



External Review
of Educational Programmes in
Academic Choir Conducting and Vocal Art,
delivered
by the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art,
Russia

JOINT FINAL REPORT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
2	CONTEXT AND MAIN STAGES OF THE REVIEW.....	3
	2.1 Reasons for commissioning the review	3
	2.2 Composition of the Review Panel.....	4
	2.3 Goals and objectives of the review	5
	2.4 Stages of the review	5
	2.4.1 Self-evaluation report	5
	2.4.2 Site visit to the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art.....	6
	2.4.3 Evaluation report	6
3	DESCRIPTION OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES 'ACADEMIC CHOIR CONDUCTING' AND 'VOCAL ART'	6
	3.1. Information on the Institution.....	6
	3.2. Description of the programmes.....	7
4	FINDINGS	8
	4.1 Standard 1: Mission of the education institution	8
	4.2 Standard 2: Educational process	10
	4.3 Standard 3: Student qualifications	14
	4.4 Standard 4: Teaching staff.....	16
	4.5 Standard 5: Facilities, resources	17
	4.6 Standard 6: Internal quality assurance and decision-making processes	18
	4.7 Standard 7: Public information	20
5	CONDITIONS FOR ACCREDITATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR QUALITY ENHANCEMENT	21
	5.1 Conditions	21
	5.2 Recommendations	22
6	CONCLUSIONS	25
	ANNEX	26

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An external review of educational programmes 'Academic choir conducting' and 'Vocal art' delivered by the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art was carried out during the period from October 2011 through February 2012 involving a review of the self-evaluation report supplied by the Institution, a site visit by the external review panel, and preparation and production of the present report on the outcomes of the external review process.

The main purpose of the review was to analyze whether the educational programmes meet the *Standards and Criteria for Public Accreditation of Programmes of Higher Music Education (hereinafter – NCPA-AEC Standards and Criteria)* jointly developed by the National Center of Public Accreditation (NCPA) and the European Association of Conservatoires (AEC) in accordance with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG-ENQA)*.

NCPA-AEC Standards and Criteria were developed in 2011 when NCPA and AEC decided to cooperate on the joint accreditation procedure of study programmes offered by the Gnesins Academy of Music and the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art in Moscow, site-visits to be held on 13-18 February 2012. The document was meant to be used for the above mentioned accreditation procedure and to ensure that the latter would comply with NCPA and AEC criteria and procedures. Both the institutions concerned agreed to take part in the joint NCPA-AEC procedure.

This Final Review Report provides the basis for a decision on accreditation which is to be made by NCPA and AEC with respect to the programmes under review against *NCPA-AEC Standards and Criteria*. The main goal of public accreditation is to enhance quality of education and to promote quality culture in education institutions, to identify best practices of ongoing improvement of educational quality, as well as to ensure public provision of information about education institutions delivering study programs in accordance with European standards of educational quality.

2 CONTEXT AND MAIN STAGES OF THE REVIEW

2.1 Reasons for commissioning the review

Article 33.2, Point 41 of the Law of the Russian Federation "On Education" of 8 November 2010 №293-Ф3 stipulates that education institutions have the right to undergo public accreditation procedures conducted by Russian, foreign, or international educational, scientific, public, or other organizations. Information on the outcomes of such accreditation shall be considered in the state accreditation review process.

To undergo the public accreditation procedure regarding the programmes 'Academic Choir Conducting' and 'Vocal Art', the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art applied to the National Center of Public Accreditation via the Association of Russian Music Education Institutions.

NCPA operates at the national level and is recognized by the leading international organizations of quality assurance in higher education¹.

¹ The Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education CEENQA (full membership); The Asia-Pacific Quality Network APQN (full membership); The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education INQAAHE (full membership); The European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education ENQA (affiliate status).

2.2 Composition of the Review Panel

The procedures of nomination, selection and approval of candidates for membership in the External Review Panel were conducted jointly by the National Center of Public Accreditation (NCPA), the Association of Russian Music Education Institutions and the European Association of Conservatoires (AEC).

Composition of the Review Panel:

- **Eduardas Gabnys (Review Chair)**
Professor (former Rector) at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, Lithuania
Expert in higher music education, leadership and administration of education institutions of higher music education
Nominated by the Association of Russian Music Education Institutions
E-mail: eduardas.gabnys@lmta.lt
- **Lubov Stuchevskaya**
Professor at The Royal Flemish Conservatoire, Antwerp, Belgium
Expert in Vocal Studies
Nominated by the European Association of Conservatoires
E-mail: lubovstuchevskaya@gmail.com
- **Grzegorz Kurzyński**
Professor at The Karol Lipiński Academy of Music in Wrocław, Poland
Expert in higher music education, quality assurance and accreditation (including AEC criteria and procedures), the Bologna process implementation
Nominated by the European Association of Conservatoires
E-mail: grzegorz.kurzynski@amuz.wroc.pl
- **Anthony Zielhorst**
Artistic leader and conductor of choirs and ensembles, coordinator of the National Curriculum Master Orchestral Conducting, Conducting Dpt., Young Talent Dpt. at *The Royal Conservatoire The Hague, The Netherlands*
Expert in Choral Conducting, representative of stakeholders
Nominated by the European Association of Conservatoires
E-mail: a.zielhorst@koncon.nl
- **Eduard Fertelmeister**
Rector of Nizhny Novgorod State Conservatory named after M.I. Glinka, Russia
Expert in choral conducting and composition, leadership and administration of education institutions of higher music education
Nominated by the Association of Russian Music Education Institutions
E-mail: nngk@mail.ru
- **Ksenia Muslanova**
Post-graduate student at A. Schnittke Moscow State Institute of Music, Russia
Expert in Vocal Studies
Nominated by the National Center of Public Accreditation
E-mail: biankoluna@mail.ru
- **Zhanna Kuzminykh (NCPA representative acting as Panel Secretary)**
Head of the International relations Department of National Center of Public Accreditation (NCPA), Russia
Expert in the field of Higher Education, Bologna reforms implementation in Russia and in Europe
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The Review Panel comprised experts with the profound and wide-ranging experience in Higher Music Education in Europe and in Russia, who brought to their task, alongside their generalized professional knowledge, their particular specialist expertise: in the field of higher music education administration - Eduardas Gabnys, Grzegorz Kurzyński, and Eduard Fertelmeister; in the field of academic choir conducting –Anthony Zielhorst and Eduard Fertelmeister; in the field of vocal arts – Lubov Stuchevskaya. Participation of Grzegorz Kurzyński with his great expertise in

the Bologna process implementation, quality assurance and accreditation procedures including AEC criteria and procedures was of greatest value to the other Panel members. Having representatives of both Russian and European Higher Music Education provided the basis for reviewing the programmes in the context of European trends in quality assurance as well as of the Russian national higher education system.

The Panel members' specialized expert knowledge, their extensive experience in Music Education and music profession, and an active representation of the current student and stakeholder perspectives – all this enabled the Panel to work constructively addressing a wide range of issues in the course of the external review.

The Panel would like to express their appreciation to Mr. Maxim Belau, PhD, associate professor of Moscow State Open University, who worked as an interpreter across the two days of the Panel's visit to the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art. Mr. Belau was nominated by the Association of Russian Music Education Institutions.

2.3 Goals and objectives of the review

The review of the educational programmes 'Academic Choir Conducting' and 'Vocal Art' delivered by the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art (*hereinafter* also referred to as *the V. Popov Academy*) was aimed at:

- evaluation of the effectiveness of the study programmes under review and assessing the level of their compliance with the *NCPA-AEC Standards and Criteria*;
- provision by the Panel of conditions and recommendations which could contribute to further development and quality enhancement of the educational programmes being considered for accreditation.

2.4 Stages of the review

The review was conducted in three stages: (1) examination of the self-evaluation report and other documentation submitted by the V. Popov Academy (2) the site visit by the Panel to the Institution, and (3) preparation and production of an evaluation report on the outcomes of the external review process.

2.4.1 Self-evaluation report

The Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art was responsible for conducting the self-evaluation procedure regarding all the programmes under review, as well as for writing a self-evaluation report and its timely submittal to NCPA and AEC. Based on the *NCPA Guidelines for Conducting Self-Evaluations at the Program Level*, the self-evaluation report included the introduction, the findings of the self-evaluation procedure, and conclusions.

In accordance with *the external review schedule*, the self-evaluation report of the educational programmes in Academic choir conducting and in Vocal art was submitted to NCPA, AEC and distributed among the Review Panel members 30 days prior to the site visit by the Panel to the V. Popov Academy.

The External Review Panel wishes to note that the self study procedure was conducted on the basis of SWOT-analysis against each of the NCPA-AEC Standards. The panel also points out that it might have been helpful to present information on the educational programmes in Academic choir conducting and Vocal art in separate sections of the self-evaluation report thus highlighting peculiarities of each of the two specialisms. Nevertheless, the document was rather informative, which enabled

the Panel to get a general impression about the programmes under review and to outline the basic lines of inquiry to be followed during the site visit.

2.4.2 Site visit to the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art

The site visit to the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art was undertaken on 14 – 15 February 2012, with a preparatory briefing session for the Panel on the evening 13 February 2012. The aim of the site visit was to verify the validity of information contained in the self-evaluation report provided by the study programmes being considered for accreditation, and to gather additional evidence as to the programs' delivery and compliance with the *NCPA-AEC Standards and Criteria*.

NCPA and AEC were responsible for setting the dates and schedule of the evaluation visit; the site visit program and timetable were finalized after they had been discussed and agreed upon by the Review Panel and the V. Popov Academy administration.

In the course of the site visit the Panel conducted a few meetings and interviews with the senior administration staff, academic staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students, external stakeholders (employers, alumni). During the visit to the Academy the Panel conducted examination of the documentary evidence presented and requested for further information and supplementary materials.

The Panel would emphasize efficient interaction among experts, NCPA and AEC staff at the preparation and implementation stages of the review procedure.

The V. Popov Academy provided organisational support for the site visit, including arrangement of meetings and interviews on site, provision of meeting rooms and working facilities for the Panel.

At the end of the site visit, the Review Chair made a brief presentation to the Academy staff describing the most prominent preliminary findings of the external review.

The detailed schedule of the site-visit is attached as Annex to the present report.

2.4.3 Evaluation report

The review panel was responsible for delivering to NCPA and AEC the Final evaluation report on the outcomes of the external review of educational programmes being considered for accreditation.

The draft evaluation report (25 pages, excluding Annex), was prepared by the Panel Secretary based on the findings of the Panel. The Panel members then commented on the draft report and the finalized draft was sent to the V. Popov Academy to check for factual errors. The panel finalized the report after making the necessary factual corrections, and sent it to NCPA, AEC, and to the V. Popov Academy by the end of March 2012.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES 'ACADEMIC CHOIR CONDUCTING' AND 'VOCAL ART'

3.1 Information on the Institution

The Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art is a Federal State Budgeted Institution of Higher Professional Education, delivering educational programmes of secondary, vocational, higher, and postgraduate and further education.

The legal status of the Academy is determined by the Constitution of the Russian Federation, the Civil Code of the Russian Federation, Federal Acts "On Education", "On Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education", Model Regulation on educational institution of higher professional education (institution of higher

education) of the Russian Federation, approved by the decision of Council of Ministers of the Government of the Russian Federation (N 597, 06.29.93), other laws of the Russian Federation, regulatory documents of the Ministry of Education and Research of the Russian Federation and the Academy's Statutes. The founder of the Academy is the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation.

The Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art was established in 1991. In 2009 the Academy was named after Victor Popov, its founder, long-standing leader and chief conductor.

The Academy is the first Russian higher education institution (*hereinafter* – HEI) of vocal and choral art. The main idea behind its establishment was to maintain and develop in new historical context the long traditions of the Russian singing art.

The Academy differs from most Russian HEIs by the organization and content of the educational process. Its key programmes based of the principle of historicism focus on professional preparation and personal development of a conductor or a singer, possessing musical intelligence and skills to perform works of various styles and artistic movements, both traditional and contemporary.

The organizational structure of the V. Popov Academy incorporates five Departments (Choral conducting, Solo singing, History and Theory of Music, Piano, Humanities and Social and Economic Disciplines), as well as a few other units with research, managerial or support functions.

The Academy's concert activities constitute one of the pillars of proper training of musicians alongside with their involvement in the educational process. The Academy's choirs often perform concerts in Russia and abroad – in Europe, Asia (Japan, Taiwan), America (the USA, Mexico, Canada).

Nikolay N. Azarov has been Rector of the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art since 2009.

3.2 Description of the programmes

The Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art delivers full-time educational programmes leading to Specialist's Diploma degree; the length of study is 5 years.

The study plans of the reviewed programmes are structured according to the sets of disciplines (Humanities, Social and Economic disciplines, General profession-oriented disciplines, and Specialized disciplines) and includes a federal and a regional component, the latter comprising elective courses.

The Academy does not offer Bachelor or Master degree programmes.

Programmes of the specialism 'Academic choir conducting' prepare students for the professional careers of a conductor, a choirmaster, and a teacher.

The Academy annually enrolls 14 students in the programme 'Academic Choir Conducting', 10 places being state budgeted.

Programmes of the specialism 'Vocal art' (Academic singing) prepare students for professional careers of a concert-chamber singer, and a teacher.

The Academy enrolls 22 students in the programme 'Vocal art', 14 places being state budgeted.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 Standard 1: Mission of the education institution

Compliance with the standard – Needs improvement

The Academy's mission, aims, goals and objectives are stated in the document *Concept of Education and Professional Training of the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art*, which defines the mission as follows:

1. Improvement of the national system of Professional Arts Education, aimed at providing continuity and coherence between various educational levels, the study process beginning at an early age.
2. Preparation of highly educated individuals and highly qualified professionals capable of professional development and professional mobility in the context of informatisation and globalization.
3. Maintenance of the singing tradition, retaining and development of choral singing, an indigenous art of Russia, to provide safety and prosperity of the Russian culture as well as of Russia in general.

Based on the review of the documentation, meetings and interviews held during the site visit to the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art, the Review Panel finds that the V. Popov Academy's activities are aimed at the implementation of the ideas originally set forth by Victor Popov as key principles of the Institution: to carry on and develop the centuries-old traditions of the Russian choral art in the new historical context.

The Academy's core values are respect for traditions and history, continuity, training of professionals able to constitute the backbone of the Russian musical community. To achieve this goal, the Academy follows the principle of unity of solo and choral practices in the education provision for singers and conductors.

The Academy's *Strategic Plan 2011- 2016* identifies key areas of educational, research and methodological, concert and artistic, administrative and economic activities of the Institution in accordance with the stated mission, goals and objectives.

Having studied this document the Review Panel recorded its declaratory character since it does not contain any references to strategies or procedures by which the Institution plans to achieve the stated goals by the end of the indicated period. The Panel understands that to a certain extent this may be connected with the peculiarities of funding Russian state HEIs: the amount of funds allocated to HEIs from the state budget is determined every three months thus institutions do not have a clear vision of their financial prospects. However, in the Panel's opinion, strategies and stages of implementation may and are to be defined more clearly with regard to many of the stated aspects, among them 'organization and holding of regular master classes of outstanding experts', 'improving performance of the Scientific Research Department', 'enhancement of the Student Research Society' and others.

The *Concept of Education and Professional Training of the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art* does not sufficiently reflect a few aspects which are of primary importance in the context of the Bologna reforms implementation in Russia:

- the role of students and other stakeholders in contributing to enhancement of the education provision;
- significance of the internationalization strategy for successful positioning of the Academy in the European Higher Educational Area.

Based on the documentation examined as well as onsite meetings and interviews the Review Panel did not sense that the Academy's activities are adequately

focused on the development of student self-regulation and self-organization skills which form the basis for lifelong professional and personal development, or on the development of student mobility as stated in the Academy's mission.

The Panel would like to point out the fact that the *Concept of education and professional training of the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art* and the Academy's *Strategic Plan 2011 - 2016* – documents of primary significance defining priorities and key activities of the Institution – are not publicly available either in printed form or on the Academy's official web site.

During on site meetings and interviews the Panel did not have an impression that the Academy's academic staff members, students or stakeholders were well informed of the Institution's mission or its main provisions. This may be explained by the fact that the mission statement of the Academy is rather long.

The most important condition of the effectiveness of the mission is its practical orientation: a clear mission statement would set out the institutional vision, values, goals and strategic initiatives, which would enable administration and academic staff, students and stakeholders to understand the underlying basis for the actions of the Academy, as well as to cooperate efficiently towards common goals and to promote the image of the Academy in Russia and internationally.

Emphasizing their deep respect for the Academy's aspiration to retain traditions of the Russian choral singing school, the Review Panel members find it important to draw the Academy administration's attention to the fact that achievement and demonstration by the Academy of higher levels of flexibility, dynamism and openness to international trends in higher education, such as transition to the two-cycle system, introduction of ECTS and the European Diploma Supplement, establishment of internal quality assurance systems and others, could enhance the quality of education provision in the Institution and open new opportunities for personal and career self-realization of its students, alumni and academic staff.

Recommendations:

The Review Panel proposes the following **precondition for accreditation** of the programmes under review: V. Popov Academy's administration in cooperation with the staff members, students and stakeholders implement the following measures.

The Concept of education and professional training of the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art and the Academy's *Strategic Plan 2011 - 2016* are to be reviewed and amended so that:

- the mission of the Academy is articulated more clearly and concisely;
- strategies for achievement of goals and objectives set forth in the documents are determined and clearly articulated;
- the role of students and stakeholders in contributing to education provision enhancement is defined.

After the revision of the strategic documents it is necessary to inform the Academy's staff members, students, stakeholders and general public of the changes introduced through publication of the documents on the Academy's official website (Russian and English-language versions).

The Review Panel would emphasize the most important condition for the effectiveness of the above-listed measures: they need to be supported by adequate decisions and procedures: active involvement of students and stakeholders in the development and revision of study plans, curriculum design, as well as in design and implementation of various aspects of internal quality assurance system, etc.

- The Panel recommends that the V. Popov Academy administration in close cooperation with the Academy's staff members, students and stakeholders (partner associations, HEIs, employers and others) define and articulate its internationalization strategy, and subsequently integrate the strategy in the

Academy's mission, as well as in *The Concept of education and professional training of the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art* and the Academy's *Strategic Plan 2011 – 2016*. After all the above measures have been accomplished, it is necessary to inform the Academy's staff members, students, stakeholders and general public of the changes introduced into the mission and strategic documents through their publication on the Academy's official website (Russian and English-language versions).

- The Panel recommends that the administration of the V. Popov Academy provide staff members and students with an opportunity to get acquainted with the essence of the Bologna process, the implementation of the Bologna reforms in Russia, as well as with the basic developments, trends and concepts of the European Higher Education Area (ECTS, a credit, the Diploma Supplement, academic mobility, an individual study plan, etc), for example, through participation in domestic and international workshops, professional development courses and conferences on these issues.

4.2 Standard 2: Educational process

Compliance with the standard – Substantially compliant

The fundamental principle of the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art is the principle of unity: educational process of the programmes 'Academic Choir Conducting' and 'Vocal Art' is implemented so that students of both the specialisms – conductors and singers – are actively engaged in actual concert life as a single choir ensemble. Convergence and interconnection of these two specialisms can be observed in the educational process: choirmasters-interpreters acquire profound vocal skills, and vocalists master the skills of choir and ensemble singing, performance in various styles, ensembles and artistic manners.

Educational and methodological support of the specialisms Academic choir conducting and Vocal art (study plans and syllabi, intended learning outcomes) is based on the unity of goals and objectives of the programmes.

Student workload in Choral singing as defined in the study plan for the Vocal Art programme is comparable to the planned workload in choral singing for the programme 'Academic choir conducting'. The module of profession-oriented disciplines for students of the programme 'Academic choir conducting' comprises solo singing, work in an opera class, courses of acting techniques development. Students of both specialisms undergo an in-depth training in vocal ensemble singing, which equally contributes to the development of professional competencies of students of the specialisms.

Educational programme in Academic Choir Conducting

The study plan of the programme in Academic choir conducting is distinguished by an extended component of vocal training – more auditory work time is planned for the discipline Solo singing (vocal training), a new study course *Vocal ensemble* has been introduced, upon completion of which students take a State Examination. History of vocal and choral performance is an important complex of specialized disciplines including History of Vocal and Choral Arts, Theory of liturgical singing (a special course included in "History of Choral Music"), the Latin language (singing Latin texts).

In the course of studies student conductors master such profession-oriented and specialized disciplines as Solfeggio, Polyphony, Harmony, Conducting, Reading of Choral Scores, History of Choral Art, Methods of Choir Conducting, Choir Conducting Practice and others.

Elective courses (vocal disciplines including Vocal hygiene and Phoniatics, Modern opera theatre, Study of opera parts) and optional courses (Sound engineering,

Symphony conducting, Composition, Musical algorithmization, Improvement of vocal training etc.) are aimed at the achievement of common goals of the two academic programmes: training of highly qualified professionals in the field of academic choir conducting who are familiar with all aspects of artistic and creative, managerial and educational activities. Electives and optional courses are annually reviewed and updated.

The final State attestation includes graduation examinations in:

- conducting a concert programme and working with a choir;
- vocal ensemble;
- defense of the Diploma project in music performance and pedagogy.

Educational programme in Vocal Art

The Academy prepares professionals in academic singing who are awarded the qualification “concert and chamber singer” upon completion of their course of studies. Thus, the key specialized disciplines are Solo singing, Chamber singing, Concert and chamber singing. According to the Institution’s mission, which is focused on maintenance and development of Russian solo and choral singing traditions, auditory work time allocated for the disciplines *Vocal ensemble* and *Culture of speech* has been increased, and a new discipline of *Choral class* has been introduced.

The auditory work time has been increased for the delivery of such general professional disciplines as solfeggio, harmony and piano performance. These are disciplines which contribute largely to the development of performance skills regarding vocal and choral works of any technical difficulty, which considerably widens the scope of graduates’ professional competencies.

Elective disciplines (set of vocal disciplines: Vocal hygiene and phoniatics, Modern opera theatre, Study of opera parts) and optional disciplines (Sound engineering, Symphony conducting, Composition, Musical algorithmization, Improvement of vocal training etc.) are aimed at the achievement of common goals of the programmes under review: training of highly qualified professionals in the field of academic choir conducting who are familiar with all aspects of artistic and creative, managerial and educational activities. Electives and optional courses are annually reviewed and updated.

The final State attestation includes graduation examinations in:

- giving a solo concert performance;
- Vocal ensemble;
- defense of the Diploma project in music performance and pedagogy.

Having examined the study plans and syllabi relating the programmes under review, the Panel found no evidence of interrelation between the stated intended learning outcomes and the Dublin Descriptors or the Learning Outcomes for European music higher education, produced by AEC.

The Panel would note that it would have been helpful if course synopses and other documents had been presented in the English language. Despite the fact that annotations in English were attached to some of the documents, those annotations were not clear enough in their content or structure to allow the Panel to get a clear idea of the evidence reviewed.

Based on the documentation examination and information obtained at the meetings, classes and concerts attended, the Review Panel believes that though the V. Popov Academy does not deliver programmes of the Bachelor and Master Degree levels, its specialist’s diploma studies and doctoral studies – traditional for Russian higher education – are coherent and successive in the context of the existing system of professional preparation.

Student assessment in both the academic programmes is carried out through different forms of formative and summative (mid-term, final) assessment. Traditional assessment formats are academic concerts, competitions, mid-term examination concerts and other ways of demonstrating student learning and creative achievements. Criteria of mid-term and final assessments are published and are available in print at the Academy Departments.

Students demonstrate their study progress via their artistic and creative activities, such as philharmonic concerts and tours, preparation and performance of solo, ensemble and choral singing projects in various concert halls of Moscow and other Russian and foreign cities; participation in artistic contests and festivals. Thus, students have wide opportunities to demonstrate their accomplishments.

The Review Panel wishes to note as a positive aspect of the Academy's activities the fact that organizing concerts and tours for the Institution Choir ensemble, the Academy's administration pays special attention to the educational value of the performance events, as well as to the quality of education provision: individual assignments and methodological recommendations are developed, methods and techniques for personified education are used.

Professors of the V. Popov's Academy use various teaching strategies, techniques and assessment methods depending on specific goals and objectives of each study course of the programmes in Academic choir conducting and Vocal art. The educational process involves regular consultations for students. During the meetings with the Panel undergraduate and postgraduate students, alumni and academic staff members spoke about professors' readiness and willingness to carry out individual tutorials on a voluntary basis, beyond their planned teaching workload. The Panel approves of the Academy's teaching staff enthusiasm but suggests that this scheme of individual tutorials be scheduled and formalized, and thus professors be paid for their work.

Based on the meetings with the administration, faculty, undergraduate and postgraduate students as well as attending classes during the site-visit the Review Panel had an impression that the prevailing model of interaction between academic staff and students is primarily that of the "subject-object" type which is teacher-centered and based on informing and controlling (sometimes in an authoritarian way) students rather than facilitating their learning.

In the course of the site visit the Review Panel repeatedly drew attention of the Academy's administration and faculty to the appropriateness and advisability of shifting the focus from the educator to the student (student-centered approach) by giving students more independence (as far as it is possible within the rigid limits of the Russian State educational standards) in their choice of music works for studying and performing, disciplines to study and topics for research projects.

The Review Panel suggests that the transition to the student-centered education may be facilitated through the use of active learning/teaching methods, problem-based approach to education, subject-subject model of interaction between professors and students, diversification of the learning environment. These are just some of the conditions that would contribute to a more complete exposure and development of each student's potential.

Throughout their studies at the V. Popov Academy students are involved in various research activities by writing course papers, conducting performance analyses and systematic research work in the course of the Humanities. The results of the student research work are presented in the Academy's journal "Vestnik AHI" (V. Popov Academy's Herald) as well as at regularly held research conferences. The positive aspect of research papers is that they consider general musicological issues, not only issues of specific interest to vocalists and conductors.

Nevertheless, the scope of themes of student research projects seemed to the Panel rather limited. This may be related to the limited amount of international literature and lack of the Institution's subscriptions to research databases. The

Review Panel members are unsure if, and how, students learn to search in international research databases, which is considered to be a vital skill for doing research. In the light of the development of the methodology of educational process and internalization it is very important to offer materials in other languages than Russian and materials from different musical backgrounds.

Having studied a few samples of students' research papers (articles published as the student research conference proceedings, or course papers) the Panel found that most papers did not contain references to contemporary international literature and that there were no research papers in foreign languages (English, German).

The Academy's international activities are limited to concerts and tours of the Academy's choirs and soloists. The Institution has a few contacts with foreign concert organizations (mainly German). These contacts may be considered as informal partnerships, but this aspect of the Academy's international activities is not reflected in the study plans or in the educational process. At present four students of the Academy are studying abroad on exchange programmes.

In the opinion of the Panel, the Victor Popov Academy does not have a clearly articulated and developed internationalization strategy/engagement in international partnerships. Due to some peculiarities of the Russian system of education the Academy has no opportunity to use Erasmus network as an efficient tool for broadening mutual exchange.

Recommendations:

- The Panel recommends that the study plans and syllabi of the study programmes under review contain direct references to strategies and methods for achieving intended learning outcomes, as well references to the way the latter correlate with the Dublin Descriptors and, if possible, with the AEC Learning Outcomes.
- The Academy is advised to enrich the library stock with international literature, and, if possible, to subscribe to international research databases in order to provide students with access to foreign literature in the original as well as to any information relevant to their research activities.
- The Panel recommends that the Academy encourage its students to enclose summaries in foreign languages to their research papers in order to ensure availability of the results to a wider public.
- Underlining once again its genuine respect and appreciation of the Russian traditions of teaching choral singing, the Panel recommends that the Academy be more open to the new promising trends in Higher Education, in particular, to the student-centered approach based on the one hand, on students' productive independence and self-regulation, and on facilitative guidance by professors on the other. Of primary importance are student's individuality and personal experience, which are to be taken into consideration while designing the educational process.
- The Panel recommends that methodology of conducting lessons be improved on the basis of the student-centered approach: coaching, guidance and stimulation are provided to students by their teachers.
- The Academy needs to formalize its internationalization strategy on the basis of strategic planning and subsequently integrate the strategy in its study plans and educational process.
- Criteria of formative and summative assessments should be more widely published in print form and on the official website of the Academy (both in Russian and in English).
- The Panel suggests that in service training with professional choirs be integrated in the study process.

4.3 Standard 3: Student qualifications

Compliance with the standard – Fully compliant

The Academy enrolls students on the basis of the results of entrance examinations which are held to evaluate creative, technical, academic and intellectual abilities of its applicants.

Thus the most talented and well-prepared prospective students are admitted to the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art.

The Vocal Art Department incorporates a unit of preparatory training, which enrolls applicants who demonstrate appropriate vocal and music abilities, but have not completed a course of secondary professional music education. The study period is 1-2 years.

Students of both the Conducting Department and the Vocal Department have an opportunity to master solo and choral singing, and students of the Department of Vocal Art can learn the basics of choral conducting.

One of the Academy's strengths is that the majority of its first-year students are graduates of the College of Music, and they enter the Academy having received a profound theoretical and performance preparation.

Among major peculiarities of the Academy's education is its practice-orientation. A new chamber choir or a mixed vocal ensemble is organized annually to include students of the same year of studies. From the very start of their studies students work with a group of singers; each semester they prepare and perform a new concert programme under the guidance of their professors.

The Panel wishes to underline the active position of the Academy's administration in organizing concerts and tours for the Institution's choir ensembles which provides students with additional opportunities for getting authentic performance experience, on the one hand, and ensures a high level of graduates' employability on the other.

According to the statistics data presented by the Academy, 92% of the Academy's alumni are quite successful in finding work in Russia, primarily in Moscow. The majority of the Academy's alumni work as choirmasters (often in church choirs), choir singers or teachers in music education institutions. At the same time it should be noted that the Bologna process envisages wider employment possibilities and, if necessary, even a change of career within the music profession.

During the site visit to the Institution, the Panel got an impression that the words 'choirmaster' and 'singer' dominated over the word 'conductor', and that preparation in choir conducting and conducting techniques is given less attention as compared to other disciplines. This might be the reason for graduates' choosing more 'accessible' careers of singers or choirmasters.

During the meetings with undergraduate and postgraduate students the panel did not sense that students had motivation to set up their own choirs or other kinds of ensembles. In the Panel's opinion, in the course of studies at the Academy students are not prepared to address organisational, financial and law issues for realization of their artistic intentions as creative directors of newly founded ensembles and choirs.

The students interviewed seemed contented with the education provision, in terms of both content and organization. They would only wish to increase the amount of time allocated for students' individual work with the choir, especially while preparing their course and diploma projects.

During the meetings the Review Panel took notice of certain passivity and immaturity of students' position on the issues of educational process structure and content, possible ways of improvement of education provision and learning environment. Thus, the students expect that problematic issues (for example,

master classes organization, provision of more time for individual work with the choir) would be arranged by the Academy's senior administration. The Panel would emphasize that prospective choir leaders will need such leadership qualities as initiative, ability to interact with people, to work in a team, to unite staff, to take responsibility for achieving common artistic goals, etc. Insufficient level of development of these qualities might be among the reasons why the Academy's graduates take little initiative in establishing new ensembles, though they get extensive professional preparation in choral conducting and vocal.

Most postgraduate students interviewed also showed little initiative, as well as unpreparedness to enter the labour market. The Panel took notice of the senior and postgraduate students' confusion relating such issues as searching a job or audition possibilities, international validity of the Academy's diploma etc.

In the course of the meetings undergraduate and postgraduate students demonstrated rather poor knowledge of foreign languages. It should be noted that according to the programmes' requirements students are supposed to study four foreign languages, which is one of the priorities for future conductors, choir singers and soloists.

Stakeholders interviewed highlighted the high level of the alumni' professionalism, fundamental character and flexibility of their education: alumni of the reviewed programmes are competitive experts; they are able to work successfully as singers, performers on musical instruments, choirmasters, and conductors. The employers also reported that the Academy's graduates have a highly developed musical thinking and intelligence, and are well prepared theoretically, self-disciplined, able and ready to work hard, able and willing to learn new musical material (including material in foreign languages) quickly and with high quality. As a recommendation employers suggested that more attention be paid to the development of students' acting and theatre performance skills.

The Academy keeps in touch with alumni through running different events like competitions, festivals, contests of creative works, as well as research conferences and career guidance activities of the Chair, as evidenced by numerous diplomas, letters of thanks and responses from employers. However, the Panel has found that the system of interaction between the institution and its alumni is mainly informal and is not a part of the institutional system of student and alumni employment assistance. The Academy does not have a formalized and well-documented internal quality assurance/ management system, thus graduate surveys are not a part of it.

Recommendations:

- The Panel recommends that a system of interaction between the Academy/its departments and alumni be developed, formalized and implemented.
- The Panel suggests that the Academy should closely consider the idea of greater openness of education to different careers for musicians, for instance, in management or social sphere, which reflects a broader view on the scope of professional activities in accordance with the student-centered approach in the context of the Bologna process. Thus it may be appropriate to establish an organization responsible for monitoring and analyzing data on employment and career development of the Academy's students and alumni (Employment and Career Centre, or a Centre for Assistance to Student and Graduates in Employment and Adaptation to the Labor Market). Among major objectives of such a body could be implementation and operation of an information system supporting employment of graduates and providing them with data on domestic and foreign labor markets, labor market research and forecasting.
- The Panel recommends stimulating artistic development of young conductors by broadening their views on diversity of styles and enriching the repertoire by music works of various styles.

- The panel recommends that more attention be paid to the development of leadership skills and abilities of future conductors, for example, by introducing such changes in the curriculum elective component as more elective courses, using partner relations with Higher Music Education Institutions and inviting outstanding scholars and practitioners. It is also recommended to introduce a course in pedagogy, methods of teaching, and psychology.
- The Panel suggests that a special course be introduced into the curriculum variable component with the aim to increase students and graduates' opportunities for professional self-promotion (the course may include modules on management, advertising, as well as practical aspects of finding and implementing career opportunities such as writing CVs, guidelines of behavior during the job interview, adaptation in a new team).
- In order to improve the effectiveness and objectivity of student assessment engagement in the assessments of external faculty from Russia and abroad may be helpful.
- To enhance the level of linguistic competency and professional training of students it may be effective to involve international professors in conducting classes in different academic disciplines in foreign languages.
- To develop student mobility and enhance their linguistic and professional competencies, the Academy has to explore all possibilities for students' participation in international academic exchange programs.

4.4 Standard 4: Teaching staff

*Compliance with the standard – **Substantially compliant***

Among the Academy's teaching staff members there are professors, associate professors (docents), Honoured Artists and Honoured Art Workers of the Russian Federation, laureates of All-Russian and international art contests, experienced lecturers, who use unique methods of teaching. 55 full-time staff, 12 part-time staff members and 16 staff members with hourly earnings worked in the Academy in 2011.

The procedure of new faculty employment is of major importance and is conducted in several stages. First of all candidates undergo an introductory interview. Candidates with adequate knowledge base, sufficient work experience and good recommendations from other employers are admitted to the second stage, which is a test lesson in the form of a presentation to be evaluated by experienced professors of the Academy. The employment procedure implies both knowledge and experience evaluation, and assessment of candidates' pedagogical competencies. Those candidates who have successfully passed all stages are employed by the Academy as faculty members.

The Academy's teaching staff members annually undergo assessment of their knowledge of educational programmes and standards on site. Besides, they are provided with professional development opportunities through participation in professional development courses, seminars, master classes, international programs and internships, pedagogical conferences and round table discussions.

During the site visit the Panel made sure that the Academy's undergraduate and postgraduate students and alumni highly appreciate professionalism of their teachers whose deep and wide-ranging expert knowledge is an asset of highest value to students and to the Academy. Nevertheless, the Review Panel wishes to underline the necessity and importance of specialization in teaching disciplines involving studying musical material of various epochs.

One of the strong features of the Academy is the highly professional approach to working with male students at the voice mutation period. As a result of well-organized work male students of the programme in Academic Choir Conducting get

well developed vocal skills, which has sometimes resulted in the students' transfer to the programme of Vocal Art.

The majority of the Academy's teaching staff members are former graduates of the Institution, they are employed the Academy at an early age and have a life-long career within the institution. There are some positive aspects in this situation: such professors know the specificity of the institution's education provision and take it into account in their teaching activities. On the other hand, the professors' professional flexibility can become rather a questionable issue.

Recommendations:

- To enhance academic mobility and professional competency of the teaching staff, the Academy's administration could explore new opportunities for the teaching staff to participate in educational, teaching, and research internships in other higher education institutions including HEIs outside Russia.
- A considerable number of the Academy's teaching staff members are its former graduates. To enhance their professional flexibility the Academy should provide them with opportunities to do their postgraduate studies in other HEIs of Russia and abroad.
- In order to promote personal and professional growth of the academic staff the Academy should regularly hold conferences, master classes, and seminars inviting for participation representatives of international music community.
- It is recommended to introduce in the curricula elective components a few courses for studying musical works of particular historical epochs. It may be useful to invite external experts from Russia and abroad, who have in-depth specialist expertise relevant to the musical material covered by the programme (Renaissance, Baroque, Classicism, Romanticism ...). Master classes, lectures, seminars and research projects may be used as appropriate formats for such a study course.

4.5 Standard 5: Facilities, resources

*Compliance with the standard – **Needs Improvement***

The Viktor Popov Academy of Choral Art is located in a standard building originally constructed as a comprehensive school building. The latter comprises a concert hall, a gym, a theatre room, 2 chamber halls and a few auditoriums for choir classes, as well as 45 classrooms for group and individual classes.

The Review Panel fully supports the Academy's administration initiatives aimed at constructing new Academy's premises. The Panel is sure that more auditoriums and a larger concert hall are an absolute necessity and a condition to ensure effectiveness of the educational process.

There is also a sound recording studio in the Academy, where the students' concerts, exams and other events are videorecorded and later demonstrated to students to provide a basis for reflection and performance analysis.

The Academy has an up-to-date phoniatic room where the Laboratory of Voice Physiology and Pathology is located. Best Moscow phoniaticists practice at the Laboratory.

The library funds of the Academy are enlarged and renewed annually and are generally sufficient for the educational process delivery. The working hours of the library and reading room are from 9 a.m. till 6 p.m. every day, which is convenient to the students. Nevertheless, there remain such areas for improvement as ensuring remote access to the library resources, for which an electronic catalogue and database of library materials are to be developed.

There are 63 musical instruments (36 grand pianos and 27 pianos) in the classrooms and halls of the Academy to support the process of study and students' self-preparation. In the opinion of the Review Panel the number of musical instruments is sufficient, whereas their quality needs improvement as well as the quality of their tuning.

For the last few years the Academy has managed to enhance the level of technical support of the educational and creative processes having acquired new musical instruments, up-to-date equipment for the sound recording studio, and computers. The Panel wishes to point out that though the sound recording studio is well-equipped, the overall number and quality of the computers do not meet the contemporary educational requirements.

The Review Panel emphasizes that improvement of living conditions in the student hostel is to become a priority for the Academy for near future. The hostel is located rather far from the Academy; most rooms are shared by two, three or four students, but there are two rooms one of which is shared by seven, and the other – by eight students. Due to absence of musical instruments in the hostel building, the students have no opportunities for individual practice.

The Panel understands that unstable State funding of public higher education institutions is the main limitation of the enhancement of the Academy's facilities and development of long-term strategic vision. Nevertheless the Review Panel wishes to express its hope that the Academy's will find ways to raise funds for enhancing its facilities, among them the ways outlined in the self-evaluation report (attraction of foreign students on non-budget study conditions, commercial use of the concert hall and sound-recording studio, increase of fee-paying students in conducting, vocal and sound engineering specialisms, set up of new educational programmes (e.g., variety singing) etc.).

Recommendations:

- The Panel recommends that the Academy continue the work aimed at enhancing the quality of musical instruments, including their tuning.
- In order to provide students with the opportunity to access the library resources remotely, an electronic catalogue, database resource need to be developed.
- In order to improve the educational process the Academy needs to take great effort towards finding additional material and administrative resources for support and improvement of the equipment and facilities available. This involves construction of a new building, enlarging the number of lecture rooms and computer equipment, and improving living conditions in the student hostel.
- To enhance the student individual studies it is recommended to supply the hostel with musical instruments and a computer class.

4.6 Standard 6: Internal quality assurance and decision-making processes

*Compliance with the standard – **Needs Improvement***

General management of the Academy is conducted by an elected representative body - Academic Council, formed in accordance with the Statutes of the Academy.

Organization of interaction between structural subdivisions of the Academy is carried out by vice-rectors in accordance with the allocation of responsibilities adopted by the Rector of the Academy. A number of educational issues are submitted to the meetings of the University administration.

The Education committee is the main body of the Academy which exercises internal control over the processes of education quality assurance. The main goal of the

committee is to enhance the quality of education by means of ensuring a high level of the educational process management and control, as well as exercising control over students' learning progress and discipline. Decisions made by the committee are publicly available on the information boards and, in part, on the Academy's official website.

A few developments aimed at the improvement of the quality monitoring system have been introduced in the Academy, such as a computer program for monitoring students' learning progress, Regulations on the system for student learning outcomes monitoring and assessment in the disciplines offered by the Department of History and Theory of Music, Regulations on the system for student learning outcomes monitoring and assessment (using a point-rating system) in the disciplines offered by the Department of Humanities and Socio-Economical disciplines.

Based on the documentation examination, evidence gathered at the meetings and interviews, the Review Panel found that the academic staff and students of the Academy lack clear understanding of what an internal quality assurance system is. Diametrically opposed and complementary definitions of quality were given by the meetings participants, but most of the faculty and staff considered "quality" to be equivalent to a high level of students' qualification. Thus, the Academy should first ensure that its stakeholders have a clear understanding of the modern concept of "quality of education", which would be the first step on the way to developing an internal quality assurance system.

In the opinion of the Review Panel, the area of most serious concern with regard to the programmes under review as well as the V. Popov Academy on the whole is students' non-involvement in decision-making processes of the Institution. Students are passive, they do not know their rights and do not try to change things they are not satisfied with in the education provision.

The Academy's subdivisions are responsible for collecting and analyzing data on various aspects of their activities and the Academy's activities, but there is no formalized, documented and officially established structure responsible for quality issues at the Academy. Thus, due to the absence of such a structure student or alumni surveys and questionnaires, if implemented, are of sporadic, "occasional" rather than systemic nature.

The Panel wishes to emphasize that absence of a formalized, well documented internal quality assurance system is definitely a weakness of the Academy, thus, establishing such a system should be the Institution's priority for near future.

Recommendations:

The Review Panel would like to outline a most significant precondition for accreditation of the programmes under review, which is development, formalization and implementation of an internal quality assurance system in the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Arts.

The Panel has no doubt that the Academy has a few isolated components of the system in place, but they need to be streamlined, organized and formalized in order to form a true quality assurance system which would be feasible at all levels of the Academy to:

- ensure transparency of the Academy's activities;
- involve the Academy's personnel, teaching staff, and administration in the Academy's multifaceted activities;
- systematize the Academy's activities aimed at enhancement of its functioning and elaborate a policy in the sphere of education quality assurance.

Such a system should meet requirements of all stakeholders (the Academy's students and administration, employers, government, society) and be adaptable to new requirements put forward by these stakeholders.

Thus, as the result of the follow-up measures, the Academy should achieve a certain level of formalization of its procedures, efficiently document its activities regarding quality management and assurance, and use a more 'institutionalised' approach to quality assurance processes. The internal quality assurance system will allow systemic data collection and analysis on every structural subdivision of the Academy; the findings will then be used as a basis for decision-making, risk management, and for developing a long-term strategy for the internal quality assurance system enhancement.

- The Review Panel recommends that the V. Popov Academy develop and implement a policy of student involvement in quality assurance processes at the department, inter-department and institutional levels.
- The Panel suggests that representatives of employers and professional associations be involved in reviewing and updating study plans and syllabi of disciplines as well as be invited for participation in formative and summative assessments in order to ensure a higher level of relevance of the educational process to the requirements of the present-day labour market and new trends in the development of professional music community.

4.7 Standard 7: Public information

*Compliance with the standard – **Fully compliant (Area of strength)***

Student groups, soloists and teaching staff of the Academy regularly take part in major cultural events which are held not only in Moscow but also in other Russian cities and abroad. Many public musical and cultural events are held on the Academy's premises. Based on the documentation examined and evidence gathered at the onsite meetings and interviews the Review Panel found that all the events are widely covered in mass media (both Russian and international).

The Academy closely cooperates with various organizations of the professional music community. The Academy has developed and implemented a strategy aimed at cooperation with potential employers. There's an agreement with the Kolobov Novaya Opera Theatre of Moscow which provides students and postgraduates with official internship opportunities.

The Academy's teaching staff and administration encourage students' and postgraduates' participation in musical theatre performances, chamber choir concerts, solo concerts, festivals and competitions, etc.

The Academy provides its students with an opportunity to take part in auditions held by Russian and foreign impresarios; the Institution disseminates information about new graduates among theatres and concert organizations of Russia

The V. Popov Academy has developed a long-term strategy (until 2014) aimed at strengthening its cooperation with the professional community which results in the engagement of the Academy's choirs and soloists in creative programs of leading concert organizations.

Information for prospective students and students of the Academy and College is available on the official website of the Academy (www.axu.ru). Additional information on the Academy and its admission rules can be obtained on site during the 'Day of Open Doors'.

Recommendations:

- The Panel recommends that the English version of the official website of the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art be better structured and that its content be extended in accordance with the recommendations mentioned in paragraph 4.1.

- The Academy needs to continue its work towards formalization of its relationships and contacts with the professional sphere in Russia and abroad in order to avoid the dangers of becoming "an exclusive eco-system" (focusing primarily on the domestic labour market, the opportunities for the students' and professors' professional flexibility being limited).

5 CONDITIONS FOR ACCREDITATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Based on the documentation examination and evidence gathered at the meetings and interviews on site, the Panel has worked out two conditions for accreditation of the programmes under review and a number of recommendations which it considers would be useful for the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Arts in its ongoing quality improvement of the study programmes. Below is a summary list of conditions and recommendations with the reference to the paragraph where they originally occur in the earlier sections of the present report.

5.1 Conditions

The Review Panel proposes the following **conditions for accreditation** of the programmes under review.

1. V. Popov Academy's administration in cooperation with the staff members, students and stakeholders implement the following measures.

The Concept of education and professional training of the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art and the Academy's Strategic Plan 2011 – 2016 are to be reviewed and amended so that:

- the mission of the Academy is articulated more clearly and concisely;
- strategies for achievement of goals and objectives set forth in the documents are determined and clearly articulated;
- the role of students and stakeholders in contributing to education provision enhancement is defined.

After the revision of the strategic documents it is necessary to inform the Academy's staff members, students, stakeholders and general public of the changes introduced through publication of the documents on the Academy's official website (Russian and English-language versions).

The Review Panel would emphasize the most important condition for the effectiveness of the above-listed measures: they need to be supported by concrete actions and decisions: active involvement of students and stakeholders in the development and revision of study plans, curriculum design, as well as in design and implementation of various aspects of internal quality assurance system, etc.

2. The second condition for accreditation of the programmes under review is development, formalization and implementation of an internal quality assurance system in the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Arts.

The Panel has no doubt that the Academy has a few isolated components of the system in place, but they need to be streamlined, organized and formalized in order to form a true quality assurance system which would be feasible at all levels of the Academy to:

- ensure transparency of the Academy's activities;
- involve the Academy's personnel, teaching staff, and administration in the Academy's multifaceted activities;
- systematize the Academy's activities aimed at enhancement of its functioning and elaborate a policy in the sphere of education quality assurance.

Such a system should meet requirements of all stakeholders (the Academy's students and administration, employers, government, society) and be adaptable to new requirements put forward by these stakeholders.

The Review Panel proposes that the accreditation of the programmes in Academic Choir Conducting and Vocal Art delivered by the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art be subject to the condition that the Academy submit a report to NCPA and AEC no later than 1 May 2015 describing its plan of follow-up measures and progress that will have been made in implementation of the conditions and recommendations contained in the present report (Chapter Five of the present report).

5.2 Recommendations

- 4.1 The Panel recommends that the V. Popov Academy administration in close cooperation with the Academy's staff members, students and stakeholders (partner associations, HEIs, employers and others) define and articulate its internationalization strategy, and subsequently integrate the strategy in the Academy's mission, as well as in *The Concept of education and professional training of the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art* and the Academy's *Strategic Plan 2011 – 2016*. After all the above measures have been accomplished, it is necessary to inform the Academy's staff members, students, stakeholders and general public of the changes introduced into the mission and strategic documents through their publication on the Academy's official website (Russian and English-language versions).
- 4.1 The Panel recommends that the administration of the V. Popov Academy provide staff members and students with an opportunity to get acquainted with the essence of the Bologna process, the implementation of the Bologna reforms in Russia, as well as with the basic developments, trends and concepts of the European Higher Education Area (ECTS, a credit, the Diploma Supplement, academic mobility, an individual study plan, etc), for example, through participation in domestic and international workshops, professional development courses and conferences on these issues.
- 4.2 The Panel recommends that the study plans and syllabi of the study programmes under review contain direct references to strategies and methods for achieving intended learning outcomes, as well references to the way the latter correlate with the Dublin Descriptors and, if possible, with the AEC Learning Outcomes.
- 4.2 The Academy is advised to enrich the library stock with international literature, and, if possible, to subscribe to international research databases in order to provide students with access to foreign literature in the original as well as to any information relevant to their research activities.
- 4.2 The Panel recommends that the Academy encourage its students to enclose summaries in foreign languages to their research papers in order to ensure availability of the results to a wider public.
- 4.2 Underlining once again its genuine respect and appreciation of the Russian traditions of teaching choral singing, the Panel recommends that the Academy be more open to the new promising trends in Higher Education, in particular, to the student-centered approach based on the one hand, on students' productive independence and self-regulation, and on facilitative guidance by professors on the other. Of primary importance are student's individuality and personal experience, which are to be taken into consideration while designing the educational process.
- 4.2 The Panel recommends that methodology of conducting lessons be improved on the basis of the student-centered approach: coaching, guidance and stimulation are provided to students by their teachers.

- 4.2 The Academy needs to formalize its internationalization strategy on the basis of strategic planning and subsequently integrate the strategy in its study plans and educational process.
- 4.2 Criteria of formative and summative assessments should be more widely published in print and on the official website of the Academy (both in Russian and in English).
- 4.2 The Panel suggests that in service training with professional choirs be integrated in the study process.
- 4.3 The Panel recommends that a system of interaction between the Academy/its departments and alumni be developed, formalized and implemented.
- 4.3 The Panel suggests that the Academy should closely consider the idea of greater openness of education to different careers for musicians, for instance, in management or social sphere, which reflects a broader view on the scope of professional activities in accordance with the student-centered approach in the context of the Bologna process. Thus it may be appropriate to establish an organization responsible for monitoring and analyzing data on employment and career development of the Academy's students and alumni (Employment and Career Centre, or a Centre for Assistance to Student and Graduates in Employment and Adaptation to the Labor Market). Among major objectives of such a body could be implementation and operation of an information system supporting employment of graduates and providing them with data on domestic and foreign labor markets, labor market research and forecasting.
- 4.3 The Panel recommends stimulating artistic development of young conductors by broadening their views on diversity of styles and enriching the repertoire by music works of various styles.
- 4.3 The panel recommends that more attention be paid to the development of leadership skills and abilities of future conductors, for example, by introducing such changes in the curriculum elective component as more elective courses, using partner relations with Higher Music Education Institutions and inviting outstanding scholars and practitioners. It is also recommended to introduce a course in pedagogy, methods of teaching, and psychology.
- 4.3 The Panel suggests that a special course be introduced into the curriculum variable component with the aim to increase students and graduates' opportunities for professional self-promotion (the course may include modules on management, advertising, as well as practical aspects of finding and implementing career opportunities such as writing CVs, guidelines of behavior during the job interview, adaptation in a new team).
- 4.3 In order to improve the effectiveness and objectivity of student assessment engagement in the assessments of external faculty from Russia and abroad may be helpful.
- 4.3 To enhance the level of linguistic competency and professional training of students it may be effective to involve international professors in conducting classes in different academic disciplines in foreign languages.
- 4.3 To develop student mobility and enhance their linguistic and professional competencies, the Academy has to explore all possibilities for students' participation in international academic exchange programs.
- 4.4 To enhance academic mobility and professional competency of the teaching staff, the Academy's administration could explore new opportunities for the teaching staff to participate in educational, teaching, and research internships in other higher education institutions including HEIs outside Russia.
- 4.4 A considerable number of the Academy's teaching staff members are its former graduates. To enhance their professional flexibility the Academy should

- provide them with opportunities to do their postgraduate studies in other HEIs of Russia and abroad.
- 4.4 In order to promote personal and professional growth of the academic staff the Academy should regularly hold conferences, master classes, and seminars inviting for participation representatives of international music community.
 - 4.4 It is recommended to introduce in the curricula elective components a few courses for studying musical works of particular historical epochs. It may be useful to invite external experts from Russia and abroad, who have in-depth specialist expertise relevant to the musical material covered by the programme (Renaissance, Baroque, Classicism, Romanticism ...). Master classes, lectures, seminars and research projects may be used as appropriate formats for such a study course.
 - 4.5 The Panel recommends that the Academy continue the work aimed at enhancing the quality of musical instruments, including their tuning.
 - 4.5 In order to provide students with the opportunity to access the library resources remotely, an electronic catalogue, database resource need to be developed.
 - 4.5 In order to improve the educational process the Academy needs to take great effort towards finding additional material and administrative resources for support and improvement of the equipment and facilities available. This involves construction of a new building, enlarging the number of lecture rooms and computer equipment, and improving living conditions in the student hostel.
 - 4.5 To enhance the student individual studies it is recommended to supply the hostel with musical instruments and a computer class.
 - 4.6 The Review Panel recommends that the V. Popov Academy develop and implement a policy of student involvement in quality assurance processes at the department, inter-department and institutional levels.
 - 4.6 The Panel suggests that representatives of employers and professional associations be involved in reviewing and updating study plans and syllabi of disciplines as well as be invited for participation in formative and summative assessments in order to ensure a higher level of relevance of the educational process to the requirements of the present-day labour market and new trends in the development of professional music community.
 - 4.7 The Panel recommends that the English version of the official website of the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art be better structured and that its content be extended in accordance with the recommendations mentioned in paragraph 4.1.
 - 4.7 The Academy needs to continue its work towards formalization of its relationships and contacts with the professional sphere in Russia and abroad in order to avoid the dangers of becoming "an exclusive eco-system" (focusing primarily on the domestic labour market, the opportunities for the students' and professors' professional flexibility being limited).

6 CONCLUSIONS

Having examined the evidence carefully, the Review Panel concludes that the educational programmes 'Academic Choir Conducting' and 'Vocal Art' delivered by the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art are **substantially compliant** with the *NCPA-AEC Standards and Criteria for Public Accreditation of Programmes of Higher Music Education*.

Nevertheless, there remain areas for improvement which have been described in the form of recommendations in Chapters 4 and 5 of this report. The Review Panel proposed two conditions for accreditation of the programmes under review:

1. The Concept of education and professional training of the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art and the Academy's Strategic Plan 2011 – 2016 are to be reviewed and amended so that:
 - the mission of the Academy is articulated more clearly and concisely;
 - strategies for achievement of goals and objectives set forth in the documents are determined and clearly articulated;
 - the role of students and stakeholders in contributing to education provision enhancement is defined.
2. An internal quality assurance system is to be developed, formalized and implemented in the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art.

The Review Panel proposes that the accreditation of the programmes 'Academic Choir Conducting' and 'Vocal Art' delivered by the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art be subject to the condition that the Academy submit a report to NCPA and AEC no later than 1 May 2015 describing its plan of follow-up measures and progress that will have been made in implementation of the conditions and recommendations contained in the present report (Chapter Five of the present report).

As the main strengths of the programmes being considered for accreditation the Review panel would like to define their commitment to the idea of preservation and development of the best traditions of the Russian choir singing art, most active participation in the cultural life of their region, home country and abroad; fundamental and versatile character of professional preparation which enables graduates' successful self-realization as conductors, choirmasters, soloists and choir singers, concertmasters and teachers of music education institutions.

Furthermore, the Panel considers important to note the high corporate spirit manifesting itself in the commitment of the Academy's staff to the values and core principles of the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art as well as in students' awareness of their corporate belonging.

On the behalf of the Panel:



Zhanna Kuzminykh

Panel Secretary

Annex

**NCPA–AEC External Review of Educational Programmes in Academic Choir Conducting
and Vocal Art delivered by the Victor Popov Academy of Choral Art
SCHEDULE AND TIMETABLE OF THE SITE VISIT
13-15 February 2012
Moscow**

Time	Activity	Participants	Place
13 February 2012, Monday			
Arrival in Moscow, Check in at the hotel Preparatory meeting of the panel Dinner			
14 February 2012, Tuesday			
10.00	Panel's Arrival at V. Popov Academy of Choral Art		All meetings will be held in Room dedicated to the memory of V. Popov
10.15 – 11.00	Excursion around the Academy of Choral Art	Boys' choir, elementary school, concert hall, gym, dining room, equipment rooms, phoniatic room, 101, room for disabled students, computer room, 118, sound recording library, 203, 202, 215, 314, 318, 319, 304	
11.00 – 11.15	Coffee break		
11.15– 12.30	Concert		
12.30 – 13.30	Lunch		
13.30 – 14.30	Meeting with the Academy's Leadership and staff members responsible for accreditation	N. Azarov, A. Ampar, E. Schapova, V. Matveenko, E. Maytova, N. Efimova, I. Mardarovskaya	
14.30 – 14.45	Coffee break		
14.45 – 16.00	Work with documentation.		

Time	Activity	Participants	Place
16.00 – 17.00	Meeting with ACA teaching staff members	O. Tsukanova, N. Serbul, L. Fishkina, A. Shishonkov, V. Safonova, A. Gavdush, T. Gaponenko, V. Ryabchikov, D. Vdovin, L. Abramova, V. Alexandrova	
17.00 – 18.00	Meeting with external stakeholders (employers)	V. Raku, L. Kontorovich, A. Puzakov, A. Shanin	
18.00 – 19.00	Dinner		
15 February 2012, Wednesday			
10.00	Panel's Arrival at V. Popov Academy of Choral Art		
10.15- 11.00	Attending classes, auditions	Boys' choir, students' choir	
11.00 – 11.15	Coffee break		
11.15 – 12.00	Meeting with students	V. Pekhov, A. Abbasova, M. Tyo., G. Kuznetsov, M. Kuznetsov., I. Leonova, K. Safonov, B. Petrenko, I. Tatakov, I. Besedin, E. Vasilchuk	
12.00 – 13.00	Attending classes	Solfeggio, singing, conducting, acting	
13.00 – 13.45	Lunch		
13.45 – 14.45	Meeting with Department Heads	M. Tsukanova, A. Starodubrovsky, A. Petrov, S. Nesterenko, V. Sorokovikova	
14.45 – 16.00	Meeting with former students of the Academy	E. Svetozarova, E. Sayapina, G. Zhuravlev, Y. Rostotsky, A. Mayorov, I. Karpov, A. Simonov, K. Bikmaeva, F. Mescheryakov.	
16.00 – 16.15	Coffee break		
16.15 – 18.15	Work with documentation		
18.15 – 19.15	Dinner		

List of the meetings participants

Leadership:

Nikolay Azarov - Rector
Arnold Ampar - Vice-Rector for creative affairs
Elena Schapova - Vice-Rector for concert activity and public relations
Elena Maytova - Vice-Rector for academic affairs
Natalya Efimova - Vice-Rector for research affairs
Valentin Matveenko - Vice-Rector for administrative affairs
Irina Mardarovskaya – Chief Accountant

Faculty:

O. Tsukanova, N. Serbul, L. Fishkina, A. Shishonkov, V. Safonova, A. Gavdush, T. Gaponenko, V. Ryabchikov, D. Vdovin, L. Abramova, V. Alexandrova

Employers:

V. Raku - Deputy Director and Stage Director of the Kolobov Novaya Opera Theatre of Moscow
Lev Kontorovich – Honoured Artist of the Russian Federation, Professor, Artistic leader of the Academic Grand Choir "Masters of Choral Singing"
A. Puzakov – Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Moscow Synodal Choir
Alexander Shanin – Orchestra Director of the State Academic Bolshoi Theatre

Students:

V. Pekhov, A. Abbasova, M. Tyo., G. Kuznetsov, M. Kuznetsov., I. Leonova, K. Safonov, B. Petrenko, I. Tatakov, I. Besedin, E. Vasilchuk

Heads of Departments:

M. Tsukanova - Department of History and theory of Music
A. Starodubrovsky – Piano department
A. Petrov – Department of Choral Conducting
S. Nesterenko – Department of Solo singing
V. Sorokovikova – Department of Humanities and Socio-economic disciplines

Alumni and postgraduate students:

E. Svetozarova, E. Sayapina, G. Zhuravlev, Y. Rostotsky, A. Mayorov, I. Karpov, A. Simonov, K. Bikmaeva, F. Mescheryakov.