

AEC Quality Enhancement Process



Association Européenne
des Conservatoires,
Académies de Musique
et Musikhochschulen (AEC)

AEC Institutional Review Visit to

Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University in Brisbane

2-4 April 2012



Review Team:

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Celia Fitz-Walter (Student Expert), PhD Student, Queensland University, Brisbane

Secretary:

Linda Messas, General Manager at the European Association of Conservatoires

Introduction

The visit to the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (QCGU) was undertaken in the framework of the *AEC Quality Enhancement Process for Institutions and Programmes*, a service offered by the AEC to its member institutions in order to assist them in their quality improvement activities. QCGU had invited the AEC to conduct an institutional review in preparation for a formal review by Griffith University in June 2012 and in order to measure the Conservatorium against international standards.

An international group of experts was appointed to review the Conservatorium and used for this purpose the AEC Framework Document *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Music Education*, a set of common European standards and procedures for the external review of institutions and programmes in higher music education. Based on the visit and the materials sent to the team beforehand, the present report was produced.

QCGU was founded by the State of Queensland in 1957 as part of a larger movement to build a cultural infrastructure in a State emerging from its colonial and rural history [self-evaluation report (SER) p1]. Following a higher education reform in the late 1980s, the Conservatorium was integrated to Griffith University and relocated at the heart of the cultural precinct of Brisbane [ibid.]. QCGU is now one of the seven schools of the Arts, Education and Law (AEL) Group and part of its educational offer is delivered at another campus on the Gold Coast. In 2012, QCGU has 743 students enrolled in undergraduate programmes, 109 students enrolled in postgraduate programmes and 26 students in non-award programmes [SER, p6].

During the review visit, the Conservatorium was represented by the Director, Huib Schippers and its Executive Team. The members of the Review Team were chair Mist Thorkelsdottir (Dean of the Music Department, Reykjavik Academy of the Arts), Bernard Lanskey (Director of the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, National University of Singapore), Martin Prchal (Vice-Principal of the Royal Conservatoire, University of the Arts The Hague) and Student Expert Celia Fitz-Walter (PhD Student, Queensland University, Brisbane). The Secretary was Linda Messas (AEC General Manager).

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

The self-evaluation report was surprisingly not structured following the AEC Criteria for institutional review, which offer a template for international benchmarking; This was particularly surprising given the conservatory's international aspirations as it would have allowed the panel to give more specific feedback in relation to this ambition. It is the Review Committee's contention that a closer alignment of the AEC reporting structure would actually have given a better balanced picture of the conservatorium's identity than the picture created by the submitted report. Nevertheless the submitted report has supported the Team's reflections and discussions before, during and after the visit.

Review Schedule

Monday 2 April (Day 1) (half day)

Time	Session (venue as notified by the institution)	Names and functions of participants from the visited institution
10:00 – 12.30	Explore South Bank Cultural Precinct at leisure	
12.30-13.30	Lunch - Team members in South Bank Parklands	Review panel only
13.30 – 15.30	Preparatory meeting of the Review Team QCGU Boardroom (level 3, room 3.46)	Review panel only
15.30 – 16.30	Guided tour - Review of the facilities (studios, concert venues, practice facilities, library)	Venues staff + Music Technology student
16.30 – 17.00	Break	
17.00 – 18.00	Meeting 1 <i>QCGU Executive team</i>	Professor Huib Schippers, Associate Professor Don Lebler, Dr Scott Harrison, Dr Donna Weston, Dr Helen Lancaster, Ralph Hultgren, Michele Walsh
18.00 – 19.30	Meeting 2 <i>Heads of Area</i>	Andrew Brown, Stephen Cronin, Louise Denson, Peter Luff, Gerhard Mallon, Paul Sabey, Margaret Schindler, Vanessa Tomlinson, Natasha Vlassenko, Michele Walsh,
19.30 – 21.00	Dinner – The Jetty – Sidon Street, South Bank	Review panel and QCGU Executive

Tuesday 3 April (Day 2)

Time	Session (venue as notified by the institution)	Names and functions of participants from the visited institution
08:00-09:00	Breakfast meeting of Review team	<i>Review team only</i>
9:00 – 09:30	Sample student work and impressions Gold Coast campus	<i>Musical theatre - To be held in the Opera Space, level 1, room 1.73</i> <i>BPM students – To be held in Boardroom</i>
09:30–11:00	Meeting 3 <i>Formal meeting with students- max 10 students</i>	<i>Selected UG Students (from opera, classical music, jazz, music technology, popular music, musical theatre, from different years, studying different subjects), including a member of the student representative council</i>
11:00-11.30	Break	N/A
11.30-13.00	Meeting 4 <i>Meeting with Academic and Administrative Officers responsible for Learning & Teaching</i>	<i>DD L&T; Convenors key programs (Gemma & Julian, Brydie, Matt, Donna, etc. ; Head of Student Administration, Library</i>
13:00–14.00	Lunch	N/A
14.00-15:00	Instrumental workshops	<i>QCGU staff and students in various locations</i>
15.00 – 16.00	Meeting of the Review Team QCGU Boardroom (level 3)	Review panel only

16.00 – 17.30	Meeting 5 <i>Meeting with researchers, postgraduate and research students</i>	<i>DD R Scott Harrison, QCRC Director Huib Schippers, QCRC members including Stephen Emmerson, Kim Cunio, HDR students, recent graduates, Liam Flenady, Jodie Taylor, Dan Bendrups</i>
17.30 – 18.00	Break	N/A
18.00 – 19.00	Meeting 6 <i>Meeting with representatives of the music profession</i>	<i>Chris Bowen (Arts Queensland), John Kotzas (QPAC), Russell Mitchell and Narelle French (OQ), Richard Wenn (QSO) ,</i>
19.00 – 19.30	Review Team meeting	N/A
19.30	Dinner - TBC	As proposed by the institution

Wednesday April 4 (Day 3)

Time	Session (venue as notified by the institution)	Names and functions of participants from the visited institution (meeting personnel can be combined taking care to ensure conflicts of interest)
09:00-09:30	Review Team meeting	N/A
09:30-11:00	Meeting 7 <i>Meeting with QCGU Enterprise team (community outreach & partnerships)</i>	As proposed by the institution <i>Executive manager Helen Lancaster, Sarah Sullivan, Sheree Clem, Ralph Hultgren, and Abi Zrobok</i>
11:00-11:30	Break	N/A
11:30-13:00	Meeting 8 <i>Meeting with key personnel AEL Group</i>	<i>Financial manager Sue Smith, HR Advisor Alarna Mullins, Dean Acad. Claire Wyatt-Smith, Dean Research Richard Bagnell</i>
13:00–14:00	Lunch	<i>Lunchtime concert BPM students</i>
14:00-15:00	Meeting 9 <i>Example: extra session if required by the Review Team (members of the team may explore more thoroughly specific area, meet other representatives of their choice</i>	As notified by the Review Team
15:00-17:00	Review Team meeting - Preparation for the feedback meeting	N/A
17:00-18:00	Feedback to the institution	Leadership of the institution (normally the same personnel as the first meeting) and Dean Acad. Claire Wyatt-Smith
18:00-19:00	Optional: Cocktail reception for the ABC (Con Theatre) OR Kawai Piano Series concert – Graham Fitch (IHRH)	<i>University welcome of national broadcaster as new neighbour</i>
19:00	Dinner	As proposed by the institution

1. Mission and vision

1-a. What is the national legal context and framework in which the institution operates?

“While most conservatoires in Australia were established as stand-alone institutions like those in mainland Europe, all have amalgamated into universities [...] as part of the 1988 Dawkins reforms of Higher Education, leading to curricular structures more in line with those in the UK and the Bologna Treaty: a three-cycle higher education in music, with typically a three year Bachelor degree (with the possibility of a fourth year – called Honours if it has a research component), a two year Masters program, and three year Doctoral studies (either PhD or professional doctorate) [SER, p2]”.

The Conservatorium was referred to as one of the University’s crown jewels [meeting with the University’s AEL Group]. The University representatives recognised the lack of acknowledgement by the government of the high costs associated with music teaching [ibid.] and the Conservatorium’s management team highlighted the willingness on the University side to understand and accommodate the Conservatorium’s needs [meeting with the management team]. The high level of support provided by the Pro-Vice Chancellor was also pointed out [ibid.]. However, the new organisational structure in place since 2011 within the Arts, Education and Law Group generates additional administrative procedures and costs, and a significant amount of time is spent by the Conservatorium’s Director in negotiating with the University [ibid.].

The Review Team observed that there is significant support from the University to the Conservatorium, which is fully respected and valued. Although bureaucracy is certainly unavoidable in such a large structure, the University is encouraged to ensure that the administrative procedures in place do not hinder the Conservatorium’s operation.

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

The Conservatorium’s mission is to serve music in its various circles (community and wider) as well as possible through successfully training musicians, engaging with the community, research and engaging with partnerships [meeting with management]. The Conservatorium is described as “help[ing] aspiring musicians to find their places on the world stage [Conservatorium Website¹]”. In addition, the Review Team was informed about the Conservatorium’s ambition to be one of the top conservatoires in the world (in the top 10%) [meeting with management].

The Conservatorium’s Executive, formed in 2009, formulated key goals for 2012 – 2015 “in consultation with staff, students, and external stakeholders:

- Catering to a highly motivated and diverse student body through a range of courses across its two campuses, offering curricula intended to enable young music professionals to make the best contribution possible to cultural life in the twenty-first century.
- Consolidating an innovative and vibrant music research culture that connects musical practice, the place of music in society, technology, and learning processes through creative and rigorous enquiry, attracting strong cohorts of research students and substantial funding.

¹ See website <http://www.griffith.edu.au/music/queensland-conservatorium>.

- Connecting with communities of music lovers and young learners through outreach activities across the state and by profiling the facilities at the heart of Brisbane’s cultural precinct for use as a premier venue for concerts and events as well as an excellent educational institution.
- Collaborating closely with national and international organisations for mutual benefits: with tertiary institutions in Australia and abroad (with emphasis on the Asia-Pacific); with festivals and promoters; and with policy and funding bodies.
- Creating a sustainable organisational and financial basis for the full range of QCGU activities by developing effective and transparent support structures, adequately resourced through a mix of recurring and competitive university/public funding, commercial income, and philanthropy [SER, piii]”.

The aforementioned goals are clearly articulated and thought to be achievable in the next years should the last objective (concerning the financial sustainability of the Conservatorium) be reached. As far as the vision is concerned, the Review Team would like to encourage the Conservatorium to develop a contextualised vision, deliverable to a future point, which would distinguish it from the other conservatoires in the world, clearly indicate its specific areas of focus and inform the curriculum goals.

The emphasis in the material given to the Review Team was not so much based on the first goal, as information on educational programmes was rather limited in comparison to full chapters on research and community, partnerships and commercialisation, which created confusion about the balance between research and performance. Indeed the focus and energy directed towards research - as described in the self-evaluation report – creates, at least in relation to the document, an impression that performance is not celebrated at the same level.

Finally, while the Conservatorium’s ambition is to be considered as a world-class conservatoire, the key goals mentioned above very much remain in the local realm. They seem reasonable and achievable but do not support, in the Review Team’s opinion, the international ambition. Thus, it is unclear to the Review Team if members of the institution other than the management team are aware of this ambition and share it.

1-c. What are the goals of its educational programmes and how do they address the institutional mission?

The goals of the Conservatorium’s educational programmes are described online. For example, “all strands of the Bachelor of Music aim to produce graduates who are highly skilled, musically adaptable and equipped to enter professional life as creative and flexible 21st century musicians [Griffith University website².” The management team highlighted the programmes’ aims of making students aware of the breadth of professional possibilities and of presenting them with a wider picture of opportunities than it is the case in other music institutions of the kind [meeting with management].

The goals of the educational programmes appear to the Review Team to be in line with the Conservatorium’s key goals for 2012-2015 quoted above. The Review Team would like to commend the Conservatorium’s management and staff members for their work on adapting the educational offer to the

² See <http://www148.griffith.edu.au/programs-courses/Program/OverviewAndFees?programCode=1268&studentType=Domestic>

changing music profession. The introduction of the course “My life as a musician” for example [SER, p5 and course profile online³] can be considered as good practice to prepare students for a portfolio career.

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

The Conservatorium’s strategic plan for 2011-2015 is structured into four areas: learning and teaching, research, partnerships, ER and internationalisation, as well as organisation and infrastructure [Appendix 1.2 QCGU Strategic Plan].

The Review Team would like to commend the Conservatorium’s significant achievements described in the strategic plan, particularly the profound Bachelor programmes’ reform to ensure their relevance to the profession and the Conservatorium’s key role in the State’s musical life through the organisation of public events, the contribution to festivals and the involvement in policy and funding discussions. The Review Team is also looking forward to seeing the outcomes of the project on one-to-one teaching and how it will be implemented in the Conservatorium’s curricula.

Although teaching and learning is the first area referred to, the plan T&L in 2011-2015 focuses on the curriculum reviews (some of them in place since 2011 and others to be undertaken in 2012). The Review Team could not see that a leading idea, aim or action to be achieved by 2015 was introduced in this area with an ambition to place the Conservatorium in a different/more advanced position than the one it currently is in. As opposed to this, the section about research reflects a highly forward-looking attitude as it states clear goals, intentions and commitments as well as concrete means of achieving them. The Review Team would therefore like to suggest a revision of the Strategic Plan in order to ensure that both areas (T&L and research) are addressed in a similar way in its key documents. The Plan would also benefit from the insertion of details about the financial underpinning of the strategy.

³ See https://courseprofile.secure.griffith.edu.au/student_section_loader.php?section=2&profileid=66447.

2. Educational processes

2.1 Programmes

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

The Review Team is aware that Creative and Performing Arts Learning Outcome Statements have been devised to represent the national standard for graduates in bachelor and coursework masters degrees and that the higher education academic standards in creative and performing arts in Europe, the UK and North America were also considered in that process (along with the 'Polifonia/Dublin Descriptors')⁴.

As mentioned in the self-evaluation report the Conservatorium is leading a national research project which aims to “develop and trial consensus moderation strategies that will address the alignment between learning and assessment and national Threshold Learning Outcome statements (TLOs) in tertiary music programs. It will focus on the development and description of a shared understanding of academic standards within the discipline of music at the undergraduate level using the ALTC Creative and Performing Arts Learning Outcome Statements as a benchmark, with particular attention to the basis for grading student work”.

Although it is unclear to the Review Team how far the Creative and Performing Arts Learning Outcome Statements are used in the development of the Conservatorium's programmes, Conservatorium faculty members/researchers are aware of their existence and on-going work on Conservatorium's assessment processes is making use of these statements. However, the fact that the PDDs have been considered during the development of the latter statements should not prevent the Conservatorium from using them directly in the development of its programmes. The Review Team did not find any evidence that the programmes' outcomes had been mapped with AEC Learning Outcomes, while this would be a first essential step to increase the compatibility of QCGU programmes with the international system, at least with regard to European institutions.

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

“Undergraduate programs include the Bachelor of Music, Bachelor of Popular Music and Bachelor of Music Technology, each with an associated 4th year Honours program available. A Bachelor of Music/Bachelor of Business double degree was offered for the first time in 2012. Bachelor of Popular Music/Bachelor of Business and Bachelor of Music Technology/Bachelor of Business programs will be submitted for approval during 2012.

Postgraduate programs include Graduate Certificates and Graduate Diplomas in Music Studies and Music Technology, a Master of Music Studies program and a Research Higher Degree Qualifying program.

Research programs include the Doctor of Musical Arts, Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of Philosophy by Publication, Master of Music and Master of Philosophy. A Master of Music (Research) is available to

⁴ See Publication of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council entitled *Learning and Teaching Academic Standards Project - Creative and performing arts*, December 2010.

qualifying students at the elite Australian National Academy of Music in Melbourne. Study areas include classical music (instrumental), composition, jazz, music studies and research, music technology, musical theatre, opera and voice, pedagogy and music education, and popular music. [SER, p6]”

Research students met by the Review Team indicated the opportunity for MA students, following an independent review, to be upgraded to a doctorate if the student’s delivery is considered as doctoral level production [meeting with research students]. The Conservatorium’s management is currently reviewing this to build a strong master programme (a strand leading to a DMA and a strand leading to a PhD) [meeting with reseachers].

As the Review Team was not provided with programmes’ learning outcomes for the various study cycles, there is no evidence to inform the Team’s impression that there is a progression between the various cycles.

2.2 Delivery

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

The Review Team found in the self-evaluation report and in the discussions indications that the Conservatorium provides distance-learning education, explores the development of a peer assisted study scheme and exposes students to the profession via ‘work integrated learning experiences’. The Review Team would like to commend the truly innovative curriculum of the Bachelor of Popular Music (BPM) and its mode of delivery.

The Conservatorium may wish to consider exploring all possible ways to increase cross-departmental collaborations as well as to provide multidisciplinary education paths (linking with other elements of Griffith University).

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

The Queensland Conservatorium Research Centre (QCRC) was established in 2003 as “one of thirty nodes of research excellence at Griffith University” with “26 researchers now jointly dedicating 11,000 hours annually to over thirty research projects” in four areas: creative practice as research, education and training, music and communities, and the interplay of music and new technologies [SER, p11].

Research is integrated at all programmes’ levels from Bachelor to Doctoral, for example through the course ‘Writing and thinking about music” in the very first year (training students to be able to research their art, argue about it and write about it), through weekly research training for honours students and through required participation to research colloquiums for Master of Music and Doctoral students (in the DMA) [meeting with T&L academic and administrative staff]. The integration of research in the Bachelors programmes is facilitated by the fact that the researchers teach at undergraduate level and examples were given of new courses introduced as a result of a teacher’s research activity [meeting with researchers].

The Review Team was informed that the coursework master is priced at the full fee while the research master is free for domestic students, all research higher degree being funded by the government [meeting with researchers]. Griffith University is strongly encouraging the intake of doctoral students, also via distance-learning arrangements [ibid.].

The Review Team would like to commend the successful involvement of the research faculty in all teaching levels including the undergraduate level and strongly supports QRCR efforts to integrate research, teaching and learning and community activities. QRCR is functioning as an international beacon of excellence in enhancing the institutional culture both at the level of the Conservatorium and at the level of the University. The Review Team also appreciates the relative balance of creative and research outputs.

The Conservatorium is advised to ensure that research is not prioritised over T&L (as the self-evaluation report seems to indicate). The Review Team would like to advise the Conservatorium to properly acknowledge and celebrate the centrality of performance as a majority of its students are undergraduate performers.

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

Half of the 200 public events taking place yearly within the Conservatorium are produced by the Conservatorium (i.e. staff and students) [SER, p19]. Along with performances of teachers and guests on Wednesdays and of the Conservatorium's ensembles in residence on Fridays, students benefit from performance opportunities on Thursdays, which are filled up for 2012 [meeting with the enterprise team]. Other time slots, for example for departments' concerts and orchestras' concerts, are also available and an email is sent every year in August or September to all staff and students including an outline of the performance opportunities; a possibility for ad hoc and last minute concerts is progressively being provided as student demand is increasing [ibid.]. Students are encouraged to act as professionals and be actively involved in the organisation and promotion of the concert [ibid.].

Members of the teaching staff met by the Review Team indicated the existence of a concert committee with representatives of the various areas, where the time slots for the various ensembles and departments are discussed; they indicated that the events calendar had been tightened due to pressures on performing spaces [meeting with T&L academic and administrative staff]. As there is no performance space at the Gold Coast Campus, students are encouraged to perform outside the Conservatorium and are assessed for such activities [ibid.].

Some of the students met by the Review Team felt that the amount of performance opportunities had reduced in relation to earlier in their programme and deplored the complexity of the application process and of the concert organisation in comparison to other external venues [meeting with students]. Students enrolled in programmes at the Gold Coast were satisfied with the amount of gigs they could perform outside [ibid.].

There are certainly performance opportunities for students. However, such opportunities seem to vary according to the students' area of study. It is important that undergraduate students receive ample performance opportunity as a central part of their learning experience. In a context where the

Conservatorium is considering further growth, it is important that serious consideration be given to ensuring that equivalent performance opportunities are offered to all enrolled students where relevant.

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

One of the University Student Administration Centres is situated within the Conservatorium; it is composed of five staff members including former Conservatorium students and is primarily dedicated to Conservatorium's students but is open to all University students [meeting with T&L academic and administrative staff]. The Centre keeps track of students' assessment and provides help with issues such as enrolment, timetable, programs and courses, credit, tuition fees and charges, student policies, and available scholarships [Griffith University Website⁵].

As far as academic counselling is concerned, all Conservatorium's teaching staff members are expected to be available for student consultations throughout the semester, Heads of Areas are the ones to be consulted for matters relating to their areas of study, Program Convenors provide advice in relation to their programs and new students can contact the designated First Year Advisor [SER, pp. 7-8].

The students met by the Review Team expressed dissatisfaction regarding the University Student Administration Centre's services, mentioning for example a lack of information about the availability of scholarships [meeting with students]. They highlighted the availability and readiness to help of their Heads of Areas in particular and of QCGU staff more generally [ibid.].

In addition, the Conservatorium has introduced this year a Peer Assisted Study Scheme (PASS) for students in first year music theory courses [SER, p8]. Two second year students recommended by the Head of Composition are chosen to assist first year students in their learning process (e.g. to encourage them to work in groups) [meeting with Heads of Areas]. However, attendance has been quite low until now [ibid.].

Student researchers met by the Review Team (some of them enrolled in the distance-learning programmes) reported some problems in relation to the initial orientation received and in some cases in the supervision process [meeting with student researchers].

Students are provided with various options in terms of academic guidance and the Review Team would like to commend the availability of Conservatorium staff members for students. The PASS is an interesting initiative, which however has not proven itself yet. Consideration may be given to offering a more specialised training to the second year students involved in the process.

The University may wish to consider consulting students (e.g. via a focus group meeting) about their complaints in relation to the student administration in order to increase its awareness and understanding of those complaints and to act upon them.

Information relating specifically to conservatorium-level activities which lie outside modular delivery (e.g. performance opportunities and protocols, processes related to external and outreach engagement, communication channels etc.) is difficult to find and sometimes seems unarticulated. Such information,

⁵ See <http://www.griffith.edu.au/new-students/getting-around-university/get-to-knowstudent-administration-centre>.

however, is central to conservatory activity and deserves to be more easily accessible, more comprehensive and more clearly communicated.

Finally, the Review Team was surprised not to find any printed handbook for Conservatorium students. This is common practice in many conservatoires in the world as students do not necessarily go online to search for information. The Review Team noticed that the various pieces of information relevant to Conservatorium students need to be looked for at various places on the website, sometimes on the Conservatorium webpages, other times on the University pages, and had to spend some time searching for certain documents. The information, once found, is very useful, clear and relevant and it is crucial that more thought is given to where this information is placed on the website and how students can find it more easily. The Conservatorium may wish to refer to websites of other conservatoires in the world which are integrated into universities in order to find good examples of how Conservatorium-specific information is provided⁶.

2.3 International perspectives

2.3-a. Does the institution have an international strategy?

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

2.3-c. Is the institution participating in international partnerships?

The University is committed to internationalisation [Griffith University Strategic Plan 2009-2013]. This encompasses internationalisation of the curriculum, active participation of students and staff in international networks, financial support to enable staff to travel and help maintaining and extending partnerships and attraction of PhD students (the University actually waives their fee) [meeting with AEL group].

The Conservatorium's ambition is to be one of the top conservatoires in the world (in the top 10%) [meeting with management]. The strategy on internationalisation is outlined as follows: "[in 2015] QCGU focuses on long-term, mutually beneficial and intense collaborations with selected institutions in Europe and America through Pentacon, and in the Asia Pacific region through the ASI, while still keeping open its doors to targeted, one-off project-based collaborations. In the international market, QCGU targets students for niche degrees, with an emphasis on popular music, chamber music, opera, musical theatre, and research, maintaining an overseas student base in excess of 5%, ensuring constant international reference points as well as additional income [SER, p31]."

The Review Team finds the strategy mentioned in the self-evaluation document inconsistent with the Conservatorium's ambition to be a global player. As quoted above, the strategy focuses on cooperation with four institutions in Europe and Canada as well as on the Asia-Pacific region. Regarding the potential to become a leading force in the Asia Pacific region, there is no evidence that this is a realistic objective at this point, bearing in mind the currently available resources, though there was some evidence at least that the university's support and the research profile may mean that the conservatorium is better placed than

⁶ Addendum following comments from the Conservatoire Executive Team on the draft report: the Griffith website is being improved in order to address navigation issues such as those mentioned by the Review Team.

any other Australian institution. More thoughts may need to be given on which niche areas to focus on, as opera or chamber music are quite widely taught.

The current situation is as follows:

International students and international exchange: There are at the moment “5 international students enrolled in Gold Coast programs (3.5% of the total Gold Coast Campus enrolment) and 34 enrolled in South Bank programs (4.6% of the total South Bank enrolment) [SER, p6]” and the amount of international students is growing in the area of research [meeting with management]. The management team deplored a relatively more expensive cost of living abroad as well as stricter visa regulations and a prohibitively high exchange rate as strong obstacles to students’ mobility (respectively outgoing and incoming); in addition, the management indicated that very few funding mechanisms exist to send students abroad [meeting with management].

The number of international students enrolled at the Conservatorium is low compared to international standards. The Conservatorium has the natural advantage of offering all its courses in English, which greatly facilitates hosting students without having to translate course material or to require from some teachers that they work in a foreign language, etc. A key element in student recruitment is certainly promotion and the Review Team would like to recommend that a section dedicated to potential international students is included on the Conservatorium’s website.

Outgoing student mobility is very limited. Although the University ‘Student exchange’ programme supports students to study abroad for 1 or 2 semesters, the list of exchange partners from which students can chose their destination does encompass universities which often (in the case of Europe at least) do not include a conservatoire or a music academy⁷. If this results in Conservatorium’s students not being able to be supported by this University programme, such a situation needs urgent consideration.

International faculty: no statistical data was provided on the proportion of international staff. Staff profiles show a rather balanced picture. More than half of the staff members are from Australia and have pursued their studies in the country while others have truly international backgrounds. No information was provided about sessional staff members.

The Conservatorium may wish to consider encouraging more strongly staff exchanges, as these can contribute significantly to student recruitment as well as ensuring that the institution has a deeper and more broadly owned awareness of contemporary international trends in music education.

International partnerships: an informal cooperation is in place through the ‘Pentacon Group’ with the Guildhall School of Music & Drama (London); Sibelius Academy (Helsinki); The Schulich School of Music of McGill University (Montreal); and the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague with the aim to “exchange experience, best practice, research outcomes, key staff, and students [SER, p28]”. “QCGU has shifted its focus from many loose collaborations and memorandums of understanding to fewer, but mutually beneficial and long-term relationships with carefully selected partners in the Asia-Pacific for exchange, overseas students, and research collaborations. Currently China Conservatorium (Beijing), Hanoi National

⁷ See <http://www.griffith.edu.au/international/exchange/outgoing-exchange/exchange-partners>.

Academy of Music (Vietnam) and the National Centre for Performing Arts (Mumbai) are the focus of attention. Collaborations in this area have already included staff exchange for instrumental/ensemble tuition, keynote lectures at conferences, and jointly organised festivals [SER, p15 and 28]”. A list of international partners of the Research Centre was provided in the self-evaluation report, including for example the AEC, the University of Ghana and the Swedish international development cooperation agency [SER, p16]. The Conservatorium was said to be very active internationally in the area of research [meeting with management].

The scope, nature and aim of the various partnerships listed in the self-evaluation report needs to be clarified. The Conservatorium may wish to consider evaluating the current partnerships to ensure that each of them contributes to the aim of internationalisation as defined by the Conservatorium and beyond research and that this internationalisation is reflected in the Conservatorium’s curricula.

Administrative support and funding for internationalisation: the Conservatorium used to have an international office but internationalisation is now centralised by the University [meeting with management]. In terms of funding, “QCGU was selected by the Vice Chancellor as one of eight Areas of Strategic Investment (ASI) of the University, with five years of substantial additional funding to enable a program *Music, Arts and the Asia-Pacific* to further strengthen existing areas of excellence such as opera, small ensembles, music technology, and practice-based music research, and build on interdisciplinarity as well as stronger international collaborations, particularly with the Asia-Pacific region [SER, piii].

The absence of an international officer, based in the Conservatorium, to develop international activities and to assist students and staff in pursuing opportunities is of concern. Many aspects of music students’ mobility are rather specific compared to mobility in other fields: study destinations are often chosen on the basis of the presence of a teacher with whom the student would like to study, conservatoires often verify the student’s capabilities through entrance examinations with the aim to maintain high artistic standards, the ecology of the conservatoire needs to be preserved when selecting incoming students. This implies a highly personal approach to international exchanges and cooperation and it seems crucial to the Review Team that an international officer be specifically appointed to support the internationalisation of the Conservatorium.

International benchmarking: the Conservatorium does not involve any external examiners in its assessment process; International ensembles in residence were mentioned as a way to put students in contact with international standards [meeting with management]. Students met by the Review Team indicated that they consider the Conservatorium as a first stage which needs to be completed with studies abroad in order to establish themselves internationally; they did not feel ready to compete by international standards [meeting with students]. Research students met by the Review Team pointed out the need for more benchmarking [meeting with research students].

There is a lack of opportunity to engage in international comparisons or benchmarking to international standards in performance and teaching. The Conservatorium may wish to explore the opportunity to ask guests coming to Brisbane to deliver a masterclass, a concert or a presentation to take part in the assessment process by serving as external examiners as well as arrangements with conservatoires internationally for the exchange of external examiners that could be both part of examination panels as

well as give master classes. In addition, the Review Team would like to recommend that all research students, including those following the distance-learning option, are encouraged and supported to take part in international conferences. Finally, mapping the Conservatorium's learning outcomes directly with the AEC Learning Outcomes could be a promotional tool potentially useful in the recruitment of European students, as the Conservatorium could show that its programme levels do correspond with European programmes for all three cycles and that the same concept of student-centred learning is implemented in Brisbane.

General conclusion on internationalisation:

There is an apparent disconnection between the internationalisation ambitions of the University and the Conservatorium on the one hand, and the current lack of opportunities for international activities and interactions beyond research on the other. While Research deserves internationalization in terms of leading-edge values, other aspects (e.g. student exchanges, international performance opportunities, formal partnership agreements etc.) lag significantly behind international norms.

Internationalisation needs a significant investment and the Conservatorium, given its position within the University as a centre of excellence and its capacity to operate in an international arena (as evidenced by the developments in the field of research), should be given a pilot or priority status in the further development of the University's international ambitions.

2.4 Learning assessment

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

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

Students are assessed at the end of their first year and their mark determines the amount of contact time with the teacher which they will be entitled to have [meeting with Heads of Areas]. Students referred to the A,B,C evaluation system describing strand A as the music education strand, strand C as the performing strand (C students being given more opportunities for ensembles and more contact time) and strand B as an intermediate option providing broader career opportunities depending on students' input [meeting with students]. Heads of Areas did not support this new evaluation system where a student's career is decided upon at the end of its first year, given that some students may require more time to acquire artistic maturity [meeting with Heads of Areas]. Heads of Areas therefore advocate for a postponement of such a selection to the end of the second year [ibid.].

The assessment process is fully internal and the size of the panel depends on the year the student is enrolled in [meeting with Heads or Areas]. Students finishing their fourth year will be assessed by a panel of three; in four years, some students may thus face eight times the same examiner, especially in areas like

brass or musical theatre in which only one full-time staff member is active [ibid.]. Heads of Areas expressed their concern about the lack of internal benchmarking in the assessment process [ibid]⁸.

Students met by the Review Ream indicated that the projects undertaken outside the curriculum were assessed on the basis of a reflective journal and recognised within the elective “project studies”.

The Review Team was not provided with a description of the various assessment methods used or with a grading system; assessment criteria were found on the internet.

The Conservatorium is strongly advised to reconsider the time given to students before a decision that could impact their career. Instrumental and especially vocal students develop in various ways and at various speeds and the Conservatorium could overlook talented students who need a longer time to develop artistically. There was some evidence to the panel that this was particularly the case for students arriving from more remote rural areas. In addition, the Review Team would like to encourage the Conservatorium to explore the possibility to involve external examiners at least in the final examinations’ juries. The various conservatoires in Australia could exchange external examiners.

⁸ In its comments on the draft report, the Conservatorium Executive Team indicated however that the Conservatorium is participating in the Griffith University Consensus Moderation project to ensure benchmarking in assessment between departments.

3. Student profiles

3.1 Entrance qualifications

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

“The primary means by which applicants are selected for offers into QCGU programmes is by audition” [SER, p6]. The Heads of Areas met by the Review Team indicated that students’ levels at entrance were rather heterogeneous (although the general level had increased in music technology and jazz) and that they were under the impression that a certain number of applicants had to be accepted also for financial reasons [meeting with Head of Areas]. The Open Conservatorium, housed within the Conservatorium, provides pre-college education via an Early Childhood Music programme (from 0 to 7 year olds), the young Conservatorium (for primary and secondary school students) and the Tertiary Preparation Workshop aimed at assisting applicants to university music degrees [Open Conservatorium flyer and website]. In addition, the Open Conservatorium’s continuing professional development programmes are a means to recruit students for the MA (coursework for the postgraduate programme).

The Review Team was not provided with detailed entrance requirements and found it difficult to find such requirements on the website. The Conservatorium is advised to communicate more explicitly about the entrance standards. A certain diversity of students’ level is unavoidable, even more given the lack of formal/public pre-college education in Australia, and also desirable in order to promote equal opportunities. Some statements heard during the various meetings (with faculty members and with students) however make the Review Team wonder about the openness of the recruitment process and recommend that the variety of level be given specific attention in the future as part of a broader strategy to benchmark student’s level according to international standards.

3.2 Student progression and achievement

3.2. How are student progression and achievement followed within the programmes?

The Review Team was not provided with information about this topic and does not have a clear view of the Conservatorium’s expectations in terms of standards’ improvement⁹. The retention rate for the Master of Music Studies [SER, p38] is a concern.

⁹ The Review Team was informed after drafting the report that progression and achievement are tracked by student administration.

3.3. Employability

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

The University has set up a “Stay connected” programme for alumni, encouraging them to enter their contact details online while providing them with special benefits and services such as the reception of a monthly e-newsletter, the access to the library and to careers and employment services and discounted rates at Conservatorium Concerts [Griffith University Website¹⁰]. Graduates from the Conservatorium also benefit from this programme and can register their details on the webpages dedicated to the Conservatorium. In addition, the University distributes the Australian Graduate Survey to all its graduates to collect data about the work and/or further study activities they engage in after graduation [ibid.¹¹]. At the Conservatorium level, efforts have been made to reconnect with alumni at the occasion of the Conservatorium 50th anniversary celebrations in 2007 [SER, p20]. The database encompasses data from about 500 alumni who are regularly informed about Conservatorium events by the marketing manager [meeting with Enterprise Team]. They benefit from discounted rates to use the Conservatorium venues and can make use of the concerts agency as well as of the continuing professional development opportunities provided by the Enterprise Team [ibid.]. One of the objectives of the Enterprise Team is to update the Conservatorium alumni database [meeting with the Management Team].

There is a clear intention from the Conservatorium management to address the need to reconnect with Conservatorium graduates and the Review Team would like to encourage the Conservatorium to pursue its attempts in this field. Establishing a formal alumni system at the Conservatorium level would indeed provide the institution with additional data on the situation of former students (including those who have graduated for several years) and would extend the network of contacts for current students. The AEC publication *Today's Student: Tomorrow's Alumnus – Cultivating Good Alumni Relationships in Conservatoires*¹² could be helpful in this process. In order to facilitate the immense task of contacting all former students, the Conservatorium might wish to consider limiting the scope of the survey by each year tracking students in a different study fields, such as brass students, wind students, etc.

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

Appendices 2.4.4 and 2.4.5 show the percentage of Bachelor graduates employed full time or pursuing full time study. As mentioned in the self-evaluation report, such information does not fully reflect the latest trend in the music sector, where graduates increasingly embrace a portfolio career, i.e. a combination of part-time jobs [SER, p8]. A University report from February 2012 on job prospects for music programme graduates indicates that these prospects “are generally below average or average, with declining or stable future employment. The key occupation for expected employment growth, however, is noted as private teaching and tutoring.” [Appendix ‘External Relations Competitor Analysis’, part 6].

The information collected during the various meetings supports the view that most of the graduates do find work: performance funding is allocated to the Conservatorium based on (among other indicators) the

¹⁰ <http://www.griffith.edu.au/development-alumni/alumni/griffith-services>

¹¹ <http://www.griffith.edu.au/student-surveys/australian-graduate-survey>

¹² The AEC/‘Polifonia’ Handbook *Today's Student: Tomorrow's alumnus - Cultivating Good Alumni Relationships in Conservatoires* (2007) can be found online at <http://www.aecinfo.org/publications> .

outcome of the Graduate Survey [meeting with the AEL Group] and representatives from the profession indicated an increased degree of appreciation of Conservatorium graduates' level and preparation for the profession; they also highlighted graduates' important role in teaching within the state and beyond [meeting with the Profession].

In order to be able to show the full spectrum of activities undertaken by its graduates, the Conservatorium is encouraged to collect directly from its alumni relevant data more adapted to the employment trends in the music sector (e.g. taking into account part-time jobs) than the statistical data compiled by the University which does not fully reflect the actual employment situation. The introduction of the course "My life as musician" shows the Conservatorium's awareness of the changing music profession and its concern to ensure that its graduates are well-prepared.

As employment in teaching has been rising and is expected to rise very strongly, it is essential for the Conservatoire to offer music education courses to all its graduates. At present, specific pedagogical studies seemed available to most departments but not all.

3.4 Equal opportunities

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

Griffith University is committed to the promotion of diversity, social justice and community engagement and has declared as its priority in the field the increase of "the participation and success of students from low socio-economic backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students with disabilities" [University website¹³]. As far as the Conservatorium is concerned, "success rates for Indigenous Students at the Conservatorium are better than those for the AEL group, the University and National rates for the 2006 – 2010 period. However, participation rates are low and retention rates are variable. The curriculum tends to be a poor fit." [SER, p9].

The Review Team notes that the question of equal opportunities is considered as important for the University and that the situation in terms of equal opportunities within the Conservatorium is in line with the situation within the other AEL elements.

¹³ See <http://www.griffith.edu.au/student-equity-services>.

4. Teaching staff

4.1 Artistic and scholarly activity and qualifications

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

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

Staff profiles indicate that members of the teaching staff are very active as performers and/or researchers [Appendix 5.2 Staff profiles]. Teaching staff feature regularly in the Conservatorium concerts calendar [2011 and 2012 Concert Season]. In addition, twenty-five artists and scholars are involved in the Queensland Conservatorium Research Centre (QRCR) created in 2003 [Appendix 1.1 – QRCR Brochure 2011-2012] and “in 2010 - 2011, QRCR produced a total of over 100 outputs, almost evenly distributed between text-based and creative research [including] opera direction, opera performance and full-length symphonic compositions. With 32 researchers involved in contributing to this effort, almost the entire full time staff have contributed to this outcome.” Members of the research centre pointed out a good degree of communication between them and of information about the various research outputs through festivals and presentations [meeting with the researchers].

In terms of institutional policy, there is a workload model adopted by other conservatoires in Australia with a standard proportion of workload allocation: 60% to teaching (the University standard is 40% but the Conservatorium benefits from a special model taking into account one-to-one tuition specificities [meeting with researchers]), 20% to research (this can be lesson preparation but should result in a text-based or creative output) and 20% to service [meeting with L&T academic and administrative staff]. Some of the faculty members met indicated a difficulty to find the right balance between these elements (some of them willing to teach more, some of them willing to further develop their research profile), which results in a stretched workload [ibid.]. Staff members are entitled to apply for a semester-long sabbatical every three years although few of the interviewed staff members had applied for one [ibid.]. The University also has a policy for promotions (from A to E levels) including promotion mentoring and the faculty met by the Review Team felt well supported in this regard [ibid.]¹⁴.

The Review Team could appreciate the high level of commitment of teaching staff members and their enthusiasm for what they do and for the development of the Conservatorium. There is a well-known University policy (adapted to the Conservatorium) to support staff scholarly activities via an allocation of time, an encouragement of research production (in size and quality) and promotion opportunities. In this field, and in relation to international practice, the work realised by the QRCR towards the acknowledgement of creative practice as research should be commended: artistic production by faculty is acknowledged and strongly encouraged and ‘reflective practice’ is placed at the core of the institutional culture. The Conservatorium may wish to ensure that faculty not involved in the research centre (e.g. supposedly part-time faculty) are provided with similar encouragement and benefit from the influence and results of the QRCR.

¹⁴ Addition following comments from the Conservatoire Executive Team on the draft report: this model is imposed by the Unions.

4.2 Qualifications as educators

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

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

The students met by the Review Team indicated their great satisfaction with the teaching quality [meeting with students]. General teaching seminars are offered by Griffith University and faculty members try to attend [meeting with Heads of Areas].

The Review Team did not look into detail in this matter but was encouraged by the students' strong enthusiasm for the capacities of faculty.

4.3 Size and composition of the teaching staff body

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

"The organisation and many of its staff are stretched well beyond their limits, with budget deficits accumulating year by year hindering equitable workloads [SER, p4]."

The Review Team did not find data on teaching staff numbers and allocation in the self-evaluation report nor information on how recommendation 3 of the QCGU 2006 review has been addressed (i.e. convening a working party to "reduce by at least 25% the number of courses offered" and "ensure that academic teaching loads are realistic and manageable" [SER p34]). The 60-20-20 workload model described above indicates that teaching is considered as prominent in staff members' mission.

The Review Team is however concerned by the statistical data provided by the Conservatorium on student numbers per subject/instruments, which indicate a very high amount of students in certain subjects such as violin and voice (50 and 80 undergraduate students respectively) in comparison to other subjects. From an international perspective, such a difference between amounts of students enrolled in - for example - the various string subjects is rather unusual. This can create problems in the ecology of the Conservatorium and in these students' participation to ensembles (e.g. in the case of violin students).

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

"About two-third(s?) of the workforce [is] in the 40 – 60 age range, a slightly high 23% over 60, and a slightly low 9% under 40. This is expected to shift to a more equal balance (16/16%) by natural attrition and new recruitment by 2015" [SER, p24].

The Review Team did not find detailed information on the composition of the teaching staff. Compared to international standards, the percentage of elderly staff is high. As they presumably benefit from long-term employment, the level of flexibility is limited. This does not necessarily create a problem as the teaching faculty is constantly encouraged to innovate and be at the forefront of the field. It is however unclear for the Review Team how easily the Conservatorium can hire new staff members if a new module needs to be

developed for which there is no expertise in the house.

5. Facilities, resources and support

5.1 Facilities

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

“QCGU is fortunate to have custom-built facilities in the South Bank Parklands (...) with a fully equipped and acoustically superb theatre (632 seats), an excellent recital hall (200 seats), an orchestral hall, an outdoor stage, an opera studio, 6 lecture rooms, 45 teaching and 55 practice rooms. The Bachelor of Popular Music program is in the Arts and Media building in the Gold Coast campus and features state-of-the-art-recording and production studios. (...) With the rise in student numbers over the past few years, both the Gold Coast and South Bank campuses have reached and in some ways exceeded their capacity. In 2012, Musical Theatre students have had to be relocated to hired outside studio spaces. Plans to build a fourth floor on the building were explored but are not feasible. Currently, additional space in conjunction with newly built space for neighbour QPAC is being explored [self-evaluation report pp. 25-26]”. Students met by the Review Team were very satisfied with the facilities but indicated a higher pressure on space due to the constant increase in student numbers [meeting with students].

Facilities can be said to be generally very good and up to international standards. However the Review Team noticed the following:

- The lack of dedicated facilities for musical theatre students needs urgent attention
- The Gold Coast campus lacks non-teaching student facilities and places where students can gather informally
- There is a strong pressure on performance spaces – in part due to the financial need to rent out the spaces for external events

Therefore the Review Team does not support any increase in student numbers unless space possibilities are extended.

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

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

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

Apart from complaints about the piano maintenance (and more particularly piano tuning) [meeting with students], the Review Team had the impression that the instruments provision is adequate. Based on the tour of the building and the short movie about Gold Coast Campus, the computing and technological facilities are appropriate and well-used by the students and the library facilities and services are in line with international standards.

5.2 Financial resources

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

"QCGU has a total turnover close to \$18m a year including its tertiary teaching, research, events, and commercial activities. Tertiary teaching is by far the largest income source (ca \$15.3m). Of this amount, 50% is returned to the University in attributions towards buildings, administrative and technical support, etc.; the rest is largely spent on salaries within QCGU (...). While the University has been very generous in terms of supporting QCGU with building upgrades, the five-year ASI funding, sponsorship for music events, equipment reserves, and deficit reductions by the PVC, current funding is insufficient to deliver the publicised programs, particularly undergraduate degrees in western classical music disciplines such as keyboard and opera, which require much and intensive training to be competitive and prepare students for the requirements of professional life [SER, p26]". Indeed the sum of yearly deficits will reach over 4M in 2012 and over 7M in 2014 [Appendix 1.3 p8, Actual Budget] and although this deficit has been accepted so far and compensated by extra income from the other faculties of the Arts, Education and Law group, the latter's growth starts to slow down and to feel the need to face this issue [meeting with AEL Group].

The Review Team could appreciate the efficient management of the institution and acknowledges the Conservatorium's efforts to generate additional income (e.g. through renting extensively its concert venues, working on the development of an endowment fund, etc). However, while many higher education institutions in Europe are currently under severe financial pressure, the Conservatorium's financial situation appears as very serious to the Review Team and needs urgent consideration: the financial resource base seems currently insufficient to meet operational costs, let alone realise the ambitious goals and to underpin further strategic development. Such an observation was already expressed in the 2006 University Review (Recommendation 14).

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

"An ongoing concern is to create a sustainable financial basis for Queensland Conservatorium and its activities [SER, p26]"

The Conservatorium management is aware that a long-term solution is needed for appropriate funding. However, projections are made until 2014 and no solution seems to have been proposed by the University at this stage to address the funding situation. This situation makes it difficult for the Conservatorium to plan ahead for its development. The Review Team supports the Conservatorium's management view that the University has showed great understanding of the Conservatorium's specific situation, for example in relation to the financial implications of one-to-one tuition; however the Review Team would like to encourage the Conservatorium to formalise an agreement with the University to ensure it is appropriately funded for an institution of its kind in order to protect itself from the potential change of key University staff who at the moment are favourable to the Conservatorium.

5.3 Support staff

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

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

Faculty members met by the Review Team indicated that University policies were changing over time from more centralisation to more decentralisation and vice versa and that, given the various administrative layers on top of the Conservatorium management, they were facing a high level of bureaucracy which was considered as dysfunctional [meeting with T&L academic and administrative staff]. Such a view was reinforced by the Heads of Areas who deplored for example delays in receiving their examination papers [meeting with Heads of Areas].

Given the percentage of its income which is paid back to the University for its various services, and the impression that certain of these services may not fit the Conservatorium's needs, the Review Team would like to suggest that the Conservatorium gets more dedicated, centrally-funded University officers appropriate to its specific modus operandi or that the University explores the extent to which certain administrative activities could be organised and financed by the Conservatorium itself with a decreased charge for University services.

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

6.1 Internal communication process

6.1-a. Is there an internal communication strategy?

Students indicated that departments were quite separated [meeting with students] and faculty members mentioned that communication was very much area-based [meeting with T&L academic and administrative staff]. Students can find information on the courses and the T&L environment on the University website of which the section “Programmes and courses” constitute an online handbook with links to the course programmes [Griffith University Website]. Students met by the Review Team were however not fully informed about opportunities for financial assistance (for example scholarships and grants) or about performance opportunities within the Conservatorium and critical of the student administration services [meeting with students].

The Review Team did not find information about the Conservatorium’s internal communication strategy and/or channels in the self-evaluation report and would describe the communication in place as reactive rather than predictive. As far as communication to students is concerned, as various pieces of information for students are situated in different places of the University website, the Review Team sees it as essential to provide a printed student handbook addressing all Conservatorium-related matters. If printing seems too costly, a PDF document could be made available to students, which would give at once all the information specific to Conservatorium studies, including information about counselling services, financial support, academic tutors, application to perform in the Conservatorium venues, Conservatorium committees, etc. Such a document would also be useful in attracting more international students at QCGU as the Conservatorium’s educational offer and learning environment would be clearer to outsiders. Communication among students themselves may need to be encouraged across areas and across campuses via the increase of activities/courses/projects facilitating such exchanges. The level of communication to staff and among staff members is not clear to the Review Team, especially with regards to non-members of the Research Centre, part-time staff and staff not involved in Conservatorium committees (see §6.2).

6.2 Organisation and decision-making processes

6.2-a. How are the curricula/programmes and the teaching and learning processes supported by decision-making on strategic affairs and by decision-making on curricular affairs?

At Conservatorium level, decision-making on strategic affairs is in the hands of the QCGU College Committee Executive (CCEX) which is composed since 2009 of a Director, an Executive Manager, a Deputy Director T&L, a Deputy Director Research, a Deputy Director Gold coast, and two senior staff representatives: Head of Performance and Head Open Con [SER p25]. The Conservatorium is part of the Arts, Education and Law (AEL) Group; the Conservatorium director reports to the Pro-vice Chancellor AEL and since 2011 the group is administered by three Deans (Academic, Teaching and Learning, and Research) [ibid. and organigramm p41]. The Conservatorium is represented on and reports to University Committees [meeting with T&L academic staff].

The Conservatorium College Committee brings together every two months the Heads of Areas, Convenors, and administrative leadership [meeting with Head of Areas] and has two subcommittees:

- “The Learning and Teaching Committee, which prepares all curriculum-related submissions to College Committee, and
- The Performance Committee, which deals with the issues and organisation specific to an institution dealing with performing arts” [SER, p25] and meets every week [meeting with Heads of Areas]¹⁵.

All research matters are dealt with in the QCRC and ad hoc committees are regularly set up to discuss other arising matters [SER, p25]. Thus, for the review of the undergraduate programmes, a review committee was formed to conduct the review and produce recommendations [See for example Appendix 2.1 – BPM Review]. In addition to policies initiated by the University, policy proposals are initiated by the subcommittees, discussed at the College Committee and finally presented to the University [meeting with Heads of Areas].

As far as students’ representation is concerned, almost all University Committees encompass student members [meeting with T&L academic staff].

Such an organisational structure based on committees involving various staff members is appropriate to support the programmes and the T&L processes and in line with international practice. However, students met by the Review Team were not aware of the existence of a Student Representative Council within the Conservatoire [meeting with students].

Based on the various conversations during the site-visit, the Review Team could appreciate a high degree of respect of and trust in the executive team from the faculty, the students and the University representatives met.

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

This issue was not addressed by the Review Team as there seems to be a general satisfaction with these structures. Given the place given to the Conservatorium within such a large group – including other disciplines than arts and humanities, which is quite unusual in an international perspective - the Review Team is concerned with the risk of longer decision-making timeframes and increased bureaucracy (as measures need to be reported to and discussed at the University levels before they can be implemented), which could in the long-term affect the pro-activity and enthusiasm of the Conservatorium members.

6.2-c. Is there a risk management strategy?

This issue was not addressed by the Review Team.

¹⁵ Correction following comments from the Conservatoire Executive Team on the draft report: the Committee is called Performance Studies Sub Committee and meets monthly.

6.3 Internal quality assurance systems

6.3-a. What quality assurance and enhancement systems are in place and how do they relate to the national and local legislative requirements (where appropriate)?

The Conservatorium is subject to the University requirements in terms of quality assurance and reviews are a very important part of the university improvement cycle [meeting with AEL Group]. A review document is prepared by the Conservatorium, based on factual data and input from external stakeholders; the main aim is to encourage critical reflection about the situation described by these statistics [ibid.]. In June 2012 the Conservatorium will be visited by a review team appointed by the University, which will produce recommendations addressed to the Conservatorium and the University [meeting with management team].

On the contrary to stand-alone conservatoires which may need to develop such systems from scratch, conservatoires who are part of universities benefit from quality assurance systems established by the University they are member of. The regular reviews undertaken by Griffith University contribute to fostering the institutional spirit of reviewing and reflecting and the recommendations from the 2006 university review show the thoroughness and usefulness of these reviews.

6.3-b. How are staff, students and former students involved in these quality assurance and enhancement systems?

The University administers the Australian Graduate Survey which collects information on graduates' satisfaction on the courses they have followed [SER, p8]. At the level of individual courses, Student Evaluations of Courses (SEC) are conducted by Griffith University for all courses every semester [SER, p9]. Students met by the Review Team pointed out the facility to share any problem they are facing with their teachers or Heads of Areas [meeting with students] and some faculty members mentioned the welcoming attitude of the management to discuss student's concerns [meeting with T&L academic staff]. The director also regularly organises breakfast meetings with students to hear their voice [meeting with management]. The reports of the undergraduate programmes' reviews include reports from students' focus groups established to collect students' feedback on the concerned programmes [See for example appendix 2.1 – BPM Review Report].

There is evidence that students and former students are regularly consulted about the quality of the courses via specific surveys. It is not clear to the Review Team if they are also consulted on non-academic matters in a systematic way nor if/how their participation to the surveys is being encouraged. As mentioned above, the creation of a student body representing Conservatorium students and sending representatives to the various committee meetings would enable stronger student participation to the quality enhancement process and formally give all students an equal voice through this representation. As far as staff is concerned it is not clear to the Review Team how those staff members who are not on the Conservatorium committees are able to give feedback and are being informed of any improvement measures. Finally, it is very important that all stakeholders consulted in the process are informed of its results and of the changes which have been implemented; this will indeed encourage further participation in satisfaction surveys, focus groups, etc.

6.3-c. *To what extent are these systems:*

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

The recommendations from the 2006 university review “have all been addressed by the QCGU leadership through a rigorous process of reporting to the PVC and finally the University Council [SER, p3]” including recommendation 3 which was suggesting that QCGU establishes a “working party of program convenors, chaired by a senior academic, to conduct a review of curricula” [SER p34]. As a result, a review of the undergraduate programmes (BMus and BMus Studies) was undertaken in 2010 and led to “actions to update the curriculum to better align with contemporary artistic and industry demands, as well as GU strategic goals [p5]”

The regular review system in place within Griffith University is indeed used to improve both curricular and non-curricular issues. The scope of recommendations from the 2006 review is large and there is evidence that they have been implemented. The review of the quality assurance system itself is under the university’s responsibility.

7. Public interaction

7.1 Influence on cultural life

7.1. Is the institution involved in the development of cultural and musical activities outside the institution?

The Conservatorium's ambition is 'to be at the core of the musical life of the state and beyond' [QCGU Strategic Plan 2011-2015 p5]. "QCGU is widely seen as a key player in the Queensland cultural arena by presenting 150 – 200 public concerts and events per year for diverse audiences, participating in major festivals and events by other organisations, and contributing to arts policy and public discourse on the position of music and the arts in society [SER, p31]". Representatives of the profession indeed referred to the Conservatorium's role as cultural centre, mentioning its strong public performances programme which is partly linked to the Queensland Performing Arts Centre's programme [meeting with the profession].

In addition, the Open Conservatorium organises under its umbrella all the extra-mural activities of the Conservatorium, from pre-college education to continuing professional development courses for teachers and community music teachers [meeting with enterprise team and flyer Open Conservatorium]. The performance agency gives students and staff opportunities to perform at weddings and private events [ibid.]. The SHEP programme involved students from the whole state with about 150-160 participants in each of the regional programmes [ibid.]¹⁶.

Finally, the Conservatorium engages with Australian Indigenous culture, through the Tennant Creek Project aiming to "assist local musicians in their efforts to develop, maintain and promote their music, while increasing students' understanding of Indigenous music practices [SER, p12].

The Review Team would like to praise the Conservatorium for its strong involvement in the development of cultural and musical activities outside the institution, particularly at local and state level: it acts as a lobby for music and culture; serves as a venue for both internal and external performance; it reaches out through offering pre-college and continuing professional education, as well as through preparing applicants for admission; finally it engages with indigenous culture. In terms of community engagement, the positive energy, the open attitude, the integration in the local context and the geographical reach of the Open Conservatorium are to be commended.

7.2 Interaction with the profession

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

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

Two of the three representatives of the profession met by the Review Team were members of the Conservatorium's Industry Advisory Board, which meets four times a year and reflects on the relevance of the Conservatorium's programmes to the profession [meeting with the profession]. Examples of how their

¹⁶ Correction following comments from the Conservatoire Executive Team on the draft report: about 650 students participated to SHEP in regional areas in its last edition.

input had led to changes in the programmes were given, such as the introduction of courses to prepare students for the profession, and the development of the musical theatre programme [ibid.].

The cooperation with the Conservatorium was described as both very formal and very informal [ibid.] In terms of venue, the Conservatorium is “exploring the potential of close collaboration with Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC), the Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA), Opera Queensland and the State Library, as well as new neighbours ABC (radio and television) and Queensland Symphony Orchestra (QSO) [SER, p21]”. QPAC performance and studio spaces are also used as a venue for QCGU large projects’ rehearsals. Other types of cooperation include arrangements to ensure that prominent artists travelling to Brisbane to perform at QPAC will come to the Conservatorium to deliver a master class [meeting with the profession].

The Review Team found evidence of the Conservatorium’s interaction with the profession. Having established an Industry Advisory Board is good practice.

7.3 Information to potential students and other stakeholders

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

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

The University website contains a very large amount of information dedicated to different target groups: current students, current staff, future students, alumni, as well as information for the general public under the headline ‘About Griffith’ [See University Website].

The Conservatorium wants to “optimis[e] [its] visibility” and “maintain a high profile in local and national news media through recruitment ads, free publicity for events, topical stories and ‘public intellectual’ writings by staff [QCGU Strategic Plan 2011-2015 p5].

The Review Team found detailed information on Griffith University website on the programmes and courses offered at the Conservatorium. As mentioned above in §2.2-d, the fact that various pieces of information are to be found in various parts of the website does certainly complicate the search for information. As an example, a user clicking on a specific theme while surfing on the Conservatorium’s webpages will be directed to a general university page where s/he will first have to chose a study field (law, health, music, etc) before relevant information can be showed. While the Conservatorium obviously benefits from a significant support from University in relation to its website, which covers all the relevant topics in a very clear manner, some further thought is needed to ensure that more information is provided on the Conservatorium website, as this is where potential music students, both domestic and international, will look for information.

SUMMARY

In relation to the Conservatorium's ambition to be positioned in the international arena, the following section offers a list of strengths and perceived issues for further development. With these strengths and issues for development in mind, the Conservatorium seems to be ideally placed, given the range of its activities and the clear level of endorsement it receives from Griffith University, to be the primary Conservatorium nationally in relation to its identified ambition to be a leading force in the Asia-Pacific region.

Strong points

1. There is an ambitious and driven executive team, which is respected by the University, the teaching faculty and the students
2. The teaching faculty is very committed and highly valued by the students
3. Facilities are generally excellent and fit for purpose:
 - a. a well-positioned building in terms of profile and visibility, adjacent to key professionally relevant institutions
 - b. a world-class concert hall
 - c. a well-resourced and well-used library
4. The Queensland Conservatorium Research Centre is functioning as an international beacon of excellence in enhancing the institutional culture both at the level of the Conservatorium and at the level of the University
5. The manner in which research faculty is integrated into all levels of teaching is to be commended
6. In terms of community engagement, the positive energy, the open attitude, the integration in the local context and the geographical reach of the Open Conservatorium are to be commended
7. In terms of the learning and teaching culture, there is a clear and healthy capacity for reflection and embracing change (e.g. curriculum reform in the Bachelor programme and the truly innovative curriculum in the Bachelor of Pop Music programme at the Gold Coast campus)
8. The individual module descriptions are well developed
9. A convivial atmosphere exists in which students feel they have easy access to all teaching faculty and support staff
10. A strong belief in the institution is evident at all levels, ranging from students and the teaching faculty up to the University level and the professional artistic community in Brisbane

Issues for further development or consideration

1. Financial sustainability: the financial resource base seems currently insufficient to meet operational costs, let alone realise the ambitious goals and to underpin further strategic development

2. Internationalisation: as a centre of excellence within the University with the capacity to operate in an international arena, the Conservatorium should be given a pilot or priority status in the further development of the University's international ambitions
 - a. There is an apparent disconnection between the internationalisation ambitions of the University and the Conservatorium on the one hand, and the current lack of opportunities for international activities and interactions beyond research on the other.
 - b. There is a lack of opportunity to engage in international comparisons or benchmarking to international standards in performance and teaching
 - c. The absence of an international officer, based in the Conservatorium, to develop international activities and to assist students and staff in pursuing opportunities is of concern
3. Communication: the clarity of the formal flow of essential information specific to Conservatorium activity and procedures needs urgent consideration (e.g. information on student representation, student performance opportunities, scholarships, mobility grants, research support, as well as a website difficult to navigate and less convincing in relation to Conservatorium-specific issues than to University wide aspects)
4. Some aspects of major-study assessment are in need for review, particularly in the make-up of assessment panels (which very strongly rely on internal teaching faculty) and the frequency of assessments by the same teaching faculty. The Conservatorium is aware of this and working on it through its involvement in consensus moderation projects
5. In order to avoid potential problems of continuity in the event of key staff members leaving the Conservatorium, the Committee recommends that some of the internal strategies and processes be more systematised and formalised
6. A lack of dedicated facilities for music theatre needs urgent attention. Any increase in student numbers would put considerable pressure on the use of facilities available at both the South Bank and Gold Coast campuses
7. There are perceived unrealised opportunities for collaboration and sharing of best practice between departments internally and in connection with the Queensland College of Art
8. Taking into account international standards and developments in relation to the construction of the 3-cycle structure (such as in the Bologna process), the profile, size and place of the current Master of Music (in relation to the Bachelor, Doctoral and PhD programmes) need consideration
9. The integration of research students into the community of the Conservatorium needs further consideration
10. Based on the self-evaluation document produced by the Conservatorium, the centrality of performance within the Conservatorium does not seem to be sufficiently celebrated, particularly when compared to Research, in a context in which the majority of students are undergraduate performers