

Report of the panel of the external review of MusiQuE

November 2015

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1 Executive Summary

This report analyses the compliance of MusiQuE, Music Quality Enhancement, The Foundation for Quality Enhancement and Accreditation in Higher Music Education, with the 2015 version of the European Standards and Guidelines for Higher Education (ESG). The report is based on a review coordinated by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM). Based on this report MusiQuE will apply for registration on the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) for the first time. The site visit of the peer review panel in charge of the evaluation of compliance with the ESG took place on July 1st and 2nd 2015.

The creation of MusiQuE results from a long exploration of the needs of the higher music education sector in the field of quality assurance and accreditation. Although MusiQuE was only formally established in October 2014, its review system builds upon foundations that have been laid down over more than a decade. After intensive work and consultation, an original framework for review was developed in 2007 under the umbrella of the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC). This framework has been tested extensively during 29 reviews that AEC conducted over the past years. Since its foundation, MusiQuE has developed all of the quality enhancement activities previously organised by AEC.

The creation of MusiQuE is a response to wishes expressed by the higher music education sector. Given the specificities of the higher music education sector, it was felt to be highly desirable to provide institutions with a tailor-made quality enhancement tool that would be adapted to the particular characteristics of the music discipline, and of the specialist institutions in which musicians are most often educated. Over the course of ten years, the voting membership (Deans, Principals, etc.) of the Association of European Conservatoires (AEC) engaged in developing quality enhancement protocols, processes and standards, established which activities would be appropriate to focus on, and then undertook a variety of peer quality enhancement reviews to test these and receive feedback from all those involved. MusiQuE was subsequently established, with full support of the AEC membership, to serve as an independent autonomous association that would henceforth take responsibility for all aspects of quality enhancement and accreditation activities for music in higher education. In its current format, stakeholder associations including the AEC, the European Music Union (EMU) and Pearle* are represented on the Board of Directors of MusiQuE and promote the organisation among their constituents. Other stakeholders, such as students, have been less involved in the development of MusiQuE.

The review panel observed a strong desire among all stakeholders to enhance the quality of music education. In order to achieve this goal, MusiQuE intends to offer a diversity of services - and even expand those already offered - in order to meet the needs of higher music education institutions throughout Europe and beyond. EQAR registration will facilitate future cooperative activities with national agencies and enable institutions to choose MusiQuE as their sole review body. In a number of countries, EQAR registration would enable MusiQuE to make formal accreditation decisions.

Overall, the review panel noted that the governance structure of MusiQuE has been designed in a way that will guarantee a high level of independence from the higher music education sector, building on the quality assurance experience of AEC and involving the music (education) sector wherever appropriate. MusiQuE has developed detailed procedures that are largely in line with the European Standards and Guidelines. It has also built experience in organising joint assessments in

cooperation with national quality assurance agencies. MusiQuE intends to be financially sustainable by developing a flexible fee structure associated with its various review and consultation activities.

In light of the documentary and oral evidence it considered, the review panel has concluded that MusiQuE is in substantial compliance with the ESG. The panel notes that the agency fully complies with the ESG 2.2, 2.4, 2.5, 2.7, 3.2, 3.3, 3.6 and 3.7; substantially complies with ESG 2.1, 2.3, 2.6, 3.1 and 3.4 and partially complies with ESG 3.5. Although there is a need to better guarantee the financial sustainability of MusiQuE for the coming years, there is every reason to believe that MusiQuE has the potential to generate sufficient numbers of applications in the coming years to be financially sustainable.

2 Glossary of acronyms

AEC	Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen
AEQES	Agence pour l'Evaluation de la Qualité de l'Enseignement Supérieur de la Communauté française de Belgique
ANVUR	Agenzia Nazionale di Valutazione del Sistema Universitario e della Ricerca
AQ Austria	Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung Austria (Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation)
AQU Catalunya	Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya (Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency)
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EMU	European Music Schools Union
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education.
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines (for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area)
ESU	European Students' Union
EUA	European University Association
EURASHE	European Association of Institutions in Higher Education
MusiQuE	Music Quality Enhancement, The Foundation for Quality Enhancement and Accreditation in Higher Music Education
NASM	National Association of Schools of Music
NVAO	Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatie Organisatie (Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation)
OAQ	Organ für Akkreditierung und Qualitätssicherung der schweizerischen Hochschulen (Organisation for Accreditation and Quality Assurance for the Swiss Academic Institutions)
Pearle*	Pearle*-Live Performance Europe (the Performing Arts Employers Associations League Europe)

3 Review process

This is the report of the peer review of MusiQuE, based on a site visit undertaken on July 1st and 2nd 2015 for the purpose of determining whether the agency meets the 2015 version of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) in order to apply for registration on the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR).

3.1 Background and outline of the review process

The review has been conducted on the basis of the ESG, which were first adopted by the Ministerial meeting in Bergen in 2005 at the proposal of the E4 Group, including the four main European stakeholder organisations in higher education: the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the European Students' Union (ESU), the European University Association (EUA) and the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE). Between 2012 and 2015, the ESG were thoroughly revised. A new version of the ESG has been adopted by the European Higher Education Area governments in their Ministerial meeting in Yerevan, in May 2015. The review of MusiQuE has been based upon this new version of the ESG.

The external review of MusiQuE was conducted in line with the guidelines provided by EQAR in the document 'Use and Interpretation of the ESG, for the European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies' (June 2015) and in accordance with the timeline set out in the Terms of Reference. The National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) is serving as Review Coordinator. NASM is a not-for-profit organisation domiciled in and operating under United States law, providing a broad range of accreditation, statistical, professional development, and policy analysis services for institutions engaged in professional and pre-professional education and training in music.

As MusiQuE advocates for discipline-specific quality assurance and accreditation, it was deemed essential that a review coordinator familiar with this approach and expertise in the field of accreditation in music would be chosen. NASM fulfils this requirement and, along with the international perspective that it brings, is active in a region of the world where there is no competition or conflict of interest foreseen with MusiQuE.

The review panel for the external review of MusiQuE was composed of the following members:

- Daniel Sher, Dean Emeritus, College of Music, University of Colorado Boulder (Chair)
- Andrée Sursock, Senior Adviser, European University Association
- Jeffrey Sharkey, Principal, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
- Iring Wasser, Managing Director, Accreditation Agency for Engineering, Informatics, Natural Sciences and Mathematics
- Jordan Gregoris, Student, Master of Arts HES-SO in Music Pedagogy, major in Instrumental Teaching, Haute Ecole de Musique de Lausanne, site de Sion
- Pieter-Jan Van de Velde, Staff member Quality Assurance, VLUHR Quality Assurance - Flemish Higher Education Council, Belgium (Secretary)

With regard to the composition of the review panel, a balance was sought between panel members with specific expertise in quality assurance in higher music education and members with expertise in (transnational) quality assurance within the European Higher Education Area.

3.2 The review process

The panel was confirmed in April 2015 and received the self-evaluation report in June 2015. The well-written, insightful and informative self-evaluation report and its attachments provided the

panel members with excellent insights into the background and practices of MusiQuE in preparation for the site visit.

The panel conducted a site-visit to validate the self-evaluation report and clarify any points at issue. This visit took place on July 1st and 2nd 2015 in MusiQuE's offices in Brussels. MusiQuE drew up the programme for the site visit in close cooperation with the Review Coordinator and the chair and secretary of the panel. The review panel was given access to all relevant documents and all the stakeholders and potential stakeholders with whom it wished to consult throughout the review. The programme included interview sessions with members of the Board, representatives of AEC, EMU and Pearle*, the staff of MusiQuE, representatives of quality assurance agencies with which MusiQuE collaborates, representatives of higher music education institutions, and members of MusiQuE's review teams, including student representatives. The interviews held during the site visit provided valuable oral evidence, insightful analysis and critically important feedback. The review panel wishes to thank the Board and staff of MusiQuE for their excellent preparation of the site-visit. The panel members express their appreciation to all those who took the time and effort to meet with them, to share their experience, expertise and perspectives.

At the end of the site visit, the panel held an internal meeting, during which it agreed on the preliminary conclusions related to the level of compliance of MusiQuE in relation to each of the standards in parts 2 and 3 of the ESG. The secretary of the panel then drafted the report in cooperation with the rest of the panel, before submitting the draft report to the Review Coordinator (NASM). NASM offered MusiQuE the opportunity to comment on the draft report and subsequently asked the panel to review the comments received from MusiQuE and edit the report where necessary. After consultation with the whole panel, the chair and the secretary finalised the report, before submitting the final report to NASM.

In relation to its conclusions, the panel finds it important to note that it assessed MusiQuE's level of compliance with the standards and also took into account MusiQuE's practice in relation to the indicators listed in the guidelines. Along with the guidelines provided in the document "Use and Interpretation of the ESG for the European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies", the panel has taken into account all types of quality assurance activities which MusiQuE offers to higher music education institutions (Quality Enhancement Reviews for Institutions, Programmes, and Joint Programmes; and Accreditation Procedures for Institutions, Programmes, and Joint Programmes). The review panel has assessed MusiQuE's quality assurance activities based on the available information and evidence, taking into account the fact that MusiQuE had only performed five Institutional Quality Enhancement Reviews, of which four were jointly organised with AEQES at the moment of the review. The assessment of the other types of activities has been performed based on the experience of AEC, in combination with the available information about procedures for those reviews when implemented by MusiQuE. The review panel is, nevertheless, confident that the conclusions for each standard are applicable for all six activities listed just above.

4 MusiQuE as a quality assurance agency

4.1 Higher music education in Europe

The organisation of higher music education in Europe has unique characteristics compared with many other types of higher education institutions. Institutions of higher music education operate under a variety of titles and exhibit a corresponding variety in their characters. This diversity within the higher music education sector is not merely a matter of labels; across Europe, the sector is treated in very different ways by its national governments. In some countries, institutions report to the ministry of education; in others, they are organised under the ministry of culture. Similarly, in some countries, institutions deal only with the higher education level; in others, they are responsible for the entire continuum of musical learning right from the early years; and, in yet a further twist, some institutions are higher education-only from Monday to Friday, but run a special pre-college music department on Saturdays.

The main sector organisation of higher music education in Europe is the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC). The AEC has 261 active members, representing approximately 90% of the total number of higher music education institutions across Europe and about 200,000 students.

4.2 Quality assurance in higher music education

In MusiQuE's view, embedding a culture of quality assurance in higher music education is both helped and hindered by the fact that quality, in the sense of excellence within a particular endeavour, has always been at the forefront of higher music education. Therefore, quality usually and instinctively is understood as musical quality, and this deeply embedded concept can easily be perceived as being in conflict with connotations of quality that arise from the generic procedures of quality assurance.

There are no universally accepted definitions of musical quality; qualitative standards in music are developed within musical traditions. That is to say, the artistic experiences and expectations embedded in those traditions form the basis by which musical quality can be assessed. But 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. Definitions may be elusive, but within the expert community of the discipline, there is generally a wide and reliable consensus around the recognition of musical quality when and where it arises.

Even if consensus can be reached regarding many aspects and concepts related to musical achievement, there is no single method or route for attaining artistic goals. A supportive environment is needed for the successful development of students. It enables them to challenge traditional musical practices and expectations. Furthermore, such an environment demonstrates open-mindedness towards diversity in the job market and is helpful in sustaining a continuous dialogue with a wide variety of professional communities. Finally, it sets the stage for exploring the artistic potential in encounters with this diversity of musical cultures and traditions, thus preparing students for international mobility.

The prominence of musical quality as a daily aspiration in the lives of those working in higher music education means that any system of quality assurance which ignores, or seems alien to the quality that is so deeply embedded in the discipline will be perceived not only to be irrelevant but even potentially harmful. In common with other higher arts disciplines, but arguably even more so than others, the sector can therefore often feel to be ill-served by generic quality assurance procedures,

especially those that concentrate upon systems, committee structures, etc. and focus less on what is actually going on in pursuit of musical excellence in the teaching studios and performance spaces.

Conservatoires and their various equivalents do indeed have unique characteristics in comparison to their peers in higher education. These are manifested in a variety of ways:

- They are focused almost relentlessly on professional preparation, and yet theirs is a very different discipline from others in the professional higher education sector;
- Their teachers are mostly individuals who divide their working time between the institution and their professional practice; while some are full time or nearly full time, many are teaching for as little as half a day per week or less;
- Teaching is divided between one-to-one lessons, and supporting classes in common to all instrumentalists, singers and composers.
- The audition has been the paramount evaluative mechanism for a job, but these days research and teaching degrees are very relevant in finding employment at conservatoires, universities and schools. In many ways, Europe is a leading innovator in performance-oriented research.

The main teaching methodology in higher music education - professionals coaching students in small studios - permits a high level of autonomy and detachment from the institution, often for the students as well as the teachers, while their dedication to excellence in musical practice can represent challenges for conservatoires in getting large numbers of part-time staff to feel engaged with some aspects of quality assurance.

4.3 A European subject-specific approach to quality assurance and accreditation

Almost all European countries have set up quality assurance or accreditation agencies responsible for evaluating higher education institutions within their national frameworks. As a first step, it has been logical for such agencies to be organised on a national basis and linked to the particular governmental and legal systems under which the institutions function. The paradigm around which such national agencies base their procedures is generally that of the multi-disciplinary university, combining scientific subjects with those in the arts and humanities and often exercising quality assurance systems at the level of the institution - and therefore above that of its individual constituent disciplines.

Most conservatoires are exceptions to such a paradigm in two ways: first, they deal exclusively with a highly specialised subject, which might require discipline-specific reviewers; second, because they focus on just one subject, the distinction that is made between institutional level and programme level quality assurance processes is not always relevant. In effect, evaluating a music programme often means evaluating also the institution responsible for it. Even when conservatoires are merged with other arts-based institutions into universities of the arts, the shared focus on the arts in such institutions still makes them distinctive in the higher education sector.

Due to their specificities, conservatoires perceive the national procedures for evaluation or accreditation not always as entirely fit for purpose in their definition of quality. In some cases, the procedures do not take into account the specificities of the sector (e.g. their educational processes such as the prominence of one-to-one teaching by skilled practitioners, some of whom may spend but a small portion of their time within the institution); in others, their panels do not involve a sufficient number of music specialists. This is sometimes due to the difficulty of finding impartial expert reviewers within a small, specialist national sector in which institutions may be in competition with one another - for reputation, faculty recruitment, state funding, etc. - even as they serve a common educational and artistic cause. Some national procedures also focus on the

national context when considering the outward-facing aspects of an institution's operation but do not address aspects linked to internationalisation, which has always been an important aspect of quality for conservatoires.

A dedicated quality assurance and accreditation agency for music can address many of these issues. In the eyes of virtually every stakeholder the panel encountered, MusiQuE is particularly well-suited to provide the discipline-specific expertise necessary for in-depth analysis and evaluation. Establishing such an agency at the European level also minimises rivalries within the discipline at a national level. It also embeds at the very heart of such an agency the concept of internationalism. In the process it enriches the participants' understanding of quality through recognition of the diversity that such quality may take.

4.4 Historical background of MusiQuE

To fully understand 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.

The AEC is a member association composed of institutions delivering higher music education. Its active members are conservatoires, music academies and Musikhochschulen operating within the European Higher Education Area and in countries of the European Neighbourhood Policy Initiative. The AEC has 261 active members and an additional 30 associate members in North America, Asia and Australasia.

Founded in 1953, the AEC has been pro-active as a force for the development and modernisation of higher music education since the beginning of the Bologna Process in 2000. In fostering excellence in artistic practice, learning, teaching, research and innovation that are to be found in conservatoires, and in recognising that such excellence can be manifested in diverse forms, the AEC has moved - always from the perspective of the discipline of music - toward embracing a role for itself in the domain of quality assurance and enhancement.

Since 2002, the AEC has been developing its involvement in quality assurance. In 2002-2004, the AEC undertook a project in collaboration with the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), the discipline-specific accrediting body for music in the United States. In 2006-2007, a 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 goal of 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. The criteria and procedures were tested in four pilot visits to institutions in the Czech Republic, Italy, Germany and Norway. The AEC has built on this experience within the Erasmus Mundus-funded project 'Mundus Musicalis', which compared quality assurance and accreditation procedures in higher music education in various parts of the world.

Following five institutional reviews in the Western Balkans as part of a project funded by the Swedish international development and coordination agency Sida, a Working Group on Quality Assurance and Accreditation was established within the Erasmus Network for Music 'Polifonia', to further develop and improve the review system. In parallel, the AEC 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 reviews have been offered: quality enhancement processes and joint review procedures in collaboration with national quality assurance and accreditation agencies.

Meanwhile, during the period 2004-2010, the Polifonia/Dublin Descriptors for 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycle awards in music were developed, adapting the text formulated in the original Dublin descriptors to show that while the fundamental attributes identified for each cycle are applicable to the music sector it was necessary to introduce small changes so as to link the text more concretely to the music discipline. Complementing these descriptors at a more detailed level, the AEC/Polifonia Learning Outcomes adopted a similar strategy, using the standard notions of knowledge, skills and generic competences but attempting within these domains to capture the essence of what music graduates are expected to know and to be able to do.

In 2011, a Quality Enhancement Committee was established by the AEC with a range of responsibilities concerning oversight and quality assurance of the Institutional and Programme Review Scheme. One of the tasks of the Quality Enhancement Committee was to explore the feasibility of establishing a European-level quality assurance agency for the sector. In parallel with this, another 'Polifonia' Working Group on Quality Enhancement and Accreditation developed the procedures further. Thanks to a close cooperation with the 'Polifonia' Working Group, the feasibility study was finalised in September 2013 and presented to the AEC Council and membership in November 2013 along with an action plan for 2014 that outlined steps toward the actual establishment of this evaluation body.

The procedures inherited by MusiQuE have grown and developed based on the experience and knowledge gained from all these projects. They necessarily retain certain fundamental characteristics common to all quality assurance processes but they are tempered at every stage by the belief that only a definition of quality that makes sense to music practitioners will build credibility and respect in the higher music education sector, including teachers and the students.

4.5 MusiQuE as an independent organisation

Even though the AEC could have continued to offer its review services as part of its activities, the membership decided to create a new legal body in order to ensure the highest possible level of independence from the AEC. As the MusiQuE Framework document states (pages 16-17):

“Various models were explored with regard to guaranteeing the independence of the review body, and the option to keep the review scheme within the AEC (following the 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 EQUAR 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 whilst retaining the all-important connection to the wishes and needs of the music sector provided by AEC's membership network.”

MusiQuE was thus legally established as an independent, not-for-profit external quality assurance body for higher music education, following a process formally concluded in The Hague, The Netherlands, on 7th October 2014. Its current seat of operations is in Brussels, Belgium.

Three organisations have come together as the founding members of 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). There are provisions in MusiQuE's statutes that enable other organisations to join its Board in future.

Vision and mission statement

In its self-evaluation report, MusiQuE describes its ambitions for the future in its vision and mission statements as follows:

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 ESG and is registered on 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 characterised 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.

Structures

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. 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 AEC, EMU and Pearle*-Live Performance Europe. MusiQuE Board membership is designed to ensure that AEC representatives shall always constitute the majority. Therefore, with the Board’s minimum composition of five members, three are appointed from the AEC, one from EMU and one from Pearle*. In addition, a balance in terms of geographical origin and musical background is sought, both among the members appointed by AEC and across the Board as a whole.

The MusiQuE Board depends for its effective functioning on support provided between its meetings and during its reviews by two part-time MusiQuE staff, seconded by the AEC. In this arrangement, MusiQuE staff work as necessary to complete all tasks assigned and expected of them by the MusiQuE Board. Semi-annually, the Board determines with the AEC leadership the percentage of total time on task that staff have devoted to MusiQuE and then, by mutual agreement, reimburses the AEC for staff time, including benefits. Therefore, although staff are seconded to MusiQuE, it is

clear that in the course of carrying out MusiQuE responsibilities, staff are reporting only to the MusiQuE Board. The Review panel concludes that this arrangement meets two important objectives: financial sustainability (at least for the immediate future), and institutional autonomy for MusiQuE. Nonetheless, the Review Panel recommends some changes to staff compensation procedures that could assist AEC and MusiQuE maintain greater transparency within this arrangement (see closing section of this Report, “Recommendations”). MusiQuE staff responsibilities include preparing the Board meetings, ensuring that the Board decisions are implemented and coordinating review processes. A member of the MusiQuE staff will usually serve as secretary during MusiQuE reviews. The Board may also engage external individuals on a short-term basis to serve as secretaries for a specific review procedure in order to ensure that the overall workload of activities is manageable.

Activities

MusiQuE provides the following services:

- Quality enhancement reviews for institutions, programmes, and joint programmes
- Accreditation processes for institutions, programmes, and joint programmes
- Bilateral collaborations with national quality assurance and accreditation agencies
- Quality assurance desk which provides procedural assistance to interested and applicant institutions

Quality Enhancement Reviews for Institutions, Programmes and Joint Programmes

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

Accreditation Procedures for Institutions, Programmes and Joint Programmes

It is central to the rationale of MusiQuE that higher music education institutions should also have the opportunity to engage in formal accreditation procedures coordinated by it. This would mean that in countries where evaluation and accreditation bodies other than the national agency are authorised to operate, institutions could turn to MusiQuE as an alternative to the national process or combine a MusiQuE quality enhancement review with the national accreditation procedure required by law.

Bilateral collaborations with national quality assurance and accreditation agencies

An alternative to an accreditation process 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, which has been used in the French community of Belgium and Catalonia, is especially attractive for institutions wishing to engage in a subject-specific and internationally-based quality enhancement review but obliged to conform to national requirements that do not allow MusiQuE to conduct these processes on its own. The basis of such collaborative QA processes is that of a participation of equals. Both MusiQuE and the national quality assurance agencies have their own strengths, expertise and history; it makes obvious sense to combine these in a complementary way. Under these circumstances, the subject-specific and enhancement-oriented process is not an additional burden for the institution, over and above its national QA obligations, but it fulfils the two functions in one exercise. Any such process continues to be subject to the national legislative framework where the institution is located, and to other factors of suitability.

As part of the preparations for a collaborative process, a comparison is made between the national agency’s standards and 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 amongst members of the finally constituted panel will be subject to negotiation but, again, the guiding principle is one of equality between the partners.

Quality Assurance Desk for institutions

As a complement to the procedures operated by MusiQuE, its staff and experts also provide targeted assistance regarding quality assurance procedures to higher music education institutions. This service is not fee-paid or intended to provide consultative advice to institutions with regard to their operations and curricular offerings but rather to assist institutions with the MusiQuE application process. The main 'portal' to this service is the MusiQuE Quality Assurance Desk. The MusiQuE staff offers specific guidance in relation to MusiQuE tools/guidelines (including the MusiQuE Standards for Institutional, Programme and Joint Programme Review) and, where appropriate, provides references to sources on internal and external quality assurance. The MusiQuE staff also organises, upon request, a preparatory visit to explain how an institution can apply for a review undertaken by reviewers from the MusiQuE peer-reviewers Register. There is no aspect of this service that is evaluative or duplicates the evaluative aspects of the MusiQuE review process.

For most of the year, the Desk exists in 'virtual' form as a space on the MusiQuE website to respond to specific email queries. Services provided by the MusiQuE Quality Assurance Desk are also available at the AEC's Annual Congress and, by request, at the annual meetings of EMU and Pearle*. Delegates can bring their inquiries directly to the MusiQuE Board and staff in a face-to-face interaction, which can then be followed up by email, etc. if necessary.

5 Findings of the panel

5.1 ESG 2.1 - Consideration of internal quality assurance

STANDARD:

External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance described in Part 1 of the ESG.

GUIDELINES:

Quality assurance in higher education is based on the institutions' responsibility for the quality of their programmes and other provision; therefore it is important that external quality assurance recognises and supports institutional responsibility for quality assurance. To ensure the link between internal and external quality assurance, external quality assurance includes consideration of the standards of Part 1. These may be addressed differently, depending on the type of external quality assurance.

Findings of the panel

MusiQuE is dedicated to the continuous improvement of the quality of higher music education and, through its accreditation, quality enhancement and advisory services, to assisting higher music education institutions in their enhancement of quality. Its review framework has been designed in cooperation with the higher music education institutions and has been conceived as a support mechanism to the institutions' own quality assurance processes. In particular Standard 7 of its framework focuses on internal quality assurance (adapted according to whether it is the institution as a whole [IR], a programme [PR] or a joint programme [JPR] that is being reviewed):

- Standard 7 (IR): The institution has a strong internal quality culture, supported by clear and effective quality assurance and enhancement procedures.
- Standard 7 (PR & JPR): The programme has in place effective (joint) quality assurance and enhancement procedures.

In addition, other standards relate to the 10 standards mentioned in ESG Part 1. MusiQuE has carried out a mapping exercise showing the compliance of their Standards with those of the 2015 version of ESG Part 1. This mapping exercise makes it clear to the panel and to all of MusiQuE's reviewers that the ESG Part 1 are in place and thoroughly addressed by MusiQuE.

When MusiQuE organises joint assessments with other agencies, the assessment frameworks of both agencies are often merged into one. Based on experience, this does not pose any problems, as these are often quite compatible. MusiQuE helps to adapt the more general assessment frameworks national agencies use to the specificities of music education.

In order to draw the institutions' and the reviewers' attention to the ESG Part 1, a reference to this part and how the MusiQuE standards relate to it has been included in the MusiQuE document 'Background, Mission and Regulations' and in the template for the institution's self-evaluation report. MusiQuE has also decided to include an introduction to the ESG in its peer-reviewers' training sessions.

To conclude, the framework which has been designed, clearly addresses Part 1 of the ESG. However, the framework has not been fully implemented yet, as to date, MusiQuE has not conducted any assessments using the revised (May 2015) ESG. Therefore, at the time of the site

visit, it was not possible yet to provide evidence on the implementation of the recently revised ESG in MusiQuE's assessments. Nevertheless, the review panel remains confident that the 2015 version of the ESG's Part 1 will be fully implemented by MusiQuE.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that MusiQuE substantially complies with ESG 2.1 for all six activities.

5.2 ESG 2.2 - Designing methodologies fit for purpose

STANDARD:

External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.

GUIDELINES:

In order to ensure effectiveness and objectivity it is vital for external quality assurance to have clear aims agreed by stakeholders.

The aims, objectives and implementation of the processes will

- bear in mind the level of workload and cost that they will place on institutions;
- take into account the need to support institutions to improve quality;
- allow institutions to demonstrate this improvement;
- result in clear information on the outcomes and the follow-up.

The system for external quality assurance might operate in a more flexible way if institutions are able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their own internal quality assurance.

Findings of the panel

MusiQuE has been established, as described under chapters 3 and 4 of this report, because the higher music education sector felt the need to have external quality assurance procedures which are more fit for purpose than those of traditional national quality assurance agencies. The procedures that are used now are the result of a lengthy process involving higher music education institutions, both in the development of procedures and through several pilot assessments in different European countries. Their primary aim is to assist higher music education institutions to improve by providing them with a music-specific and internationally oriented review, with a focus on enhancement, and set against the mission of the institution under review.

Although MusiQuE's assessment frameworks do not differ fundamentally from those of national quality assurance agencies, some aspects of the assessment frameworks are defined more in detail, such as the importance of the involvement of the institution in the cultural life of its community and the ways to assess the quality of teaching and examinations (through visits to classes, examinations and concerts). Overall, higher music education institutions are enthusiastic about their fitness for purpose. This positive evaluation is expressed in surveys organised by AEC and later MusiQuE, as well as in the panel's meetings with institutions and reviewers. The primary advantages articulated by those interviewed during the site visit was the trust expressed in MusiQuE's expertise which results from the fact that it is a sector-based initiative which relies on the experience of the peer reviewers and focuses on relevant educational and assessment methods (one-to-one teaching, performances, etcetera). It is, therefore, important for MusiQuE to continue to monitor trends in the music profession and the higher music education sector in order to take those into account in

the reviews MusiQuE conducts and to contribute to the fitness for purpose of higher music education.

For example, music students graduating today find themselves needing to adapt to a career that will likely include part-time teaching, often at multiple institutions, perhaps developing a private teaching studio, along with performing in a variety of relatively small-budget orchestras, small (chamber) ensembles, bands and combos, and the occasional solo performance. Bundling these various activities into a successful career, referred to as a “portfolio career” is a change in the field that has been happening fairly recently, as full-time, salaried positions within professional ensembles and in teaching institutions become more competitive and far more scarce, and are replaced with more of these part-time, contractual arrangements. Because of the inclusion of teachers (EMU) and professional musicians (Pearle*) on its board, MusiQuE is in an excellent position to explore this changing outcome for conservatoire graduates and, over time, it may develop strategies that can address this challenging career circumstance.

In order to continue to guarantee the fitness for purpose of MusiQuE’s procedures and to take all these and any other relevant developments in higher music education and the music profession into account, stakeholder involvement is crucial. Therefore, MusiQuE invests time and effort to guarantee the active involvement of the higher music education institutions and sector organisations. The higher music education sector plays a crucial role in shaping the procedures now offered by MusiQuE, both through active participation in project work and the provision of feedback. On a structural level, music schools (EMU) and employers (Pearle*) are involved. Those organisations do not only suggest members for the Board of MusiQuE, they are also invited annually to suggest improvements in the procedures MusiQuE applies. The panel suggests that there should be a joint meeting of the AEC Executive Committee and the MusiQuE Board on a regular basis, to discuss areas of mutual interest, concern and opportunity. In turn, Pearle* and EMU representatives are encouraged to ensure that updates of their work on the MusiQuE board are shared at regular meetings of their respective organizations.

Other stakeholders such as students, alumni and representatives of the broader society are not yet involved in the design and continuous improvement of MusiQuE procedures. The panel recommends building upon the strong stakeholder involvement and widening its scope to include those stakeholders who have not yet been consulted on a structural basis.

MusiQuE’s procedures have been developed taking into account the workload and costs needed to apply them in small, specialist institutions. The workload required to prepare for the review is clearly presented to institutions and programmes before the review process starts. The costs of the process are kept to a minimum. As an independent agency, MusiQuE has to reflect the full cost of its operations in the prices charged. However, it has expressed the ambition to reflect the different levels of economic prosperity across Europe in the fees it charges to programmes and institutions.

In countries where higher music education institutions are required to be evaluated/audited/accredited by a national agency, MusiQuE offers the option for a joint assessment, in order to allow institutions to comply with national regulation, and at the same time benefit from the music-specific and international approach which MusiQuE provides. In each case of cooperation with a national agency, procedures are adjusted in order to ensure full compatibility with national regulations.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that MusiQuE fully complies with ESG 2.2 for all six activities.

5.3 ESG 2.3 - Implementing processes

STANDARD:

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include

- a self-assessment or equivalent;
- an external assessment normally including a site visit;
- a report resulting from the external assessment;
- a consistent follow-up.

GUIDELINES:

External quality assurance carried out professionally, consistently and transparently ensures its acceptance and impact.

Depending on the design of the external quality assurance system, the institution provides the basis for the external quality assurance through a self-assessment or by collecting other material including supporting evidence. The written documentation is normally complemented by interviews with stakeholders during a site visit. The findings of the assessment are summarised in a report (cf. Standard 2.5) written by a group of external experts (cf. Standard 2.4).

External quality assurance does not end with the report by the experts. The report provides clear guidance for institutional action. Agencies have a consistent follow-up process for considering the action taken by the institution. The nature of the follow-up will depend on the design of the external quality assurance.

Findings of the panel

All MusiQuE reviews are based on a self-assessment exercise carried out by the institution; an external assessment made by an expert panel and informed by a site visit and a report produced by the panel. All final reports of MusiQuE reviews are published on its website.

The ESG suggest that agencies should provide follow-up procedures for all reviews that contain any sort of recommendations. However, the extent to which MusiQuE follows up on the results of its reviews varies, depending on the kind of review undertaken. Although the self-evaluation report mentions that institutions are expected to respond whenever there are questions related to their partial compliance or non-compliance with a MusiQuE standard, this is only a requirement for accreditation reviews. In other cases, it is left up to the reviewed institution whether to request a follow-up or not. The review panel understands that it is difficult to impose a follow-up in the case of voluntary review. Nevertheless, the panel suggests including a kind of follow-up as an integral part of the review process. A policy of consistent follow-up, particularly with regard to the responses of institutions to areas requiring improvement was also one of the recommendations mentioned by stakeholders during the site visit of the peer review panel.

Although MusiQuE has had limited experience in conducting reviews, the processes have been extensively tested in the past and continuously improved upon by the AEC, now continued by MusiQuE. (See the comments provided on page 11, top of Section 4.5 of this Report for further explanation of this transition from AEC to MusiQuE). MusiQuE has developed detailed procedures which are thoroughly and clearly described in the MusiQuE framework document 'Background, Mission and Regulations' (BMR). Furthermore, templates have been developed for the self-evaluation report and for the review panel's report to encourage consistency. As a reinforcement of

consistency, the MusiQuE staff support panels in this respect, and it is one of the responsibilities of the MusiQuE Board to review reports from the perspective of consistency. Although the procedures are well designed, evidence regarding the consistency of MusiQuE's reviews is limited because MusiQuE is in the early stage of development.

Some reviewers suggested that MusiQuE should provide more guidance to higher music education institutions in the preparation of their self-evaluation reports. Indeed, they signalled major differences in the quality of self-evaluation reports. A first step taken by MusiQuE to offer this guidance is the development of a template for self-evaluation reports. MusiQuE is aware of the fact that further guidance is necessary.

For joint reviews with other agencies, an assessment is made of the compatibility of the two assessment frameworks and clear arrangements are made in order to integrate the procedures of the two quality assurance agencies. As a consequence, procedures differ depending on the partner agency but there is always a self-evaluation report, a site visit by peers and a public report. The existence of a follow-up procedure is in this case often based on national requirements. Based on the reviews which have been performed in cooperation with AEQES and AQU Catalunya, the panel found enough evidence that the key characteristics of MusiQuE's procedures are also present in joint reviews: domain specific experts, the focus on specific modes of delivery of music education and assessment and the use of international experts.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that MusiQuE substantially complies with ESG 2.3 for all six activities.

5.4 ESG 2.4 - Peer-review experts

STANDARD:

External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).

GUIDELINES:

At the core of external quality assurance is the wide range of expertise provided by peer experts, who contribute to the work of the agency through input from various perspectives, including those of institutions, academics, students and employers/professional practitioners.

In order to ensure the value and consistency of the work of the experts, they

- are carefully selected;
- have appropriate skills and are competent to perform their task;
- are supported by appropriate training and/or briefing.

The agency ensures the independence of the experts by implementing a mechanism of no conflict-of-interest.

The involvement of international experts in external quality assurance, for example as members of peer panels, is desirable as it adds a further dimension to the development and implementation of processes.

Findings of the panel

The expertise of its panels is one of the strengths of MusiQuE. This was confirmed by all stakeholders during the site visit. MusiQuE has established a register of peer reviewers. This register

takes the form of a database which includes reviewers' profiles and experience in the field of higher music education and quality assurance. There are published criteria for the selection of peer-reviewers. Interested individuals who meet those criteria (an appropriate qualification and recognised expertise in areas relevant to higher music education and broad knowledge of the teaching and learning models and methods relevant to higher music education) and who are willing to act as peer-reviewers fill in a template. The MusiQuE Board circulates an annual call for peer-reviewers across the AEC, EMU and Pearle* memberships, normally in connection with a training session on the day preceding the AEC General Assembly. MusiQuE can also recruit outside the AEC, EMU and Pearle* if a certain competence not otherwise available is needed. The Board evaluates the suitability of the applicant's profile based on the criteria as well as on the need to maintain a balanced Register (in terms of gender, geographical distribution, languages spoken, etc.).

The register is reviewed periodically. One of the requirements to become part of the register is that experts must complete a training session provided by MusiQuE. The register provides a clear added value when cooperating with national agencies, as those agencies often lack the network to find the most appropriate reviewers with domain specific expertise. Until now the register has included mainly music educators with an AEC background; it would be useful to involve EMU and Pearle* to also attract reviewers with specific expertise of the current job market for musicians.

MusiQuE organises a training session for peer reviewers annually, often the day before the annual AEC congress. The training of peer reviewers takes a full working day and combines information sessions and role-playing. Students are welcome - and invited - to join the training sessions. Some of them have already accepted the invitation and participated in the training session in 2014.

In order to keep track of the quality of reviewers a survey is organised at the end of every review. Reviewers and reviewed institutions are asked for feedback on the other review team members which can help to ensure that all team members have indeed performed their task in the best possible manner, and have abided by MusiQuE's Code of Conduct.

The composition of each panel is based on a proposal by the MusiQuE staff, taking into account the characteristics of the institution; the list is approved by the MusiQuE Board. Invited reviewers are requested to fill in a questionnaire aimed at ensuring there are no conflicts of interest. In cases where none are revealed, the invitation is confirmed. Given the international nature of MusiQuE, geographical balance is an important aspect of its reviews. MusiQuE indicates that review teams include only experts who are international in the context of the institution being reviewed. Because of this, the relevant language skills of experts also form an important consideration in the selection process.

Every panel includes a student from the country where the institution is situated, thus ensuring good local knowledge from the perspective of a 'consumer' of higher music education as it is delivered within the national context. While students are currently selected on a review-by-review basis, MusiQuE continues to consider new strategies for expanding the list of available student panellists by asking institutions to nominate students for training, raising awareness of quality assurance amongst them, or creating a student working group whose members might form a nucleus of individuals to be called upon. Currently, students may not have always completed a training session before participating in a review, which this review panel suggests needs to be addressed.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that MusiQuE fully complies with ESG 2.4 for all six activities.

5.5 ESG 2.5 - Criteria for outcomes

STANDARD:

Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

GUIDELINES:

External quality assurance and in particular its outcomes have a significant impact on institutions and programmes that are evaluated and judged.

In the interests of equity and reliability, outcomes of external quality assurance are based on predefined and published criteria, which are interpreted consistently and are evidence-based.

Findings of the panel

MusiQuE's standards constitute the explicit and published criteria against which the outcomes and judgements of its reviews are made. These standards are presented in three columns:

- the first column lists the Standards to be met for each type of review. There are 17 standards in total, distributed across eight primary domains of enquiry.
- the second column includes a series of questions relevant to the identification of good practice in the area of each 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. They also act as a guide to review panels as they explore how the institution has responded to each standard.
- the third and last column 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 this good practice.

The standards are published on MusiQuE's website. In its examination of the review reports, the MusiQuE Board pays particular attention to ensuring that the standards are applied consistently. The standards themselves are subject to continuous review. When changes are approved, these are also published on the website.

The outcomes of MusiQuE review procedures can be the following:

- 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, partially met or not met; the report also highlights strong points, and provides recommendations for improvement.
- In the case of an accreditation procedure, the report will conclude with an accreditation decision as follows:
 - o Accredited
 - o Conditionally accredited
 - o 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).

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

As indicated before, in joint reviews with national quality assurance agencies, procedures are adapted and integrated into a common review framework, which is communicated to the programmes or institutions under review.

Overall, reviewers and institutions under review approve the information and guidance they receive from MusiQuE.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that MusiQuE fully complies with ESG 2.5 for all six activities.

5.6 ESG 2.6 - Reporting

STANDARD:

Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

GUIDELINES:

The report by the experts is the basis for the institution's follow-up action of the external evaluation and it provides information to society regarding the activities of an institution. In order for the report to be used as the basis for action to be taken, it needs to be clear and concise in its structure and language and to cover

- context description (to help locate the higher education institution in its specific context);
- description of the individual procedure, including experts involved;
- evidence, analysis and findings;
- conclusions;
- features of good practice, demonstrated by the institution;
- recommendations for follow-up action.

The preparation of a summary report may be useful.

The factual accuracy of a report is improved if the institution is given the opportunity to point out errors of fact before the report is finalised.

Findings of the panel

For MusiQuE reviews, reports are drafted by a MusiQuE staff member who serves as the panel secretary and is responsible for ensuring that the reports are clear to a readership not involved in the review process and in line with MusiQuE processes, for example in providing evidence-based findings. The reports must cover all the points listed in the guidelines. Institutions are given the opportunity to comment on the factual accuracy of a report and, where appropriate, adjustments are made.

Reports are submitted to the MusiQuE Board for a check of consistency. Once approved, final review reports are published in full on the MusiQuE website. All review reports produced since 2007 are based on the same reporting template in order to ensure consistency.

Reports are in most cases published in English, but if an institution requests it, reviews can be conducted in French or German. The panel appreciates that institutions can request a review in a language other than English. Such a practice might be helpful for institutions across the EU. Nevertheless, taking into account the international ambition of MusiQuE, the review panel suggests

that such reports should also be made accessible to an international public, e.g. by providing a summary in English.

The primary target audience is the members of the reviewed institution. Thus, reports are crafted with attention to detail and include numerous recommendations. Reviewed institutions are generally positive about the quality of the reports. MusiQuE indicates that the reports can also be read and used by other stakeholders without alteration or abbreviation (students, representatives of national governments, representatives of the music profession), and, therefore, there is no current intention to produce other reports oriented towards other target groups - such as summary reports. Based on its review of several reports and discussions with several stakeholders, the panel is not convinced that the review reports are easily accessible to the broader public. The panel suggests that MusiQuE consider options that would make reports more accessible for students and the broader public. One such option, discussed with MusiQuE during the site visit, was to publish an executive summary.

Evaluation questionnaires received from reviewed institutions and reviewers have pointed out the delay in the production of some of the review reports, especially in cases where the secretary is seconded from AEC staff. MusiQuE is aware of this issue and expects that the situation will improve once MusiQuE staff are able to focus on procedures more than on MusiQuE's establishment and external review. Taking into account the limited available human resources (see ESG 3.5), this problem, however, might continue to occur in the future.

In the case of procedures undertaken jointly with national agencies, reports are often structured according to those agencies' own templates, therefore the responsibility for writing the reports will vary from case to case. Those differences can lead to differences in quality of the reports as MusiQuE indicated during the site visit. With some agencies, panel members are asked to write the report. In other cases, an internal or external secretary writes the report. In the case of an external secretary, it is important to invest in a good briefing of the secretary in order to assure the quality of the reports.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that MusiQuE substantially complies with ESG 2.6 for all six activities.

5.7 ESG 2.7 - Complaints and appeals

STANDARD:

Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.
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GUIDELINES:

In order to safeguard the rights of the institutions and ensure fair decision-making, external quality assurance is operated in an open and accountable way. Nevertheless, there may be misapprehensions or instances of dissatisfaction about the process or formal outcomes.

Institutions need to have access to processes that allow them to raise issues of concern with the agency; the agencies, need to handle such issues in a professional way by means of a clearly defined process that is consistently applied.

A complaints procedure allows an institution to state its dissatisfaction about the conduct of the process or those carrying it out.

In an appeals procedure, the institution questions the formal outcomes of the process, where it can demonstrate that the outcome is not based on sound evidence, that criteria have not been correctly applied or that the processes have not been consistently implemented.

Findings of the panel

MusiQuE has described extensive procedures for dealing with both complaints and appeals, but up to now, no complaints or appeals have been brought by any of the institutions under review.

Complaints may arise when aspects of the process are felt by the institution to be at variance either with MusiQuE's own description of its procedures or with the 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 from the MusiQuE Board. The complaint procedure would not be applied in cases where the real cause of concern is the accreditation decision, except where it is the sincere belief of the institution that an inappropriate judgment has been reached as a direct result of a departure from MusiQuE's own procedures or from the ESG. All complaints will be given full consideration by the MusiQuE Board. 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.

For accreditation procedures, an appeal procedure is also in place. Appeals may arise when an institution believes that an unfair or inappropriate judgment has been reached and where the institution has exhausted all other means of obtaining what it sees as a just outcome. The various provisions for reviewing the judgements of review teams should mean that an appeal represents an action of last resort. In case of an appeal, the MusiQuE Board activates the Appeals Committee by alerting the standing committee member and appointing a second member with appropriate expertise to deal with the appeal. The Board receives the decision of the Appeals Committee and takes the formal decision on its approval or otherwise; it then communicates the result of the appeal to the institution.

Should MusiQuE receive a complaint or appeal, it is clear from the guidelines outlined in the "Background, Mission and Regulations" document that appropriate procedures are in place to deal with them, and that special attention will be given to identifying any possible adjustments and improvements that might be introduced into the relevant procedure.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that MusiQuE fully complies with ESG 2.7 for all six activities.

5.8 ESG 3.1 - Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

STANDARD:

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.

GUIDELINES:

To ensure the meaningfulness of external quality assurance, it is important that institutions and the public trust agencies.

Therefore, the goals and objectives of the quality assurance activities are described and published along with the nature of interaction between the agencies and relevant stakeholders in higher education, especially the higher education institutions, and the scope of the agencies' work. The

expertise in the agency may be increased by including international members in agency committees.

A variety of external quality assurance activities are carried out by agencies to achieve different objectives. Among them are evaluation, review, audit, assessment, accreditation or other similar activities at programme or institutional level that may be carried out differently. When the agencies also carry out other activities, a clear distinction between external quality assurance and their other fields of work is needed.

Findings of the panel

MusiQuE complies fully with ESG 2.2, 2.4, 2.5 and 2.7 and it complies substantially with ESG 2.1, 2.3 and 2.6. Although the panel identifies some areas for improvement in relation to Part 2 of the ESG, the panel is convinced that the external quality assurance activities of MusiQuE satisfactorily take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance processes described in Part 2 of the ESG.

Each of MusiQuE's procedures have explicit goals and objectives which, taken as a whole, support the overall mission of MusiQuE. Both this mission and the objectives of individual procedures are publicly available on the MusiQuE website, in its documentation and in a flyer which explains how MusiQuE functions and what its benefits are for the higher music education sector, institutions and students.

MusiQuE builds upon the experience of AEC which organised 29 reviews between 2008 and 2014. MusiQuE itself has the ambition to regularly carry out institutional and programme reviews at the request of individual institutions. Until now, MusiQuE has been involved in the organisation of five reviews. It conducted one Institutional Quality Enhancement Review and was involved in the evaluation of four higher music education institutions in Belgium, organised by AEQES. For 2016, five reviews are planned in The Netherlands: MusiQuE has been asked by four conservatoires to conduct a cluster accreditation of music bachelor programmes, and the School for Young Talent of the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague has requested a Quality Enhancement Review.

The reviews MusiQuE organises are requested voluntarily by the institutions. As a result, MusiQuE is fully dependent on the number of institutions willing to engage MusiQuE for their external quality assurance. Although a number of institutions are interested in doing so, at the time of the site visit it was made clear to the review panel that the demand on the part of institutions for reviews in the future would depend on admission to EQAR. Indeed, registration on the European Quality Assurance Register will allow institutions in a number of countries to engage MusiQuE instead of the national quality assurance agency, rather than in addition to it, as is currently the case. Because of this, the Board is convinced that MusiQuE will be in high demand and engaged regularly to perform reviews within the higher music education sector.

As already stated, the involvement of the music education sector and the professional field in the governance of MusiQuE has been fundamental since its conception. In addition to the AEC, EMU and Pearle* have nominated members to the MusiQuE Board. Nevertheless, next to representation on the MusiQuE Board, the review panel suggests that it would be beneficial to have regular formal meetings between MusiQuE and its partners and other stakeholders. Stakeholders such as students, alumni and other representatives of the broader society are not yet involved in the governance of MusiQuE. The review panel noted that it might be advisable to involve students in serving on the MusiQuE Board; during the site visit, board members seemed amenable to this suggestion.

The experts MusiQuE engages for its peer review panels are mainly originating from the higher music education sector. Student involvement is also guaranteed. In the peer review panels, generally no other stakeholders, such as professional practitioners, are involved.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that MusiQuE substantially complies with ESG 3.1 for all six activities.

5.9 ESG 3.2 - Official status

STANDARD:

Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognised as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.

GUIDELINES:

In particular when external quality assurance is carried out for regulatory purposes, institutions need to have the security that the outcomes of this process are accepted within their higher education system, by the state, the stakeholders and the public.

Findings of the panel

MusiQuE has been 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. The statutes registered in The Hague spell out in detail MusiQuE's status and mission as a quality assurance agency.

The review procedures conducted by MusiQuE have been recognised in a number of contexts at the national and international level:

- By the Walloon Government (Belgium), in the case of the procedures jointly undertaken with AEQES in 2014;
- MusiQuE has been listed as an evaluation body recognised by the Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie (NVAO).

Agreements with the Agenzia Nazionale di Valutazione del Sistema Universitario e della Ricerca (ANVUR) and with the Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung Austria (AQ Austria) are currently being negotiated.

In a number of countries formal recognition of MusiQuE by (national) public authorities depends on the registration on EQAR. Registration on EQAR will therefore in itself contribute to solidifying the formal recognition of MusiQuE. As mentioned before, this formal recognition will allow higher music education institutions to engage MusiQuE in order to obtain an officially recognised accreditation decision instead of the accreditation provided by national quality assurance agencies.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that MusiQuE fully complies with ESG 3.2 for all six activities.

5.10 ESG 3.3 - Independence

STANDARD:

Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.

GUIDELINES:

Autonomous institutions need independent agencies as counterparts.

In considering the independence of an agency the following are important:

- Organisational independence, demonstrated by official documentation (e.g. instruments of government, legislative acts or statutes of the organisation) that stipulates the independence of the agency's work from third parties, such as higher education institutions, governments and other stakeholder organisations;
- Operational independence: the definition and operation of the agency's procedures and methods as well as the nomination and appointment of external experts are undertaken independently from third parties such as higher education institutions, governments and other stakeholders;
- Independence of formal outcomes: while experts from relevant stakeholder backgrounds, particularly students, take part in quality assurance processes, the final outcomes of the quality assurance processes remain the responsibility of the agency.

Anyone contributing to external quality assurance activities of an agency (e.g. as expert) is informed that while they may be nominated by a third party, they are acting in a personal capacity and not representing their constituent organisations when working for the agency. Independence is important to ensure that any procedures and decisions are solely based on expertise.

Findings of the panel

It is clear to the Review Panel that MusiQuE is an autonomous, independent foundation (See comments on page 11, section 4.5 of this Report.). MusiQuE builds on the extensive experience in quality assurance which AEC has built over the past decade, often in cooperation with the international Polifonia network. MusiQuE clearly benefits from the support for a subject-specific quality assurance agency in the field of music which has been built over this period of time. The continuity in the leadership which established quality assurance activities within AEC and now within MusiQuE is a strong asset for MusiQuE. This continuity exists on the level of the MusiQuE Board, AEC and MusiQuE staff and reviewers.

Taking into account that MusiQuE has grown organically out of the sector, independence has been considered with great care in the establishment of the agency and the formalisation of its statutes. While involving stakeholders in its governance, the panel is satisfied that MusiQuE has the necessary safeguards in place to guarantee its operational independence. Based on the information the panel received and the discussions it had with the different stakeholders, it has no indication that MusiQuE's actions are influenced by public administrations, higher education institutions, external stakeholders, or any individual with direct interest in higher education.

On the level of organisational independence, it was decided to create a fully separate legal entity and to involve a broad set of stakeholders in its governance. The legal form is that of a foundation, as opposed to an association, since the latter has members and this may have created a conflict of interest between MusiQuE and AEC. The foundation has AEC, EMU and Pearle* as founding partners. These organisations are also in charge of proposing members for the MusiQuE Board. The MusiQuE Board is fully independent from all three partner organisations and has full decision-making power concerning MusiQuE activities and finances. Although the panel appreciates that already three organisations demonstrate a strong engagement with MusiQuE, it suggests broadening further its constituency to ensure that all stakeholders are involved in the development of MusiQuE.

On the level of operational independence, the definition and operation of MusiQuE's procedures and methods are undertaken independently from third parties. Also the nomination and appointment of

external experts is carried out autonomously by MusiQuE, through its staff and Board working in cooperation and according to the criteria laid down in the MusiQuE framework document 'Background, Mission and Regulations'. Due to the international nature of MusiQuE, it can easily appoint experts from multiple jurisdictions.

Until now, the MusiQuE staff works on the basis of secondment arrangements with AEC. All records, documentation, computer files, etcetera are kept separately from those of AEC. The panel appreciates that these measures guarantee operational independence. This construction appears to be working well at this stage of MusiQuE's development. As the workload of MusiQuE increases over time, it will be necessary to develop alternative strategies for appointing and deploying staff that can fully meet its operational workload and reinforce its autonomy vis-à-vis AEC.

Also, independence on the level of the review outcomes is guaranteed. Review team members fill in and sign a questionnaire so that any conflict of interest can be identified; they also commit to respecting the MusiQuE code of conduct, which include both references to independence in relation to the institution under review, in the past, the present and the near future.

Reports are written by the secretary, under the direction of the review team. The institution has the opportunity to comment on factual errors. Once the report has been revised in the light of any factual issues raised by the institution, the Board has the responsibility for its formal approval. This is especially important in the context of reviews that conclude with formal accreditation decisions. Thus, the final outcomes of the quality assurance processes remain the responsibility of MusiQuE itself. At the end of the review procedure, institutions receive a letter signed by the MusiQuE Board informing them about the final outcomes of the procedure.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that MusiQuE fully complies with ESG 3.3 for all six activities.

5.11 ESG 3.4 - Thematic analysis

STANDARD:

Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.
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GUIDELINES:

In the course of their work, agencies gain information on programmes and institutions that can be useful beyond the scope of a single process, providing material for structured analyses across the higher education system. These findings can contribute to the reflection on and the improvement of quality assurance policies and processes in institutional, national and international contexts.

A thorough and careful analysis of this information will show developments, trends and areas of good practice or persistent difficulty.

Findings of the panel

As a subject-specific quality assurance agency, MusiQuE is well placed to publish reports with information about developments, trends, emerging good practice and areas of persistent difficulty or weakness in music education. Sharing best practices and participating in the public debate are indeed also stated as objectives in MusiQuE's mission statement.

A first report was produced as a result of a study conducted by the ‘Polifonia’ Working Group on Quality Enhancement, Accreditation and Benchmarking: each working group member was asked to read three review reports produced between 2008 and 2012 by AEC and to identify trends and comment on the quality of the reports. This analytical report provided valuable feedback on the processes which were new at the time, and were in need of close scrutiny. So, the focus of this report is mainly oriented towards the analysis of how procedures are implemented, and less towards a real thematic analysis, which is the focus of Standard 3.4, although this report identifies some elements of a thematic analysis.

A second report has taken the form of a trend analysis reviewing a cross-section of procedures undertaken between 2010 and 2013. This trend analysis is based on findings from ten review reports on music higher education evaluations from 2010-2013. Four of these were institutional reviews conducted according to the AEC Quality Enhancement Process and six were accreditation procedures undertaken jointly by the relevant national agency and the AEC. This trend analysis report focuses more than the first one on trends in higher music education. MusiQuE plans to publish such a report every two years.

In addition, the MusiQuE Board identifies good practices each time a report is considered in order to refer to them in its annual report. This way, it builds these good practices into a valuable published resource.

In addition to thematic analysis, the AEC and later MusiQuE staff have disseminated information about their sector-based quality assurance activities at such events as the annual European Quality Assurance Forum, “The Future of Higher Education - Bologna Process Researchers’ Conference (FOHE-BPRC)”, the ENQA/INQAAHE conference on labels (both in 2011), and the AQ-Austria conference (2014).

The peer review panel encourages MusiQuE to build on its first thematic analysis and continue to provide the higher music education sector and broader society with regular reports on the state of higher music education, best practices and common challenges.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that MusiQuE substantially complies with ESG 3.4 for all six activities.

5.12 ESG 3.5 - Resources

STANDARD:
Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.

GUIDELINES:

It is in the public interest that agencies are adequately and appropriately funded, given higher education’s important impact on the development of societies and individuals. The resources of the agencies enable them to organise and run their external quality assurance activities in an effective and efficient manner. Furthermore, the resources enable the agencies to improve, to reflect on their practice and to inform the public about their activities.

Findings of the panel

MusiQuE aims to be self-sustaining financially. During the preparation of the establishment of a separate quality assurance agency, which stretched roughly from late 2011 to early 2014, a thorough market analysis has been conducted. This exercise also included the volume of activity likely to be developed and the prices that might realistically be applied to MusiQuE's procedure. The exercise shows that the potential for growth is strong.

MusiQuE does not have other sources of income; therefore, sustainability must be achieved through review fees. In developing a business plan, the assumption was made that five reviews per year would be realistic and allow MusiQuE to meet its expenses. Based on this number, a minimum price per review was set to be viable as a self-sustaining organisation. This price is based on a very low cost structure. The review panel is not fully convinced that this low cost structure is viable in the long run. The budgeted staff time is limited and nearly no overhead costs are budgeted. The review panel therefore suggests that MusiQuE reconsider the long-term budget, taking into account all expenses necessary to establish MusiQuE as a fully independent quality assurance agency with a sustainable scale of activities. In this budget explicit attention should be paid to the necessary resources that would enable MusiQuE to improve, to reflect on its practice and to inform the public about its activities. In developing its price structure for reviews, the panel recommends applying for a ruling with the Belgian tax administration about the need to include VAT in its pricing structure.

MusiQuE has a flexible approach to pricing which is responsive to local situations. Review fees are determined for each case, starting from a number of standard unit costs, but adjusting these according to a number of factors, such as the scope of the review (size of the institution, number of programmes to be reviewed), the number of reviewers involved in the review team and the length of the site visit. MusiQuE aims to further develop its pricing strategy, in order to also adapt the price of a review to the gross national income of the country where the institution is situated.

To gain market share it is important for MusiQuE to make its added value even more explicit. MusiQuE has built a group of enthusiastic supporters who are fully convinced of the added value of international quality enhancement external reviews and who are therefore willing to pay for the services provided by MusiQuE. A market analysis conducted by MusiQuE suggests that there is a broader potential for its services. The challenge will, nevertheless, be to convert this potential in a continuous flow of requests from institutions who are willing to pay for MusiQuE's reviews.

In conversations with national agency representatives at the time of the site visit, it was clear that there is considerable interest among several of the EU countries to adopt MusiQuE as the designated accreditation reviewer once it has achieved EQAR status. That sentiment greatly enhances MusiQuE's prospects for financial viability.

A challenge for all the quality assurance agencies that depend on voluntary participation is the fluctuation in the number of reviews to be organised in any given fiscal year. To date, MusiQuE's cost structure is flexible, due to the secondment agreement with the AEC, which allows it to easily reduce or increase the available staff time, depending on the number of procedures in a given year. In light of the independence and self-sustainability of MusiQuE, the review panel does not see this as an ideal long-term situation. It therefore recommends that MusiQuE should build in a sufficient margin above the actual costs of each review to ensure that there is a financial reserve to cope with varying workload within the organisation (cf. ESG 3.3).

The creation of a subject-based quality assurance agency for music is something behind which the sector, represented by the AEC and its membership, has thrown its wholehearted commitment. The set-up costs have been explicitly approved as an element of AEC expenditure for 2014 and 2015.

MusiQuE expects to be able to generate sufficient income to reach self-sustainability from 2016 onwards, as it has already been approached to conduct several review procedures in that year.

In the course of the site visit, therefore, it became clear that it would be in MusiQuE's best interests if it could acquire a financial arrangement with the AEC and/or EMU and Pearle* that would ensure that MusiQuE could continue its work into 2016 and perhaps into 2017, in the (unlikely) event that some of the reviews for these initial years of its operation did not materialise. Such a guarantee can best ensure MusiQuE's financial viability, at least in the short term.

Overall, the review panel greatly appreciates the fact that the AEC has financed the set-up costs of MusiQuE and it is convinced of the potential of MusiQuE to become financially self-sustaining. In fact, MusiQuE has been approached by several institutions to perform reviews in the next academic year, though no contracts had been signed yet and no commitments had been secured for a financial contribution from the founding partners as of January 2016. Therefore, the review panel assesses MusiQuE at the moment of the review to only partially comply with the Standard 3.5.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that MusiQuE partially complies with ESG 3.5 for all six activities.

5.13 ESG 3.6 - Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

STANDARD:

Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.

GUIDELINES:

Agencies need to be accountable to their stakeholders. Therefore, high professional standards and integrity in the agency's work are indispensable. The review and improvement of their activities are on-going so as to ensure that their services to institutions and society are optimal.

Agencies apply an internal quality assurance policy which is available on its website. This policy

- ensures that all persons involved in its activities are competent and act professionally and ethically;
- includes internal and external feedback mechanisms that lead to a continuous improvement within the agency;
- guards against intolerance of any kind or discrimination;
- outlines the appropriate communication with the relevant authorities of those jurisdictions where they operate;
- ensures that any activities carried out and material produced by subcontractors are in line with the ESG, if some or all of the elements in its quality assurance activities are subcontracted to other parties;
- allows the agency to establish the status and recognition of the institutions with which it conducts external quality assurance.

Findings of the panel

All relevant documents and procedures are published on MusiQuE's website (www.musique-qe.eu). A separate chapter of the MusiQuE framework document 'Background, Mission and Regulations' sets

out the procedures, both internal and external, that have been developed to ensure high standards, integrity and accountability to MusiQuE's stakeholders.

In terms of the competence and professionalism of those involved in its activities, there are clear criteria for the qualities needed and the processes of selection to be followed for Board members and Review Team members.

Feedback is gathered on a regular basis and is a part of each review. The peer reviewers are asked to comment on their fellow panelists. Questionnaires are systematically distributed and the results are considered by the MusiQuE Board. Annually, the three founding partner organisations are asked to submit suggestions for improvement. Reviewers and representatives of higher music education institutions indicated during the site visit that the inputs they provide lead to improvements in the work of MusiQuE.

Furthermore, an external evaluator has been appointed with the task of reviewing material that documents MusiQuE's activity, especially the annual report and to monitor the compatibility of the system with the ESG. The evaluator is independent of the operations of MusiQuE and may come from within or outside the music education sector. The external evaluator is appointed for two years and in charge of producing an annual report with comments addressed to the Board.

When working with other quality assurance agencies, the first step MusiQuE takes is to perform a feasibility study, including an investigation of the agency's practice to ensure that they are in line with the ESG and compatible with MusiQuE's procedures. Confirmation of this is an important prerequisite for MusiQuE to conduct a common review.

Members of review teams are required to sign a code of conduct. As MusiQuE operates in a broad range of cultural contexts, and will ultimately involve the work of many reviewers, board members, and staff. Given that there are many stakeholders and institutions to be involved, the panel recommends that MusiQuE further expand its current code of conduct, which, though adequate for its first year or two of operation, needs to cover additional contingencies that all accreditation agencies potentially encounter. The current Code of Conduct mainly focuses on appropriate behaviours of review panel members. Topics which may be tackled in such a code of values are how to deal with gifts by the institution under review, etcetera. MusiQuE might consider further expanding its current Code of Conduct

Conclusion

The panel concludes that MusiQuE fully complies with ESG 3.6 for all six activities.

5.14 ESG 3.7 - Cyclical external review of agencies

STANDARD:
Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.

GUIDELINES:

A periodic external review will help the agency to reflect on its policies and activities. It provides a means for assuring the agency and its stakeholders that it continues to adhere to the principles enshrined in the ESG.

Findings of the panel

This is the first time that MusiQuE requests a review. Its application to EQAR implies that it will comply with all its requirements, including a cyclical review.

MusiQuE is committed to continuous improvement, as stated in its Vision Statement. As part of this commitment, MusiQuE will submit itself to external review every five years. Additionally MusiQuE decided to submit itself to a bi-annual review of its activities by an external evaluator.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that MusiQuE fully complies with ESG 3.7 for all six activities.

6 Conclusion

In the light of the documentary and oral evidence considered, the review panel is of the opinion that MusiQuE fully complies with eight Standards, substantially complies with five standards and partially complies with ESG 3.5 (Resources). The panel is convinced, however, that MusiQuE has the opportunity to strengthen its financial sustainability over time. Therefore it recommends that the EQAR Register Committee accept MusiQuE's application.

Below is a summary of the recommendations that have been noted in this report. Included are some additional recommendations that MusiQuE might consider that will further strengthen this relatively new organisation as it moves forward into its activities as a recognised quality enhancement and accreditation agency.

7 Recommendations

In the course of its discussions, the review panel had occasion to develop suggestions that were thought to be useful to the MusiQuE Board as it continued to develop its best practices, processes and methodologies. Most are alluded to in the body of this report, but they are all collected here for easy reference. These are not intended to suggest concerns any deeper than those delineated in the report. These recommendations are not related to the conclusions with regard to the review panel's decisions on compliance. Rather, they are offered as helpful suggestions, as MusiQuE embarks on its journey to refine its strategies in line with its intent to always offer a service that is of significant value to its constituents.

- In order to build on connections and collaborations with its various stakeholders, the review panel suggests that MusiQuE:
 - Organise joint meetings of the AEC Executive Committee and the MusiQuE Board on a regular basis, to discuss areas of mutual interest, concern and opportunity.
 - Ensure that Pearle* and EMU provide updates of their work on the MusiQuE board at regular meetings of their respective organizations.
 - Add a student member to its Board, to ensure that there are the strongest possible ties with, and robust input from this vitally important consumer sector.
 - Involve EMU and Pearle* in the provision of reviewers for the reviewer register in order to also attract those with specific expertise within the current job market for musicians.
 - As it moves forward, continue to consider involving other stakeholders, such as alumni, national and professional arts organisations and other representatives of the broader society as it continues to refine and update the design and continuous improvement of its procedures.

All of the above will help the MusiQuE Board to monitor trends in the music profession, improve communication among all sectors, and ensure that programmatic changes are implemented by broad consensus, whenever necessary and deemed appropriate.

- As the board has learned from its own internal evaluation process, MusiQuE can assist institutions by ensuring that the quality of self-evaluation reports are consistent. To that end, MusiQuE could implement more complete and thorough training and guidance for all institutional representatives serving as self-evaluation report primary authors and compilers.
- MusiQuE should make a concerted effort to broaden the number of students included on its register of qualified reviewers, and ensure that all student-members successfully complete a training session before they participate in a peer review.
- MusiQuE is urged to formulate a process that ensures even greater consistency with regard to follow-up. This could be achieved by establishing specific guidelines and timetables for

institutional responses to reviewers' reports, whether these are quality enhancement reviews, or accreditation reviews.

- MusiQuE should consider options that would make reports more accessible to a broader public. One such option discussed at the site visit was to publish a shorter executive summary of the report in English and perhaps in the national language as well.
- MusiQuE is encouraged to implement its plans to publish bi-annual reports on the state of higher music education, best practices and common challenges.
- With the goal of helping MusiQuE achieve greater financial stability and sustainability, the review panel recommends that the board consider taking the following steps:
 - Work out a method of continuing financial support or a guarantee of such support from the AEC or other stakeholders, so that MusiQuE can be assured of continuing its work through 2016, and perhaps 2017 as well, should any of the currently scheduled reviews be delayed, cancelled or not materialise for whatever reason.
 - Develop a financial and contractual arrangement with AEC for the compensation (and benefits) of support staff that is transparent and clear, that more clearly reflects the time devoted to MusiQuE activities, and that will, therefore, appropriately reflect the autonomy of MusiQuE.
 - As its workload increases over time, MusiQuE might wish to develop alternative strategies for appointing and deploying staff that can fully meet its operations and continue its autonomy with respect to its relationship with the AEC.
 - Apply for a ruling with the Belgian tax administration to determine whether it needs to include VAT in its pricing structure.

In general, and to ensure that it has an overview of its financial needs and expectations, MusiQuE is urged to develop a comprehensive business plan that accounts for whatever the organisation will require for building a contingency fund, which can happen due to a lean year for procedures, whether due to delays, tabled procedures, and etc. In this budget MusiQuE should also pay explicit attention to the necessary resources that would enable MusiQuE to improve, to reflect on its practice and to inform the public about its activities.

- MusiQuE could make its added value even more explicit by considering additional marketing strategies that can assist them in convincing the broadest possible segment of its target audience of the added value of MusiQuE's services.
- MusiQuE might consider further expanding its current Code of Conduct, in order to cover additional contingencies that all accreditation agencies can potentially encounter.

8 Annexes

8.1 Annex - Site visit schedule

Wednesday July 1st 2015

09.00-11:00 Private Review Panel meeting / materials review

11:00-12:00 MusiQuE Staff - Clarification questions

- Linda Messas
- Jef Cox

12:00-12:45 Lunch

12:45-14:15 Meeting with MusiQuE Board

- Martin Prchal, Chair of the MusiQuE Board; Vice-Principal at the Royal Conservatoire, University of Arts The Hague, Netherlands
- Christopher Caine, Secretary of the MusiQuE Board; Programme Leader BMus and Head of International Programmes at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, UK
- Helena Maffli, MusiQuE Board member; President of the European Music Schools Union (EMU)
- Geza Kovacs, MusiQuE Board member; 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
- Mist Thorkelsdottir, MusiQuE Board member, former Chair of AEC Quality Enhancement Committee; Head of Department at the Academy of Music and Drama at the University of Gothenburg

14:15-14:30 Break

14:30-16:00 Meeting with AEC, EMU and Pearle*-Live Performance Europe representatives

- Pascale De Groote, AEC President; Vice-Chancellor at AP Artesis Plantijn University College Antwerpen
- Georg Schulz, AEC Vice-President, Associate Professor Kunstuniversität Graz
- Jeremy Cox, AEC Chief Executive
- Stefan Gies, former member of AEC Quality Enhancement Committee, Professor of Pedagogy at the Hochschule für Musik Dresden; Chair of the Polifonia Working Group on Quality Assurance and Accreditation (2011-2014); Chair of the AEC FULL SCORE Evaluation Working Group (2014-2017)
- Timo Klemettinen, EMU Managing Director
- Anita Debaere, Pearle* Director

16:00-16:15 Break

16:15-17:45 Meeting with reviewers

- Gustav Djüpsjöbacka, Artistic rector of the Sibelius Academy Helsinki (Chaired Reykjavik 2012, Prague 2014 and wrote the trend analysis 2010-2013)

- Ingrid Hanken, Associate Professor in Pedagogy at the Norwegian Academy of Music (Reviewer for Prague 2014, chaired Wroclaw and Krakow reviews, reviewer for Groningen 2008)
- Maarten Weyler, Head of the Music Department of the School of Arts Ghent (Reviewer for AEQES-MusiQuE reviews of 4 Conservatoires in Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles 2014-2015)
- Orla McDonagh, Head of Faculty for Musicianship, Royal Irish Academy of Music (Reviewer for Reykjavik 2012 and member of Polifonia WG3)
- Terrell Stone, President of the Early Music Department and International Relations Coordinator for the Conservatory at the Conservatory in Vicenza (Reviewer for ESMUC 2014 and member of Polifonia WG3)
- Ondrej Danek, Master Student in Music Management, Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts JAMU in Brno (Student reviewer for Prague 2014)
- Antoine Gillieron, Master en interprétation spécialisée, musique contemporaine (piano), Hochschule für Musik, Basel (Student reviewer for Brussels 2014 and Liège 2015)
- Jacques Moreau, Director, CEFEDM Rhône-Alpes, Lyon (Chair of AEQES-MusiQuE reviews of the 4 conservatoires in Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles) (via Skype)

19:00-22:00 Private Review Panel dinner

Thursday July 2nd 2015

9:00 - 10:00 Meeting with MusiQuE staff

- Linda Messas
- Jef Cox
- Celia Duffy, externally hired secretary for ESMUC review 2014

10:00 - 10:15 Break

10:15 - 11:45 Meeting with representatives of reviewed institutions/programmes

- Bernard Lanskey, Director of the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, National University of Singapore (Singapore 2010, institutional review)
- Frederic De Roos, Director of Royal Conservatoire of Brussels (Brussels 2014, joint review AEQES-MusiQuE)
- Ingeborg Radok Zádna, Vice-Dean for International Relations and Art Activity, Prague Academy of Performing Arts, Music and Dance Faculty (Prague 2014, institutional review)
- Melissa Mercadal, Director and Professor of the Interuniversity Master Program in Music Therapy (idEC-UPF), Coordinator of Research and Master Programs and of Research Group "Music & Creation" at ESMUC (Barcelona 2014, review with AQU Catalunya)
- Henk van der Meulen, Head of the Royal Conservatoire of The Hague (The Hague 2012, accreditation procedure recognized by NVAO)

11:45 - 12:00 Meeting with Jeremy Cox, CEO of AEC

12:00 - 13:00 Meeting with representatives of agencies with which MusiQuE has undertaken joint collaborative reviews

- Caty Duykaerts, Head of the Executive Unit of the Agency for Evaluation of Higher Education Quality in the French Community of Belgium (AEQES)
- Eva Jaroszewski, Attachée at AEQES

- Nuria Comet, Project manager and head of internal quality assurance, Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency (AQU Catalunya)
- Nel Göbel, Senior auditor at the Netherlands Quality Agency (NQA)

13:00 - 14:00 Lunch break

14:00 - 14:30 Private Review Panel meeting

14:30 - 15:00 Meeting with MusiQuE Board

- Martin Prchal, Chair of the MusiQuE Board; Vice-Principal at the Royal Conservatoire, University of Arts The Hague, Netherlands
- Christopher Caine, Secretary of the MusiQuE Board; Programme Leader BMus and Head of International Programmes at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, UK
- Helena Maffli, MusiQuE Board member; President of the European Music Schools Union (EMU)
- Geza Kovacs, MusiQuE Board member; 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
- Mist Thorkelsdottir, MusiQuE Board member, former Chair of AEC Quality Enhancement Committee; Head of Department at the Academy of Music and Drama at the University of Gothenburg

15:00 - 16:00 Private Review Panel meeting

16:00 - 16:15 Presentation of the conclusions of the panel to the Board and staff

8.2 Annex - Supporting documents

Context

1. MusiQuE Statutes (English translation) [Standard 3.2]
2. MusiQuE framework document 'Background, Mission and Regulations' [All standards]

Standards

3. MusiQuE Standards [Standard 2.5]
4. Mapping of MusiQuE Standards for Institutional Review against ESG Part 1 [Standard 2.1]

Board and staff

5. CVs of the MusiQuE Board and staff members [Standard 3.6]
6. Agendas of the past MusiQuE Board meetings [Standards 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3]
7. Reports of the past MusiQuE Board meetings [Standards 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3]

Review procedures

8. List of completed and upcoming MusiQuE reviews [Standard 3.1]
9. Agreement signed between AEQES and MusiQuE [Standard 3.2]
10. MusiQuE Template for institutional review visit schedule [Standard 2.3]
11. Reviewers Report Template [Standard 2.6]
12. Template for self-evaluation report (Programme Review) [Standard 2.3]
13. Template for follow up procedures [Standard 2.3]

Peer-reviewers

14. Template for peer-reviewers profile [Standard 2.4]
15. Peer-Reviewers Register overview [Standard 2.4]
16. MusiQuE questionnaire for peers invited for reviews [Standards 2.4 and 3.3]
17. Guidelines and Code of Conduct for Review Teams [Standard 3.3]
18. Programme of the 2014 Peer-Reviewers Training [Standard 2.4]
19. Power-point of the 2014 Peer-reviewers Training [Standard 2.4]

Internal quality assurance

20. Result of the feedback questionnaires 2013-2014 [Standard 3.6]

Trend analysis

21. First trend analysis 2013 [Standard 3.4]
22. Second trend analysis 2014 [Standard 3.4]

Promotion and results of "market studies"

23. Results of surveys undertaken in 2006 and 2011
24. MusiQuE Flyer [Standard 3.1]
25. Country overview of quality assurance developments in the European Higher Education Area and MusiQuE promotional activities [Standard 3.1]
26. Presentation delivered at the meeting of the Association of Nordic Music Academies (ANMA) on May 19th, 2015 [Standard 3.1]