



# MusiQuE – Music Quality Enhancement: Background, Mission and Regulations

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## Introduction

This document sets out in a systematic way the accreditation, quality enhancement and advisory procedures of the European independent accreditation and external evaluation body for music studies known as MusiQuE – Music Quality Enhancement. The document is intended to serve various target groups:

1. Firstly, institutions which express interest in undergoing institutional and/or programme review or seek general advice on quality assurance. For this target group, this document contains a large amount of detailed information on criteria, procedures and practical issues.
2. Secondly, stakeholders outside the higher music education sector wanting to know more about higher music education in general and about quality assurance in the sector in particular. These can be quality assurance experts, higher education specialists, ministerial representatives or professionals working in the music profession. For this target group, information has been compiled that gives further insight into the special characteristics of higher music education and how these characteristics can be taken into account when addressing quality assurance.

This discipline-based approach of MusiQuE is based on the conviction that the enhancement of quality in the sector is undoubtedly best served through an interaction with peer-specialists. Furthermore, the truly European and international set-up of MusiQuE provides important added value, bringing additional objectivity to its procedures, as well as a connection to the highly international nature of the music profession.

MusiQuE was established as a completely independent body from the *Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen* (AEC), the large representative European association of the higher music education sector. This was to ensure the open, disinterested and objective character of its operations. The majority of the processes described here draw upon tried-and-tested elements developed within the context of the quality enhancement activities undertaken up until 2014 by the AEC. However, following appraisal by MusiQuE, some of these features have been newly formulated and updated, and care has been taken to ensure that they are fit for purpose, up-to-date and representative of a truly independent body.

In addition to its independent constitution, MusiQuE has taken an important step towards forging closer connections to the music profession by involving (in addition to the AEC) two large European associations representing music employers in the field of music: : the European Music Schools Union (EMU) and Pearle\*-Live Performance Europe (the Performing Arts Employers Associations League Europe). This way, it is to be anticipated that actions of MusiQuE will always be checked for relevance with the professional demands of today's world of music.

The Board of MusiQuE would like to present this document to its readers as a primary source of information regarding quality issues in higher music education. However, it is important to stress that MusiQuE does not see itself as a static and inflexible entity: procedures are in place to enable MusiQuE to be responsive to its stakeholders such as higher music education institutes and professional music bodies. This will enable MusiQuE to remain focussed on its own enhancement. It will ensure that MusiQuE will actively contribute to the European debate on quality in the European Higher Education Area in general and in the higher music education sector in particular, a sector so crucially linked to the further development of Europe's unique cultural heritage.

# 1 Higher music education and quality assurance

## 1.1 Music, the musician and musical quality

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

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

### *The musician*

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

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

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

### *Musical quality*

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

## **1.2 Characteristics of higher music education**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- To promote music education and music practice.

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

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

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

## 1.5 MusiQuE History

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

## **2 MusiQuE, its Mission and Structure**

### **2.1 MusiQuE: mission statement and objectives**

The following vision and mission statements attempt to encapsulate the essential nature of MusiQuE:

#### *Vision statement*

MusiQuE seeks to be the recognised European independent accreditation and external evaluation body for music, contributing to the continuous improvement of the quality of higher music education across Europe and beyond. Its operations are underpinned by independent, skilled and authoritative international peers. MusiQuE operates according to the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and is registered on the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR). As such, it seeks to be a leading player in higher education quality assurance in general, working with the institutions in which its procedures are applied to construct a broadly-supported quality culture with respect to the specific contexts and individual characteristics of higher music education and its institutions. Through such work, MusiQuE aims to heighten the trust of society in the quality of music study programmes.

#### *Mission statement*

MusiQuE's work is discipline-specific and aims to be characterized by flexibility, diversity, transparency and accountability in its treatment of quality enhancement in music. Through its accreditation, quality enhancement and advisory services, MusiQuE assists higher music education institutions, across Europe and further afield, in their enhancement of quality. It treats quality assurance and enhancement from a subject-specific viewpoint and enables institutions to engage with the improvement of the discipline and its curricula from artistic, practical and other relevant perspectives. Furthermore, MusiQuE works to stimulate and support European institutions in the achievement of highly valued reputations internationally for their artistic output, education and research.

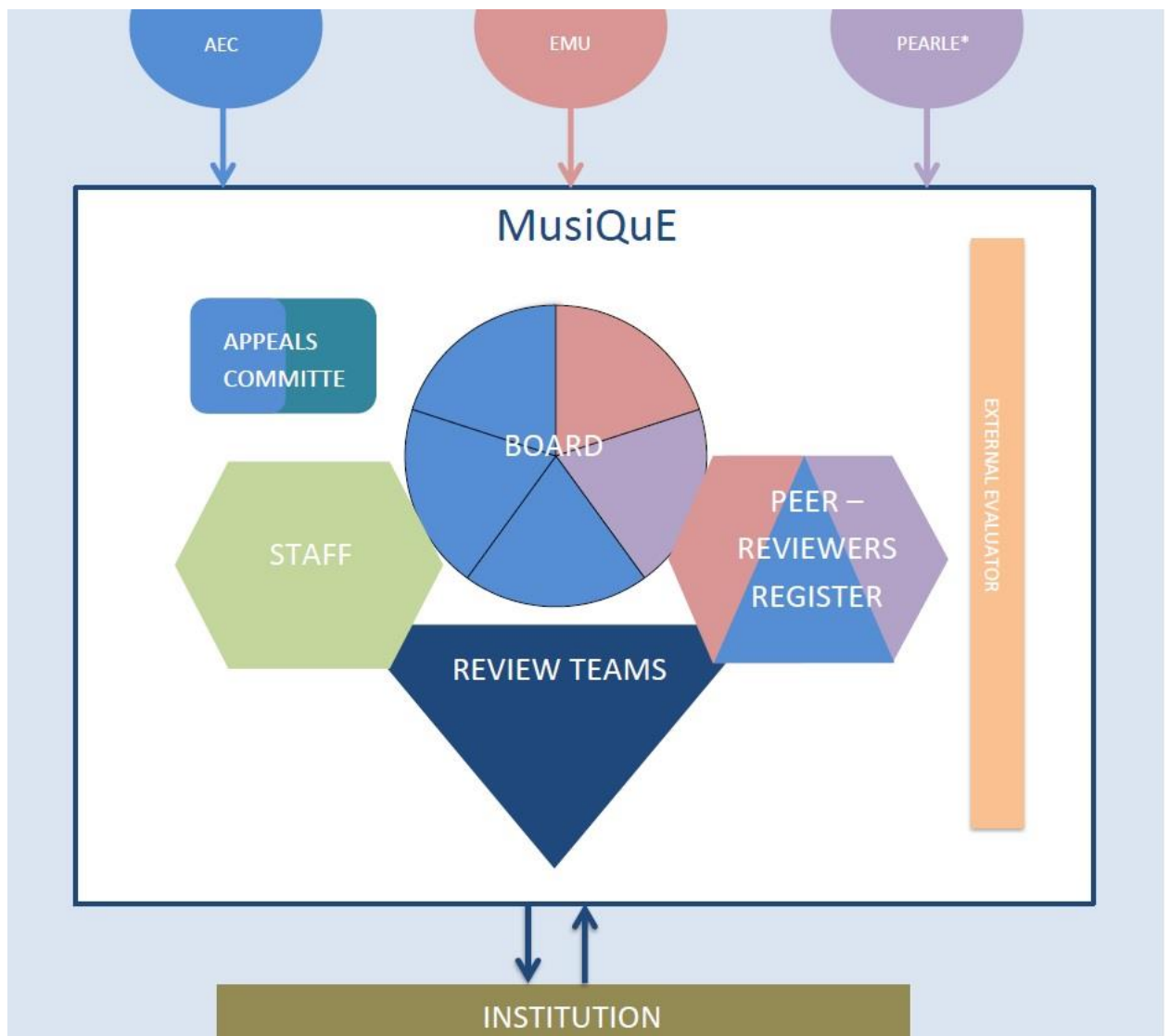
With its extensive expertise in the field of music, and knowledge of diverse national systems, MusiQuE participates in the public debate about musical quality and it contributes to the broad dissemination of information, new ideas and strategies concerning quality enhancement, learning, education and research, especially where these impinge upon the discipline of music and how it is taught, practised and researched.

### **2.2 MusiQuE: foundation and structure**

MusiQuE is established as an independent foundation under Dutch law. Founded in The Hague, The Netherlands, on 7th October 2014, MusiQuE is registered at the chamber of commerce in The Hague and its current seat of operation is in Brussels, Belgium. Its structure comprises three elements:

- The MusiQuE Board
- Supporting staff, who carry out the work determined by the Board (MusiQuE staff, including seconded AEC staff and externally hired staff)
- A Peer-Reviewers Register of experts who form the teams that carry out the reviews commissioned by the Board.

The following diagram summarises MusiQuE's structure:



The MusiQuE Board and the Peer-Reviewers Register are described in Sections 3 and 4 respectively; the description of arrangements concerning MusiQuE staff is included within Section 3.

### **3 MusiQuE Board**

The MusiQuE Board is responsible for all decision-making and for the commissioning of actions in relation to the operations of MusiQuE. It is therefore the key entity in MusiQuE's structure and its composition, roles and responsibilities have a critical bearing on the effective and appropriate functioning of MusiQuE.

#### **3.1 Composition**

The MusiQuE Board is composed of a statutory minimum of five members appointed on the basis of proposals by the three organisations involved in MusiQuE: the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC), the European Music Schools Union (EMU) and Pearle\*-Live Performance Europe (the Performing Arts Employers Associations League Europe).

The proportion of members appointed by AEC shall be in an absolute majority. Therefore, with the Board's minimum composition of five members, three will have been appointed by AEC, one by EMU and one by Pearle\*. In addition, a balance in terms of geographical origin and musical background will be sought wherever possible, both among the members appointed by AEC and across the Board as a whole.

From time to time, the size of the MusiQuE Board may be increased, ensuring that the number of Board members matches the level of activity of MusiQuE and that the demands upon Board members are realistic. The Board may also name further organisations able to nominate one Board member each, where this is felt to add to the inclusiveness and range of expertise represented across the Board. Where the new members added would otherwise result in AEC-appointed members ceasing to be in the overall majority, additional Board members will be appointed by AEC in order to maintain this.

#### **3.2 Nomination of Board members**

Board members are nominated for 3 years with the possibility of renewing their term once (i.e. for a maximum of 6 years). For organisations other than AEC, contributing one member each, this entails a nomination and selection process (or the renewal of the term of an existing representative) every three years. For AEC, with its multiple representation on the MusiQuE Board, a rolling system has been established, with different representatives starting and finishing their terms in different years, to balance the requirements of regular refreshment of the Board's composition with a necessary stability in its functioning. This means that, for AEC, either a process of renewal of term or nomination and selection of a new representative will take place in every year.

##### **3.2.1 Criteria for the nomination of Board members**

Organisations responsible for proposing Board members should ensure that the candidates have:

- a good knowledge of professional musical life and/or of higher music education, if possible at the European level
- experience of evaluation and/or accreditation procedures

### **3.2.2 Nomination processes**

#### **3.2.2.1 Nomination process for AEC representatives on MusiQuE Board**

AEC representatives are nominated by the AEC Council, following a call for interest; Council's nominations are then validated by AEC General Assembly before being submitted to the MusiQuE Board. The whole process takes just under a year between the call for applications and a new representative taking his or her place on the Board.

The sequence of events is as follows:

- An open call for applications is launched every year in spring by the MusiQuE staff to recruit MusiQuE Board members. This call includes the criteria to be met and, where appropriate, indicates whether a standing member wishes to put themselves forward for re-election to a second term
- Interested individuals apply to AEC Council every year by 1<sup>st</sup> June
- AEC Council studies the applications at its autumn meeting (in September) and prepares a draft recommendation for the MusiQuE Board, including a list of candidates by order of preference
- The AEC General Assembly is asked to endorse this recommendation, both in terms of the names put forward and the order of preference (usually in November)
- The endorsed recommendation is communicated to the MusiQuE Board
- The MusiQuE Board selects the candidate(s) based on the recommendation from AEC Council and in accordance with the legal requirements for the Dutch foundation
- Following the meeting, the MusiQuE staff inform the successful applicant and AEC Council of the outcome
- The new (or renewed) representative takes up his/her place on the Board from its next meeting

In addition to the criteria for all MusiQuE Board members listed in 3.2.1, the prospective Board members nominated by the AEC should:

- Be listed on MusiQuE peer-reviewers' register
- Have been involved in reviewing institutions or programmes (at national or international level)
- Not be current members of AEC Council (if appointed, they should not simultaneously hold the office of MusiQuE Board member and AEC Council member at any point within either mandate)

#### **3.2.2.2 Nomination process for EMU and PEARLE\* representatives on MusiQuE Board**

EMU and Pearle\* representatives (and those of other organisations named in future by the MusiQuE Board) are mandated by their respective Boards through procedures determined by those organisations, but along similar lines to those set out above. The process is always initiated by a call for applications being issued by the MusiQuE staff but, as seen above, this will only take place once every three years (except in the event of a representative ending his or her term prematurely).

### **3.3 Role and responsibilities:**

The MusiQuE Board will undertake the following activities:

Concerning the review and accreditation procedures

- Receive notification of each request from an institution for a review and monitor the overall quantity of these and their planning, taking into account the human and other resources of MusiQuE
- Confirm through a letter of acceptance when a request for the review is granted and, in that letter, set out the overall review timeframe
- Assess and approve proposals for peer-reviewers selected from the Register by the MusiQuE staff for each review, based on the relevance of their expertise, and monitor these proposals for signs of over-use of certain individuals or neglect of others on the Register who seem to have comparable expertise
- In the case of MusiQuE Quality Enhancement Reviews: review final reviewers' reports to ensure their consistency with, and relevance to, the review standards. Following this, confirm in writing to the institution that the institution/programme/joint programme has been reviewed by MusiQuE with due reference to the MusiQuE standards and procedures
- In the case of accreditation procedures: consider each final report written in the framework of accreditation procedures and check if the justifications listed by the review team for each standard support the proposed level of compliance with that standard; take the final formal decision on the accreditation of the institution/programme/joint programme based on the proposal of the Review Team; confirm this in writing to the institution.
- Monitor the follow-up process(es) relating to conditions and recommendations in reviews.
- Receive appeals requests from institutions and, following this, activate the Appeals Committee by alerting the standing committee member and appointing a second member with appropriate expertise to deal with the appeal; receive the verdict of the Appeals Committee and take the formal decision on its approval or otherwise; communicate the result of the appeal to the institution

Concerning the Register of Experts

- Compile, maintain and update a Register of expert peer-reviewers who may be drawn upon to undertake quality assurance and accreditation activities on behalf of MusiQuE
- Periodically advertise across the AEC, EMU and Pearle\* memberships (and those of any additional organisations who may be invited to join the Board) for new individuals to come forward to be considered for inclusion on the Register
- Review CVs of individuals to determine their suitability for inclusion on the Register and, if satisfied, approve their inclusion
- Respond promptly to situations where the MusiQuE staff is unable to assemble from the existing register a suitable panel of reviewers for a visit and requires consideration of a new candidate with appropriate expertise for the visit in question
- When alerted by the MusiQuE staff of problems related to the reviewers, seek confidential feedback from Chairs of review teams and/or the secretary appointed by MusiQuE on the performance of individuals within the review teams and on any recommendations they have that might flow from this for additional training, briefing before visits, etc.
- From time to time, review the suitability of individuals who have been included for a period of several years on the register – especially those who have been engaged in little or no quality assurance or accreditation activity during that time

Concerning internal quality assurance of MusiQuE

- Consider the results of feedback questionnaires filled in by institutions and reviewers and take appropriate actions for improvement
- Consider ways in which the consistency of the reports can be assured, for example by inviting second readers
- In consideration of the above and any other relevant information, produce an annual report on all its activities for the year, noting any good practice observed and identifying any areas where it believes beneficial changes might be made.
- Appoint an External Evaluator, independent of the operations of MusiQuE, who will review material documenting MusiQuE's activity, especially the annual report
- Consider the comments of the External Evaluator and take appropriate actions for improvement
- In the event of a formal complaint being received from an institution involved in a review, activate the complaints procedure and, having determined the validity or otherwise of the complaint, inform the complainant of the result
- Prepare for external reviews (ENQA/EQAR)

Concerning financial matters

- Monitor and decide upon financial issues such as annual budgets, pricing policies and future financial self-sustainability
- Approve the annual accounts
- In connection with this, establish and periodically review a formal business plan for quality assurance activities

Concerning further development, external relations and communication

- Initiate new activities deemed to be consistent with the vision and mission of MusiQuE and achievable within existing and anticipated resources
- Keep under consideration ways in which the MusiQuE quality assurance and accreditation activities might be encouraged to expand, develop and evolve across the European Higher Education Area as a whole
- Ensure that the Boards and General Assemblies of each of the partner organisations are informed about the work of MusiQuE and have the opportunity to suggest improvements to the system, extension of its scope, and any other initiative
- Every two years, commission an individual well experienced in higher music education, and in quality assurance activities within this sector to produce a trend analysis
- Contribute to the communication and dissemination of information about MusiQuE activities, including representing MusiQuE - individually and, where appropriate, collectively - at quality assurance and accreditation-related events
- Sign cooperation agreements with other quality assurance and accreditation bodies/agencies

### **3.4 Special roles within the MusiQuE Board**

The Board includes a Chair, a Secretary and a Treasurer. These roles are agreed on an annual basis by the Board itself, based upon the membership for that year. The Chair, Secretary and Treasurer may be re-elected annually for as many years as they remain members of the Board (maximum 6) and there is no separate term of office for them.



### **3.5 Decision-making processes**

All decisions are taken by a simple majority of members present. In the case of the Board having an even number of members, the Chair shall have a casting vote where the number of votes initially cast is equal.

### **3.6 Level of commitment and financial arrangements**

It is expected that Board members will:

- attend 2 Board meetings per year (i.e. 2 meetings of one full day, excluding travel)
- prepare thoroughly for these meetings (i.e. 1 day of preparation per meeting)
- respond to some requests by email (e.g. 1 full day per year)

All travel, accommodation and subsistence expenses will be covered by MusiQuE.

### **3.7 External staff and supporting staff**

#### **3.7.1 Peer-reviewers**

Peer-Reviewers form the teams that carry out the reviews commissioned by the Board. MusiQuE works with a pool of international specialists in the relevant musical fields, able to understand the specificities of the various institutions, programmes and disciplines. More information on MusiQuE peer-reviewers is provided below: chapter 4 presents MusiQuE Peer-Reviewers Register and describes the training received by MusiQuE peer-reviewers; chapter 9 addresses the composition of the Review Team and the roles and responsibilities of the reviewers.

#### **3.7.2 Support staff and secretaries**

The MusiQuE Board depends for its effective functioning on support provided between its meetings and during its reviews by suitably qualified individuals. The individuals who make up the MusiQuE staff are responsible for ensuring continuous support to the MusiQuE Board: they prepare the Board meetings, ensure that the Board decisions are implemented and coordinate the review procedures (see the role of the MusiQuE staff during review visits in Section 7.1). A member of the MusiQuE staff will usually serve as secretary during MusiQuE review procedures.

MusiQuE staff members are individuals seconded by AEC. The Board may also hire external individuals on a short-term basis to serve as secretaries or in other roles for specific review procedures in order to ensure that the overall workload of activities is manageable.



## **4 Peer-Reviewers Register**

MusiQuE works with a pool of competent review and accreditation experts in the field of higher music education, listed in the MusiQuE Peer-Reviewers Register.

### **4.1 Criteria for acceptance onto the Register**

Each reviewer listed on the Register should have:

- an appropriate qualification (degree or professionally-oriented diploma) and recognised expertise in areas relevant to higher music education
- broad knowledge of the teaching and learning models and methods relevant to higher music education

Beyond this, potential members of the Register should ideally meet one or more of the following requirements:

- have experience in quality assurance in higher music education,
- have been trained through a training for peer-reviewers delivered by MusiQuE or other quality assurance and accreditation agencies
- have international experience that provides a basis for making international comparisons
- have experience in the development, design, provision and evaluation of higher education programmes in music.

In addition, existing members of the Register should update their familiarity with MusiQuE's standards and procedures by taking part periodically (preferably no less frequently than every five years) in the training for peer-reviewers regularly offered by MusiQuE.

#### **4.1.1 Admission procedure**

Interested individuals who meet the above requirements and are willing to act as Peer-Reviewers for Quality Enhancement Reviews, accreditation procedures and joint collaborative reviews fill in the Template for Peer-Reviewers (available online at <http://www.musique-qe.eu/documents/templates>) and send it to the MusiQuE staff.

The MusiQuE Board advertises every year across the AEC, EMU and PEARLE\* memberships for new individuals to come forward to be considered for inclusion on the Register, normally in connection with a training session on the day preceding the AEC General Assembly. MusiQuE can also recruit outside AEC, EMU and PEARLE\* memberships if a certain competence not otherwise available is needed.

All profiles will be considered by the MusiQuE Board during its meeting following the yearly call for reviewers (or possibly by email in the case of procedures when reviewers are invited in specialised areas who are not listed – yet – on the Register).

The Board will evaluate the suitability of the applicant's profile based on the criteria set out above as well as on the needs of maintaining a balanced Register (in terms of gender, geographical spread, languages spoken, etc.). Ideally, at least two of the criteria should be met. Peers can be listed on the Register even when they do not have experience in all fields mentioned in the Register. It will then be the responsibility of the MusiQuE staff (supported by the Board) to ensure that when Review Teams are assembled, they are competent as a whole.

Applicants will be informed by email about the decision reached by the Board within three weeks after its meeting.

#### **4.1.2 Data collected and data confidentiality**

The Register for Peer-reviewers contains the following data collected for each person:

- Country and Position (including freelance or retired status)
- Field(s) of musical expertise
- Other fields of non-musical/organisational expertise
- Degree or professionally-based diploma qualification(s)
- Knowledge/experience in teaching and learning in higher music education
- Experience in the development, design, and provision of higher education programmes in music
- Experience/Knowledge in QA in Higher Music Education (including experience with AEC reviews and active participation in QA within own institution)
- Other international experience
- Language skills
- Contact details

Data provided by applicants will be made available to the MusiQuE Board members and the MusiQuE staff only, and will be kept confidential.

In the case of bilateral cooperation procedure with national quality assurance and accreditation agencies, the full profile of reviewers may be provided to the national agency.

#### **4.1.3 Maintenance of the Register**

The entire Register is reviewed by the MusiQuE Board every three years (including in terms of evaluating the continuing suitability of individuals).

As a preliminary to this exercise, all peer-reviewers listed in the Register will be asked by email once every three years if they wish to remain on the Register and (in that case) to review their profile. If no answer is received, this will be considered as a wish to be taken out of the Register.

All peer-reviewers listed in the Register are encouraged to update their profile at any time if changes occur.

When the results of the feedback questionnaire sent to peer-reviewers after a review visit indicate that there might have been some problems within a review team, the Committee will seek confidential feedback from Chairs of review teams and/or the secretary appointed by the MusiQuE staff on the performance of individuals within the review teams and on any recommendations they have that might flow from this for additional training, briefing before visits, etc.

## **4.2 Training for peer-reviewers**

Training for peer-reviewers is regularly offered by MusiQuE in workshops usually scheduled immediately before the start of the AEC Annual Congress. Workshops are delivered by MusiQuE Board members, MusiQuE staff members and by some experienced MusiQuE reviewers.

All representatives of AEC's 300 member institutions receive an invitation to this training together with the invitation to the Congress and can register for this optional activity. In addition, applicants for the MusiQuE peer-reviewers register who have not been immediately entered on the register because they had not previously attended MusiQuE peer-reviewers training are specifically contacted and encouraged to attend the session.

The training sessions aim at offering elements of training and professional development to potential and confirmed MusiQuE peer-reviewers. They are open to all staff members of higher music education institutions - experienced or not – who are a) interested in becoming peer-reviewers for MusiQuE in the future, b) motivated to reflect on their experience and practice as peer-reviewers or c) have a general interest in quality assurance and accreditation in conservatoires.

Each training session starts with a general introduction to MusiQuE, its structure and its review procedures, as well as to the notion of “peer” in peer-review.

This introduction is followed by the “3Ps” plenary session (“Preparations, Procedures and Paperwork”) which provides participants with an overview of their role and responsibilities during the whole review procedure. The session is divided into three parts:

- Part A – “Before the review” addresses the preparation of the review. Documents received by the reviewers (including the MusiQuE standards, the self-evaluation report and the visit schedule) are presented to the participants, guidance on how to read a self-evaluation report is provided by an experienced reviewer and a practical exercise is undertaken to train reviewers for the preparation of the first review meeting.
- Part B – “During the review” addresses the role of the Secretary, the role of the Review Team Chair and the role of the Other Reviewers (Peers and Student) and the MusiQuE code of conduct is presented.
- Finally, Part C – “After the review” presents the writing report process and the final outcome of the review.

Two sessions are then offered successively to small groups of participants:

*Acting as Peer-Reviewer (Role-Play):* this session involves participants undertaking a mock institutional review visit meeting, assuming the role of either staff from within the institution being reviewed or members of the review team. The aims of this session are as follows:

- To understand the institutional review procedure.
- To ensure that review team members understand their roles and tasks, the importance of team working and the rules of conduct/behaviour during a review visit.
- To reflect on what makes an effective meeting during a review visit.
- To have the opportunity to explore the techniques and skills required to be an effective review team member.

*Working as part of a team:* this session is based on the “World Café” method wherein the large group is divided into several smaller groups who each sit at tables (café style) and discuss a number of questions posed by the session leaders. Each smaller group is

asked to produce summary statements responding to each question discussed, which are then collected, displayed and discussed by the larger group.

Sample questions used in previous training sessions have included:

1. "How might a review team deal with confrontation and surprise?"
2. "In order to create a good team, what needs to happen the night before the review?"
3. "How can the review team quickly establish an atmosphere of trust with the institutional groups?"

Each smaller group elects a Chair who takes responsibility for leading the discussion and for writing the summary statements. Once all summary statements have been collected and displayed, they are discussed by the larger group with a view to highlighting the main topics that have emerged from the smaller group "café" chat.

The experience of being divided up into these smaller groups, which aim to be representative of a typical review group structure (in that they should include a good balance between junior/senior faculty, have appropriate gender balance, have a student representative and so on). Having to discuss real issues quickly, and without a previous working relationship with the other members of the group, is quite intentional as it mimics the exact experience of most review teams.

Part of the larger group discussion at the end of the session tackles not just the issues/topics raised in relation to the questions asked, but also the experience of having to develop almost instantaneously a working relationship with previously unknown individuals and develop into a good team in a very short period of time.

The training session ends with a presentation of the MusiQuE Board and a session where there is an opportunity for the participants to offer their own feedback on the session.

## 5 MusiQuE Procedures

### 5.1 Characteristics for Quality assurance in higher music education

Music shares many common features with other disciplines in terms of assessment and quality assurance at higher education level. However, in order for a quality assessment procedure to be accurate as well as fair, it is necessary to consider the individual discipline's special characteristics. This section describes features which should be taken into account in quality assurance and accreditation reviews in higher music education.

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

- I. Respect the content and nature of music and their relationships to education and training in music at the professional level.
  - Recognize music as a unique, nonverbal means of communication, discourse, and insight.
  - Respect music as a medium for intellectual work expressed both in music itself and in words about music.
  - Work with a conceptual understanding of the elements in the content of professional music study including, but not limited to, performance, composition, musicianship, music theory, music history and repertoire, and pedagogy.
  - Exhibit understanding and respect for the multiple ways these elements are ordered, prioritised, and integrated to develop and synthesize the artistic, intellectual, and physical capabilities of students.
- II. Respect the fundamental characteristics of education and training in music at the professional level.
  - Recognize and support the necessity of curricula that include one-to-one tuition, ensembles, courses, and final projects such as recitals and compositions.
  - Recognize fundamental necessities for time allocations that grow from the nature of music and music learning, including the time requirements for developing the integration of artistic, intellectual, and physical knowledge and skills.
  - Understand the necessity of resources essential to music study such as expert specialized personnel, facilities conducive to various types of instruction, and financial support.
  - Be able to connect issues of financial allocation to necessities regarding time and resources.
  - Understand that students must demonstrate significant levels of artistic and technical mastery in order to be admitted.
  - Recognise that musical, instrumental, vocal, or compositional technique—while essential for entrance, continuation, and graduation—enable high levels of artistry but are not a substitute for artistry.
- III. Respect the natures, achievements, aspirations, and structures of individual institutions.

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

- Conduct evaluations with respect for, and in light of, the various missions, goals, objectives, and methodologies chosen by the individual institutions.
  - Have a sophisticated understanding of how music schools and conservatoires are the same and how they are different.
  - Respect the fact that various structures and approaches to music and music study work effectively and produce outstanding results.
  - Understand both individual and group responsibilities for the development of musical and educational quality.
- IV. Maximize the use of evaluation systems and methods consistent with the natures of music, music study, and the operation of music schools and conservatoires.
- Recognise the intense evaluation and assessment pressures that come from the public nature of music performance and composition.
  - Respect that the concept of multiple effective approaches extends into teaching and learning as well as to matters of interpretation in performance and aesthetic accomplishment in composition.
  - Understand the continuous, moment-by-moment evaluation and assessment essential to both the preparation and presentation of performances and to the composition of music. In music, assessment is integrated continuously into the work as well as being applied to completed work.
  - Make use of high levels of expertise in music, music teaching, the operation of education and training institutions, and the relationships among the three. Peer evaluation is essential for credibility in reviews of music schools and conservatoires.
  - Describe in advance the purpose of any review and the specific criteria on which the evaluation is to be based. Do not attempt to conflate artistic and educational criteria with economic and market criteria.
  - Make clear to all evaluators that the focus is on functions to be served, rather than methods to be employed.
  - Have protocols indicating that individual evaluators are to make judgments about effectiveness with regard to the criteria chosen for the evaluation and not on personal preferences regarding choices in areas where there are many correct answers.

## **5.2 Basic principles of the MusiQuE review procedures**

MusiQuE review procedures are based on the twin principles of their being designed from a subject-specific perspective and conducted by peer reviewers with specific subject expertise. The services offered by MusiQuE are conceived as offering an important service to higher music education institutions, aimed at assisting them in their quality enhancement activities. Although its accreditation procedures necessarily involve evaluating institutions in relation to a set of standards, this principle of assistance in quality enhancement applies even in this context.

The role of peers is at the core of the system. Their expertise is combined with an intimate understanding of the realities that apply in higher music education institutions. They are perfectly placed to engage with the procedures as ‘critical friends’, delivering their judgements in a spirit of constructive dialogue with the institution, its leaders, teachers, students and administrative staff.

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

The expertise of the peer reviewers is primarily as teachers within their discipline, but many of them also possess significant administrative experience and understand the issues of higher music education from this perspective as well. In general, Review Teams will be assembled in such a way that the individual expertise of each team member complements that of the others.

The other most important constituency within higher music education institutions is that of the students. Students are systematically included as members of the Review Teams assembled under the procedures organised by MusiQuE. The role of students is the same as that of the other peer reviewers, and their perspective is equally valued.

MusiQuE conducts its review procedures in a manner that is characterised by the following principles:

- Respecting the special characteristics of higher music education and the contexts and traditions in which music is created
- Encouraging higher music education institutions to reflect on their own practice, development and challenges
- Assisting them in the enhancement of their quality by focusing on learning and experience-sharing
- Striving towards a higher level of objectivity (through the involvement of international review teams)
- Bringing a European/international dimension to the procedure
- Striving for the improvement of higher music education as a whole

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

MusiQuE provides the following services:

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

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

Under this procedure, higher music education institutions have the opportunity to engage in a Quality Enhancement Review, i.e. a peer-review visit, either for the whole institution or focused on one or more programmes, which results in an advisory report.

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

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

- To provide the opportunity for higher music education institutions to choose to be evaluated through a procedure devised and implemented by those with specialist knowledge and understanding of such institutions
- To offer a procedure that is intrinsically international in its outlook and in the range of countries from which experts are drawn
- To bring fresh ideas and wider perspectives into institutions, encouraging the principle of ‘many correct answers’ to questions concerning the pursuit of quality in higher music education
- Under certain circumstances, to serve as a ‘rehearsal’ for an impending formal review event
- In the process, to furnish the institution with evidence, in the form of impartial external evaluation, that may then be used its self-evaluation report

#### **5.3.1.2 Process**

- The institution is asked to prepare an analytical self-evaluation report, which is sent to the peer-reviewers at the latest a month before the site-visit.
- The peer-reviewers (at least four persons, including a student), accompanied by a Secretary, conduct a site-visit of a minimum of 1.5 days for a programme review and 2.5 days for an institutional review, during which they meet members of the Management Team, of the Academic, Artistic and Administrative Staff, Students, Representatives of the Profession, etc., and have the opportunity to visit classes and lessons, and attend concerts/recitals.

#### **5.3.1.3 Outcome**

- The outcome is an advisory report, highlighting good practice and including a set of recommendations for further improvement, written by international specialists in the relevant musical fields.

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

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

Any such procedure will continue to be subject to the national legislative framework where the institution is located, and to other factors of suitability.

#### **5.3.2.1 Objectives**

- To provide a procedure that satisfy the legal obligations in terms of accreditation as described in the national regulation of the country in question
- To provide the opportunity for higher music education institutions to choose to be evaluated through a procedure devised and implemented by those with specialist knowledge and understanding of such institutions
- To offer a procedure that is intrinsically international in its outlook and in the range of countries from which experts are drawn



- While observing appropriate formality in the proceedings, to stimulate a process of internal reflection on quality issues and to bring fresh ideas and wider perspectives into institutions, encouraging the principle of 'many correct answers'
- To deliver a procedure which, although its primary purpose may be to fulfil a legislative requirement, can be of genuine benefit and enhancement to the institution, its teachers and students, both in the debate and reflection it stimulates and in the changes that it may initiate

#### **5.3.2.2 Process**

- As with the Quality Enhancement Review, the institution is asked to prepare an analytical self-evaluation report, which is sent to the peer-reviewers at the latest a month before the site-visit.
- The peer-reviewers (at least four persons, including a student), accompanied by a Secretary, conduct a site-visit of a minimum of 1.5 days for a programme review and 2.5 days for an institutional review, during which they meet members of the Management Team, of the Academic, Artistic and Administrative Staff, Students, Representatives of the Profession, etc., and have the opportunity to visit classes and lessons, and attend concerts/recitals.

#### **5.3.2.3 Outcome**

- The outcome is a report, written by international specialists in the relevant musical fields, which, in addition to highlighting good practice and including a set of suggestions for improvement, concludes with a formal recommendation as to the awarding of accreditation.
- The report may call for accreditation without any recommendations or conditions, accreditation with recommendations only or accreditation subject to certain conditions, whether on their own or in addition to recommendations.
- Any conditions will be framed in such a way that the outcome required and the timescale in which it should be achieved are clear, although, as far as possible, the institution will be given autonomy in terms of the methods by which it achieves the necessary outcome(s).
- If conditions have not been met in the set timeframe, the recommendation will be not to accredit the institution. Under such circumstances, a clear set of remedial steps will be outlined to guide the institution in the reforms considered necessary. The institution will then be free to re-apply for accreditation after a period of one year.

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

An alternative to an accreditation procedure conducted solely by MusiQuE is for MusiQuE to operate in collaboration with a national quality assurance and accreditation agency through a merged set of standards and procedures. This option is especially attractive for institutions wishing to engage with a subject-specific and internationally-based quality enhancement review but obliged to conform to national requirements not allowing MusiQuE to conduct these procedures on its own. The basis of such collaborative accreditation procedures is that of a participation of equals. Both MusiQuE and national quality assurance agencies have their own strengths, expertise and accumulated history; it makes obvious sense to combine these in a complementary way.

As part of the preparations for a collaborative procedure, a comparison is made of the national agency's standards with those of MusiQuE. Arising out of this exercise, a merged set of standards is produced ensuring that no aspect found in either of the separate standards is omitted. Generally, the level of correspondence between standards is found to be high and the comparison process results in enhanced mutual trust and, from time to time, a productive sharing of practice.

The selection process of experts is also characterised by cooperation. The final review team seeks to blend subject-specific expertise with a familiarity with any particular national circumstances. Precisely how this is done, and the division of responsibilities such as Chairing amongst members of the finally constituted panel will be subject to negotiation but, again, the guiding principle will be one of equality between the partners.

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

#### 5.3.3.1 Objectives

- To provide the opportunity for higher music education institutions who are obliged to work within their national system (or who find benefits in doing so) to choose to be evaluated through a procedure which is nevertheless informed in both its design and delivery by those with specialist knowledge and understanding of such institutions
- To offer a procedure that, while it may largely follow national patterns, is intrinsically international in its outlook and in the range of countries from which experts are drawn
- While observing appropriate formality in the proceedings, to stimulate a process of internal reflection on quality issues and to bring fresh ideas and wider perspectives into institutions, encouraging the principle of 'many correct answers'
- To deliver a procedure which, although its primary purpose may be to fulfil a legislative requirement, can be of genuine benefit and enhancement to the institution, its teachers and students, both in the debate and reflection it stimulates and in the changes that it may initiate

#### 5.3.3.2 Process

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

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

#### 5.3.3.3 Outcome

- The precise outcome will depend upon the nature of the cooperation but will always take the form of a report.
- The report will either be written by international specialists in the relevant musical fields or will receive strong input from them.
- The fulfilment of any recommendations or conditions will usually be subject to the procedures of the national agency.
- In the case of accreditation procedures:
  - Although terminology may vary, the report will conclude with a call for accreditation without any recommendations or conditions, accreditation with recommendations only or accreditation subject to certain conditions, whether on their own or in addition to recommendations.
  - As with MusiQuE's own procedures, there will generally be a possibility that accreditation might be withheld when conditions are not met in the timeframe set, in which case, appropriate remedial steps would be outlined.

#### 5.3.4 Quality Assurance Desk for institutions

As a complement to the procedures operated by MusiQuE, its staff and experts also provide targeted advice on quality assurance procedures to higher music education institutions. The main 'portal' to this advice is the MusiQuE Quality Assurance Desk. For most of the year, this exists in 'virtual' form as a space on the MusiQuE website for submitting by email a specific query (inquiries can also be made by telephone, although it may not always be possible to provide the answer immediately within the span of the call).

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

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

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

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

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

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

The MusiQuE staff can also organise, on request, a preparatory visit to explain how an institution can apply for a review undertaken by reviewers from the MusiQuE peer-reviewers Register. During such a visit, a programme will be designed in collaboration with the institution in order to ensure that the review will focus on their needs. Such preparatory visits will be charged to the institution in addition to the review costs.

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

## 6 Review Standards

As stated at the start of the previous chapter, the services offered by MusiQuE are conceived as offering an important support and benefit to higher music education institutions, aimed at assisting them in their quality enhancement activities. Nevertheless, its accreditation procedures necessarily involve evaluating institutions impartially in relation to a set of standards. This chapter briefly describes those standards and presents the procedures whereby they themselves are periodically reviewed and, where necessary, revised. Finally, this chapter briefly presents how MusiQuE standards relate with the European standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance.

Three sets of standards have been designed to meet different institutional needs:

- A set of *Standards for Institutional Review*, to be used for reviews covering the whole institution (IR)
- A set of *Standards for Programme Review*, to be used for the evaluation of one or more programmes within an institution (PR)
- A set of *Standards for Joint Programme Review*, to be used for the evaluation of a study programme jointly developed by several partner institutions from different countries (not necessarily leading to a joint degree) (JPR)

All three sets of standards can be found online at <http://www.musique-qe.eu/documents/musique-standards>.

Depending on the context and aim of the review procedure, one of these three sets of standards will apply. This set will then be used by the institution to write its self-evaluation report and compile supportive evidence, by the Review Team during the site-visit to structure and inform its fact-finding exercise and by the Review Team after the site-visit as a basis on which to assess the institution / programme / joint programme and build the review report.

All three sets of standards share a common philosophy and address similar areas; their differences lie in the way that they are specifically tailored to the review task in question.

The document *MusiQuE Standards for Institutional, Programme and Joint Programme Review* includes a general introduction presenting the standards and their rationale and explaining this common philosophy. It also includes the three sets of standards.

Each set of standards is divided into three columns:

- The first column '*Standards*' lists the standards to be met for each type of review. There are 17 standards in total, distributed across 8 primary domains of enquiry. The domains are as follows:
  1. Institutional Mission, Vision and Context/Programme's Goals and Context
  2. Educational Processes
  3. Student Profiles
  4. Teaching Staff
  5. Facilities, Resources and Support
  6. Communication, Organisation and Decision-making
  7. Internal Quality Culture
  8. Public Interaction

- The second column '*Questions to be considered when addressing this standard*' includes, for each standard, a series of questions relevant to the identification of good practice in the area of that standard. These questions are aimed at encouraging the institution to look into the issue raised, and to reflect on its own practice and on the possible need to improve in this area.
- The third and last column '*Supportive material/evidence*' gives an indication of the kinds of supporting material which an institution or programme team is advised to provide to the peer-reviewers as evidence of good practice.

Institutions and programmes to be reviewed will receive an indicative template for their self-evaluation report based on the MusiQuE standards (available online at <http://www.musique-ge.eu/documents/templates>). Each of the 17 standards listed in the first column needs to be addressed, while the second and third columns are meant as guidelines for the self-evaluation process (see clauses 8.2.2.1 and 8.2.2.2 for more information on the self-evaluation report and the supportive material/evidence).

## 6.1 Review and revision of Standards and Procedures

It is crucial that the standards and procedures employed by MusiQuE should undergo continuous development to ensure that they remain reflective of the current reality of higher music education and of the artistic professions, respond to any further evolution of the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and answer the changing needs of institutions and of society. The MusiQuE Board is responsible for the regular revision and updating of the standards and procedures in order to ensure this.

The following process is in place to guarantee that review and updating are done in an appropriate and transparent way, which balances the independence of MusiQuE against its obligation to act in ways that carry the confidence and support of its key stakeholders – the conservatoires and the music profession:

- Any member of AEC, EMU and Pearle\*-Live Performance Europe (or any other organisation that may subsequently join the Board of MusiQuE) will be able to suggest changes. Proposals for change can also arise from experiences encountered during a MusiQuE review
- Proposals are submitted to the MusiQuE Board, which must then consider all these proposals and may, in addition, propose further changes of its own
- All proposals sent in before January 31<sup>st</sup> each year are addressed as an agenda item within the MusiQuE Board meeting following that date, usually held in February
- Based on the proposals received, the MusiQuE Board prepares a composite proposal of its own for changes to the standards and procedures and sends this to the AEC Council before its March meeting, as well as to the Boards of EMU, PEARLE\* and any other organisations that may subsequently join the MusiQuE Board
- In the case of AEC, the AEC Council receives the proposal and sends it, normally without alteration, to the membership for consultation, with a deadline of June 30<sup>th</sup> for responses. If Council feels it necessary to question any aspect of the proposal, this is done as soon as possible through correspondence with the MusiQuE Board
- EMU, PEARLE\* and any other organisations that may subsequently join the MusiQuE Board make their own arrangements for gathering feedback from their memberships and for reporting on this to the MusiQuE Board

- Any amendments to the proposal suggested by the various memberships are considered by the Board of MusiQuE and a final proposal is sent in early September to the Boards of all organisations represented on the MusiQuE Board
- In the case of AEC, the AEC Council considers the final proposal for changes to the standards and procedures at its September meeting
- The AEC Council brings the final proposal to its General Assembly in November for adoption by the members. Because of the earlier process of consultation, it is the presumption that the changes will be adopted by the General Assembly; should this not be the case, the matter will be referred back to the MusiQuE Board for its next meeting in February of the following year
- EMU, PEARLE\* and any other organisations that may subsequently join the MusiQuE Board make their own arrangements for gaining adoption by their memberships and for reporting on this to the MusiQuE Board
- In the event of the AEC General Assembly or the memberships of other organisations opposing certain aspects of the proposed changes, it is expected that this will be given due weight by the MusiQuE Board in its deliberations before introducing any changes to its standards and procedures. Ultimately, though, it is the MusiQuE Board that decides on such changes, always bearing in mind the need, emphasised above, for it to continue to command the confidence and support of its key stakeholders

## **6.2 MusiQuE standards and the European standards for internal quality Assurance**

Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) have been developed in 2005 and revised in 2015 by the key stakeholders in the field of quality assurance at European level: the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the European Students' Union (ESU), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and the European University Association (EUA). A major goal of these Standards and Guidelines is to contribute to the common understanding of quality assurance for learning and teaching across borders and among all stakeholders. One of the principles they are based on is the primary responsibility of higher education institutions for the quality of their provision and its assurance.

The first part of these standards (Part 1) aims to provide higher education institutions with standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance. When the first set of criteria for institutional review in higher music education was developed in 2007, Part 1 of these standards and guidelines were considered as a reference tool (in their 2005 version). More recently, the MusiQuE standards, which are meant to guide the institutions/programmes in their self-evaluation process and are used by the MusiQuE Review Team both for its fact-finding exercise and to build its report, have been mapped against Part 1 of these standards and guidelines (in their 2015 version). This way, institutions/programmes reviewed by MusiQuE are ensured that all European standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance (Part 1) are addressed in MusiQuE review procedures.

MusiQuE also aims to operate in full compliance with Part 2 and 3 of European standards and guidelines, respectively for external quality assurance and for quality assurance agencies.



## 7 The Review Procedure

### 7.1 Responsibilities of the parties in the review procedure

In a MusiQuE review procedure there are four parties, each with specific responsibilities for actions:

The *institution/programme* seeking a review or accreditation is responsible for:

- Co-operating with the MusiQuE staff and Board and the Review Team in planning and implementing the visit. In order to facilitate this co-operation, the Rector (or equivalent) should designate a contact person who will liaise with the Review Team through its secretary.
- Organising the self-evaluation process as presented in section 8.2.1 and providing the necessary documentation as described in section 8.2.2.
- Depending on the national regulations, suggesting candidates for the Review Team.
- Supplying the Review Team with all other information required for review.

The *MusiQuE staff* is responsible for:

- Administering the applications for review submitted to the MusiQuE Board so that the Board can assure itself that the overall timetable and workload of review activities is appropriate to the staffing and other resources available.
- Identifying members of the Review Team for the review procedure (from individuals on the peer-reviewers' register) and presenting them to the Board, ensuring that the reviewers selected form a well-balanced team qualified overall to participate in all aspects of the procedure.
- Where necessary, seeking the approval of the Board for a reviewer not yet on the Register whose special expertise is needed to complete the team.
- Co-operating with the institution/programme and the Review Team in planning and implementing the visit.
- Providing a secretary responsible for:
  - Liaising with the other members of the Review Team
  - Providing secretarial support to the reviewers: the secretary will be responsible for the communication with the institution before and after the review and for writing the first draft of the Review Team's report.
  - Ensuring that the Review Team's report adheres to the standards and remit of the review.

The *Review Team* (composed of the reviewers and the secretary) is responsible for:

- Performing the review of the institution/programme in accordance with the MusiQuE standards and procedures.
- Contributing to the report of the review at two stages of the process: first, by completing and/or suggesting adjustments to the draft report written by the secretary and, second, by providing any necessary expert input to adjustments following the response of the institution/programme to the report.
- Abiding by all other review protocols and procedures, including the clause on confidentiality.



In the review procedure, the *MusiQuE Board* is responsible for:

- Formally accepting the institution's request for the review (taking into account the human and other resources of MusiQuE)
- Assessing and approving the proposal provided by the MusiQuE staff for peer-reviewers to make up the team for the review
- Responding to any consultation from the MusiQuE staff on matters related to the review
- In the case of MusiQuE Quality Enhancement Review: reviewing the final reviewers' report to ensure its consistency with, and relevance to, the review standards. Following this, confirming in written to the institution that the institution/programme/joint programme has been reviewed by MusiQuE with reference to the MusiQuE standards and procedures
- In the case of accreditation procedures: considering the final report and checking if the justifications listed by the review team for each standard support the level of compliance with each standard; take the final formal decision on the accreditation of the institution/programme/joint programme based on the proposal of the Review Team. Confirming this in written to the institution.
- In the event of a review leading to a formal complaint or appeal from the institution, implementing the appropriate procedure
- Following up on any conditions agreed by the Review Team

The overall responsibilities of the MusiQuE Board were presented in detail under section 3.3.

## 8 Preparing a review

### 8.1 Request for a review

A higher music education institution wishing to be reviewed (whether on an institutional or a programme basis) should submit a request to the MusiQuE Board in writing, addressed to the Chair of the Board. This should be signed by the Rector or equivalent. The letter should be submitted by email to [info@musique-qe.eu](mailto:info@musique-qe.eu) a minimum of twenty weeks before the review visit is expected to take place. In addition, a paper copy may be sent by post.

The request should include:

- The type of review requested by the institution (programme or institutional).
- A motivation for requesting a review.
- The preferred period (month and year) for the visit of the review team.
- Any specific areas of expertise required for the review (this will enable MusiQuE to recruit the appropriate experts).
- Information about the institution (departments, study areas, degree structure and number of students) or about the programme (level of degree, study focus and number of students).

Where a joint programme review is being requested, either the letter itself should carry the signatures of the Rectors (or equivalent post-holders) of all institutions or it should be submitted by one Rector but with accompanying letters from heads of all the other institutions involved confirming that their request is unanimous.

Upon acceptance of the request, the MusiQuE staff will liaise with the institution on matters relating to planning, financial details and process.

### 8.2 Preparing material for a review

The material assembled in preparation for a MusiQuE review, whether of the institution or of specific educational programmes, should include the following:

- A self-evaluation report based on the standards for institutional, programme or joint programme review, as appropriate (see <http://www.musique-qe.eu/documents/musique-standards>). The report should be the product of a full institutional self-evaluation process.
- Supporting documentation providing evidence for the claims made in the self-evaluation report.

#### 8.2.1 The importance of self-evaluation

The self-evaluation process is an important element in most quality assurance and accreditation procedures. This process is the means by which an institution critically examines itself and/or its programmes, and it is expected that staff and students will be involved in full. A well-conducted self-evaluation process offers a major opportunity for significant quality enhancement of all aspects of the institution. Self-evaluation normally results in a report, which forms the basis for the review that is then conducted by the Review Team.

A self-evaluation process may be structured and implemented in a variety of ways. The following points may be helpful to institutions undertaking such a process:

Useful points in the self-evaluation process	
• Senior Management advocacy:	The success of the process is dependent on the wholehearted support of the self-evaluation process by the Senior Management. It should strongly encourage all levels of staff and the student body to be involved in the process.
• Preparation:	Thorough preparation is vital for success. All those involved need to know what is expected of them and clear and comprehensive guidelines should be drawn up.
• Briefing:	Heads of departments, student representatives and other key officers require thorough briefing. It is advisable that members of staff who are required to work towards the review (in the drafting of documents, etc.) be given advice and briefing information well in advance.
• Structure:	A self-evaluation process will normally involve all levels of the institution. The structure of the review should be decided well in advance, giving clarification of the context of the review and what might be achieved as a result.
• Issues:	As indicated below, the self-evaluation process will focus on a number of issues, many of which are fairly broad. It is important that the questions to be discussed in the various fora and groups in the course of the self-evaluation process are selected carefully for each forum or group, and that they are formulated with a high degree of accuracy.
• Working environment:	Discussing quality issues is difficult in itself, and it is particularly challenging to take a critical perspective on one's own work and institution. However, working for improvement and quality enhancement is an important aspect of being professional, indeed for artists and scholars. It is of great importance to create an atmosphere of confidence and openness around the process in order for all to feel secure when sharing their thoughts and ideas.
• Past, present and future:	Most institutions are proud of their history and traditions, which may be rooted in specific historic events and/or individuals' outstanding achievements. Quality enhancement should indeed find energy and impulses in the past. At the same time it should relate very concretely to the present situation – personnel, students, resources, facilities, etc. Above all, it should be aimed at the future, in the knowledge that it may take time to establish change.
• Documentation:	It is important to document all the various stages of an internal self-evaluation process thoroughly. Such documentation is used as evidence for the leadership to draw conclusions and initiate change if relevant.

Both internal self-evaluation and external review should be measured against the institution's stated mission, vision, objectives and priorities. The challenge of self-evaluation is to make clearly defined and well-supported statements about how these translate into the profile and operations of the institution, including its internal decision-making processes. These statements will help the Review Team to make its own assessments and

recommendations based on the evidence provided by the self-evaluation report and the review process itself.

### 8.2.2 The self-evaluation report in preparation for a review by MusiQuE

The self-evaluation report is the most important document in the external review procedures carried out by MusiQuE. Because these procedures are based on peer review by subject experts, the experience of the Review Team will enable it to derive a considerable amount of information from the way in which an institution presents itself in this document. Through the document, the institution conveys information about, and reflection on, itself and/or the programme(s). The report is used by Review Teams as not just the starting point but also a recurrent point of reference for their enquiries.

#### 8.2.2.1 The self-evaluation report

The self-evaluation report should:

- Be no longer than 30 pages (excluding supporting documents).
- Be written in English unless otherwise agreed by the MusiQuE staff.
- Be organised in accordance with the way in which the standards themselves are listed and numbered.
- Be analytical and reflective, and include, if possible for each standard, an assessment of the situation described and some thoughts about future directions envisioned.
- Include:
  - An introduction including a brief account on how the self-evaluation process was organised and how the report was produced.
  - An executive summary including some key facts and data about the institution.
  - A short chapter on the history of the institution.
  - A brief description of the national music educational structure or system and the place of the institution within the structure. This will provide important contextual information for the Review Team.
- Provide easily readable statistical overviews and supporting information in relation to students, staff, graduates, alumni, applicants etc.
- Be presented on behalf of and signed by the Rector(s) (or equivalent).
- Be sent electronically to the MusiQuE staff with a list of the proposed supporting documents, a minimum of eight weeks in advance of the Review Team's visit.
- Be sent both electronically and by post in hard copy to each member of the Review Team a minimum of five weeks before the Review Team's visit. The supportive material is provided on a memory stick, sent electronically to each member of the Review Team or uploaded on an online platform which can be accessed by all Review Team members.
- Be circulated to all members of staff and students who are to meet the Review Team.

The self-evaluation report should address each MusiQuE standard in turn, and should show appropriate balance between description, on the one hand, and evaluation of strengths and weaknesses on the other. Institutions should adopt an open and self-critical approach towards quality assurance.

In order to assist institutions with the structure of the report, an indicative template for the self-evaluation report (institutional, programme and joint programme review) is provided by MusiQuE (see <http://www.musique-ge.eu/documents/templates>). It is suggested that, for each standard, the report should include an analysis of challenges faced, how the institution has reflected on these and the changes that are envisioned to address them. Brief historical accounts of changes that have recently been implemented, and their effects, may also help to place future strategies for quality enhancement into context.

The ‘Questions to be considered when addressing this standard’ listed in the second column of the Standards document suggest areas to be covered in the answers, if relevant. These questions/indicators aim at facilitating the understanding of each standard and at illustrating the range of topics covered by that standard.

Finally, the self-evaluation report should be supported by documentary evidence (see next section).

#### 8.2.2.2 Supportive material/ evidence

The third column in each set of standards lists the ‘Supportive material/ evidence’. This column suggests the kind of existing documentation or materials that should be used to support the self-evaluation description and analysis written in relation to each standard. Three types of material are recommended:

- a) Statistical data (number of students, teachers, financial information, etc.);
- b) Documentation relating to curricula, artistic activities, facilities, biographies of teachers;
- c) Strategic and policy documents, which describe the institution’s/the programme’s (new) goals and methods applied to reach them, and/or provide an assessment of the institution’s/programme’s current work.

It is understood that institutions may not always have pre-existing comprehensive supporting documentation or materials and that these may still be in development. If this is the case, institutions are asked to give succinct answers to areas of enquiry and to provide details explaining the stage of development of the information.

Institutions are recommended to:

- Adhere closely to the list of ‘Supportive material/ evidence’ given in the standards and ensure that all the standards are supported by appropriate documents.
- Include any relevant statistical information (students, staff, graduates, alumni, applicants, facilities etc.) in an easily readable format.
- Include any documentation relevant to the national educational system, the institution and/or the programme.

- Contact the MusiQuE staff to discuss the language of these materials. It is normally agreed that larger documents (catalogues, comprehensive study plans, etc.) may be presented in the original language provided that comprehensive summaries are provided in English.
- Number the attachments and establish easily visible cross-references between the self-evaluation report and each of the attached documents. The self-evaluation report should list the supporting documents in full.
- Include, by special agreement with MusiQuE, a representative selection of students' work (recordings/coursework, etc.).

### **8.2.3 Confidentiality and publication**

The self-evaluation report will be treated by the MusiQuE staff and by all members of the Review Team as confidential (as stipulated in the code of conduct to which all Review Team members are asked to commit). All self-evaluation reports are kept in digital and printed format by the MusiQuE staff at their base of operation, currently co-located with the offices of AEC in Brussels, Belgium.

Institutions are, however, free to publish their own self-evaluation report on their website if they so wish.

### **8.2.4 Review Costs**

Review fees are determined on a case-by-case basis, starting from a number of standard unit costs, but adjusting these according to a number of factors:

- Gross national income (GNI) of the country where the institution is situated
- Scope of the review (size of the institution, amount of programmes to be reviewed)
- Number of reviewers involved in the Review Team
- Length of the review visit

The MusiQuE staff will construct an individualised fee quotation for the proposed review, taking into account the factors mentioned above, and send it to the institution.

## **9 The Review Team**

### **9.1 Composition of Review Teams**

For each Review, the MusiQuE staff and the institution agree on the areas of expertise needed according to the specificities of the institution/programme (for example: expertise in jazz, expertise in early music, etc.) and on the number of reviewers needing to be appointed to conduct the review appropriately.

#### **9.1.1 Number of reviewers on the Review Team**

Normally, there will be a minimum of 4 members in a Review Team, including the Chair and the student member. However, the number of members may vary depending on the size and range of the institution and on the scope of the review (programme, multiple programmes, institutional, etc.).

#### **9.1.2 Areas of expertise needed in the Review Team**

A review/accreditation team should have sufficient expertise, experience and overall balance to cover all aspects of the review and/or accreditation task. Such expertise will normally include institutional management and governance, artistic and academic management and artistic and professional experience, each at an appropriate level. Knowledge of the country-specific system of higher music education and of the legislation applicable in that country will be addressed where possible and as appropriate.

#### **9.1.3 International dimension**

Normally, all reviewers, with the exception of the student, will be, or have been, professionally active principally outside the country in which the institution is located although, as indicated above, some familiarity with the national system of that country among the Review Team is desirable.

Except in rare cases, the language of the review will be English. Reviewers should normally therefore have a good basic proficiency in reading, understanding, speaking and, preferably, writing in English. Key documents provided by the institution or, at least, crucial sections of longer documents should be available in English and, where necessary, should be translated to a professional standard.

At the same time, it is essential that institutional representatives have the opportunity to express themselves in the language of the country where the review is being conducted. It is therefore recommended that the Review Team include at least one member who is able to understand/speak the language in question. In cases where it is felt necessary, the institution will be asked to hire a translator.

For further discussion of language arrangements, see 10.5.1.

#### **9.1.4 Appointment procedures**

##### **9.1.4.1 Appointment of peer reviewers**

When composing suitable review teams, MusiQuE staff will always begin by selecting peers already listed on the Register who have appropriate expertise. Depending on the national regulations, institutions/programmes may also suggest candidates for the review team and participate in the discussion on the Review Team's composition. Whenever appropriate (e.g. for Quality Enhancement Reviews), a team may also

include a novice/freshman/newcomer in order to allow for an element of training/learning-by-doing to take place. Under such circumstances, care will be taken to ensure that there is a correspondingly high level of experience elsewhere in the team.

The proposed composition of a Review Team will take into account a wide range of factors: the number of peers needed, the areas of expertise identified by the institution, the profiles of the peers (level of experience in reviewing institutions, languages spoken, etc.) as well as gender balance. More emphasis will be put on the collective level of competence and experience of the team than on individual competences and experiences.

The proposal submitted to the MusiQuE Board should include at least three names for each type of expertise identified, in order to ensure that other reviewers can be contacted quickly if the preferred one is unavailable. It will also indicate clearly the individuals thought suitable to take on the role of chair. The order in which the reviewers should be contacted may either be proposed by the MusiQuE staff or left to the discretion of the Board.

The Board members agree on the final proposed composition of the Review Team either during their regular meetings or by email, depending on the timeframe of the review procedure. In the case of email processes, Board members are asked to send their comments within one week. In the event of contradictory views, the Chair of the Board is asked to make the final decision.

#### **9.1.4.2 Appointment of students**

Students are recruited, whenever possible, from the country in which the reviewed institution is situated, in order to facilitate their understanding of the higher education system being considered.

The MusiQuE staff will usually contact representatives of other higher music education institutions in the country, asking them to recommend students. The MusiQuE staff will be provided with the CV of one or more students, either via direct contact or through the person(s) recommending the student(s).

Students should:

- Be proficient in English (minimum C1 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages<sup>12</sup>) or in another language in the rare cases where the language of the procedure will be other than English
- Be enrolled on a programme at least at the level of studies being considered during the review (e.g. the student recruited for a review concerning Bachelor programmes will be enrolled on a Bachelor, Master's or Doctoral programme)
- Ideally, be involved in the student association/union/other equivalent body in their institution and, as a result, be experienced in representing other students in decision-making processes
- Be critical, solution-oriented and open-minded to various perspectives and methods

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<sup>12</sup> See [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/CADRE1\\_EN.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/CADRE1_EN.asp).



- If possible, have had experience abroad (project, course, ERASMUS year, etc.) during their studies

The MusiQuE staff may contact students by phone to explore if these elements are met. The students' CV(s) is/are then submitted to the MusiQuE Board for approval. The order in which the students will be contacted (if relevant) might be proposed by the MusiQuE staff or left to the decision of the Board.

### **9.1.5 Procedures to prevent conflicts of interest**

A conflict of interest may arise from past, current or planned association between an expert and members of the institution. It is the responsibility of all parties (MusiQuE, the reviewers and the institution) to make an immediate disclosure should they become aware of a potential conflict of interest.

#### **9.1.5.1 Questionnaire to peers invited to join Review Teams**

Once the proposed composition of the Review team has been agreed upon by the MusiQuE Board, the MusiQuE staff will then contact reviewers to invite them to participate in the review. This invitation will include a short questionnaire on conflict of interest which reviewers are asked to fill in and sign. This questionnaire comprises the following questions:

- Are you related to, or in conflict with, staff members of the institution to be reviewed?
- Have you ever been employed at the institution to be reviewed?
- Are you in negotiations to obtain future employment at the institution to be reviewed?
- Are you involved in any formalised joint cooperation with the institution to be reviewed?
- Do you have any other issues which could potentially create conflicts of interest?

In cases of doubt, where a connection of some sort is acknowledged but is either slight or well in the past, the MusiQuE Board will be consulted as to whether it disqualifies the individual.

At this invitation stage, prospective reviewers will also be asked to agree with the code of conduct (see below).

#### **9.1.5.2 Consultation of the institution**

Once the proposal for Review Team is complete and approved by the MusiQuE Board, it is sent to the institution by the MusiQuE staff for information. The institution is asked to point out any potential conflict of interest from its own perspective and can ask that a reviewer be taken out of the list, if duly justified. In cases when the institution has been involved in the discussions on the Review Team's composition (depending on the national regulations), such a consultation is not applicable.

### **9.1.6 Inviting potential members of the Review Team**

The MusiQuE staff then proceeds to inviting by email the various Review Team members in the order approved by the MusiQuE Board. The invitation message presents the visit and its context, and the invitation includes:

- A briefing paper mentioning the dates of the site-visit, the type of review to be conducted, the working language, the planned composition of the Review Team, an overview of the responsibilities of the Review Team members, a summarised timeframe for the review procedure, information on expenses and honorarium, as well as links to the MusiQuE standards and procedures
- The letter from the institution requesting a review, which explains the reasons and context of the review
- The Guidelines and Code of Conduct of MusiQuE reviewers (see 9.2)
- The questionnaire to peers invited to join Review Teams, designed to point out any conflict of interest (see 9.1.5.1)

Depending on the availability of reviewers and on their answers to the questionnaire, the MusiQuE staff confirms their participation to the Review Team and starts arranging the Review Team members' travels. Once the Team is complete, the schedule designed by the institution following the MusiQuE template (see <http://www.musique-qe.eu/documents/templates>) is shared with the reviewers for comments. Closer to the site-visit, the Review Team receives the documentation from the institution, practical information, as well as meeting sheets to be used to prepare each meeting.

## **9.2 Roles, responsibilities and code of conduct**

### **9.2.1 Roles and responsibilities of Review Team members**

The duties of review and accreditation teams include the assessment of documentation provided by institutions, the undertaking of a visit to the institution and the production of a review report. The Team is composed of the Chair, the peers, the student and the secretary, whose respective responsibilities are outlined below.

#### **9.2.1.1 The Chair is responsible for:**

- a) discussing with the Review Team members and agreeing the areas of enquiry (themes to be covered) for each meeting with the various institutional representatives
- b) determining the running order of each meeting (the sequence in which Review Team members will pose their questions)
- c) within meetings with institutional representatives:
  - a. making introductions
  - b. taking responsibility for the first section of each meeting - outlining areas of enquiry, etc.
  - c. directing the order of proceedings
  - d. running to time
  - e. within time constraints, ensuring that all peers are able to pursue their areas of enquiry in full and that, where appropriate, they are enabled to provide input into other areas
  - f. concluding each meeting in a positive manner, having first given the institutional representatives time to add any other relevant information and comments.
- d) in the concluding summarising meeting, outlining the elements of good practice, recommendations and other important points arising from the review

- e) answering the feedback questionnaire after the review and notifying the MusiQuE staff of any problem in relation to the peers' attitudes

**9.2.1.2 Other reviewers (peers and student) are responsible for:**

- a) preparing adequately for the review (being familiar with the key documents from the institution and those from MusiQuE)
- b) during the site visit:
  - a. referring to documents or previous discussions as appropriate
  - b. ensuring that they observe the order of proceedings as agreed with, and directed by, the Chair
  - c. ensuring that their questions are focused on the pre-agreed areas of enquiry (themes to be covered) unless otherwise invited by the Chair
- c) contributing to the final reviewers' report by assisting the Secretary to summarise the key outcomes of each meeting during the review, and by giving input on the first draft report after the review

**9.2.1.3 The Secretary is responsible for:**

- a) the coordination of review preparations (team, material, schedule)
- b) communicating with the institution and with the peers, before and after the review
- c) conducting a briefing session for the peers during the first gathering of the Review Team
- d) during the site-visit meetings
  - a. writing minutes of each meeting,
  - b. actively assisting the peers during Review Team meetings by providing overviews of issues discussed and of areas of enquiry still to be covered
  - c. ensuring that the peers comment on all areas of enquiry in order to collect sufficient material for report writing
  - d. coordinating the logistics in cooperation with the institution's representatives
  - e. preparing the final meeting in collaboration with the Chair and team members using tools provided
- e) writing the first draft of the experts report, based on the peers' comments

**9.2.2 Code of conduct for Review Team members**

At the time of first contacting potential Review team members, all those responding positively are asked to confirm that they subscribe to the Code of Conduct for Review Team members. This states that all Review Team members should:

- a) be free of conflicts of interest (confirmed in greater detail via a questionnaire)
- b) handle all data with the outmost confidentiality
- c) ensure that a fruitful dialogue takes place during the site visit
- d) avoid referring to their own (institutional) experience, as well as giving informal advice and feedback, unless by permission of the Chair
- e) respect the local culture of the institution
- f) avoid voicing any directly comparative value judgment during the meetings (be it negative or positive)
- g) avoid interruptions of colleagues or institutional participants, leaving time for the latter to have their say
- h) consider the internal objectives and strategies of the institution in addition to the QA/accreditation standard (rather than the QA/accreditation standards only)

- i) consider the relationship between all aspects examined (such as facilities, teaching, research)
- j) reference the evidence they provide in careful and specific terms (e.g. by mentioning “students met by the Committee” instead of just “students”).

## **10 The review visit**

### **10.1 Status of the visit**

At an early stage, institutions will have decided to apply for one of the services offered by MusiQuE. They should therefore be familiar with, and accepting of, the standards and procedures that are applicable to that specific service.

Reviewers will carry out reviews in accordance with the relevant standards and procedures, and will explore the compliance of the institution/programme/joint programme with each standard. The work of the Review Team should be seen as a peer-led quality enhancement process; MusiQuE Teams will focus on providing advice and suggestions to the institution for its improvement and further development, even where this is done within a framework of formal recommendations concerning accreditation.

### **10.2 Aim and focus**

The main aim of the visit is for the Review Team to collect evidence and information on the various areas of enquiry and criteria in order to complete and, where appropriate, to verify the picture of the institution/programme as described in the self-evaluation report and in the supporting materials. Thus, the external perspective brought in by the Review Team, and informed by its expertise and international experience, takes as its point of departure the internal perspective as expressed in the self-evaluation report.

More specifically, the visit will give the Review Team a unique opportunity to gain an understanding of the specificities of the institution/programme as these are experienced ‘on the ground’, and of the extent to which there is consistency between these and the way in which the institution presents itself. In addition, the Review Team will be able to explore whether, how and with what results the institution’s strategic policies and procedures for quality enhancement are implemented throughout the institution – and, indeed, have the desired impact. Both of these foci are equally important. All the scheduled encounters should aim at exploring issues that, in one way or another, have a direct bearing on them.

### **10.3 Duration**

The visit will normally last at least 1.5 days for a programme review and at least 2.5 days for an institutional review (subject to variation depending on the circumstances).

### **10.4 Briefing sessions during reviews**

A briefing session takes place at the beginning of the very first Review Team meeting. It is the responsibility of the secretary to explain the background of the procedure (mission and vision of MusiQuE, aims of the MusiQuE reviews), the expectations of the institution, as well as the role of peer-reviewers. The secretary will take the Review Team members through the review procedure and standards being applied, remind them of the Code of Conduct and deal with any questions they may have. At the end of the session he/she will ask all reviewers to confirm that they have a full understanding of the procedure about to be embarked upon and of their role within it.

### **10.5 Programme and itinerary**

Elements to be included in the programme of a review visit are listed below:

**Compulsory items:**

- Meeting with the head of institution and institutional/departmental/programme leaders
- Meeting with the Chair and/or a member of the relevant Board/Council (e.g. Academic Council, Conservatory Council)
- Meeting with artistic and academic members of staff (professors and teachers)
- Meeting with senior administrative officers (responsible for quality assurance and enhancement, the international office, financial services, the alumni office, the planning unit, co-ordination of artistic and research activities, public relations, etc.)
- Meeting with students representing all study cycles and different levels and subjects (including, where relevant, a representative of the student union/council)
- Meeting with former students
- Meeting with representatives of the profession (employers, organisation representatives, etc.) from the region
- Review of facilities (studios, concert venues, practice facilities, libraries, etc.)
- Review of assessed student works such as concert recordings, compositions and final papers to consider the standard and modes of assessment and the learning achievements of students
- Attendance at concerts or other public presentations of students' work and/or visits to classes delivered at the time of the review
- Plenary meetings of the Review Team (including one for the preparation of the report).
- Feedback by the Review Team to the institution/programme at the end of the visit. It is recommended that this session be open to any student, staff member or person linked with the institution, who wishes to attend.

**Recommended items:**

- Attendance at performance examinations including the follow-up discussion by the examination committees.

The institution may combine the personnel of meetings for the sake of efficiency –for instance, representatives of the profession and former students, or students and former students.

Conflicts of interest should be avoided so, for example, members of staff should not be met by the Review Team together with current students; members of the leadership team should not be met together with representatives of the profession, etc.

A template has been designed for the typical programme of a MusiQuE review visit (see <http://www.musique-qe.eu/documents/templates>).

The final programme and itinerary should be negotiated and agreed between the Review Team, through its secretary, and the institution. The proposed programme will be sent to the Review Team through its secretary and any further adjustments will be agreed with the institution if needed. Other than small adjustments to take account of unavoidable changes in availability, the schedule should be fixed a minimum of four weeks before the date of commencement of the visit.

Once the programme and itinerary have been agreed, the institution will be asked to confirm the names and functions of all the personnel that the Review Team will meet.

The Review Team will not be able to examine every aspect of the institution. The itinerary should therefore be designed to give the Review Team as full a picture as possible of the institution and/or the specific programme(s). Special emphasis should be given to strategies and measures adopted to enhance the quality and relevance of the study programme(s).

#### **10.5.1 Meetings**

- **Length of the meetings:** Most meetings should last between 60 and 90 minutes. Initial and final meetings with the leadership may be extended. Visits to classes will normally not last longer than 30 minutes. Adjustments will be made to the length of the session in cases where translation is provided.
- **Scope of meetings:** The meetings will be chaired by a designated member of the Review Team. After introductions, the Chair will inform the participating staff and/or students of the main areas of enquiry for that meeting.
- **Participants in meetings:** The institution should select participants who are able to speak and discuss with authority on the areas of enquiry relevant to the meeting. The number of participants in each meeting should normally be between 5 – 12 persons for a 90 minute meeting. Representatives of the management should only be present in those meetings indicated for that purpose on the schedule.
- **Language:** Except in rare cases, the language of the review will be English. Key documents provided by the institution or, at least, crucial sections of longer documents should be available in English and, where necessary, should be translated to a professional standard.

Meetings during the review visit will normally be conducted in English. However, it is essential that institutional representatives have the opportunity to express themselves accurately and with confidence during the review visit, and this will often mean doing so in the language of the country where the review is being conducted. If the experts are not conversant with this national language, appropriate translation arrangements should be decided in advance.

Institutions expecting much of the discussion during the review visit to be conducted other than in English will normally be asked to hire a professional interpreter – acquainted with the music field – in order to provide experts who are unfamiliar with the language with the best possible real-time translation of what is being said.

In some special cases (where there is cooperation with national agencies, etc.) another language than English may be agreed upon for the whole procedure (preparation and coordination, self-evaluation report, site-visit and final report).

- **Reflection/discussion time for the Review Team:** The Review Team will hold several meetings on its own. It will commence with a two-hour initial preparatory session and there will normally be a summary meeting towards the end of the review during which the Review Team will prepare initial feedback to the institution along with the final report.

The itinerary should permit the Review Team to meet on its own between meetings. It might allow 15 to 30 minutes for this purpose or it might leave a more extended period of time after every two meetings. The Review Team might also reserve lunch breaks for further meetings of this nature. There will be a summary meeting of the Review Team at the end of each day.



- **Parallel meetings:** It is possible – by agreement between the Team and the institution – to run parallel meetings of sub-groups from the team with different groups of representatives of the Institution.
- **Flexibility of the schedule:** The institution is encouraged to leave one to three hours free at some point in the programme so that members of the team may explore more thoroughly specific areas, meet other representatives or visit the facilities (being guided, for example, by students).
- **Informal meetings/encounters:** The team should have the opportunity to meet informally (perhaps at dinner or lunch) with the leadership and other key members of the institution. Such encounters will underline the important concept of peer review rather than inspection. The team may also engage with students informally if, for instance, they act as guides to classes, facilities and events.
- **Concerts, recitals and visits to classes:** The institution is invited to provide the reviewers with a schedule of all the activities taking place in the institution during the timeframe in which a visit to classes is planned, such as concerts, recitals, master-classes, lessons, etc. On the basis of this schedule, reviewers will then chose the classes they wish to visit (individually or in groups, by themselves or led by students) in order to gain a fuller picture and understanding of the provision. Institutions are requested to inform all staff members about the potential visit of the reviewers.
- **Performance examinations:** If the review visit takes place during a practical examination period, the institution may provide the Review Team with the opportunity both to attend the performance part of the examination and to observe the deliberation of the jury that follows.
- **Final feedback meeting:** at this meeting, the Chair of the Review Team will present the preliminary findings of the Team and clarify the further steps of the review procedure. At this moment, the Review Team would not expect to enter in an in-depth discussion with the representatives of the institution/programme about the preliminary findings. The institution/programme is encouraged to share the findings with all interested individuals, either by inviting a wide audience to attend this final feedback meeting or through other channels.

Schedules should be drawn up in a way that minimises the risk of delay and disruption.

## 10.6 Practical issues

It is important that the Review Team be offered appropriate working conditions while working on the site.

The Review Team will need:

- A separate room for the duration of the review set up for individual work as well as for group meetings. This room should be big enough to accommodate all meetings. The Secretary should be given a copy of the room key in order to ensure that the Team's belongings are safe while the Team is away
- Appropriate refreshments (water, tea, coffee, fruit, cookies, drinks) available in the room at all times.
- Name-cards with the names of all Review Team members and of all the institution's participants.



- A computer with internet access (wireless if possible) and a printer.
- Lunches - either at a nearby restaurant (with the assurance that the lunch will be served fast) or through on-site catering in the Review Team's room. The Review Team may wish to meet on its own during lunch periods.
- A list of all classes/activities available to visit. It is recommended that each reviewer is guided in the building, perhaps by students.

## **11 Report and Outcomes**

### **11.1 Review report**

The Review Team will draft a report, normally in English, within ten weeks of the site visit. This report will be based on all the information received by the team through the institution's own self-evaluation document and supporting materials (see 8.2.2) and on insights gained during the site visit.

#### **11.1.1 Structure and creation process of the draft report**

The first version of the draft report is prepared by the Secretary, building on written contributions made by the other Review Team members. The report is structured as follows:

- Table of Contents
- Introduction (information on the context of the review, data on the institution/programme and composition of the Review Team)
- Analysis of how each standard is met:
  - o Description of the situation in the institution, based on elements from the self-evaluation report and precisely quoted (for example, “[self-evaluation report, p. 16]”) and on findings from the site-visit duly referenced (for example, “Students met indicated that” or “[meeting with administrative staff]”)
  - o Statement assessing the compliance of the institution/programme/joint programme with these standards
  - o Comments and suggestions for improvement
- A summary, in table format, of the compliance with standards
- A summary of recommendations and conditions, if appropriate
- In the case of an accreditation procedure, a proposal to the MusiQuE Board concerning the accreditation of the institution/programme/joint programme

The report may also address other issues which the Review Team finds relevant to the aims of the review exercise.

Within six weeks after the site visit, the Secretary will send the draft version of the report to the other members of the Review Team, who will be given two weeks to send their feedback. The revision process of the draft version is organised internally by each Review Team (for example, some Chairs will prefer to review the draft report first before forwarding it to the other Team members, others will prefer that feedback is collected by the secretary from all Review Team members first).

Once all Review Team members agree on the draft version, it is sent to the MusiQuE staff (unless the secretary was a member of the MusiQuE staff, in which case it is deemed to have been already received). In case of disagreement amongst Review Team members about any element of the report, the Chair will attempt to resolve the matter by correspondence but ultimately is empowered to make the final decision, wherever possible following the view of the majority of the panel.

#### **11.1.2 Statement on the institution's/programme's compliance with the standards**

For each standard, compliance needs to be assessed by the Review Team as follows:

- Fully compliant (the institution/programme meets the standard in all respects)

- Partially or substantially compliant (the institution/programme meets the standard in most, or some, respects). In such cases, one would expect a recommendation as to how full compliance might be achieved in future
- Not compliant (the institution/programme fails to meet the standard in all, or almost all, respects): In such cases, one would expect a condition (or strong recommendation in the case of a Quality Enhancement Review) to be imposed.

The verdict on compliance should be duly justified.

#### **11.1.3 Proposal on the accreditation of the institution/programme/joint programme**

In the case of an accreditation procedure, the Review Team is asked to conclude its report with a proposal to the MusiQuE Board concerning the accreditation of the institution/programme/joint programme that has been reviewed. The proposal should be expressed as follows:

“Based on the institution’s/programme’s/joint programme’s compliance with MusiQuE standards, it is proposed that the institution/the (joint) programme be accredited/ be accredited with conditions/should not be accredited”

In each of the above cases there may be additional recommendations attached to the proposal.

#### **11.1.4 Institution’s response to the report**

The draft report is normally sent by the MusiQuE staff to the institution by email (pdf version) within ten weeks of the visit. The institution is invited to comment on the factual accuracy of the report within four weeks from the date of the email. A written response should be addressed to the Review Team and sent by email to the MusiQuE staff indicating the institution’s general reaction to the report and, where applicable, a list of factual points for which correction is requested.

In the case of an accreditation procedure, the concluding part of the report, with its proposal to the MusiQuE Board concerning the accreditation of the institution/programme/joint programme, will be omitted at this stage of the process.

#### **11.1.5 Final report**

The Review Team will consider any comments submitted by the institution and adjust the report to ensure factual accuracy and, where this changes such matters, consistency between the corrected factual information and the conclusions drawn. The revised report will be sent by the MusiQuE staff to the institution by email within four weeks of receipt of the institution’s comments.

The normal expectation is that there will not be further revision of the report at this stage. Exceptionally, if an institution can justify a claim that its factual corrections have not been properly addressed in the first revision, a further iteration may be agreed to, at the discretion of the Review Team chair.

The revised report, which is now regarded as final, is sent to the MusiQuE Board by the MusiQuE staff. In the case of an accreditation procedure, this is the point where the concluding part of the report, with its proposal to the MusiQuE Board concerning the accreditation of the institution/programme/joint programme, is added.

## **11.2 Review outcomes and consequences**

The final report is considered by the MusiQuE Board at its following meeting or through email exchange if the following meeting will take place more than three months after the final report is ready. The Board can request access to all the self-evaluation documents.

### **11.2.1 Outcomes of a MusiQuE Quality Enhancement Review**

In the case of a Quality Enhancement Review, the result of the procedure is the final report itself, which includes the list of standards met, substantially met and not met, highlights the institution's/programme's strong points, and provides advice and suggestions/recommendations for change.

The institution will receive a letter from the MusiQuE Board stating that the institution/programme/joint programme has been reviewed by MusiQuE with reference to the MusiQuE standards and procedures and referring to the summary of compliance with standards. The letter will also inform the institution about the possibility of a follow-up process, involving the filling in of a follow-up template within 6-12 months after the delivery of the final report (see section 13).

### **11.2.2 Outcomes of a MusiQuE accreditation procedure**

In the case of an accreditation procedure, in addition to the report and advice, the result will include a decision on the accreditation of the institution/programme/joint programme, with the following possibilities:

- Accreditation
- Conditional accreditation
- Not accredited (in cases where there is non-compliance with a significant proportion, usually defined as six or more, of the 17 standards or, exceptionally, when non-compliance is less substantial than this, but the extent and seriousness of the conditions needing to be met is such that the Review Team deems it unrealistic for them to be fulfilled within the maximum period allowable – see below).

In all these cases, additional recommendations may be developed by the Review Team in order to assist the institution with its further improvement.

Where the decision is to grant accreditation, this will be for a period of 6 years unless national legislation sets a different interval.

Where conditions are attached to accreditation, the institution will be given a period of 12 months to show that the conditions have been fulfilled (with adjustments to national contexts if the requirements are different) by filling in the follow-up template (see 13.1). In exceptional, well justified cases, this period can be shortened or extended (to a maximum period of two years).

If, by the expiry of the maximum period allowed, an institution that has been given conditional accreditation fails to show that the conditions have been fulfilled, the MusiQuE Board will make an evaluation of progress achieved and, on that basis, take one of the following three actions:

- authorise a further extension to allow the fulfilment of any remaining conditions
- call for a team of 2 people from the initial review team to visit the institution a second time, at the cost of the institution, to determine 'on the ground' whether the condition has, in practice, been fulfilled or is close to fulfilment

- in extreme cases, withdraw the conditional accreditation. If this should be the Board's decision, the institution has available to it the same courses of action to redeem matters as an institution not granted accreditation at the original decision (see below).

Where the decision is not to grant accreditation, clear reasons should be given. An institution is free to re-apply for accreditation after a period of one year. In such a case, a new self-evaluation document is required (but may be largely focussed upon how the institution has addressed the previous reasons for withholding accreditation) and a new Team will be assembled.

## **11.3 Decision-making process**

### **11.3.1 MusiQuE quality enhancement reviews**

Before authorising the communication of the report to the institution, the MusiQuE Board reviews the report for overall consistency with, and relevance to, the review standards and, provided it is satisfied on these counts, endorses the report. It is the responsibility of the Board to investigate with the Review Team where concerns of consistency arise.

In case of differences between the positions of Board members and of the Review Team, the Review Team Chair (or another member of the Review Team if the Chair is unavailable) will be invited to express the opinion of the Review Team by means such as a Skype session where open questions will be discussed.

As the Board members will need to feel fully informed about the situation, the Board may therefore decide to go back to the Review Team and/or MusiQuE staff to request more information, either immediately by email or by the following Board meeting.

### **11.3.2 MusiQuE accreditation procedures**

The MusiQuE Board will consider each final report written in the framework of accreditation procedures and will take the final formal decision on the accreditation of the institution/programme/joint programme based on the proposal of the Review Team (see 11.1.3).

The Board will check if the justifications listed by the review team for each standard support the level of compliance with each standard.

In case of differences between the positions of Board members and of the Review Team, the Review Team Chair (or a member of the Review Team if the Chair is unavailable) will be invited to express the opinion of the Review Team.

If they are to make a decision differing from the recommendation of the Review Team, the Board members will need to feel fully informed about the situation. The Board may therefore decide to go back to the Review Team and/or MusiQuE staff to request more information, either immediately by email or by the following Board meeting.

Where the Board is in agreement with the Review Team's recommendation, the decision on accreditation is made by simple majority. Where the Board feels it necessary to modify the Team's recommendation, it is normally necessary for its decision to be unanimous.

## **11.4 Publication of results**

In line with the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), all reports have to be published in full.

An electronic copy of the whole report is uploaded to the MusiQuE website (page [Completed Reviews](#)) at the end of the procedure (i.e. for Quality Enhancement reviews: when the final report is sent to the institution; for accreditation procedures, when the entire process, including possible monitoring actions in relation to conditions identified by the Review Team, is completed).

The institution is entitled to use the summary of the report's findings, or extracts from it, in any responsible way that it sees fit – as part of the evidence base for formal quality assurance procedures or, where relevant, in its own institutional publicity.

## 12 Complaints and appeals

As a responsible organisation in the domain of quality enhancement, MusiQuE has procedures for dealing with both complaints and appeals. In this context, the following definitions apply:

- **Complaints** arise when aspects of the process that has been implemented are felt by the institution to be at variance either with MusiQuE's own description of its procedures or with the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), to which MusiQuE subscribes. A complaint may concern the conduct of a member of the Review Team, actions of the MusiQuE staff or decisions or communications emanating from the MusiQuE Board. Complaints should not be applied in cases where the real cause of concern is the verdict of a review, except where it is the sincere belief of the institution that an inappropriate verdict has arisen as a direct result of a departure from MusiQuE's own procedures or from the ESG.
- **Appeals** arise where an institution believes that an unfair or inappropriate verdict has been arrived at and has exhausted all other means of obtaining what it sees as a just outcome. Since there is provision in MusiQuE's procedures for institutions to correct factual errors in review reports, issues of factual accuracy should not arise at the stage that an appeal is being contemplated. The various provisions for reviewing the judgements of Review Teams should mean that an appeal represents an action of last resort; nevertheless, it is an important safeguard for institutions that, in the event of their having sincere and profound concerns about the verdicts applied to them, there exists an independent channel through which they can have those verdicts scrutinised and, if appropriate, modified.

### 12.1 Complaints

Where an institution feels that aspects of the service it has received are not all that they should be, it is encouraged to make this known as part of its feedback on the process. Such feedback helps MusiQuE to apply principles of continuous quality enhancement to its own activities.

Under certain circumstances, an institution may feel that what has arisen is too serious simply to be commented on in general feedback. In particular, this might concern major failures to conform to MusiQuE's own regulations and guidelines for its procedures or significant departures from the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) to which MusiQuE subscribes. A failure may itself be procedural or may relate to the conduct of one or more individuals involved in the process: from among the Review Team, the MusiQuE staff or the MusiQuE Board. In such circumstances, an official complaint should be made.

A complaint will only be considered as official if it is credible and substantiated by appropriate evidence, references, examples, etc. MusiQuE will only consider complaints that are related to its substantial compliance with its own regulation and guidelines and/or those of the ESG or to the conduct of one or more individuals involved in the process (in particular, actions deemed to be seriously in breach of the Code of Conduct signed up to by all Review team members).

Complaints should be submitted to the MusiQuE staff, in writing by email or regular mail. Any documents should be attached in plain text or PDF format.

The complaint will normally be considered by the MusiQuE Board. The only exception to this is in the case of a complaint relating to the Board itself (see below). The MusiQuE Board

reserves the right to ignore submissions that are bogus or obviously unsubstantiated. The Board will decide if and what action to take, as appropriate and in line with MusiQuE's procedures and regulations and/or those of the ESG. Except in the case of anonymous complaints, the Board will inform the complainant of its decision and any action taken after the complaint has been considered.

In the event that the complaint should relate directly to the Board or any of its members, the matter will be referred in the first instance to the standing member of the Appeals Committee (see below). This person will decide whether they can act upon the matter unaided or whether they require the support and assistance of other individuals. If the latter, they will make their own selection of up to two further persons. These may be contacted directly or, if preferred, contact can be made via the MusiQuE staff. Having considered the matter, the standing member of the Appeals Committee will report his/her conclusions to the MusiQuE Board. As well as undertaking any action that may be called for, the Board will faithfully communicate to the complainant the outcome of the complaint.

## **12.2 Appeals**

The provision of appropriate opportunities for appeal is an important feature of any quality assurance procedure. It acknowledges that a system of peer review is strengthened when the judgement of one particular group of peers is not necessarily to be regarded as absolute and final in all circumstances. At the same time, in a system where panels are carefully selected from a wide range of experts and where institutions have the right to comment on the initial selection if they feel it appropriate, the normal presumption of all those participating in the process should be that the considered view of the panel will be accepted, even if it contains critical elements. The freedom to voice honest criticism without fear of repercussions is as important as the right to challenge criticism when it is sincerely felt to be unjustified.

MusiQuE's procedures seek to establish a balance between the considerations outlined above in such a way that both the institution being reviewed and the experts carrying out the review feel adequately supported. The following sections describe first the routine opportunities within the process for correcting factual errors and then the more exceptional paths of action open to an institution that feels it has genuine cause to contest the final verdict of a review.

### **12.2.1 Correction of factual errors in a report**

In all MusiQuE review procedures, institutions are provided with the first draft of the Review Team's report in order to enable them to point out any factual elements that may be erroneous. With large quantities of data to absorb, and without an intimate and long-standing familiarity with the institution they are reviewing, there is always the possibility that occasional errors occur into reviewers' reports. Normally, these will not be so significant as to materially affect the opinions being put forward, but it is still important for them to be corrected. Institutions that find factual errors are encouraged to correct them, providing evidence for the correction where appropriate. On the basis of any such corrections, the draft report will be amended. This process has already been described in greater detail in 11.1.5.

Once the draft reviewers' report is adjusted and finalized, it goes to the MusiQuE Board and, once it has been discussed and agreed by the Board, is formally submitted to the institution. At this point, the opportunities for appeal that are built into the process depend upon the nature of the procedure: quality enhancement or accreditation.



### **12.2.2 In the case of a Quality Enhancement Review**

There is no formal appeals procedure in the case of a Quality Enhancement Review as there is no formal approval decision made in the context of such a procedure. The Review Team simply notes examples of good practice and offers suggestions for the institution to consider which it believes might lead to an enhancement of quality. It is to be hoped that the institution will at least engage with these suggestions in internal forums but if, ultimately, it chooses to disregard them, it is under no further obligation in relation to the procedure.

The feedback questionnaire (see Section 14) provides the institution with an opportunity to comment on the recommendations formulated by the Review Team. If the consensus within the institution is that the comments and suggestions of the Review Team have been largely irrelevant or unhelpful, this feedback is of direct benefit to the MusiQuE Board in terms of future adjustments it might wish to make to its procedures and/or its choice of peer-reviewers. However, it will not result in matters being referred back directly to the Review Team.

### **12.2.3 In the case of an accreditation procedure**

With formal accreditation procedures, the appeals process itself necessarily becomes more formal and fully-developed. The Review Team's report, once confirmed by the MusiQuE Board and delivered to the institution, contains a concrete quality judgement in terms of each of the 17 standards of the relevant MusiQuE procedure being met or not. The consequences of this judgement are potentially far-reaching for the institution and it is important for there to be a reasonable right of reply to judgements which the institution genuinely believes to be ill-founded.

An institution should only resort to an appeal where/when it believes that it has been incorrectly given the result: "Accredited with conditions" or "Not accredited". In either case, the Review team will have decided that a significant proportion of the standards have not been met and it is towards these judgements on standards, and any conditions arising from them, that the appeal should be directed. The appeal should be constructed on the basis of solid argumentation and should identify the specific sections in the final report where the institution believes the Review Team to have been in error when forming its judgement. Success in an appeal requires a convincing case to be established, based wherever possible on corroborating evidence. Self-justifications made without substantiation cannot be accepted into the appeals process. Once completed, the appeal needs to be sent to the MusiQuE Board by the institution. The procedure for this is described in 12.2.3.3.

Since the MusiQuE Board will have endorsed the judgement of the Review Team before authorising the final report to be sent to the institution, it is important that the appeal is handled by someone independent from the earlier stages of the process and therefore able to be impartial. As a result, MusiQuE uses a small Appeals Committee, formed of one standing member and one individual appointed in response to each specific appeal, enabling this second person to be chosen for their specialist knowledge in relation to the issues raised.

#### **12.2.3.1 Appeals Committee**

The standing member of the Appeals Committee is appointed by the General Assembly of AEC on the recommendation of the MusiQuE Board. The appointment is for a fixed term of three years. The standing member of the Appeals Committee should be experienced in quality assurance processes but for the period of his or her appointment, should not participate in MusiQuE reviews. In the unlikely event that

during the period of office of the standing member, an appeal arises from an institution with which he or she is connected, they should declare a conflict of interest and withdraw from the appeals process. In this case, two members will be specially appointed.

The member of the Appeals Committee specially appointed for a particular appeal is chosen by the MusiQuE Board based upon the specialist knowledge required. He or she should be unconnected with the institution that has made the appeal but may have been, or be about to be, involved in other MusiQuE procedures around the time of the appeal.

The two members of the Appeals Committee should meet, or confer by Skype, as soon as possible after the special member is appointed. They should carefully consider the appeal document and assess whether it makes a convincing case.

#### 12.2.3.2 Results of the appeal

The final judgement of the Appeals Committee will take one of four forms:

- The appeal is rejected
- The appeal is partly upheld (in which case it must be specified whether the case is sufficiently strong to cause the original judgement to be altered)
- The appeal is fully upheld (*sur dossier* and not in a visit)
- The appeal cannot be decided on the basis of a written submission alone and a further visit is required (in principle, this judgement will only be used as a last resort)

In each case, a written justification for the verdict is required. This takes the form of a report submitted to the MusiQuE Board by the Appeals Committee.

Except under the most exceptional circumstances, the MusiQuE Board will accept the verdict of the Appeals Committee and, where this calls for an alteration in the judgement delivered by the review, it will confirm this alteration. Similarly, if a further visit is called for, the Board will normally endorse this.

The result of the appeal will be communicated by the MusiQuE Board to the institution. The result finally published on the MusiQuE website will reflect the judgement after the appeal and will not record that this judgement was only reached after an appeals process.

Where an appeal is partly upheld, the Appeals Committee may either decide that the strength of the institution's case is sufficient to alter the overall result or that, notwithstanding the valid points made, the overall verdict is still appropriate. In practice, this decision will focus on two areas:

- Does the partial upholding of the appeal mean that the Review Team's decision that a particular standard has been 'partially fulfilled' or 'not fulfilled' should be revised?
- If so, should an overall condition arising from the original verdict be mitigated to a recommendation – or, indeed, removed altogether?

In principle, it should be possible for the Appeals Committee to decide that, despite the appeal being partly upheld, neither of the steps above need be taken. However, it is more likely that the partial upholding of an appeal will lead to a change at least in the first area above and, possibly, in the second as well.

Where an appeal is fully upheld, this is almost certain to result in a change in both areas described above.

The process will be applied to each of the verdicts concerning the fulfilment of standards and/or the application of conditions that have been contested by the institution. A decision of the Appeals Committee could therefore result in some elements of an appeal not being upheld, others being partly upheld and still others fully upheld. This, in turn, will determine any changes to the overall profile of conditions (for example, in the exceptional case of an original decision not to grant accreditation, an appeals decision that reduced the overall number, or the severity, of the conditions applied would normally result in accreditation being approved subject to any remaining conditions).

Exceptionally, the Appeals Committee may decide that it is unable to reach a definitive verdict based on the submitted documentation alone. Where this occurs the Committee may recommend a fresh review visit to consider the contested elements of the Review Team's decision. It is important for all parties to be clear that this visit will not address any areas that are uncontested.

The Team for an appeals visit will consist of three individuals, none of whom was involved in the original visit and among whom there is an appropriate balance of expertise. The visit should normally take no longer than one day. The costs of the visit will be shared equally between the institution and MusiQuE. In the light of this, the institution shall have the right to decline a visit, in which case the original decision of the Review Team will stand.

#### **12.2.3.3 How to appeal**

When an institution wishes to appeal a decision of the Review Team, it should do so within 60 days of the date on the formal notification of result communicated by the MusiQuE Board. The appeals documentation should be sent both electronically and in hard copy and the date of the electronic mailing will be taken as definitive in determining whether the 60-day deadline has been met or exceeded.

Prior to the deadline, the institution should contact the MusiQue staff as soon as possible indicating its intention to appeal. This notification will be acknowledged by the MusiQuE staff and will enable preliminary work to be done on notifying the standing member of the Appeals Committee and asking the MusiQuE Board to begin considering possible candidates for the second place on the Committee.

The finally submitted appeal should consist of the following:

- A covering letter, signed by the Head of the Institution confirming the appeal and outlining briefly its nature
- A more detailed argumentation dealing with each standard where a decision is being contested and/or each condition that is being appealed against. In each case, the reason(s) for the appeal should be set out and evidence supporting the appeal should either be provided within the text or, where it is to be found in separate documentation (see below) the reference for this should be given
- Supporting documentation, where this is too lengthy to be included within the text of the argumentation

The appeal should be submitted to the MusiQuE staff. Both the electronic and the hard copy versions of the appeal will be acknowledged on receipt. In both cases, the acknowledgement will be by email.

The MusiQuE staff will forward the appeal to the standing member of the Appeals Committee and notify the MusiQuE Board that a second member of the Committee should now be appointed as soon as possible. At the latest, this person should be decided upon and engaged three weeks after receipt of the appeal. Provided that advance notice of its intention to appeal has been given by the institution, this period may be shortened in most cases.

#### **12.2.3.4 Communication of the Appeals Committee's decision to the Board and the institution**

The Appeals Committee should submit its decision to the MusiQuE Board within 30 days of the second Committee member being confirmed and a full set of the documentation being sent to both Committee members by the MusiQuE staff. Initially this will be by email to the MusiQuE staff who will forward it immediately to individual Board members. The Chair of the Board will ask Board members to endorse the decision by email within 7 days. The decision and the Board's endorsement will then be put into a formal letter from the Chair of the Board, which a member of the MusiQuE staff will then be charged with communicating to the institution.

## **13 Follow-up procedures**

In order to assist visited institutions in the post-site-visit process and to enable MusiQuE to assess its impact, a peer-reviewed follow-up process is offered optionally in the case of Quality Enhancement Reviews and on a compulsory basis in the case of accreditation procedures.

### **13.1 Follow-up template**

For the follow-up process, a template has been developed (see <http://www.musique-ge.eu/documents/templates>). The template is made up of three columns:

- The issues pointed out by the Review Team as elements to be developed/ further developed are listed in the first column. In the case of an accreditation procedure, the conditions imposed by the Review Team (as well as the recommendations, if so wished by the institution) are listed.
- The second column, initially empty, is to be filled in by the institution with short reports of the actions undertaken for each element of improvement/each condition (and, if applicable, each recommendation) announced by the Review Team. In cases where the institution has not followed one or more conditions or recommendations, the reasons for this will need to be explained in this column.
- The third column, initially empty will include the comments of the Review Team on the reports drafted by the institution in the second column.

The template is sent to the institution together with the letter informing the institution of the MusiQuE Board's endorsement of the review report or of the accreditation decision. The letter also indicates the deadline by which the template needs to be sent back to the MusiQuE staff. In the case of accreditation procedures where formal conditions have been imposed, the accompanying letter stresses the crucial importance of observing this deadline and the potential threat of accreditation being jeopardised if satisfactory reporting on the fulfilment of the conditions is not made by that deadline.

### **13.2 In the case of Quality Enhancement Reviews**

There are no conditions, but only recommendations in the case of quality enhancement reviews; the follow-up process is therefore voluntary. If the institution wishes to undergo a follow-up process, it will be asked to fill in the MusiQuE follow-up template within 1 year and to provide evidence of what has been improved during that period.

The MusiQuE Board will consult the Review Team which conducted the initial review of the institution/programme. One or more members of the team will be asked to study the template filled in by the institution, as well as the evidence provided, and to fill in the third column of the follow-up template with comments and, if appropriate, further recommendations.

The MusiQuE Board will endorse the follow-up report, and send it back to the institution with a covering letter. The Board may wish to indicate names of individuals from the music education sector who could act as consultants on areas which need to be further developed, and may refer the institution to AEC Counselling visits, where appropriate.

The costs related to this follow-up procedure will be charged to the institution and will be specified at the point where the institution is invited to avail itself of the procedure.

If it is felt by the Review Team or the MusiQuE Board that the material is not sufficient to assess the fulfilment of the conditions then, subject to the agreement of the institution, a team of two individuals from the initial Review Team will be asked to visit the institution a second time at the cost of the institution. The same additional action can be implemented at the request of the institution itself if it wishes an actual site-visit as part of the follow-up process.

### **13.3 In the case of accreditation procedures**

In the case of an accreditation, there are 2 levels of follow up: recommendations and conditions

#### **13.3.1 Recommendations:**

The recommendations will be clearly listed in the reviewers report and will need to be addressed by the institution in its self-evaluation report at the next renewal of accreditation. In addition, the institution can ask that the follow-up procedure applied to any conditions made by the Review Team should also apply to the recommendations made. In this case, the procedure detailed below will apply to the recommendations as well as the conditions.

#### **13.3.2 Conditions:**

The follow-up template will list all the conditions made by the Review Team, and a deadline of normally up to 12 months will be given to the institution to fill in the template and provide evidence that the conditions have been implemented. In exceptional circumstances, the MusiQuE Board may shorten or extend this deadline (see also 11.2.2).

- The MusiQuE Board will proceed as for voluntary follow-up procedures: the template will be sent to the Review Team, who will study all the material and fill in the third column “sur dossier” to assess whether the conditions have or have not been adequately fulfilled
- The MusiQuE Board will then consider the completed template and decide on the fulfilment or otherwise of the conditions
- If it is felt by the Review Team or the MusiQuE Board that the material is not sufficient to assess the fulfilment of the conditions, a team of 2 reviewers from the initial Review Team will be asked to visit the institution a second time at the cost of the institution
- If the evidence “sur dossier” suggests that the conditions have not been fulfilled, the Board may offer an extension of the deadline, arrange a follow-up visit as above or, in extreme cases, withdraw conditional accreditation as described in 11.2.2.

### **13.4 Periodicity of review procedures**

In as much as internal quality assurance processes should be continuously undertaken to ensure a constant care for quality and a constant improvement of all provisions, external review procedures should additionally take place at regular intervals.

The period of time between two reviews will inevitably vary, as MusiQuE operates all across Europe, with different periods set by national regulations. All institutions choosing MusiQuE for their review will be encouraged to be reviewed every six years: the institution will normally be approached by the MusiQuE staff in the fifth year following the last review with a proposal to start a new review procedure. However, when the interval between two reviews set by the national legislation is shorter or longer than six years, it is this interval which will be taken as a reference and the timing of the approach from MusiQuE staff will be adjusted accordingly.

## **14 Quality Assurance of MusiQuE and its procedures**

As with any organisation that practises a policy of continuous quality enhancement, MusiQuE operates both internal and external quality assurance procedures, the former being integrated into its everyday working and the latter being implemented at periodic intervals.

### **14.1 Internal quality assurance**

The key focus of internal quality assurance for MusiQuE is upon its review procedures: how they are run, how they are perceived by institutions and by Review Teams and how they can be improved. MusiQuE employs a variety of feedback mechanisms and, on an annual basis, draws up a report informed by this feedback so that its actions to implement continuous enhancement are transparent and readily available to interested parties.

#### **14.1.1 Feedback mechanisms**

Once the final report has been sent to the institution by the MusiQuE Board, feedback questionnaires are sent by the MusiQuE staff to the reviewed institutions as well as to the reviewers.

Questionnaires addressed to reviewed institutions aim at collecting feedback on:

- The institutional experience of producing the documentation (number of persons involved in the production of the self-evaluation report, ownership of the process, difficulty in collating the documentation, relevance of the questions to the institution/programme, usefulness of the self-evaluation questions and process, usefulness of the MusiQuE material, etc.)
- the composition, efficiency and professionalism of the Review Team
- the clarity of the report
- the relationship of the MusiQuE procedure to the national accreditation context and framework

Questionnaires addressed to Review team members aim at collecting feedback on:

- the adequacy and usefulness of the documentation produced by the institution and of the supporting material provided by MusiQuE
- the composition of the Review Team, the allocation of tasks within the team and the relevance of the briefing received
- the relevance and clarity of the MusiQuE standards
- communication with the other review team members and with the institutions' representatives
- the post-review process
- language issues

Once every year, the MusiQuE staff compiles all results of the questionnaires and makes an analysis of any trends discernible in these results. The results and their analysis are then considered by the Board, which also has access, if required, to the original questionnaires. The Board then decides on any actions that it believes should be undertaken to improve the review system and, where applicable, to fine-tune the standards themselves. Where action is proposed, this is fed into the review process for procedures and standards described in 6.1.



The MusiQuE staff is responsible for alerting the MusiQuE Board independently of the standard annual process if answers given by the peer-reviewers to the feedback questionnaire reveal issues within the Review Team or in relation to the attitude of one of the reviewers. Where such a situation arises, the following procedure applies:

- Members of the MusiQuE Board will be tasked to investigate the matter further by contacting the respondent to the questionnaire, and possibly other members of the Review Team concerned, in order to understand the issue.
- A report will be made by the Board member, either verbally at the following Board meeting or by email.
- Where there is found to be an issue, action will be taken to prevent another occurrence of the problematic situation. The Board may, for example, decide to add notes in the Register of peer-reviewers concerning relationships between some reviewers, who should not serve together on the same team again; it may act to remind a peer-reviewer of his/her obligations in relation to the guidelines and Code of Conduct; or, if the issue warrants this, it may even ask a peer-reviewer to withdraw from the Register.

#### **14.1.2 Annual Report**

The MusiQuE Board is in charge of producing and publishing an annual report on all its activities for the year, noting any good practice observed and identifying any areas where it believes beneficial changes might be made. It will be as complete and transparent as possible, but where elements of the internal report might raise issues of confidentiality, it will be edited with a view to its being appropriate for publication on the MusiQuE website.

The annual reports produced by the MusiQuE Board will form an important part of the evidence trail scrutinised by the External Evaluator (see below) and used in the compilation of the self-evaluation report that the MusiQuE Board will prepare as part of periodic external reviews.

### **14.2 External quality assurance**

#### **14.2.1 External Evaluator**

An external evaluator is appointed by the MusiQuE Board to review material documenting MusiQuE's activity, and especially the annual report. The evaluator should be independent of the operations of MusiQuE and may come from within or outside the music education sector.

The external evaluator is appointed for 2 years, and is in charge of producing an annual evaluation report with comments addressed to the Board. Where relevant, the annual report produced in the following year by the Board will make reference to recommendations from the previous External Evaluator's report and how these have been addressed.

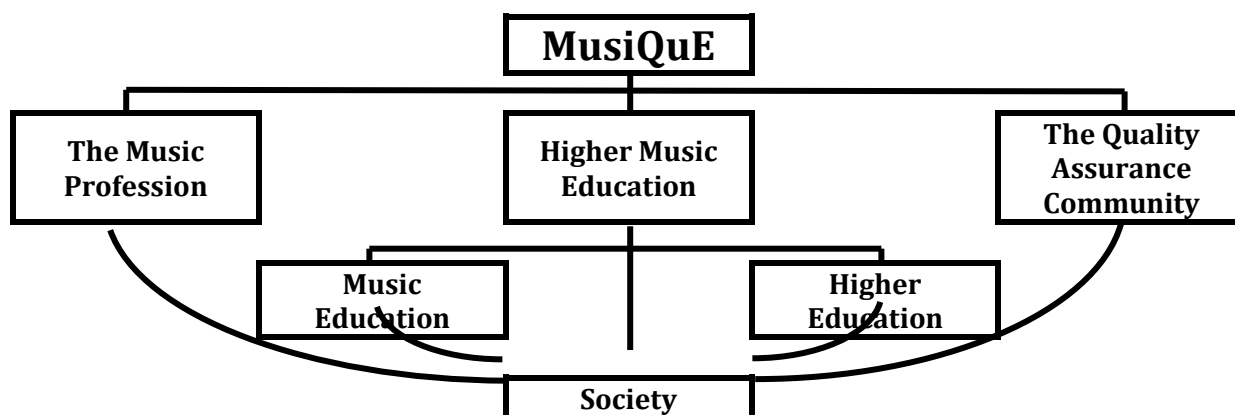
#### **14.2.2 External reviews**

MusiQuE wants to be accountable to its users and stakeholders. For this purpose, MusiQuE undergoes an external review every five years, in line with the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). This external review will also aim at being listed on the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR). The MusiQuE Board is in charge of preparing for external reviews.



## 15 Public interaction

MusiQuE is an organisation closely embedded in the higher education sector which it serves, namely that for music. However, it also connects to a range of other constituencies, educational, professional and those relating to quality assurance. Finally, as an organisation dedicated to quality and its enhancement, it has a relationship to the project of continuous improvement in society as a whole. The diagram below outlines these relationships:



MusiQuE's public interaction seeks to reflect these relationships. It enacts this interaction through ways that relate both to content and to communication. The chief interaction in terms of content is through the period analysis of trends carried out by MusiQuE. This trend analysis is just one of the many elements that are put into the public domain through the use of the MusiQuE website, newsletters and other modes of communication.

### 15.1 Trend analysis

Every two years an individual well experienced in higher music education, and in quality assurance activities within this sector, is commissioned to produce a trend analysis. This analysis uses the feedback material from MusiQuE reviews, External Evaluator reports and the MusiQuE Board's own annual reports as its primary sources but also places these in a wider context (e.g. the proportion of European quality assurance activities in higher music education that use sectoral, as opposed to national, agencies and procedures).

A first trend analysis was produced in 2013 by the 'Polifonia' Working Group on Quality Enhancement, Accreditation and Benchmarking, who studied all reports produced between 2008 and 2012. In 2014, the MusiQuE Board commissioned a second trend analysis focusing on ten reports produced between 2010 and 2013. Successive trend analyses will be able to add a longitudinal dimension, evaluating key areas of change from one analysis to the next.

### 15.2 Communication

#### 15.2.1 Website

A MusiQuE website has been created with the domain name [www.musique-qe.eu](http://www.musique-qe.eu). Information about MusiQuE and its activities is being progressively uploaded to this site.

Over time, documents such as the annual report will be uploaded to this site and therefore openly available to any visitor to the site.

The MusiQuE website is organised as follows:

- The Section *About MusiQuE* provides information on MusiQuE, its vision and mission, its partner organisations, and its structure
- The Section *News* is meant to update the reader about the latest developments and activities of MusiQuE
- The Section *Types of reviews* provides detailed information on MusiQuE services, their objectives, process and outcome
- The Section *Peer-Reviewers* addressed the criteria and procedure for admission on the Peer-Reviewers' Register and presents how Review Teams are composed and how Review Team members are appointed
- The Section *Completed Reviews* lists all review procedures undertaken since 2008, and provides access to all review reports
- Finally, the Section *Documents* includes MusiQuE Standards for Institutional, Programme and Joint Programme Review (also downloadable separately), MusiQuE framework document *Background, mission and regulations* (each chapter being downloadable separately), MusiQuE templates, articles published and presentations delivered, as well as any other relevant documents.

Overall, this resource is developed as a comprehensive portal through which the activities of MusiQuE can be made accessible to a wide public.

### **15.2.2 Newsletter**

As a complement to the MusiQuE website, a newsletter is produced at regular intervals and is distributed through a MusiQuE mailing list which will be augmented over successive years of the organisation's operation.

Once a year, a key component of the newsletter will be the announcement, together with an electronic link to the document, of the publication of the Annual Report of the MusiQuE Board. Through the mailing list, this report is made available to all AEC, EMU and PEARLE\* members, to ENQA members, to national governments, to EQAR and worldwide.

### **15.2.3 Annual call for peer-reviewers, Board members, and suggestions for the revision of standards and procedures**

An email is sent annually in Spring to AEC, EMU and PEARLE\* members to encourage representatives of these three organisations to put themselves forward as peer-reviewers (see 4.1.1), usually by the deadline of 1st June, as well as to suggest changes to MusiQuE standards and procedures (see 6.1) by the deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> January the following year.

In years where a process of renewal of a Board member's term takes place or in which a new representative shall be selected and nominated, the e-mail above will also include a call for Board members candidacy, which will be addressed to representatives of AEC, EMU or Pearle\*, depending on the organisation responsible to nominate a new candidate.

#### **15.2.4 Information sessions, presentations and publication of articles**

The MusiQuE Board is responsible to ensure that the Boards and General Assemblies of each of the partner organisations are informed about the work of MusiQuE. Information session during AEC, EMU and PEARLE\*'s Board meetings and presentation during their General Assemblies are therefore regularly delivered.

The MusiQuE Board is also in charge of contributing to the communication and dissemination of information about MusiQuE activities, including representing MusiQuE - individually and, where appropriate, collectively - at quality assurance and accreditation-related events.

A general power-point presentation on MusiQuE has been designed to facilitate presentations about MusiQuE, and the MusiQuE Board and staff are actively exploring opportunities to present MusiQuE to a wide audience: national/regional networks of higher music education institutions, individual meetings with interested institutions, European conferences on Quality Assurance, etc.

Several articles have been presented at the European Quality Assurance Forum EQAF, and some of them selected for publications. See <http://www.musique-qe.eu/documents/articles>.

#### **15.2.5 Keeping up-to-date with the latest developments in quality assurance**

In order to inform themselves about latest developments in quality assurance, representatives of the Board and staff regularly attend meetings organised by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) – including the European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF) -, the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) and the Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). MusiQuE is a member of the European Alliance of Subject-Specific and Professional Accreditation and Quality Assurance EASPA and an affiliate of ENQA.

## 16 Overall timeframe from request to publication of results

The table below summarises the normal timeframe for MusiQuE Quality Enhancement Reviews and accreditation procedures. Any changes to this timeframe will be mutually agreed by MusiQuE and the institution.

Responsible body	Action	Timescale (can be varied by mutual agreement)	Relevant chapter of the MusiQuE framework document
Institution	Submission of written request for review to MusiQuE Board (scanned letter sent by email to MusiQuE staff)	At least 20 weeks prior to the visit of the Review Team	8.1
MusiQuE	Response to the institution	In reply to the request	8.1
MusiQuE (in consultation with the institution when allowed by the national legislation)	Selection of possible Review Team members and, if necessary, approval process for experts not already on the Register	Variable, depending upon whether new approval is required. Where none, 18 weeks prior to visit	9.1
MusiQuE	Submission of list of possible Review Team members to the institution (unless the institution has been involved in the Review Team composition)	16 weeks prior to the visit	9.1.5.2
Institution	Response to the list of possible members of the Review Team to MusiQuE (unless the institution has been involved in the Review Team composition)	15 weeks prior to the visit	9.1.5.2
Institution	Preparation of the self-evaluation report and documentation [see template for self-evaluation report <a href="http://www.musique-ge.eu/documents/templates">http://www.musique-ge.eu/documents/templates</a> ]	Between the request for the review and the submission of the report and documentation	8.2
Institution (in cooperation with MusiQuE and [if different] the secretary of the Review Team)	Organisation of the review visit: - Finalisation of the schedule [see template for institutional site visit schedule <a href="http://www.musique-ge.eu/documents/templates">http://www.musique-ge.eu/documents/templates</a> ] - Hotel booking for the Review Team - Organisation of lunches, dinners, coffee breaks	During the 16 weeks prior to the visit	10

MusiQuE	Assembly of the Review Team and briefing of the experts	From 12 weeks prior to the visit	9.1.6 and 9.2
Institution	Submission of self-evaluation report and list of appendices to MusiQuE staff (electronically)	8 weeks prior to the visit	8.2.2
MusiQuE staff	Checking process of the report and document (with consultation of the Review Team)	8-5 weeks prior to the visit	8.2.2
Institution	Submission of self-evaluation report and documentation to the Review Team members <u>electronically and by post</u> (+ 1 copy to MusiQuE office)	At least 5 weeks prior to the visit	8.2.2
Review Team	Site-visit to the institution		10
Review Team	Assembling the draft report	Within 6 weeks after the visit	11.1.1 11.1.3
MusiQuE	Submission of draft report to the institution	10 weeks after the visit	11.1.4
Institution	Submission of response to the draft report to the MusiQuE staff	14 weeks after the visit	11.1.4
Review Team	Finalisation of the report	Within 18 weeks after the visit	11.1.5
MusiQuE Board	Consideration of the final report and confirmation that report is consistent with, and relevant to, the review criteria and communication of this to institution  If an accreditation procedure: decision on the accreditation of the institution/programme/joint programme	Variable but not longer than 6 months after visit	11.2 11.3
MusiQuE	Publication of the full review report on the MusiQuE website, section <a href="#">Completed Reviews</a>	End of the initial review procedure	11.4
Institution	Submission to the MusiQuE staff of the Follow-Up Template, with columns 1 & 2 filled in and providing evidence that the conditions have been implemented (in case of accreditation procedures) and, if requested by the institution, that the same is true for the recommendations [see template for follow-up process <a href="http://www.musique-qe.eu/documents/templates">http://www.musique-qe.eu/documents/templates</a> ]	Up to 12 months after the end of the review procedure	13

## 17 Authors

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- Claus FINDERUP, Rhythmic Music Conservatory (until December 2013)
- Stefan GIES, Hochschule für Musik Dresden
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- Linda MESSAS, AEC Office

*Members of the MusiQuE Board (2014-)*

- MusiQuE Board member mandated by EMU:
  - Helena MAFFLI, EMU President
- MusiQuE Board member mandated by Pearle\*-Live Performance Europe:
  - Géza KOVACS, Director-General of the Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir, President of the Association of Hungarian orchestras and Vice-President of Pearle\*-Live Performance Europe
- MusiQuE Board members mandated by AEC
  - Cristopher CAINE, Programme Leader BMus and Head of International Programmes, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance (Secretary/Treasurer)
  - Martin PRCHAL, Vice-Principal, Royal Conservatory The Hague (Chair)
  - Mist THORKELSDOTTIR, Head, Academy of Music and Drama at the University of Gothenburg

## 18 Resources

### *MusiQuE Review Standards*

MusiQuE Standards for Institutional, Programme and Joint programme Review

<http://www.musique-qe.eu/documents/musique-standards>

### *Reference Points*

'Polifonia/Dublin Descriptors for 1st, 2nd and 3rd Cycle Awards in Music' (2007)

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

The AEC/Polifonia Learning Outcomes for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycle studies in music (2007)

<http://www.aec-music.eu/userfiles/File/aec-polifonia-learning-outcomes-en.pdf>

Association Européenne des Conservatoires, 'Polifonia' Bologna Working Group, 2009, Reference Points for the Design and Delivery of Degree Programmes in Music (Deusto, Tuning Project).

<http://www.aec-music.eu/images/webshop/145/AEC%20Brochure%20-%20Tuning%20Educational%20Structures%20in%20Europe%20-%20EN.pdf>

### *European references*

Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)

[http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/ESG\\_endorsed-with-changed-foreword.pdf](http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/ESG_endorsed-with-changed-foreword.pdf)

### *Templates*

<http://www.musique-qe.eu/documents/templates>

MusiQuE Template for Peer-Reviewers Profile

MusiQuE Template for self-evaluation report

MusiQuE Template for institutional site-visit schedule

MusiQuE Template for follow-up process

### *Articles*

<http://www.musique-qe.eu/documents/articles>

Messas, L. & Kuzminykh, Z., 2012, 'International cooperation in discipline-specific quality assurance: NCPA-AEC joint accreditation of Russian higher education programmes', in Crozier, F. et al. (Eds.), *How does quality assurance make a difference?: A selection of papers from the 7th European Quality Assurance Forum* (Brussels, European University Association).

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Messas, L., & Prchal, M., 2010, 'Why respecting diversity and creativity is essential in quality assurance and accreditation processes: Observations and experiences in the field of music', in Blättler, A., et al. (Eds.), *Creativity and Diversity - Challenges for Quality Assurance beyond 2010: A selection of papers from the fourth European Quality Assurance Forum* (Brussels, European University Association).

Prchal, M., 2008, 'Quality assurance and accreditation in the European Higher Education Area: Music as a case study', in Beso, A. et al. (Eds.), *Implementing and Using Quality Assurance – Strategy and Practice: A selection of papers from the second European Quality Assurance Forum* (Brussels, European University Association).