

Executive summary



Limited Programme Review Master of Music

Conservatorium Maastricht Maastricht, The Netherlands

Site-visit: 27 – 29 November 2019

Introduction

The Zuyd University of Applied Sciences is one of the seven main higher education institutions in the Netherlands providing a Master of Music. With around forty Bachelor's and thirteen Master's programmes, 15,000 students and 1,700 staff, Zuyd University of Applied Sciences, is one of the biggest universities of applied sciences in the Netherlands (*Source: <https://www.zuyd.nl/en/about-zuyd>*). The Theatre Academy (200 students) and the Conservatorium Maastricht (550 students) form together the Maastricht Faculty of Performing Arts within the Zuyd University of Applied Sciences (*Source: SER, p. iv*).

In April 2019, Conservatorium Maastricht (CM) commissioned MusiQuE – Music Quality Enhancement (MusiQuE) to organise a review procedure for the accreditation of its Master of Music degree programme. MusiQuE coordinated the organisation of the accreditation procedure and carried out the review of the two-year Master's programme with a professional orientation and 9 graduation profiles. The report that follows covers the review of this Master of Music programme.

Summary

In November 2019 the Master of Music degree programme offered by Conservatorium Maastricht of the Zuyd University of Applied Sciences was visited by a review panel compiled by MusiQuE – Music Quality Enhancement (hereafter MusiQuE). Prior to the assessment process, the review panel was approved by the Accreditation Organisation of The Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO). The review panel assessed the quality of the programme using the limited programme assessment framework of NVAO (version September 2018). The NVAO standards for limited programme assessment were mapped against the MusiQuE standards for programme review. As a result, the MusiQuE standards and areas of inquiry were added

under each NVAO standard in order to both express and reinforce the correspondence between both sets of criteria and to complete the NVAO framework with criteria relevant for performing arts programmes. The report is structured according to the mapped NVAO-MusiQuE standards. The panel's judgement as expressed in the present report is based on the assessment rules for limited programme assessments (existing programmes), which are further detailed in Annex 5.

The Master of Music programme is a full-time programme of two years (120 ECTS). This internationally-oriented Master serves the purpose of deepening the student's experience, practice and knowledge of Classical and Jazz Music. The approach of the programme focusses on experiment through practice-based research connected to the chosen instrument and the personal goals in music. The programme aims to build useful knowledge that will serve the musician in the society of today. To realise such a dynamic programme, strategic goals are built around keywords such as "international", "craftsmanship", "innovation" and "community", and used as milestones for the policy and content of the Master of Music programme.

NVAO Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes

The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements.

The programme receives the following assessment on NVAO Standard 1: the programme meets the standard.

The basic principle of the Master of Music programme of Conservatorium Maastricht is that students from all over the world are welcome and encouraged to deepen and broaden their competencies on a musical, professional and personal level (*Source: SER, p.1*). The Master programme of Music aims to train the musician for working in an ever-changing and innovating music world and therefore, in addition to the musician's artistic-technical development, the programme wishes to focus on flexibility, networking and artistic identity. The Master of Music programme has nine graduation profiles: Instrumental classical music (all instruments), Instrumental jazz (all instruments), Vocal classical music (opera, operetta, solo singing), Vocal jazz, Composition Classical music, Composition/arranging/performing, Conducting (wind/brass band, symphony orchestra, big band and choir), Music theory and Educational research in music.

A member of both *Netwerk Muziek* (Music Network) at national level and *Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen* (AEC) at international level, Conservatorium Maastricht subscribed to the AEC Learning Outcomes until 2017, when the Dutch Conservatoires in *Netwerk Muziek* collectively established detailed frameworks for the bachelor's and master's programmes they offer. As such, for the realisation of its programmes, Conservatorium Maastricht chose to integrate the framework for master programmes of the Dutch National Training Profile for Music (DNTP) in the curricula (*Source: SER, p.2*). The intended learning outcomes are set out in concrete terms and comply with the Dublin Descriptors and the EQF level 7 Descriptors.

Conservatorium Maastricht (CM) has rich connections with the professional field and has regular meetings with representatives of the professional community to keep in touch with trends and needs. The review panel appreciates the open atmosphere the conservatoire has for critical feedback collected both internally and externally, and takes note of the existing quality culture which supports the on-going internal debate concerning survival on the highly competitive international market, and stimulates their current transition and internal reorganisation.

NVAO Standard 2: Teaching and learning environment

The curriculum, the teaching and learning environment, and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

The programme receives the following assessment on NVAO Standard 2: the programme meets the standard.

The programme is designed around three core aspects: craftsmanship, artistic vision and identity, and social positioning. These core aspects are built up in a concentric formation in which craftsmanship is the inner circle, by analogy with a sound wave, craftsmanship is the starting point from which the student can develop and refine her/his artistic identity, define her/his role in society, and position herself / himself in the industry. The conservatorium Maastricht provides the students a thorough basis in craftsmanship and, at the same time, gives the students a great freedom of choice. The self-management by the student allows them to choose from a variety of options logged in their portfolio linked to their Personal Development Plan (PDP). This high degree of freedom was praised by the review panel, but it seemed to produce a disorientating effect on foreign students who shared with the review team some of the difficulties they encountered upon arrival in Maastricht. The review team therefore recommends that more attention be paid by the Conservatorium towards student guidance through all the logistics inherent to their setting-up and organisation of their individual study programme and PDP.

The students try to meet the demands of the professional field by developing knowledge and skills 'through' and 'in' the professional practice with an international orientation. The review panel was pleased to encounter a group of excellent teachers who activate the students through e.g. music literature, audition training, audio and video material commonly used in the current professional practice, practical and tailor-made research (e.g. Arabic singing for beginners, Online Performance Improvement for piano), and 'Your Art as a Business' (YAB) – a practical workshop designed to develop the students' skills in the area of artistic management, public relations, marketing and communication.

The review panel was pleased to note the open-minded atmosphere as well as reflective approach of the students and teachers. The CM has the policy that teachers should have part-time contracts to be able to combine the teaching appointment with a professional career as a musician, which is beneficial for the educational environment they create. For the student chapter in the SER, videos were made by the students, expressing their feelings about the opportunities they get and can create in their programme. In those videos communication problems and shortage of practice rooms are often mentioned, and they also surfaced on site, during the panel's meetings with some of the programme's constituencies. Furthermore, these points of critique have already been included on the CM's agenda as points of improvement in the focus meetings from 2019 (*Source: SER Appendix 32*). Although there is a shortage of practice rooms the review panel is very positive about the facilities, especially noting the professional recording studio. A shared concern between the panel and representatives of the Programme regards the maintenance of some musical instruments, deemed necessary to preserve their quality up to standard, and the costs that it incurs. The review team recommends the CM and, equally, the Maastricht Faculty of Performing arts and the Zuyd Academy of Applied Sciences, that adequate support be offered to the Programme in order to enable it to allocate sufficient resources in the maintenance of and equipment with high quality musical instruments.

NVAO Standard 3: Assessment

The programme has an adequate system of student assessment in place.

The programme receives the following assessment on NVAO Standard 3: the programme meets the standard

The course descriptions are clear with regard to objectives, assessment, procedures and assessment criteria. CM has a good assessment structure in place and there is a good balance between process and product evaluation. Students are familiar with the criteria, they are discussed during the lessons and after presentations, in the feedback sessions. The discussions after presentations are highly appreciated by the students and were deemed very helpful in their further development.

The panel advises CM to introduce rubrics to achieve more consistency in assessment. The review panel is very positive about the (international) external assessors in the committee of examiners for the final recitals. The review panel highlighted that an enhanced level of objectivity amongst the committee of examiners would enable the students to get a real grip of the challenges intrinsic to the professional world they are preparing for, and advises the Programme to take additional

measures in this regard – e.g. through rubrics with evaluative criteria, quality definitions for those criteria at particular levels of achievement, and a scoring strategy that would foster consistency across internal and external assessors.

NVAO Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

The programme receives the following assessment on NVAO Standard 4: the programme meets the standard

The review panel concludes that CM achieves the principal goal to train talented young musicians to high artistic and professional standards and equips them with the virtuosity and inventiveness they need to become a unique and successful performer. The final examinations demonstrate that graduates from all departments perform well in the final recitals. The review panel was especially pleased with the final Jazz recitals that are organised as a real concert festival.

Final conclusion

Given the outcomes of the above-mentioned standards the panel recommends as weighted and substantiated final conclusion regarding the programme: positive.