner organisations. MusiQuE periodically provides articles or news for publication on the websites and in the newsletters of its partner organisations.

### **11.3.3 Information sessions, presentations and publication of articles**

Information sessions during AEC, EMU and PEARLE\*'s Board meetings and presentation during their General Assemblies are regularly delivered in order to ensure that the Boards and General Assemblies of each of the partner organisations are informed about the work of MusiQuE.

The MusiQuE Board and staff regularly represent MusiQuE - individually and, where appropriate, collectively - at quality assurance and accreditation-related events and actively explore opportunities to present MusiQuE to a wide audience: national/regional networks of higher music education institutions, individual meetings with interested institutions, European conferences on Quality Assurance, etc.

Several articles have been presented at the European Quality Assurance Forum EQAF, and some of them selected for publications. See <http://www.musique-qe.eu/documents/articles>.

### **11.3.4 Keeping up-to-date with the latest developments in quality assurance**

In order to inform themselves about latest developments in quality assurance, representatives of the Board and staff regularly attend meetings organised by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) – including the European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF) - , the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) and the Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE).

## **11.4 Membership in international organisations**

MusiQuE is actively involved in two network organisations:

- The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) where MusiQuE has the status of an affiliate member, and
- the European Alliance for Subject-Specific and Professional Accreditation a Quality Assurance (EASPA), where MusiQuE is one of the founding members



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