

## **AEC Quality Enhancement Process**



### **AEC Institutional Review Visit to the**

**Department of Music of the Iceland Academy of Arts,**

**7-9 May 2012**



#### **Review Team:**

John Wallace (Review Team Chair), Principal of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Glasgow

Gustav Djupsjöbacka, Artistic Rector of Sibelius Academy, Helsinki

Orla Mc Donagh, Head of Faculty, Musicianship, Royal Irish Academy of Music, Dublin

Jón Gunnar Biering Margeirsson (Student Expert), IAA Student, Department of Arts Education

#### **Secretary:**

Linda Messas, General Manager at the European Association of Conservatoires

## Introduction

The visit to the Department of Music of the Academy of Arts in Reykjavik 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. The AEC was asked to conduct an 'institution-led review at the subject level' in line with the requirements of the National Quality Enhancement Framework<sup>1</sup>. The present AEC report shall inform the institutional review of the Academy by the Icelandic Quality Board, planned in 2013-2014.

An international group of experts was appointed to review the Music Department 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.

The Iceland Academy of Arts (IAA) was founded in 1999 to provide university education in the arts and communicate knowledge and professionalism to the arts in Icelandic society [SER, p.6]. It encompasses the Department of Art Education, the Department of Design and Architecture, the Department of Fine Arts, the Department of Music and the Department of Theatre and Dance. The Department of Music was founded in 2001 and is the only higher music education institution in Iceland. It currently enrolls 92 students, taught by 21 permanent teaching staff and 25 sessional teaching staff.

The institution's representatives were Hjálmar H. Ragnarsson, IAA Rector and Mist Barbara Þorkelsdóttir, Dean of the Music Department. The members of the Review Team were chair John Wallace (Principal of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Glasgow), Orla Mc Donagh (Head of Faculty, Musicianship, Royal Irish Academy of Music, Dublin), Gustav Djupsjöbacka (Artistic Rector of Sibelius Academy, Helsinki) and student representative Jón Gunnar Biering Margeirsson (IAA Student, Department of Arts Education). The Secretary was Linda Messas (General Manager at AEC).

The Review Team would like to express its thanks to the Music Department for the organisation of the visit and for welcoming the Review Team in such a friendly and hospitable way. Staff members from the Department remained at the disposal of the Team during the whole visit and all participants 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 Review Team would like to express its appreciation for the hard work done by the Music Department in preparation of the AEC visit with the production of its self-evaluation report. This in-depth analysis of the Department, reflecting the view of all faculty and students and delivering a transparent and self-reflective presentation of the Department, has been of great help to the reflections and discussions before, during and after the visit. The process led within the Department and the report resulting from it shall certainly represent examples of good practice for future AEC review processes.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.rannis.is/english/qef/qef-handbook/section-3/>.

## Review Visit Schedule

Monday May 7<sup>th</sup>

Time	Session	Names of participants
Monday	Arrival at Center Hotel Arnarhvoll	
17:00 – 19:00	Preparatory meeting of the Review Team	
19:00 – 19:30	Meeting with Rector and Dean	Hjálmar H. Ragnarsson, Rector Mist Barbara Þorkelsdóttir, Dean
19:30	Dinner at Tjörnin.	

Tuesday May 8<sup>th</sup>.

Time	Session	Names of participants
9:00 – 10:15	Meeting with students	Baldvin Tryggvason, 1 year, Clarinet Hrafnhildur Marta Guðmundsdóttir, 1 year, Cello Georg Kári Hilmarsson, 2 year Composition Ingibjörg Guðný Friðriksdóttir, 2 year Composition Halldór Smáráson, 3 year Composition Elísabet Einarsdóttir, 3 year ,Vocal Álfheiður Björgvinsdóttir 3 year, Creative Music Communication Albert Hauksson, 3 year Composition
10:15 – 10:30	Tour around the Department's facilities.	Mist Barbara Þorkelsdóttir, Dean
10:30 – 11:00	Break	
11:00 – 12:00	Meeting with the senior administrative officers in Þverholt (Academy Main Office and Dep. of Design and Architecture )	Alma Ragnarsdóttir, International Coordinator Ólöf Gerður Sigfúsdóttir, Director of Research Services Rebekka Silvía Ragnarsdóttir, Manager of Quality Control and Development Sara Stef. Hildardóttir, Director of Library and Information Services.
12:00- 13:00	Tour of the Academies facilities in Laugarnes	
13:00 – 13:30	Lunch	
13:30 – 14:30	Mixed Bachelor student's Performance	
14:30 – 15:00	Break	
15:00 – 16:30	Meeting with Artistic and Academic staff members	Kjartan Ólafsson, professor and program director of Composition Gunnar Kvaran, professor of strings and chamber music Elísabet Erlingsdóttir, program director of vocal performance Þorbjörg Daphne Hall, associate professor and program director Sigurður Halldórsson, program director of Creative Music and NAIP Úlfar Ingi Haraldsson, Adjunct, Composition, Theory and improvisation. Peter Maté, program director of instrumental performance
16:30 – 18:00	Review Team meeting	Dean sits in the first 30 minutes if needed
18:00 – 19:00	Break	
19:00 – 20:00	Concert Performance	Creative Communication/NAIP students
20:15	Dinner at Grillmarkaðurinn	

Wednesday May 9th.

Time	Session	Names of participants
9:00 – 9:30	Review Team meeting	
9:30 – 10:30	Meeting with The IAA Board and administration	Hjálmar H. Ragnarsson, Rector Jóna Finnsdóttir, Managing Director Kolbrún Halldórsdóttir, Chairman of the board Jón Ólafur Ólafsson, board member
10:30 – 12:00	Meeting with representatives of the profession, and former students.	Arna Kristín Einarisdóttir: Concert Manager of the Iceland Symphony Orchestra Árni Harðarson: Principal of Kópavogur Music School, Conductor of Fóstbræður Men's Choir Árni Heimir Ingólfsson: Musicologist, Pianist and Choral Conductor, formerly Associate Professor of Musicology at IAA Elísabet Indra Ragnarsdóttir: Programme Director of the National State Radio, Channel 1 Sigríður Ragnarsdóttir: Principal of Ísafjörður Music School Ragnhildur Gísladóttir: Composer / Vocalist, BMus graduate 2008, MA graduate spring 2012
12:00-12:30	Lunch	
12:30 – 13:00	Option to attend a Jazz ensemble at the Department.	
13:00 – 15:00	Option to visit various classes	
15:00 – 17:00	Review Team meeting – Preparation for the feedback meeting	
17:00 – 18:00	Feedback to the institution	Hjálmar H. Ragnarsson, Rector Mist Barbara Þorkelsdóttir, Dean Rebekka Silvía Ragnarsdóttir, Manager of Quality Control and Development
18:00 – 20:00	Break	
20:00 – 21:00	BA of Composition graduation concert – Petter Eckman in The National Centre for Cultural Heritage	
21:00	Dinner at the Deans house	

## Report of the Review Team

Although the AEC review was institutional in nature, focussing on the Music Department as a discrete entity within the Iceland Academy of the Arts, the Review Team had, for necessary clarity, to look wider and deeper at certain points. The report therefore includes comments on certain programme-related aspects and on certain aspects concerning the Academy as a whole where they are important to the quality enhancement agenda of the Music Department itself.

### 1. Mission and vision

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

The Department of Music was founded in 2001 and is the only higher education institution in Music in Iceland [Self-evaluation report (SER), p.7]. Together with the Department of Art Education, the Department of Design and Architecture, the Department of Fine Arts and the Department of Theatre and Dance, the Department of Music is part of the Iceland Academy of the Arts (IAA), founded in 1999 [ibis, p.6]. The Charter for the Iceland Academy of the Arts describes the Academy as “a university institution offering higher education relating to the various fields of art that satisfies demands made of instruction and research at a university level” [Appendix 1, article 2]. The Academy is a self-governing institution financially supported by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture; its board, responsible for operations, finances and assets, determining tuition rates and appointing the Rector, is composed of five members including two appointed by the Minister of Education [ibid, articles 3, 4 and 15].

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

As mentioned above, the IAA is described in its founding charter as “an institution offering higher education relating to the various fields of art”; in addition, the IAA “shall work towards the furthering of art education in th[e] country and convey information regarding arts and culture to the public” [Appendix 1, article 2]. It was founded “with a view to placing all the arts under one banner and to provide a place where students could explore and engage in interdisciplinary studies in the arts” [SER, p.13].

More specifically, “the Department of Music aims to promote the development and individuality of students along with a strong sense of innovation, community and collaboration. The Department recognizes the opportunity and responsibility that comes from being the only higher education institution in music in Iceland. The main emphasis is that curiosity and intuition drive creativity, along with the belief that education builds upon tradition, history, knowledge and technique [SER, p.8]”. The list of strategic priorities for the Department includes the following points: “enhancing the Academy’s identity within the sector and local community” and “keep encouraging students to develop leadership skills and to become an artistic force as well as catapults for change” [SER, p.10].

The Academy’s primary vision to serve the development of the Icelandic society was reaffirmed and the Icelandic context - where arts have a very significant importance both in people’s mind and economically – was presented [meeting with the Rector and Dean]. The Board members met by the Review Team highlighted the ambition to strengthen Research and Development in the Academy and to enhance the interaction with the music sector and stakeholders [meeting with Board members]. Some representatives

of the profession pointed out the excellent spirit of the Department of Music and mentioned two areas which they felt should be part of the Department's mission: increasing the number of performers trained and providing teachers for the music schools in the country [meeting with representatives of the profession].

Although the mission and vision of the institution is advocated passionately by the Rector and the Dean, the written version does not capture this energy and positive direction. The Review Team felt this aspect could be developed. The Academy's emphasis on interdisciplinary studies should also be expressed, as well as its ambition to strengthen its international dimension.

The Department could consider addressing more specifically its expected achievements with regard to music - as the current statement could relate to any other discipline - and to link its mission with the strategic priorities stated on page 10 of the self-evaluation report.

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

Students of the Music Department should "acquire independent work methods, enhance their knowledge and develop as independent artists. The program should meet international standards and reflect the wide range of opportunities open to musicians in the field of musical performance, composition, innovation and education. Graduates of the Department of Music should be a source of enrichment for society."

While the B. Mus Programme Instrumental/Vocal focuses on classical music performance, the BA Programme in composition is designed to prepare students for various aspects of the profession and offers study trends such as film composition and composition with new media [SER, p.9]; the B. Mus Programme in Church music is intended to meet the need for church musicians in Iceland and the BA Programme in Creative Music Communication focuses on community work and prepares students for the Masters Programme in New Audiences and Innovative Practice (NAIP) [ibid, p.9]. The objectives of the Masters programmes are clearly stated: "increase students' versatility, broaden their mind and deepen their knowledge while also enhancing their professional potential" [ibid].

There is an interest within the Department to add a Masters Programme in Vocal and Instrumental Teaching in order to train music school teachers at university level; the Academy shall first address the need for this profession to be regulated [meeting with Rector and Dean]; this initiative was supported by music schools representatives met by the Review Team [meeting with the profession].

The goals of the educational programmes are in line with the Department's mission stated above. The Review Team would like to commend the choice of rationale made by the Department which has designed programmes aiming at actively building a new concept of musicianship while many conservatoires in Europe strive to produce artists for existing structures (orchestra, etc). The innovative thinking in curriculum design and in the degrees offered is also to be commended, e.g. in the MAs in New Audiences and Innovative Practice and in Composition.

The Review Team agrees that that the number one priority in curriculum development is the MA in Instrumental/vocal teaching and would like to encourage the Department to start a dialogue with the general teaching council in Iceland in order to solve the contradiction between MA requirements in

classroom teachers training and BA in instrumental/vocal teachers training<sup>2</sup>. The Review Team strongly feels that all music teachers should receive a major part of their specialist training at the Music Department, given the importance of performance in the classroom setting.

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

Although a list of strategic priorities for the Department of Music is given in the self-evaluation report (p10), the Review Team was under the impression that the Department was rather implementing a short-term strategy of survival. Various elements relating to the young age of the Academy and the recent financial crisis do explain the difficulty to plan far ahead. However, the Review Team felt it may now be time for the Department to formulate such a strategy.

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<sup>2</sup> Information about degree requirements for teaching music in Iceland was provided by the student member of the Team.

## 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 learning outcomes for the Department of Music are based on the AEC Learning Outcomes for the first cycle and each study program has a set of learning outcomes related to the overall learning outcomes of the Department [SER, p11]. The MA programmes also have their own set of learning outcomes [Ibid]. The curriculum has all been rewritten in the past two years, strengthening the structure of the courses and fostering independent, artistic, and creative students with a comprehensive understanding of the musical environment and its foundations. A greater importance and emphasis was placed on interweaving theory and practice and since spring 2011, students have been assessed accordingly [Ibid.].

There is clear evidence that the various programmes take into account the 'Polifonia/Dublin Descriptors' (PDDs) as those have been used as reference. The Review Team would like to commend the presentation skills showed by the various students who performed during the site-visit and therefore on the emphasis put on these skills by the Department.

As there are many modules with small course credit ratings; the Music Department is encouraged to explore course groupings linked to higher amounts of credits in order to widen the interdisciplinary potential of courses within the curriculum. Mapping the elements of the curriculum against the learning outcomes could be of help to the Department in this process.

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

The Creative Music Communication Programme is specifically intended to prepare students for Masters study in Music Education [SER, p.9].

The Review Team did not look into details in this matter and did not study in detail the learning outcomes of the BA and MA in composition to explore how the progression from BA to MA is envisioned.

### 2.2 Delivery

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

The self-evaluation reports mentions the following forms of teaching and learning used in the Music Department: projects in external community settings, lectures, field visits, workshops, collaborations and interactive seminars [SER, p. 13]. One of the interdisciplinary courses called 'Dialogue' requires students to work for two weeks in small groups (led by a teacher) towards different kind of projects leading to final results in the form of a performance, lecture or any kind of happening, where different ideas and methods will be the focus point [Course description, p.49]. Students met by the Review Team indicated their appreciation of the requirements to complete projects within certain courses – although some of them expressed the wish for an improved follow-up during the project and highlighted the experimental spirit of

the Department with some new courses being tried out in cooperation with the students (such as Interactive Music) [Meeting with students]. The Review Team attended a music theory class where each student was working on their own projects with individual instruction; an interactive class with groups working on different processes and projects (eventually to be part of the same production) and an individual vocal lesson.

The Review Team was impressed by the variety of teaching forms used within the Department; and the emphasis put on interaction and project work, which reflects the Department's aim to instill in students a strong sense of independence and collaboration. Some cross disciplinary projects between departments are an indication of imminent future growth in this area. The Review Team would also like to commend the Department for its experimental work in testing new courses. The flexibility of classrooms (which seemed to be easily transformed from a classroom setting to other types of working space) is an asset. As it was noticed that all students had laptops in the courses visited, the Review Team would like to encourage the Department to explore if interactive digital technology is actually used to its fullest extent.

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

"The Department aims to create a research culture [SER, p.13]". As mentioned below in §4.1, the Academy has developed a research strategy in 2007 that includes the goal to "strengthen research-based study programmes at the academy [SER, p. 108]". Currently, elements of research in the programmes are the final dissertation at undergraduate level and a research thesis in the Composition Masters; both MA programmes are described as "underpinned by research" [Ibid, p.13]. Staff from the library also assists students to use the library for research purposes [Meeting with Senior Administrative Staff].

The self-evaluation report also mentions that faculty's research outputs are fed into their own teaching and that some modules build directly on this research [Ibid.]. The Director of Research Services indicated that research remains low-key at the teaching level but highlighted the context of a long-term establishment of a research culture and the need for time to develop it; recent achievements were presented such as the dialogue with academic staff through the creation of a discussion forum and the setting up of a research conference to be included in the curriculum in the future [Meeting with Senior Administrative Staff].

The role of research in the culture of the department and in the programmes needs to be defined more fully. The Review Team would like to suggest a closer dialogue between research and the undergraduate curriculum. In addition, the Music Department is encouraged to ensure mechanisms for feeding research back into the curriculum.

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

Students have the opportunity to present their work in two contexts:

- Public performances arranged by the Department (such as end-of-semester concerts, noon recitals, graduate concert recitals, chamber music concert series every semester and masterclasses)
- Public performances in partnership or collaboration (in the form of placements with orchestras, participation to contests, competitions and festivals) [SER, p.14].

In addition, "Graduating students are required, to a large extent, to schedule, coordinate participating performers and manage their own final concert event" [SER, p.15].

Students met by the Committee confirmed these various possibilities but would like to see a stronger promotion of the in-house concerts by the Music Department (in addition to their own promotion via social media) to make these performances truly public [Meeting with students]. They also expressed the wish to be encouraged by the Department to perform regularly in other settings - so that they would gain experience for the final concert -and to be offered a course in this field [ibid.]. A final concert in composition, attended by the Committee, confirmed the high level of engagement from both faculty members and fellow students.

It is clear to the Review Team that students are offered various performance opportunities in the department's concert hall and also encouraged to perform outside the institution. The Review Team appreciates the department's ambition to develop its students' entrepreneurial attitudes and would like to echo the students' wish to be pushed further in this direction. The Review Team would also like to support the students' suggestion to create a course about concert organisation and management. Finally, the music department is encouraged to explore ways to brand its students' events with the aim of attracting an external audience to concerts (e.g. by branding its student events as the "new talents of tomorrow").

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

New students are introduced to the Academy and the Department during two orientation days and receive a student handbook [SER, p.14]. Programme directors are responsible for students' academic guidance as well as for their artistic development, and regularly meet students together with the Dean, in small groups or individually [idem]. Students met by the Committee highlighted the availability and helpfulness of the teaching staff for them, as well as the important role of the latter in assisting students to develop their professional network [Meeting with students].

The Committee could find evidence that formal arrangements are in place to provide students with academic guidance. Career and personal guidance are offered at a more informal level which seems appropriate for a department of this size.

### **2.3 International perspectives**

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

IAA International Strategy includes the following objectives: to increase mobility of students and staff (through exchanges, placements and projects), to broaden and deepen the Academy's curriculum through international cooperation, to increase awareness of cultural differences, to provide opportunities for collaboration in international projects and partnerships and to create a learning environment that is governed by equality and respect [Appendix 2b - IAA International Policy Statement].

An international coordinator is responsible for managing student and staff exchanges and promoting international projects [Ibid.]. She indicated that no policy was in place at the moment regarding numbers of international students, as the number of applications is small, and that the Academy tries to accommodate the various applicants [meeting with Senior Administrative Staff members]. A significant

part of the website is dedicated to international students, with information on the application process [IAA Website<sup>3</sup>]. As instruction takes place in Icelandic, an intensive Icelandic language course is provided for international students [Ibid.].

One of the strategic priorities for the Department of Music is to ensure that “the Department meets (...) international standards for music education [SER, p.10]. Students pointed out the importance of international students and teachers as a means of international benchmark given that the Department is the only higher music education institution in Iceland [meeting with students]. They indicated that most of the performer students were pursuing studies abroad after their Bachelor at the Music Department [Ibid]. Indeed, “in the performance area, emphasis has until now been on classical music performance and preparing students for graduate (advanced) studies in academies abroad [SER, p.10]”.

The Academy has a clear international strategy and highly values all international opportunities. This willingness to increase the institution’s international dimension is reflected in the Music Department. An international coordinator is in charge of implementing this strategy for the whole Academy. The Music Department could however consider setting some targets in terms of the percentage of international students and percentage of students going on exchange, in order to move from what seems to be a reactive approach to students’ demand to a more pro-active recruitment of students and promotion of the Department.

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

The international strategy is reflected in the educational offer in various ways:

- Presence of international students and teachers: there are four exchange students enrolled in the Department of Music in 2011-2012 [SER, p.16] and seven foreign visiting guest professors [SER, p.26]. Faculty members also indicated that they all had studied abroad [meeting with Artistic and Academic Staff members].
- Opportunities for students to study abroad for a semester: Students are encouraged to participate in the Erasmus and Nordplus mobility programmes and awarded credit points for such exchanges [Ibid, p.16]. The international coordinator regularly organises promotional sessions at departmental level, where students who have been on exchange share their experience [meeting with Senior Administrative Staff].
- Opportunities for students to take part in international projects: although there is no formal application procedure for such activity, students are directly approached and encouraged to participate; they can also apply for independent study credits for their participation in international collaboration and projects [SER, p.16]. Students met by the Review Team indicated being encouraged by their teachers to take part in competitions or in summer courses abroad [meeting with students].
- Students have the opportunity to pursue their studies by completing a joint masters programme (New Audiences and Innovative Practice – NAIP) which the Music Department has developed with The Royal Conservatory in the Hague, the Prince Claus Conservatory of Music and Dance in Groningen and the Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm and in associate partnership with the

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<sup>3</sup> See <http://english.lhi.is/international/>.

Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London and the University of Minnesota School of Music in Minneapolis MN [SER, p.9].

The Review Team would like to commend the Music Department for seizing the opportunity to develop its international dimension through its involvement in the establishment of the first ERASMUS joint masters programme in music. In addition, there are certainly several elements in the curriculum that provide students with an international dimension to their education. However, the Review Team would like to suggest that information on the extent to which Icelandic students use these opportunities is analysed and used in strategic discussions regarding the development of the Department's international activities (e.g. percentage of students going on exchange abroad, percentage of students taking part in international projects during their study period at the Department).

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

A long list of IAA's partner academies is available on IAA Website<sup>4</sup>. The Academy is also an active partner in various organisations concerned with art higher education such as the European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA), the Nordic Council of Conservatoires (ANMA), the Association Européenne des Conservatoires (AEC), and various networks supported by the Nordplus programme (e.g. Nordplus network of Nordic-Baltic music academies).

The Academy is participating in international partnerships and active in various associations and networks.

## **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?*

Various assessment methods are listed in the self-evaluation report:

- Continuous assessment during private lessons and masterclasses in instrumental/vocal and composition main study areas
- Continuous assessment through assignments, presentations, essays and examinations in music theory and literature courses
- Assessment of end-of-semester, graduation recitals and ensemble performance: some of these assessments are podcasted live
- Assessment of group activities, participation in events and written and aural reflections for the activities related to professional development
- Assessment of MA final projects, including a public performance of the compositions and a closed defence for the MA in composition, and a professional integration project for the MA NAIP. For both of these assessments, external examiners are involved in the examination committee [SER, pp.17-18]

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<sup>4</sup> See <http://english.lhi.is/international/international-cooperation/>.

Grades range from 0 to 10 and the minimum grade necessary to pass an examination is 5 [Grading scale – SER, p.84]. A correspondence with the UK and USA grading systems is provided [Ibid.] Faculty members indicated that they were having discussions within the Department about the assessment criteria in order to have a shared understanding of each of the grades [meeting with Artistic and Academic Staff]. Detailed assessment parameters have been produced by the Department explaining the meaning of a particular grade for a certain field (e.g. music theory, analytical studies, composition) [SER, p.76-79].

A variety of assessment methods is used by the Department, in line with the variety of teaching methods employed. These methods are clearly presented in the course catalogue. The Review Team would like to commend the Department for formulating detailed assessment parameters which serve as guidelines for the examiners in the evaluation process but can also give students a clear idea of how they are assessed, thus helping them in their learning process. Assessment scales should now be examined for anomaly: they should ideally map across each other and across other disciplines as well. The Department could consider mapping the elements of assessment against the Department’s Learning Outcomes (i.e. the AEC Learning Outcomes) in order to ensure that there is a good balance and correspondence between those (i.e. that all learning outcomes are assessed but also that there is no duplication or waste in the assessment).

### **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 general and specific requirements for admission to the Bachelors and Masters programmes are presented in detail in the self-evaluation report [SER, p.19]. Applicants to the Bachelor Programme are asked to provide evidence of an academic qualification before their artistic and technical skills are assessed with entrance examinations in music theory, harmonic analysis and aural skills. For both the BA and the MA in composition, applicants are shortlisted for an interview on the basis of a portfolio (and for the MA of a their research proposal) [ibid.]. IAA rules state that “an Admissions Committee shall base its decision on an artistic assessment and the applicant’s potential for artistic growth” [Appendix 2c - IAA Rules 2011-2012].

The relatively small number of applicants for instrumental/vocal studies is mentioned as a significant challenge for the Department [SER, p.20]. The number of instrumental students and instruments taught vary from year to year and the imbalance in the instrumental department limits chamber music practice and does not enable orchestral playing within the Department [SER, p.10]. The situation is addressed in various ways, some of them generating extra expenditure for the Department: all first year students take the same set of core subjects together; composer students playing instruments are asked to fill instrumental gaps and therefore receive instruction [SER, p.20]

Students met by the Committee were comfortable with the various admission processes they had gone through [meeting with students]. They indicated the organisation of a summer school for students having to improve their level in certain fields in preparation for their first year but also the possibility to follow courses in the second year when evaluation tests indicate strong skills in a certain module. Artistic and academic staff members pointed out (as mentioned in the SER) the departments’ wish to have a higher number of applicants for instrumental/vocal studies.

The Review Team feels that the admission processes in place enable the department to evaluate properly the artistic, technical and academic capacities of the applicants. The balance between composition and performance needs to be monitored in order to resolve some critical mass issues which impact on the teaching and uniform course offer.

#### **3.2 Student progression and achievement**

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

“The Academy expects students to attend all their courses [Appendix 2c - IAA Rules 2011-2012]” and, as mentioned in paragraph 2.4 (Learning assessments), students are continuously assessed [SER, p.17]. In addition, each student meets the Dean and programme directors at the end of his/her third semester to discuss his/her progress and achievement [SER, p.21]. Attendance is closely looked at [SER, p16]. A

majority of students complete their studies within the given timeframe and dropout rates do not exceed 3% [SER, p.21]. The Dean explained this rate by the small size of the Department enabling privileged contacts between students and staff, by the cohort's feeling of belonging a one group (strongly encouraged by the Department), as well as by the leadership's and faculty's efforts to assist students in difficult situations by creating special pathways for them [feedback meeting].

The Review Team found clear evidence that student progression and achievement are followed within the programmes in various ways. The small size of the Department is an asset, as students receive individual attention.

### **3.3. Employability**

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

The Academy started to survey its alumni three years ago and has collected information on six cohorts (2 cohorts were contacted each year) both about their opinion on the studies received at the IAA and about their employment situation [SER, p.21]. In addition, the Music Department conducted an informal survey among music graduates to "further examine the pathways of music alumni" [ibid.].

The IAA Board members indicated that the Academy was the only higher education institution in Iceland to survey its graduates and shared their appreciation of having a clear picture of students' situation after graduation [Meeting with IAA Board].

There is a practice to collect data on alumni at the level of the Academy. However, the reason for which an additional informal survey was led by the Department is not clear to the Review Team. If this was due to the fact that the data collected by the Academy was not perceived as detailed or informative enough, the Review Team would like to suggest that the survey used by the Academy is revised in order to include all the questions relevant to a more precise follow-up of music graduates; this would avoid a duplication of efforts.

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

The self-evaluation report indicates that a group of 88 Music Department's graduates was surveyed between 2006 and 2010, with the following results:

- 66% of the respondents have sought further studies in music.
- 65% of the respondents have been employed in instrumental/vocal performance, 30% in composition, 41% have been employed in teaching, 10% have had employment in technical fields related to music such as recording, sound management etc. and only 7% (5 students) had not been employed in the field at all (alumni could choose from more than one option) [SER, p. 21-22].

Students referred to the freelance and independent nature of Iceland people to explain the high employment rate of graduates [meeting with students]. Faculty members confirmed that the majority of performer students were pursuing their studies abroad or finding employment in Iceland [meeting with Artistic and Academic staff members]. They referred to the Department's aim to provide students with a

training oriented towards the profession and answering its needs, as well as to the Department's efforts to ensure that all students open their minds to new experiences - outside the only practice of their instrument-, for example by promoting projects involving other arts. Thus, the recent change of the curriculum for composition enables students to specialise in writing for a traditional instrument, making music for video, composing for dance (theatre, dance), composing within new media, or composing with emphasis on production [Ibid.].

There is strong evidence that graduates from the Music Department are successful in finding work or building a career which tends to confirm that the education offered at the Department is fit-for-purpose. Many graduates seem to be self-starting single artists who make their own career. The extent to which the Department actively contributes to supporting its graduates' employability (in addition to providing a education relevant to professional needs) is however unclear and the Department may wish to consider providing some sort of career services or establishing a springboard agency which could assist graduates in starting their career, perhaps in co-operation with the student union.

### **3.4 Equal opportunities**

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

The Academy has developed an Equal Rights Policy, implemented and monitored by the Equal Rights Committee, which aims to ensure the equal rights of men and women within the academic community through specific actions and by encouraging an active debate about equal rights in all areas of the Academy's activities [Appendix 3a – IAA Equal Rights Policy]. Gender balance is taken into consideration in the Departments' admission and recruitment committees and applications of students from rural areas - whose music education may be incomplete - are considered with the aim to ensure equal opportunities [SER, p. 23].

The Review Team was surprised that the Equal Rights Policy only focuses on gender, and does not address race, colour, national origin, religion and mental or physical disability. In this regard, the Music Department's building is not disability-friendly given the absence of a lift to reach the various floors. As the Department, aware of it being the only higher music education institution in Iceland, strives to ensure that students from rural areas have equal access to the institution, the Academy could consider revising its Equal Rights Policy to expand its reach.

## 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?

The Academy has established an online database for R&D output, in which faculty members document their artistic and scholarly activity, such as artistic practice, research activities, publications, recordings, participation in conferences, public discourse, memberships and overall outreach to the professional environment in music [SER, p. 24]. On a total of 19 artistic and academic staff members within the Music Department, 13 have listed their activities<sup>5</sup>.

The Review Team found strong evidence in the self-evaluation report and in the online database of the high level of artistic and scholarly activity undertaken by the Music Department's artistic and academic staff members. The Review Team was impressed by the database used by the Academy and considers it as an example of good practice.

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

IAA is the only higher education institution in Iceland which, while allocating 13 to 30% of its staff time to research, does not have a contract with the Ministry in the field of research; the Academy therefore finances research with teaching funding [ibid.]. The IAA Board members met by the Review Team pointed out the Academy's efforts to lobby at the governmental level towards the formal recognition of artistic research and its proper funding and expressed their ambition, as enshrined in the Academy's vision, that IAA also becomes a research institution [meeting with IAA Board members].

As mentioned in 2.2-b, the Academy has formulated a Research strategy which focuses - among others - on the establishment of an attractive, open research environment within the Academy; on supporting the dissemination of research output conducted under the auspices of the Academy and by academic staff; on strengthening research-based study programmes at the Academy [appendix 4b – IAA Research Strategy]. A Research Centre was created in September 2007 with the aim to “support research activities at the Academy as well as to encourage and enhance the production of knowledge and understanding in various fields of art” through the organisation of platforms to exchange experiences and practice [SER, p.25].

The Director of Research Services indicated that the Academy is currently developing procedures for sabbaticals, evaluation criteria for R&D output as well as exploring the possibility to increase the time for R&D in staff contracts [meeting with Senior Administrative Staff]. Since 2010, the Director of Research Services holds regular interviews with each staff member active in R&D to discuss their activities; the Academy organises two colloquium series per semester where academic staff members can present their research to all staff members and recently introduced a research conference for staff and master students to present their practices [ibid.].

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<sup>5</sup> See <http://rannsoknagrunnur.lhi.is/en/rannsoknir/folk/nanar/1549/>

The artistic and academic staff members met by the Review Team were aware of the on-going developments in the field of research and of the fact that protocols are being developed for sabbaticals and research outputs' assessment [meeting with artistic and academic staff members]; one of the staff members met was currently on sabbatical [ibid.]. The staff members met by the Review Team also confirmed the organisation of staff development weeks every semester.

The Review Team found evidence of an institutional policy and practice to support and enhance the teaching staff's artistic and scholarly/research production. Allocating 30% of some of the teaching staff members' time for research is rather significant and following-up those activities through regular interviews is good practice. The Review Team could notice the institution's objective to provide its staff with growing developmental support, e.g. in relation to publications and research and would like to commend the initiatives undertaken in this field, such as the establishment of an online database listing staff research activities, the creation of a research conference, as well as the on-going work on protocols for sabbaticals and on evaluative procedures connected to research awards and research outcomes. The Music Department is highly encouraged to continue its present efforts to demonstrate its eligibility for research funding. It is also encouraged to explore the area of Knowledge Exchange (both within and outside the institution).

## 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?*

Students met by the Review Team talked about the teaching in the Music Department in positive terms [meeting with the students]. Although applicants for teaching positions at the Academy are not required to perform live lessons as part of their admission process, the leadership clearly expressed that teaching qualities are considered as core in faculty recruitment [feedback meeting]. Applicants are asked to present their teaching methods as well as how they foresee the educational side of the position on paper and, if shortlisted, to expand on this during an interview [ibid]. Performance teachers are usually first invited to perform masterclasses at the Academy where their teaching qualities can be verified.

Opportunities to discuss pedagogical concerns and enhancement of teaching quality are provided during staff development days and the Department supports staff members' attendance at international conferences, meetings or other activity that contributes to their continuing professional development [SER, p26]. Staff members also have the opportunity to observe each other's teaching during masterclasses and some theory and literature classes are co-taught to some extent [SER, p.34].

The Review Team did not look in detail into this issue. Students did not raise any concern about the teaching quality and there seem to be possibilities of continuing professional development for the teaching staff.

### 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?*

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

As mentioned in the self-evaluation report, “permanent teaching staff in the Department consists of 21 people; two professors, one assistant professor, 16 adjuncts both part-time and full-time, one technical director who also teaches, one permanent guest professor and 25 sessional teachers. This year, there are seven foreign visiting guest professors. The faculty to student ratio is 1:6.5” [SER, p.26]. The Academy’s rules distinguish between ‘long-term instructors (...) certified by specially appointed certification committees, i.e. Professors, Associate Professors and Assistant Professors” and “Adjunct Professors, who are hired directly by the Rector on consultation with the respective Deans for performing chosen tasks within each department”[Appendix 1, p. 64].

In order to ensure a dynamic flow of knowledge and a healthy turnover of staff members, academic staff can hold a position for a maximum of eight years [meeting with Senior Administrative Officers]. The Academy employs a high rate of part-time staff, whose involvement depends on the instruments taught each year [SER, p.27]. Artistic and academic staff members met by the Review Team confirmed the 8-year employment limit for academic staff (some mentioning that this was a rather short period), while adjunct professors have the possibility to be employed permanently [meeting with artistic and academic staff members]. Programme coordinators indicated their satisfaction to be involved in the recruitment process of part-time staff [ibid.]

The Review Team found the number and composition of teaching staff, as well as the ratio faculty to student adequate. The Review Team was under the impression that the Department deals well with the fact that not all instruments are taught each year (depending on the admission process results). Hiring sessional staff is one of the tools for the Department to adjust to new requirements. However, the Review Team would like to express its concern regarding the 8-year employment limit for academic staff. Such a limit is very unusual in the higher music education landscape and could turn out to be risky or counter-productive by decreasing the staff members’ motivation to invest their time and energy in the institution, and by creating a need for the Department to regularly replace its key staff members. The Department is encouraged to explore an alternative measure which could be linked to annual career review and consequent performance management.

## 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?*

The Department of Music is housed in an old factory building with the Department of Drama and Dance, which generates some problems in terms of allocation of space and sound insulation [SER, p. 28]. The Department of Music has 14 instrumental classrooms and practice spaces, five classrooms shared with the Department of Drama and Dance. There is also one concert/lecture hall, two electronic studios and a music library [Ibid.]. Issues of concern mentioned in the self-evaluation and in some of the meetings with the Review Team relate to the access to professional concert facilities, practice rooms (some do not have natural daylight and radiators), facilities for faculty and staff (such as offices and private studios) and the need for a lift [SER, p. 29 and meeting with students].

Senior Administrative Staff members shared their hope that plans for the common building for all IAA departments – which had to be shelved due to the economic collapse in October 2008 – would still be re-launched when the economical context would be more favourable [meeting with Senior Administrative Staff]. They indicated finding it most difficult to provide their services in three different locations [Ibid.].

The Review Team did not find the facilities adequate to support curricula requirements: although space utilisation is excellent, space is limited, and access to better concert spaces is needed. The Music Department could consider exploring partnership with other organisations who have spaces in order to provide adequate practice rooms for students and possibly concert venues. As mentioned in §7.2, the Music Department is encouraged to pursue its negotiation efforts with the adjacent concert hall Harpa which should be a living house for the students.

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

“There are ten grand pianos and eight upright pianos, maintained by a technician on call. The Department also has two drum sets, two electronic keyboards (one of which is portable), a viola, a piccolo flute and a selection of hand-held percussion instruments in variable conditions [SER, p.28]”. The faculty members met by the Review Team regretted the lack of means to buy instruments and give them to the students [meeting with Artistic and Academic Staff members].

The Review Team felt that the number and standard of instruments is adequate to support programmes requirements given the size of the Department. Possibilities of leasing instruments could be explored.

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

“There are two studios equipped with high quality equipment for advanced music recording and sound design; powerful computers, visualizers, surround sound systems and network connectivity. There is a small computer lab with 4 computers equipped with software for generating music and sound design as

well as programming environment for artificial intelligence composing system. In addition there are possibilities for interactive and live performances and special software for spectral analysis [SER, p. 28]”.

The Review Team was impressed by the studios and lab and considers the computing and technological facilities as adequate to support programmes requirements.

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

Although no official music library existed in Iceland prior to the founding of the Department of Music, there is now a music library, open to the public, which supports faculty’s and students’ study and research [SER, p.28]. The collection consists of almost 26,000 items (books, monographs, journals, scores and sound recordings counting) and students and faculty have access to electronic texts and sound recordings via subscription databases [Ibid.]. Members of the IAA Board met by the Review Team indicated that the development of the library had been supported through an endowment [IAA Board]. Regarding the services, students receive assistance in using library resources, both at individual level and as part of a course [meeting with Senior Administrative Staff]. After several years spent on building up the collection, the need to evaluate the way resources are used and to develop a strategic plan for the library (also addressing communication with the academic departments) were expressed [Ibid.].

The Review Team would like to commend the Academy and the Department for bringing together an endowment from private sources for the development of libraries. The library is considered as adequate to support programmes requirements and the delivery of courses introducing library search is good practice. The Review Team supports the suggestion to establish a plan for the library.

## **5.2 Financial resources**

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

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

“The IAA operates on a contract with the Ministry of Education and Science and receives 85% of its funding from the Ministry and 15% from student fees; the contract allows for 72 student places for Bachelor studies in music, 24 places a year [SER, p.29]. Half of the total budget is allocated to the departments and the other half to general costs for the Academy (e.g. library, housing, cafeteria, etc) [meeting with IAA Board members]. The departments’ budgets are negotiated by the IAA Board members and the Deans [Ibid.]; 90% of spending is on salary and 10% on other costs [SER, p. 29]. Faculty members expressed the wish to be informed earlier in the process about the approval of the budget for each area (e.g. in July) [meeting with Artistic and Academic Staff members].

Government funding has been cut by 20% since the financial collapse in October 2008 and the Academy strives to ensure that such a cut does not affect students while at the same time avoiding any deficit [meeting with IAA Board members]. The geographical situation of the Academy spread over three locations does complicate this situation as libraries, cafeterias and other facilities need to operate in all three locations [Ibid.]. Although funding for the new MA in Composition - launched in 2008 – was not

provided by the Government following the crisis [Ibid, p.30], there is now confirmed funding for the programme from autumn 2012 [feedback meeting with Rector and Dean].

As the budget proportion from the state is made official at the beginning of October each year, no long-term financial planning is currently possible [meeting with IAA Board members]. The Board has been investigating about other funding sources: the endowment for the library was considered as a model to build other resources - but private funding does not currently have a good reputation in the country; alumni could be asked to contribute in the future but the Academy is rather young and would not be able to collect significant amounts at this stage; the Academy will continue applying for European Union's grants for the development of programmes or internship placements [Ibid.].

The financial resources are not adequate to support curricula requirements. The Review Team was impressed by the creativity of the Department to find solutions to continue operating in such difficult conditions: research activities are funded out of teaching funds, the number of elective courses is reduced, etc.

### 5.3 Support staff

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

The Department is served by the Secretary and the Service Assistant who maintain student records, allocate instruction space, make up schedules and timetables, provide students with certificates of attendance and transcripts, as well as the Technical Director [SER, p.30 and website<sup>6</sup>]. In addition, the teaching, learning and artistic activities are supported by staff from IAA Main Office: Research Services, Technical Services, Library and Information Services, International coordinator and Student Counsellor [SER, p.30]. Students met by the Review Team expressed dissatisfaction with the availability of the IT services and their limited presence at the Department [meeting with Students].

The technical and administrative staff is considered as adequate to support the teaching, learning and artistic activities. The Music Department is encouraged to explore solutions to the problem raised by the students.

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

"Policies and strategies for continued professional development of technical and administrative staff have been extensively discussed and the need for this is recognized. The focus up until now has been on implementing continued professional development for faculty and sessional staff but the next step will be to formulize strategies for professional development of technical and administrative staff" [SER, p.31].

The Academy is aware of the need for continuing professional development of technical and administrative staff and is indeed encouraged to explore providing such opportunities in the future.

<sup>6</sup> See <http://english.lhi.is/academy-offices/>.

## 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?*

Information for student and staff is available in the Quality Manual, addressing for example the organization of the academic year, students' admission, assessment matters, international affairs, students' final projects and graduation, staff recruitment and affairs, etc [appendix 6a - Quality Manual contents]. Channels to disseminate information within the Academy are listed on the IAA website: the intranet (with news, general information, student book keeping, and teaching system), minutes of meetings of councils and committees, reports from rector's meetings with students, as well as meetings and consultation<sup>7</sup>. Students met by the Review Team referred to the yearly meeting of all music students with the Rector and were satisfied with the informal communication channels in place with the teachers and the Dean. Senior administrative staff members met by the Review Team mentioned that operating in three venues constitutes an important challenge for them in terms of communication with the students and the faculty as well as concerning their own involvement with the disciplines [meeting with Senior Administrative Staff].

The Review Team could find clear evidence of flexible and non-formal internal communications in place within the department. The Review Team would like to commend the openness and transparency engendered by the Dean. The current spread of the Academy over three locations requires that measures are taken in order to safeguard communication over the three sites: the Academy may wish to explore allocating weekly office hours in all three locations for the centralised services as well as the setting-up of cross-Academy liaison committees which would involve members of the Music Department.

### 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?*
- *decision-making on curricular affairs?*

At the Academy level, the Management Council (consisting of the Rector, the Managing Director, the Department Deans and the Director of Academic Affairs) "prepares recommendations regarding the Academy's policy in most areas and serves as the Rector's support in daily management [IAA Rules, article 5]". In addition, the Academic Council (consisting of the Rector, Faculty Deans, representatives of the Academy's permanent staff, representatives of students and of long-term academic instructors, as well as when relevant of the Managing Director and directors of auxiliary services) discusses the Academy's professional objectives, its performance and quality of education, and supports the Rector and the Board in making decisions regarding academic issues. Among issues put forth for the Council's review are such matters as proposals for course setup, benchmarking of course quality and course requirements, policies towards research and artistic creation, as well as broader definitions of the Academy's value and role" [Ibid. article 6]. The self-evaluation report also mentions a Curriculum Committee at IAA level which oversees

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<sup>7</sup> See <http://english.lhi.is/about-the-academy/quality-enhancement/quality-system-outline/>.

the whole curriculum and ensures consistency across the departments as well as various councils (both departmental and interdepartmental) such as the IAA research committee [SER, pp. 32-33].

At the department level, “the Dean supervises operations and teaching within the Department, working to formulate its strategies]” and the Department Council (consisting of the Dean, permanent teaching staff, Study Programme Directors and a student representative) advises the Dean on academic matters [IAA Rules, article 9].

The Senior Administrative Staff members met by the Committee voiced a desire for a more formal structure for dialogue and sharing as the Academy is growing and a wish to be more involved both in defining IAA strategy (for example by being invited more frequently to the Management Council meetings), and in the departmental meetings [meeting with Senior Administrative Staff members]. The spread of departments across three locations is rather challenging for them and they welcomed the new organisational chart and were confident that it would improve the structure and communication in the next years.

Based on the evidence provided in the documents and on the various interviews, the Review Team was under the impression that the decision-making processes on strategic affairs and on curriculum affairs support the programmes and the learning and teaching processes. However, in the current context of five departments across three locations, access to the strategic planning process needs to be improved by being opened up to middle management and/ programme heads on a more regular basis.

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

No such strategy is referred to in the self-evaluation report but the fact that a new organisational chart has been produced indicates that reflection on possible improvements of those structures is undergoing.

*6.2-c. Is there a risk management strategy?*

The Senior Administrative Staff members met by the Committee indicated that no risk strategy is in place but that risk management is addressed regularly during meetings.

### **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)?*

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

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

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

The Academy has an “organized system of quality management for teaching and research, based on internal evaluation procedures in accordance with the Higher Education Institution Act No. 63/2006 [SER,

p.33]. The quality system outlined online<sup>8</sup> looks at five key aspects of the Academy's work: administration, development of programmes, curriculum and study requirements, research and development, and students and staff.

The internal quality enhancement system encompasses the following elements, which involve various stakeholders:

- 1) Evaluation questionnaires are distributed to students at the end of each course and students are to assess the courses they have attended (including their own performance), as well as teachers' performance [SER, p.34 and meeting with students]. These questionnaires are reviewed by the Rector and Dean [SER, p34].
- 2) Annual meetings are organised for all music students with the Rector, enabling them to share their concerns regarding the teaching and learning environment; students met by the Review Team considered these meetings as most effective [meeting with students].
- 3) A Student Council represents music students and its members take part every month in the Department Council meeting where they are given the opportunity to express music students' concerns and suggest improvements [SER, p.34 and Meeting with students]
- 4) Curriculum and student matters are discussed during regular meetings with all teachers organised by the programme directors [SER, p.34]
- 5) Measures to enhance the development of the department are discussed during meetings organised twice per semester by the Dean with all faculty, and often further addressed during staff development days every semester [Ibid.].
- 6) As mentioned in §3.2-a, graduate surveys have been undertaken for the last three years in order to collect feedback from alumni on their studies at the IAA [SER, p.21].
- 7) A Manager of Quality Control and Development has been appointed in 2012 to oversee quality enhancement for the whole Academy

Students indicated being consulted very often by the teachers and leadership – including in informal ways given the small size of the department and the level of personal contact between students and teachers - , and could feel that their input was highly considered [meeting with students]. They do not only feel heard, but also notice quickly improvements made following their suggestion or expression of concern [Ibid.]. Students voiced their impression that the Academy is working constantly on improving its educational offer [ibid.].

Faculty members met by the Review Team confirmed the on-going efforts undertaken by the Academy and the Department staff to improve the educational offer and environment, and shared their feeling that further improvements were still necessary (such as including a module on project management); some faculty members were hoping that programmes would be reviewed slightly less frequently – e.g. once a year - in future [meeting with artistic and academic staff members]. These faculty members indicated that student evaluation is a major factor in curriculum reviews and that they receive the evaluation results; they are invited to discuss the results with the Dean in case of problems raised by students [Ibid.].

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<sup>8</sup> See <http://english.lhi.is/about-the-academy/quality-enhancement/quality-system-outline/>.

Programme directors regretted not being presented with the evaluation of staff members they had hired [Ibid.].

The Review Team would like to commend the quality culture established in the Department and the constant search for improvement – mostly in the educational programmes but in other areas as well – which is generated by the leadership and engages all staff members. It was evident to the Review Team that students and staff not only feel listened to but are also informed about the various changes brought following their comments. The Review Team would also like to highlight the exceptional work of the Department with the preparation of the self-evaluation report; the “reflections” shared so transparently with the Review Team also reflect the self-reflective attitude of the Department and highlight how the Department has used the AEC quality enhancement process in the most beneficial way.

## 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?*

As mentioned in §1, IAA's mission is to "work towards the furthering of art education in this country and convey information regarding arts and culture to the public [IAA Charter, article 2]". IAA Board members highlighted the societal role of the Academy – through composing, creating, connecting people, training young instrumentalists and singers, etc.) and its political strength in defending the arts sector [meeting with IAA Board members]. They referred to the 'House of Ideas' initiated by the Academy in 2009 with the Business University which became a creative factory, leading to the establishment of no less than twenty creative industries' companies in two years [Ibid.]. Finally, as mentioned in §2.3, the Academy is an active member of ELIA, ANMA and AEC.

As far as the Music Department is concerned, "the faculty, students and alumni have increasingly continued to contribute significantly to a diverse musical scene [SER, p.35]". Faculty members mentioned being very active in national cultural life [meeting with artistic and academic staff members] and the high rate of part time faculty hired at the Academy [SER, p.27] also indicates a high level of external activity. Some of the Music Department programmes aim specifically at encouraging students to focus on community work (i.e. BA in creative music communication programme and Music Master of New Audiences and Innovative Practice, see SER, p. 9] as well as to "develop and lead creative projects in diverse artistic, community and cross-sectorial settings [Ibid.]". The list of outreach activities provided in the self-evaluation report (p. 132) includes concerts performed by students in schools, homes for the elderly and on the beach. Some students met by the Review Team were working on organising their final performance outside the Departments, and some indicated that they were teaching [meeting with students].

There is strong evidence that the Academy – as well as the Department as such - is involved in the development of cultural and musical activities outside the institution. The Review Team would however like to suggest that the Department pursues its efforts in this area, in order to increase its influence, in particular outside the city of Reykjavik in the rest of the country: students could be encouraged to perform outside the institution more frequently and the Department could explore initiating festivals and conferences, as well as students' tours across Iceland to perform live music. This would be completely in line with the strong emphasis on creative and communicative programmes in the IAA. As mentioned in §3.3-b, the Department is encouraged to reignite its interest in setting up a springboard agency which would assist students and alumni to create a new economy for cultural and creative enterprises in Iceland. Finally, the potential role of the Music Department in the production of "audience-educators" and music/instrumental teachers could be strengthened if a masters programme in vocal/instrumental teacher education were to be established.

## 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?*

The Music Department's strives to "be proactive in establishing, nurturing and maintaining ties with both the musical profession as well as various partners in the community, [e.g.] by inviting key members of musical organizations to come and discuss specific matters, especially in the area of pre-college music education, and IAA representatives attending meetings to discuss specific potential projects and collaborations. However, such meetings do not have a regular schedule, and there is no long-term strategy in place to develop these ties" [SER, p.37]

In the self-evaluation report, the following interactions between the Music Department and the profession are mentioned:

- Professional involvement of most of the faculty in organisations outside the IAA [SER, p.35]
- Communication with the music schools and the various music teacher associations through dialogues, meetings, seminars and conferences in order to address the development of music education and the continuum of music educational curriculum [Ibid.]
- On-going dialogue with the Iceland Symphony Orchestra (ISO) concerning its potential involvement in the training of orchestra musicians and means of collaboration. Both organisations jointly run an annual soloists competition and have undertaken ad hoc collaborations such as students' compositions being read or performed; students being invited to attend and observe rehearsals; foreign soloists and composers (guests of the Symphony Orchestra) contributing to master classes at the Music Department [Ibid., p. 36]
- Long-term relationship with the Municipality of Ísafjörður enabling first year students and teachers to engage in collaborative projects with members of the community and giving place to series of concerts and masterclasses [Ibid.]

Students met by the Review Team indicated that interaction with the profession did come organically, through an invitation by one of their teachers - member of ISO - to attend a rehearsal, through an invitation to join a concert at a music school in Reykjavik, or through their own teaching activities; they also referred to the small size of the country which facilitates networking [meeting with students]. Students however regretted the lack of cooperation with the adjacent concert hall Harpa which charges the rent of its performance halls at a very high price [Ibid.]. Members of the IAA Board confirmed this situation but indicated being confident that it may improve once debates between the city and the state about the building ownership are resolved [meeting with IAA Board members].

Representatives of the profession expressed themselves in very positive terms about the Academy and the Music Department and their achievements in establishing new thinking, shaking up the arts scene and increasing interest from the public in the arts [meeting with representatives of the profession]. Different views were expressed about the Academy's mission, as some felt it should focus on answering the country's needs (and thus educate more performers and more teachers) while others felt it should produce artists following the new way of musical thinking (with these 'new artists' themselves proactively creating new markets for the consumption of music) which the Department was in charge of developing at its foundation [Ibid.]. The representatives of the profession met by the Committee indicated a strong will

to formalise and deepen the on-going cooperation with the Music department and voiced the following comments and suggestions:

- There is an urgent need to reflect on and map the education of musicians from pre-college education to their entry in the profession.
- A masters programme in instrumental/vocal teacher education would provide current music schools teachers with an opportunity for continuing professional development and fill the demand for additional music school teachers in Iceland (many being currently recruited abroad).
- The concert hall Harpa should connect with young musicians, try to overcome the economical and political obstacles preventing lowering the fees for renting halls and indeed enter in a closer cooperation with the Academy.

The Review Team was impressed by the enthusiasm showed by the various representatives of the profession they met to increase and deepen their cooperation with the Music Department and would like to strongly encourage the Department to answer positively to this demand. Memorandums of Understanding with the various arts educators and stakeholders (e.g. Symphony Orchestra, Radio, music schools) should be explored in order to formalise and increase the Department's cooperation with the professions in order to achieve synergetic effects within limited resources. The Music Department is also encouraged to pursue its efforts to cooperate with the geographically adjacent concert hall Harpa and to explore solutions towards closer partnership with them, supporting visions of creativity in music making, so essential for both partners, thus creating a win-win-situation. There is a fundamental problem to grasp. 'Iconic' buildings like Harpa remain empty shells unless animated by people – young people like those of IAA. The Guildhall School/Barbican/LSO partnership model could be studied as an example of such a partnership which brought a dead space in London to life.

The Music Department showed awareness of the need to bring the Icelandic music/music education sector together; the Review Team would like to encourage the Department to continue its work on this matter in order to increase trust, coherence and cohesion through eliminating duplication and filling gaps.

Finally, given the positive energy which emanated from the group of stakeholders, and the eagerness of the participants to be consulted and to share their views, the Review Team would like to suggest the establishment of a formal involvement of the professional organisations in the curriculum development process, involving structured feedback, as part of a comprehensive quality enhancement system. The group met by the Review Team could be invited to meet regularly with representatives of the Department and reflect on the way the Department's educational offer answers the needs of the profession.

### **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 following communication channels are used by the Department for the publication of information to the public and potential students:

- 1) The IAA Website ([www.lhi.is](http://www.lhi.is)) introduces the Department of Music in Icelandic and in English. The English pages contain detailed information about various elements of the Academy and the Department, such as administration (including quality enhancement, various statistics, rules relating to academic appointments, equal rights, and human resources), curriculum (the general course objectives are presented and all modules are listed with the number of credits), admission procedures, assessment, student unions, international issues, etc [IAA Website]. All the Department's concerts, masterclasses and lecture series are announced on the website and the concerts are broadcasted online [SER, p.38].
- 2) Printed material is published with information for potential students. A brochure about the IAA and its individual departments is published regularly [SER, p.37].
- 3) An annual weekend of masterclasses is offered by faculty members of the Music Department to advanced students from the music schools in Iceland, which "has proven to be one of the most valuable means of introduction of the Department of Music to potential students [Ibid.]".

The Review Team would like to commend the Academy for its website, which it found very clear, informative and easy to navigate. The amount of information available in English is impressive. The website is also an expression of the policy of transparency in effect in the institution: reports of accreditation processes can be accessed freely, opening hours for the various offices are clearly mentioned, email addresses of all staff members are provided. As far as the English version is concerned, the published information is consistent with the educational offer of the Department.

## 8. Summary

This section offers a summary of the institutional attributes which stand out as being strong relative to the AEC criteria, as well as an outline of the areas in which potential for further development emerged.

### Strong points

1. The overall achievement within a short period of eleven years is remarkable: the Music Department has great spirit and the teaching is consistently of a high level
2. The staff/student ratio is good; the approval of staff by students was excellent; and staff members are perceived by the students as being very accessible
3. The staff is very committed to the institution
4. The institution is aware of its need to provide its staff with growing developmental support, e.g. in relation to publications and research
5. The internal communications in place within the department are flexible and non-formal in many contexts. The openness and transparency engendered by the Dean are to be commended
6. There is a strong foundation in educational processes responsive to students' needs: this results from the direct staff and student feedback on curriculum issues which are possible in such a small specialist institution
7. The innovative thinking in curriculum design and in the degrees offered is to be commended, e.g. in the MAs in New Audiences and Innovative Practice and in Composition. Some cross disciplinary projects between departments are an indication of imminent future growth in this area
8. The educational offer is strongly centred on the student and the student experience, and the levels of student activity and participation are high (e.g. students are largely responsible for arranging their own concerts)
9. Employability is strong (partly due to the can-do culture, and the environment of entrepreneurship alluded to in point 8).
10. The departmental emphasis on composition allied to a versatile education is unique
11. The Music Department provides a focus for Icelandic musicians to meet and network
12. The bringing together of an endowment from private sources for the development of libraries where none existed before is a significant achievement
13. There is a genuine and major commitment to quality enhancement: students feel heard and are informed of the changes brought to the educational offer and/or the learning environment following the feedback they have given
14. There is a growing vision of the institution's central role to Iceland's public music life and a strong sense of national mission within the staff

### Potential for development

1. Strategic planning
  - The mission and vision of the institution is advocated passionately by the Rector and the Deans. However, the written version does not capture this energy and positive direction. The Review Team felt this aspect could be developed. The international strategy is still to be fully realised

- In the current context of five departments across three locations, access to the strategic planning process needs to be improved by being opened up to middle management and/programme heads on a more regular basis

## 2. Research

- The role of research in the culture of the department needs to be defined more fully. The role of research in the BA programmes needs to be defined: there should be a closer dialogue between research and the undergraduate curriculum - and the Music Department should ensure mechanisms for research feeding back into the curriculum
- Evaluative procedures connected to research awards and research outcomes need to be clarified
- The Music Department is encouraged to continue its present efforts to demonstrate its eligibility for research funding. It is also encouraged to explore the area of Knowledge Exchange (both within and outside the institution)

## 3. Curriculum

- Assessment scales should be examined for anomaly: they should ideally map across each other and across other disciplines as well
- The balance between composition and performance needs to be monitored in order to resolve some critical mass issues which impact on the teaching and uniform course offer. There are many modules with small course credit ratings; the Music Department is encouraged to explore course groupings linked to higher amounts of credits in order to widen the interdisciplinary potential of courses within the curriculum.
- The Review Team agrees that that the number one priority in curriculum development is the MA in Instrumental/vocal teaching. The Review Team would like to encourage the Department to start a dialogue with the general teaching council in Iceland in order to solve the contradiction between MA requirements in classroom teachers training and BA in instrumental/vocal teachers training. The Review Team strongly feels that all music teachers should receive a major part of their specialist training at the Music Department, given the importance of performance in the classroom setting.

## 4. Facilities

- Though space utilisation is excellent, space is limited, and access to better concert spaces is needed
- Given that the Five Schools/One Estate Masterplan was overtaken by the financial crisis: to explore partnership with other organisations who have spaces that need to be animated by the work of your students

## 5. Communication

The current spread of the Academy over three locations requires that measures are taken in order to safeguard communication over the three sites: the Academy may wish to explore allocating weekly office hours in all three locations for the centralised services; and may wish to explore the setting-up of cross-Academy liaison committees which would involve members of the music department.

## 6. Strategy for public engagement/links with the community/profession

- Given the enthusiasm showed by the various representatives of the profession met by the Review Team, Memorandums of Understanding with the various arts educators and stakeholders (e.g. Symphony Orchestra, Radio, music schools) should be explored in order to formalise and increase the Department's cooperation with the professions in order to achieve synergetic effects within limited resources.
- The Music Department is also encouraged to pursue its efforts to cooperate with the geographically adjacent concert hall Harpa and to explore solutions towards closer partnership with them, supporting visions of creativity in music making, so essential for both partners. The Music Department was directed towards the example of the Guildhall School/Barbican/LSO partnership model.
- The Icelandic music/music education sector is fragmented; the Music Department is encouraged to work on bringing this sector together in order to increase trust, coherence and cohesion through eliminating duplication and filling gaps
- The Music Department was encouraged to reignite its interest in setting up a springboard agency which would assist students and alumni to create a new economy for cultural and creative enterprises in Iceland

## 7. Length of employment contract for staff members

- Time-based recruitment of staff within the Department of Music (i.e. for a maximum tenure of eight years) and the reasons for this inflexible approach need to be analysed. Annual career review and consequent performance management could be explored as an antidote to a one-size fits-all solution across the Academy.