

## 5 MusiQuE Procedures

### 5.1 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.

In 2002 – 2004, AEC and the U.S. based National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) collaborated on a project entitled “Music Study, Mobility and Accountability”, an extract from which was quoted in 1.1. Part II of the document<sup>11</sup> states that, to be effective in reviewing professional music schools and conservatoires with respect to music content and institutional mission, the review procedure should:

- 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.
  - 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 natures, achievements, aspirations, and structures of individual institutions.

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<sup>11</sup> See the document [Characteristics of an Effective Evaluation System for Music Schools and Conservatoires](#).

- 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 conservatoires 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 natures 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.

## **5.2 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. 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 evaluating institutions in relation to a set of standards, this 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 as ‘critical friends’, delivering their judgements in a spirit of constructive dialogue with the institution, its leaders, teachers, students and administrative staff.

The centrality of peer reviewers emphasises the peer-to-peer aspect of the procedures. They are not conceived as top-down, management-driven exercises but more as an engagement of equals where, in another context and with the appropriate training, the roles of reviewer and reviewed could potentially be reversed.

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 will be 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

### **5.3 Types of review procedures conducted by MusiQuE**

MusiQuE provides the following services:

- Quality enhancement reviews for institutions, programmes and joint programmes
- Accreditation procedures for institutions, programmes and joint programmes
- Bilateral collaborations with national quality assurance and accreditation agencies
- Quality assurance desk for institutions

#### **5.3.1 Quality Enhancement Reviews for Institutions, Programmes and Joint Programmes**

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.

##### **5.3.1.1 Objectives:**

- To provide an opportunity for institutions to engage with quality enhancement issues outside the constraining framework of a formal review
- To stimulate the process of internal reflection on quality issues and, where relevant, to assist institutional leaders in implementing quality-related reforms

- 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 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
- In the process, to furnish the institution with evidence, in the form of impartial external evaluation, that may then be used its self-evaluation report

#### **5.3.1.2 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.

#### **5.3.1.3 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.

### **5.3.2 Accreditation Procedure for Institutions, Programmes and Joint Programmes**

Higher music education institutions also have the opportunity to engage in formal accreditation procedures coordinated by MusiQuE. This means that, in countries where evaluation and accreditation bodies other than the national agency are authorised to operate, institutions may combine with a MusiQuE quality enhancement review the accreditation procedure required by law. Under these circumstances, the subject-specific and enhancement-oriented procedure will not be an additional burden for the institution, over and above its national accreditation obligations, but will 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.

#### **5.3.2.1 Objectives**

- To provide a procedure that satisfy the legal obligations in terms of accreditation as described in the national regulation of the country in question
- 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

- 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

#### **5.3.2.2 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.

#### **5.3.2.3 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 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.

### **5.3.3 Bilateral collaborations with national quality assurance and accreditation agencies**

An alternative to an accreditation procedure conducted solely by MusiQuE is for MusiQuE to operate in collaboration with a national quality assurance and accreditation agency through a merged set of standards and procedures. This option is especially attractive for institutions wishing to engage with a subject-specific and internationally-based quality enhancement review but obliged to conform to national requirements not allowing MusiQuE to conduct these procedures on its own. The basis of such collaborative accreditation procedures is that of a participation of equals. 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.

As part of the preparations for a collaborative procedure, a comparison is made of the national agency's standards with those of MusiQuE. 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 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.

In contexts where the use of a reviewing body other than the national agency is permitted but an institution believes that close collaboration with its national agency may benefit it, MusiQuE will also consider providing this possibility as an alternative to its own formal procedures, in view of the added value that always comes from the exchange of practices between organisations.

#### 5.3.3.1 Objectives

- To provide the opportunity for higher music education institutions who are obliged to work within their national system (or who find benefits in doing so) to choose to be evaluated through a procedure which is nevertheless informed in both its design and delivery by those with specialist knowledge and understanding of such institutions
- To offer a procedure that, while it may largely follow national patterns, 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

#### 5.3.3.2 Process

- Following an approach from a higher education institution expressing the wish that it do so, MusiQuE will contact the relevant national evaluation or accreditation agency to explore a possible cooperation for a specific procedure.
- A feasibility study will usually be undertaken during which both organisations will compare their practices (Can both sets of standards be merged?, What are the requirements set by each organisation for the institutional self-evaluation report?, How are reviewers appointed by each organisation and what kind of reviewers' profiles are looked for?, Who is in charge of writing the report in each organisation? etc.).
- If agreement can be reached on all points, a *Cooperation Agreement* will then be signed, stating the roles and responsibilities of each party.

- The basis on which judgments are made will have been determined in advance as part of the cooperation agreement and will be informed by the national legal system.
- The process itself will then be implemented according to the procedure that has been agreed.

#### 5.3.3.3 Outcome

- The precise outcome will depend upon the nature of the cooperation but will always take the form of a report.
- The report will either be written by international specialists in the relevant musical fields or will receive strong input from them.
- The fulfilment of any recommendations or conditions will usually be subject to the procedures of the national agency.
- 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.

#### 5.3.4 Quality Assurance 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 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 (inquiries can also be made by telephone, although it may not always be possible to provide the answer immediately within the span of the call).

When a query is received, it will be considered first by a member of the MusiQuE staff. If it is something that can be answered from the expertise available in the office, an email reply will be sent as soon as possible (normally within five working days).

If the query requires specialist expertise beyond the scope of MusiQuE staff, an email acknowledging the query will be sent out while staff consult the Register of experts to identify the individual most likely to be able to provide the answer required. The query is then forwarded to that person.

Normally, the expert will reply to the MusiQuE staff, who then forward the reply to the person making the original query; in some circumstances, it is more efficient to put the expert directly in touch with that person.

The MusiQuE staff can offer specific guidance in relation to MusiQuE tools/guidelines (including the MusiQuE Standards for Institutional, Programme and Joint Programme Review) and, where appropriate, will provide references to sources on internal and external quality assurance such as:

- Brochure *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe: Reference Points for the Design and Delivery of Degree Programmes in Music* (2009)

- *Report Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Music Education- an International Comparison (2008)*
- *Handbook Internal Quality Assurance in Higher Music Education (2007)*
- *Guide Learning from each other: Sharing good practice through benchmarking (2014)*

The MusiQuE staff 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. During such a visit, a programme will be designed in collaboration with the institution in order to ensure that the review will focus on their needs. Such preparatory visits will be charged to the institution in addition to the review costs.

Finally, in addition to its through-the-year virtual presence, the MusiQuE Quality Assurance Desk will be available in concrete form at the AEC's Annual Congress and, by request, at the annual meetings of EMU, Pearle\* and any other organisations that may, in future, be added to the MusiQuE Board. Delegates can bring their inquiries directly to MusiQuE Board and/or staff in a face-to-face interaction, which can then be followed up by email, etc. if necessary.