

# 1 Higher music education and quality assurance

## 1.1 Music, the musician and musical quality

Music has many forms and functions. Music may be described as an art, an academic discipline, an effective vehicle for building identity and social cohesion or as a most highly appreciated means of relaxation. Music may please, irritate, challenge and heal; it may appeal to our intellect, our emotions and our body. The effects of music are different for each individual; responses to music are therefore similarly individual.

Without diminishing the importance of these other functions, music is, however, first and foremost an art form. It is a means by which humans are able to express insights which cannot be expressed in any other way.

### *The musician*

Musicians create music primarily through the three distinct but often overlapping activities improvisation, pre-planned performance and composition. The emphasis amongst these will differ according to cultural traditions. There is a strong element of creativity in all music-making, whether composition, performance or improvisation. As well as developing these primary creative activities, higher music education studies in the contemporary world often address additional professional demands - such as those of music technology and music pedagogy - and musicians may have advanced skills across a number of such disciplines.

In order to produce original music, a musician must have a highly developed capacity for using musical vocabulary imaginatively and critically. With the help of comprehensive knowledge of the musical elements (structure, form, harmony, etc.), awareness of musical history, sensitivity to audience expectations and highly advanced technical skills, the musician is able to stand out as an individual artist.

A musician's work is physical as well as intellectual and creative. It is characterised by artistic freedom, where unlimited options may be available, and by the contrasting need for discipline and unfailing accuracy. Musical work presupposes great courage and the ability to take risks, as well as the ability to think and act critically and make precise choices.

### *Musical quality*

There are no universally accepted definitions of musical quality; qualitative standards in music are developed within musical traditions. That is to say, the artistic experience and expectations embedded in a musical tradition form the basis by which musical quality can be assessed.

But this does not mean that musical quality is solely a matter of 'fitness for purpose'. A piece of music may well serve specific functions; such functions should not be under-rated but as signifiers of quality they can never entirely replace what we might describe as inherent aesthetic value. Whatever the contingencies surrounding the assessment of musical quality, they all rest upon the premise that the aesthetic value of a piece of art is inherent in the art-work itself.

All of this is eloquently described in the document "*Quality, Assurance, Accountability: A Briefing Paper*":

Music study is permeated with accountability. Music requires a special relationship between accuracy and freedom. In practice sessions, rehearsal, and even in

performance, constant evaluation and adjustment are the norm. The success of professional music study is evaluated in light of the high standards and high expectations of the larger musical world. Tours, recordings, and international competition continue to define professional expectations by exchange of work at the highest levels. In music, we have standards because we have art, not art because we have standards.<sup>1</sup>

Performers, composers, editors or producers project their own personality into performance or composition. Their personalities distinguish their own interpretations/compositions from those of other artists. Personal characteristics may manifest themselves in the technical, interpretative, idiomatic, original, authentic and imaginative characteristics of the work. Especially in the sphere of interpretation, assessments of musical quality generally incorporate some consideration of the ‘rightness’ of fit between the art-work and the personality of the artist. However, the way in which this relationship is conceived is once again subject to the musical tradition within which the judgement is made. What one tradition sees as satisfyingly characterful may be viewed by another as indulgently ostentatious.

What this shows is that the domain of quality assessment in music is complex and requires a correspondingly sophisticated and sensitive understanding of the field and its diversity if judgements are to have validity. Such understanding may be developed individually by musicians who learn their craft solely through extensive musical practice but it is arguably more reliably engendered as a key side-product of the intensive, structures and shared pursuit of musical excellence carried out in institutions of higher music education.

## 1.2 Characteristics of higher music education

Higher music education is characterised as musical study undertaken in the context of Higher Education that has a primary focus upon students’ practical and creative development leading to professional activity in the field of music<sup>2</sup>. This study is mainly offered by specialist institutions of the kind referred to as Conservatoires, Musikhochschulen, Music Academies and Music Universities. These may be stand-alone institutions or departments within larger multidisciplinary institutions. In this document, when the term ‘conservatoire’ is used, it should always be understood as a global term for all these institutions.

Higher music education is now accepted across Europe as a discipline appropriate to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle study. An increasing number of conservatoire-style institutions either offer or are developing 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle studies. Nevertheless, some of the assumptions embedded in the concepts of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and European Qualifications Framework (EQF) need special clarification when applied to higher music education:

- A ‘ladder’ of study accessed via prior qualifications: Training in higher music education depends fundamentally upon students having obtained a significant level of musical skills prior to entry. Primary and secondary schools do not always offer opportunities for obtaining such skills. Conservatoires need to assess their applicants through specially designed entrance examinations, which may consist of live auditions with juries of teachers.

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<sup>1</sup> For a full version of this document, see <http://www.musique-qe.eu/userfiles/File/msmapbriefingpaper.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> See the brochure *Reference Points for the Design and Delivery of Degree Programmes in Music* published in July 2009, which contains a Sectoral Qualifications Framework for Higher Music Education and provides a clear overview of the higher music education sector to a wide audience by using the ‘Tuning’ methodology.

- Mobility within the EHEA: The objective of removing barriers to mobility needs to be seen in the context of a long tradition within higher music education, active well before the European higher education reforms of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, of students moving from one institution – and one country - to another as they pursue their personal growth as musicians. Their ‘passport’ for such mobility is their level of musical accomplishment; qualifications in their own right, however universally recognised, will not replace the principle of verifying a student’s capabilities through entrance examinations.

The audition is seen as a key tool in the maintenance of high artistic standards and it remains an important requirement for admission to any of the three cycles of higher education at a conservatoire. This form of selection at the beginning of each cycle is also a critical mechanism for the institution to achieve balance between the various disciplines and instrumental groups so that certain ensembles can be formed and relevant repertoire can be studied. Having such a rigorous selection procedure means, for example, that students already holding a Bachelor or Master’s degree are eligible, but not automatically entitled, to enter the next cycle.

- The learning process in higher music education centres on the personal and artistic development of the student. For most conservatoire students, 1-to-1 learning and teaching is of paramount importance for this development. Attempts to harmonise teaching methods and typical student-staff ratios across European higher education must take this into account.
- In addition to 1-1 lessons, many other learning and teaching approaches are employed so as to address the holistic and interdisciplinary nature of the subject. A student’s education often combines formal and informal elements and regularly includes experiences that take place within the professional environment.
- Obtaining a high artistic level is dependent upon mastering extensive technical and intellectual challenges along with acquiring artistic maturity. The duration of study for higher music education is therefore likely to be longer than the three-year minimum for 1st Cycle programmes (indicated in the Bologna Declaration) and the typical durations of some other disciplines.
- The concept of employability, which is increasingly prominent in politico-economic strategies for higher education, is problematic when applied to higher music education. Although there are a certain number of organised careers for musicians that offer permanent contracts, many conservatoire graduates employ themselves as freelance artists, combining various professional tasks in what is called a ‘portfolio career’. A music career is therefore often significantly more reliant upon free-lance, entrepreneurial work than other careers. Such a working pattern is difficult to capture in employment statistics but this should not lead to an underestimation of the capacity of musicians to make a living in the professional world.
- Institutions specialising in higher music education support a wide range of original and innovative work across the performing, creative and academic fields. They welcome the broad definition of research employed in, for example, the ‘Dublin Descriptors’, and they recognise a special responsibility to develop research in, and through, practice in the performing and creative arts.

Higher music education aims to give each student an optimized environment for developing a distinctive artistic profile. Such an environment values the individuality of each teacher and student; it values and supports the search for, and sharing of, knowledge; it values open

discussion and dialogue. Even if objectivity can be applied to a number of aspects and concepts relating to musical skills, there are ultimately no final solutions or truths in music; there is no single method or route that will attain artistic goals. A supportive environment is needed for the successful development of students. Such an environment enables them to challenge the traditional musical practices and expectations. Furthermore, it demonstrates open-mindedness towards the diversity in the job market and is helpful in sustaining a continuous dialogue with a wide variety of professional communities. Finally, a conservatoire environment sets the stage for exploring the artistic potential in encounters between other musical cultures and traditions, and for preparing students for international mobility.

### **1.3 Rationale for a Europe-wide Evaluation and Accreditation Body for Music**

In 1.2, higher music education was shown to have numerous special and distinctive characteristics. For an evaluation or accreditation procedure that focusses upon a discipline such as higher music education to be accurate as well as fair, it is necessary to consider the way that quality emerges from the special characteristics of that discipline. A quality assurance process that derives from a generic QA perspective will undoubtedly have some value when applied to music, but it will also have limitations. These may arise from a variety of factors: the actual framework used; the balance of expertise to be found among Review Team members; and, not least, the likely scepticism with which musicians working in conservatoires will regard a process that is not informed from first to last by musical knowledge and understanding.

For quality assurance and enhancement procedures to be of real benefit to higher music education institutions that wish to use them as tools for continuous self-evaluation and improvement, they need to feel equally embedded in the discipline as the learning, teaching and other attributes which they examine. A procedure that originates within the community of conservatoires, rather than being visited upon that community from the domain of generic quality assurance, is most likely to succeed in this respect.

Since 2000, much work has been done across the community of institutions involved in higher music education to develop a shared understanding of the learning and teaching characteristics applicable to music and the relationship between these and generic tools such as the Dublin Descriptors. Subject-specific versions of these tools, such as the 'Polifonia'/Dublin Descriptors have been created and these have been incorporated in a publication 'Reference Points for the Design and Delivery of Degree Programmes in Music', already cited in 1.2. From such tools and documents, there has developed a strong yet flexible consensus as to expectations of students graduating in music at Bachelor, Master and Doctoral levels and the key common areas that music curricula should address.

It is both logical and a real strength that a quality assurance and enhancement system for music should draw upon all this work and that the framework used as a reference point by institutions in constructing their self-evaluation reports and by review teams in evaluating them should explore the extent to which an institution conforms to, or consciously departs from, the consensus that has been established.

If the points above serve to justify the case for a procedure for music that is rooted in music, the European dimension is equally important. Quality assurance when conducted at a national level must contend with the fact that, in a small and closely-knit discipline such as music, most of those working in higher education in the same country will be known to one

another; many teachers work in more than one institution and they are linked by professional, as well as educational, networks. Moreover, there is often rivalry between institutions operating within the same national environment - in terms of reputation but also often of competition for funding. Arguably, none of these features is unique to music, but there are few disciplines (and many of those are other specialist, arts-based ones) where the pressures described are so keenly felt.

Having a body able to operate at the European level greatly eases these pressures. The pool of experts is instantly much wider and more likely to ensure that the relevant expertise can be found without conflicts of interest arising. Institutions are more likely to be receptive to constructive criticism when it is delivered by a team of impartial outsiders. Furthermore, peer review when conducted at a European level brings great benefits to both sides in terms of mutual sharing of different approaches and solutions to problems. It brings to the foreground the idea that there is no single way to achieve quality but that, on the contrary, there are many equally correct answers. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the international approach of MusiQuE connects to the international reality of the music profession today.

#### **1.4 Involvement of the professional stakeholders**

Being rooted in the discipline and European in scope are two powerful assets for a quality assurance system for higher music education. However, there is a third dimension that is equally important, namely being informed by the wider musical context – both the pre-college musical education sector and the music profession.

Higher music education is located in a pivotal position in relation to both of these: its students generally enter from pre-college training and leave into the profession; that profession, for many of them, comprises a mixture of professional practice and teaching which, in turn, makes them the next generation of stakeholders in pre-college music education; and, finally, its teachers are mostly individuals who combine on a daily basis professional practice with their work within the conservatoire context. Quality in higher music education is therefore shaped and inflected by the education that goes before it and the professional life that comes after. Moreover this influence applies to a level, and with a specificity, that is exceptional among higher education disciplines.

For this reason, MusiQuE has been set up in collaboration with two professional partners: the European Music Schools Union (EMU) and Pearle\*-Live Performance Europe (the Performing Arts Employers Associations League Europe). Both EMU and Pearle\* are organisations with a Europe-wide reach, and therefore also reflect this aspect of MusiQuE's mission.

EMU and Pearle\* are not only engaged with the activities of MusiQuE, they each contribute a member to its Board (see 3.1). The presence of representatives of both organisations on the MusiQuE Board means that the recognition and articulation of pre-college and professional perspectives are integral to MusiQuE and its functioning. The composition of the Board ensures that the kind of structured dialogue between higher music education, earlier music training and the profession that is crucial to long-term quality enhancement is a feature of its deliberations.

The European Music School Union (EMU) is the European umbrella organisation of national music school associations in Europe. Its aims and prominent tasks are:

- To promote music education and music practice.

- To co-operate by exchanging information on all questions concerning music schools.
- To promote exchanges of student delegations, teachers, pupils, orchestras, choirs, other music groups and so on.
- To raise the interest of the competent authorities and the public on questions of music education in general and to encourage amateur music and music studies.
- To help create and develop nation-wide federations of music schools.
- To maintain regular contact with interested international institutions such as the UNESCO, the European Music Council (EMC) and others.

Pearle\* is the European trade federation of Performing Arts organisations. Pearle\* represents through its members associations more than 4,500 theatres, theatre production companies, orchestras and music ensembles, opera houses, ballet and dance companies, festivals, and other organisations within the performing arts sector across Europe. The aim of Pearle\* is the establishing of a stable environment by supporting sustainability and promotion of the Performing Arts across Europe. It seeks to do this by:

- the exchange of information, experiences and ideas of common interest to members working in the Performing Arts sector
- the obtaining of information concerning all European issues relating to members' interests
- facilitating collective decisions in areas of common interest
- expressing Pearle\*'s views in discussions with bodies whose activities are relevant to Pearle\*
- lobbying in accordance with collective decisions reached by the members' representatives to EU and other authorities
- carrying out all activities connected with the above mentioned activities.

## **1.5 MusiQuE History**

To understand fully the rationale for MusiQuE, it is necessary to trace some of the recent history of the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC). This 'pre-history' of MusiQuE provides the context for why such an external evaluation body is needed and why it should take the form it does.

AEC is a member association composed of institutions delivering higher music education (HME). Its active members are conservatoires, music academies and Musikhochschulen operating within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and in countries of the European Neighbourhood Policy Initiative (ENPI). AEC has 260 active members and an additional 30 associate members in North America, Asia and Australasia.

Founded in 1953, AEC has been particularly active as a force for the development and modernization of higher music education since the beginning of the Bologna Process in 2000.

In fostering excellence in the artistic practice, learning, teaching, research and innovation that are to be found in conservatoires, and in recognizing that such excellence can be manifested in diverse forms, AEC has moved in a quite natural way – and always from the perspective of the discipline of music – towards recognizing a role for itself in the domain of quality assurance and enhancement. In doing so, it has found it helpful to consider in some detail what would be the characteristics of a quality assurance system tuned to the needs of HME and to the special characteristics of conservatoires as institutions where HME is delivered.

Alongside this reflection process, AEC has also been instrumental in developing a number of concrete tools and procedures designed to help HME institutions to engage with quality assurance and enhancement in ways that are meaningful for them. The following sections summarises some of the key elements in both these processes:

#### *Defining the characteristics of quality assurance systems in higher music education*

In 2002 – 2004, AEC undertook a project in collaboration with the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), the discipline-specific accrediting body for Music in North America, as part of an EU/USA programme<sup>3</sup> entitled “Music Study, Mobility and Accountability”. This project had quality assurance and accreditation as one of its main themes and, as a result, AEC and NASM jointly produced a statement on the characteristics of an effective evaluation system for the higher music education sector. This statement emphasized that the process of assessing and accrediting institutions and programmes for higher music education must be rooted in a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of music, the contexts in which music appears in relevant traditions and the many aspects of the musical profession. It made the point that, without such a rooting, the assessment may be preoccupied with only the technical and academic aspects of musical production – important as these may be – and thereby miss the innate, and indeed unique, characteristics of music as an art-form.

Part II of the project documentation<sup>4</sup> sets out a series of attributes believed to be essential for the effective reviewing of professional music schools and conservatoires with respect to music content and institutional mission. These attributes are reproduced in full in Section 5.1.

#### *Developing criteria and procedures for quality assurance reviews in higher music education (2006-2007)*

In 2006-2007, the project entitled ‘Accreditation in European Professional Music Training’ was carried out, building on similar projects in the fields of engineering, chemistry and business management that had the aim at establishing a so-called ‘European Quality Label’ in these disciplines. The project developed a European approach to external quality assurance and accreditation in higher music education.

As a concrete expression of this approach, the first version of a *Framework Document for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Music Education* was produced, including a set of common European criteria and procedures for external quality assurance and accreditation in music study, taking into account its specific characteristics and cultural diversity. A first version of the Handbook *How to prepare for an institutional or programme review in music* was also produced. The criteria and procedures were tested in 4 test visits in institutions in Germany, Norway, Italy and the Czech Republic during April/May 2007 and presented at a final conference at the Janáček Academy of Music in Brno in June 2007.

#### *Ensuring international compatibility of the approach developed (2007)*

The Framework Document referred to above was discussed in detail in the ERASMUS MUNDUS-funded ‘Mundus Musicalis’, a project on international cooperation in higher music education coordinated by the AEC. The ‘Mundus Musicalis’ project produced an analytical

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<sup>3</sup> For more information about this project, please visit <http://msma.arts-accredit.org>.

<sup>4</sup> See the document [Characteristics of an Effective Evaluation System for Music Schools and Conservatoires](#).

document, which compares quality assurance and accreditation procedures in higher music education in various parts of the world. The comments made in the 'Mundus Musicalis' project on the Framework Document were taken into account in preparing its final version, ensuring that a first step was already taken towards the international comparability and recognition of the criteria and procedures suggested in the document.

#### *Delivering review services and further developing the system (2007-2010)*

Following five institutional reviews in the Western Balkans as part of a project funded by the Swedish international development and coordination agency Sida<sup>5</sup>, a Working Group on Quality Assurance and Accreditation was established within the ERASMUS Network for Music 'Polifonia'<sup>6</sup>, to further develop and improve the review system. The Working Group developed separate criteria for programme review and monitored twenty reviews. It also designed questionnaires to systematically evaluate reviews, implemented some improvements to the system in line with the feedback obtained and further developed the Handbook *How to prepare for an institutional or programme review in music*. A Register for Peer-Reviewers in higher music education was also created.

In parallel, the AEC office informed national quality assurance and accreditation agencies about this European music-specific review system and pro-actively proposed cooperation in the form of joint procedures.

Thus, from 2007 onwards, two types of services became available to higher music education institutions in the field of quality assurance and accreditation:

- 1) *Quality Enhancement Process* (initially called the Institutional and Programme Review Scheme), through which higher music education institutions have had the opportunity to request a peer review visit resulting in an advisory report with recommendations for improvement written by international specialists in the relevant musical fields.
- 2) *Joint review procedures with national quality assurance and accreditation agencies*, through which institutions could benefit from a European-level subject-specific dimension added to the national quality assurance and accreditation procedures. The scope of these collaborations varied according to the partner agency, ranging from AEC only suggesting international experts to AEC coordinating the whole procedure (composition of the review team, organising the review visit and/or the report-writing process).

Twenty-nine reviews were conducted, out of which fourteen were undertaken in cooperation with a national quality assurance/accreditation agency.

Meanwhile, across the period 2004-2010, the *Polifonia/Dublin Descriptors for 1st, 2nd and 3rd Cycle Awards in Music* were developed<sup>7</sup>, adapting the text formulated in the original Dublin

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<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.aec-music.eu/projects/completed-projects/project-4>.

<sup>6</sup> Since the launch of its first edition in 2004, the ERASMUS Network for Music 'Polifonia' has pro-actively addressed European higher education policy issues from the perspective of higher music education. In each of its three cycles (2004-2007, 2007-2010 and 2011-2014), all supported by the Lifelong Learning and ERASMUS programmes of European Commission, the 'Polifonia' Network involved more than 60 organisations in professional music training and the music profession in 30 European countries. For more information, see <http://www.polifonia.eu/>.

<sup>7</sup> The Polifonia/Dublin Descriptors for 1st, 2nd and 3rd Cycle Awards in Music have been developed by the "Tuning in Music' Working Group (2004-2007) and the 'Third Cycle' Working Group (2004-2007) of the

descriptors to show that the fundamental attributes identified for each cycle are applicable to the music sector but, at the same time, introducing small changes so as to link the text more concretely to the reality experienced by those working in the music discipline. Complementing these descriptors at the more detailed level, the *AEC/Polifonia Learning Outcomes for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycle studies in music*, produced across the same period adopt a similar strategy, using the standard divisions of knowledge, skills and generic competences but attempting, within these domains, to capture the essence of what it is that music graduates in each of the cycles are expected to know and to be able to do<sup>8</sup>. Given their status since 2010 as recognised European reference points<sup>9</sup>, these Learning Outcomes have had an important role in guiding quality assurance and enhancement processes applied to music within the European context.

#### *Formalizing the European music-specific approach to quality assurance and accreditation (2011-2014)*

In 2011, a Quality Enhancement Committee was established by AEC with a range of important responsibilities concerning oversight and quality assurance of the Institutional and Programme Review Scheme: approving new experts for the Register of Experts; approving all review teams selected by the AEC office for review procedures; approving all experts' reports and confirmation letters to reviewed institutions; overseeing all review procedures and outcomes; discussing the feedback received from experts and institutions; and advising the AEC Office on possible improvements of the Scheme.

In parallel with this, another 'Polifonia' Working Group on Quality Enhancement and Accreditation (set up within the third edition of the ERASMUS Network for Music 'Polifonia'<sup>10</sup> 2011/2014) designed a model for a workshop for peer-reviewers and delivered two of these workshops in 2012 and 2014. The Working Group also reformulated the review criteria into *Standards for Institutional Review* and *Standards for Programme Review* and produced a new set of *Standards for Joint Programmes Review*, in cooperation with the 'Polifonia' Working Group on Mobility.

In addition to its tasks listed above, the Quality Enhancement Committee was charged with exploring the feasibility of establishing a European-level quality assurance agency for the sector. Thanks to a close cooperation with the 'Polifonia' Working Group, this feasibility study was finalised in September 2013 and presented to AEC Council and membership in November 2013 along with an action plan for 2014 that outlined steps towards the actual establishment of this evaluation body.

Various models were explored with regard to guaranteeing the independence of the review body, and the option to keep the review scheme within the umbrella of AEC (following the

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ERASMUS Network for Music 'Polifonia'. See [http://www.aec-music.eu/userfiles/File/Polifonia-Dublin%20Descriptors%20150107%20external\(1\).pdf](http://www.aec-music.eu/userfiles/File/Polifonia-Dublin%20Descriptors%20150107%20external(1).pdf).

<sup>8</sup> The AEC Learning Outcomes for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycle studies in music have been developed by the 'Bologna' Working Group (2007-2010) and the 'Third Cycle' Working Group (2004-2007) of the ERASMUS Network for Music 'Polifonia'. See <http://www.aec-music.eu/userfiles/File/aec-polifonia-learning-outcomes-en.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> The AEC Learning Outcomes for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycle studies in music were reviewed and accepted within the framework of the Tuning Project as the Reference Points for the Design and Delivery of Degree Programmes in Music, see <http://www.aec-music.eu/userfiles/File/aec-brochure-tuning-educational-structures-in-europe-en.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> See footnote 6.

model of the Institutional Evaluation Programme operated by the European University Association) was first considered. Further investigations in relation to how various models of independence were perceived by the EQAR Register Committee, combined with the demand from the higher music education sector that AEC should act to create the possibility of formal accreditation procedures conceived and run from the sector itself, convinced the Association to move in the direction of a fully independent body. As a result, MusiQuE was created in October 2014 as an independent foundation, able to function autonomously in all respects whilst retaining the all-important connection to the wishes and needs of the music sector provided by AEC's membership network.

The MusiQuE Board is aware of the short interval between the date of the creation of MusiQuE and that of the external review visit for which this self-evaluation report has been prepared. This is why it feels it important to emphasise to the Review Panel that, although some significant elements of its procedures are new, the situation as seen from MusiQuE's side is one where it has inherited from AEC a fully-functioning and well-tested review scheme, with a strong level of continuity within the systems despite the complete and absolute break in terms of where responsibility for them lies.

Now that MusiQuE is a fully-operational entity, and has already carried out some procedures under its own aegis, the MusiQuE Board believes it to be a positive strength that, although fully independent from AEC, it continues to benefit from the considerable body of accumulated experience gained within the frame of AEC's earlier activities. MusiQuE has absorbed this experience into its own founding structures; however, it will undoubtedly carry forward the development of its procedures over the coming years in ways determined by its independent and distinct mission, aims and objectives.

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In this introductory section, a picture has been built up of the nature of music and of quality judgements in relation to music, the characteristics of higher music education and the importance of the wider context, whether this be the European dimension or the lifelong continuum of musical activity - from pre-college to the profession - within which higher music education sits at a pivotal point; finally, the history of MusiQuE has been presented.

In the next section, the mission and structure of MusiQue are outlined, after which detailed descriptions of its procedures and the regulatory elements governing them are provided in further sections. It is hoped that the influence of all the elements described in this first section can be seen in the way the mission, structure and procedures of MusiQuE have been conceived and developed.