

Executive summary

MUSIC **Q**UALITY
ENHANCEMENT

Institutional review

Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music



Site visit 11-13 March 2019

Executive Summary

The Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music (YST) is an excellent institution which fully complies with almost all MusiQuE standards. The Review Team found that one of its key points of commendation is its well-articulated vision which is strongly embedded in the institution. It permeates the whole teaching and learning environment as well as public-facing activities. The institution is appropriately sensitive to its context and demonstrates a strong willingness to contribute to cultural life in the region.

YST has shown a remarkable ability to transform and adapt to meet challenges during the different phases in its history (albeit a relatively young institution). This ability to reflect, react and reposition as necessary, is a very strong characteristic of YST, which will serve them well in a rapidly changing environment. Over the years YST has increased possibilities for NUS students to take YST modules. The interaction between different student groups is experienced as beneficial for both groups and has strengthened the relationship between the Conservatory and the National University of Singapore (NUS).

The Review Team finds the content and structure of the study programmes as well as their methods of delivery, to be in alignment with the goals of the Conservatory. There are robust procedures in place for developing and revising curricula, and there is a willingness to support the goal that students should develop their own distinctive artistic and professional identity. YST provides excellent support for students to define their own pathway, to carry out self-initiated projects and engage in learning experiences outside the Conservatory.

YST was set up as an international school and has kept its international profile with strong international recruitment. The Conservatory is very well connected internationally and offers students a wide range of opportunities for gaining an international perspective. The international profile of the Conservatory is truly impressive.

The admission policy is in alignment with YST's profile. The admission criteria are clear and relevant, and information about criteria and requirements is readily available.

There are strong formal and informal mechanisms in place to monitor and review the progression, achievement and subsequent employability of YST students. Assessment procedures and criteria are precisely and thoroughly described, and students are well informed about them. Systems are in place to ensure that students receive feedback.

YST has managed to create a culture of caring for students and their progression which is commendable.

The number and composition of teachers is adequate. YST has a very dedicated and strong faculty with a high level of professional and research activity. Faculty are well supported for these activities as well as for professional development. Regular faculty meetings also provide arenas for support and sharing of best practice. The

Conservatory's ability to attract young YST graduates, returning from studies abroad, to become faculty members, is commendable.

YST has excellent facilities and financial resources which are stable in the foreseeable future. This puts YST in a competitive position for the ongoing recruitment of staff and students. The administrative staff team is sufficient and well qualified, and they are offered support for continuing professional and personal development.

There are efficient mechanisms in place for internal communication, enhanced by the Conservatory's cross-functional communications team. The current organisational structure seems appropriate for the organisation, but there could be more clarity around key decision-making and how the effectiveness of the organisational structure is monitored. The Review Team would also encourage YST to increase formal and informal student participation in different committees and teams. This will enhance decision-making processes and strengthen transparency and democracy within the institution

There is clear evidence of a strong quality culture embedded within the institution, but there is less evidence of a more systemic approach to quality assurance and enhancement, with clear and transparent procedures. NUS's support in quality assurance and enhancement matters is important, but at the same time YST's unique characteristics also poses some challenges when trying to align with NUS processes and procedures. The establishment of the proposed International Faculty Development Committee can provide support in this respect.

YST is very well integrated into its local context and the Review Team commends its initiatives to serve the community in different ways. The students are well prepared and encouraged to create their own outreach projects. There are clear indications that alumni understand their responsibility to the wider community. The Conservatory actively promotes links with the profession, and the central position that YST has achieved in Singaporean professional music life is truly impressive. With an increasing number of Singaporean graduates from the YST Bachelors programme, educational opportunities on a higher level will undoubtedly be in demand

Introduction

In September 2018, the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music requested an institutional quality enhancement review to be delivered by MusiQuE. The objectives of the quality enhancement review are to provide the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music an opportunity to engage in a process of internal reflection on the quality of its educational services and, where relevant, to offer the institution suggestions for improvement. Moreover, the review aims to bring fresh ideas and wider perspectives to the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, encouraging the principle of 'many correct answers' to questions concerning the pursuit of quality in higher music education.

The review followed a three-stage process:

1. YST wrote a self-evaluation report (SER) based on, and structured according to, the *MusiQuE Standards for Institutional Review* (see MusiQuE Standards for Institutional, Programme and Joint Programme Review, pp. 18-29).
2. An international Review Team studied the self-evaluation report with annexes and conducted a site visit at YST from 11^h– 13^h March 2019. This comprised meetings with the Senior Management, members of the Governing Board/NUS, faculty, students, alumni, representatives of the profession, and the YST administrative staff. Furthermore, representatives from the students and faculty gave a demonstration of the use of ePortfolio and online learning tools. The Review Team also went on a guided tour of YST, as well as a short excursion to the NUS campus, and attended a few music performances and classes as well as one rehearsal. The Review Team used the *MusiQuE Standards for Institutional Review* noted above as the basis of its investigations.
3. The Review Team produced the report that follows, structured following the *MusiQuE Standards for Institutional Review*.

The Review Team consisted of:

- Philippe Dinkel, Director, Geneva University of Music, (Chair)
- Helen McVey, Director of Business Development, The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
- He Wei, Artistic Director and Dean, Tianjin Juilliard School
- Federico Forla, Student, The Royal Conservatory, The Hague
- Ingrid Maria Hanken, Professor em. Norwegian Academy of Music, (Review Team Secretary)

The Review Team would like to thank the representatives of the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory for the production and timely delivery of the self-evaluation report and all supporting documents, for the organisation of the site-visit and for the hospitality they demonstrated. The Review Team was able to meet various stakeholders and the atmosphere of all meetings was open and collegial.

Summary of the institution's compliance with MusiQuE Standards

1. Institutional mission, vision and context	
Standard 1. The institutional mission and vision are clearly stated.	Fully compliant
2. Educational processes	
Standard 2.1. The goals of the institution are achieved through the content and structure of the study programmes and their methods of delivery	Fully compliant
Standard 2.2. The institution offers a range of opportunities for students to gain an international perspective.	Fully compliant
Standard 2.3. The assessment methods are clearly defined and demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes.	Fully compliant
3. Student profiles	
Standard 3.1. Clear admission criteria exist, which establish artistic/academic suitability of students.	Fully compliant
Standard 3.2. The institution has mechanisms to formally monitor and review the progression, achievement and subsequent employability of its students.	Fully compliant
4. Teaching staff	
Standard 4.1. Members of the teaching staff are qualified for their role and are active as artists/pedagogues/ researchers.	Fully compliant
Standard 4.2. There are sufficient qualified teaching staff to effectively deliver the programmes.	Fully compliant

5. Facilities, resources and support	
Standard 5.1. The institution has appropriate resources to support student learning and delivery of the programmes.	Fully compliant
Standard 5.2. The institution's financial resources enable successful delivery of the study programmes.	Fully compliant
Standard 5.3. The institution has sufficient qualified support staff.	Fully compliant
6. Communication, organisation and decision-making	
Standard 6.1. Effective mechanisms are in place for internal communication within the institution.	Fully compliant
Standard 6.2. The institution has an appropriate organisational structure and clear decision-making processes.	Substantially compliant
7. Internal quality culture	
Standard 7.1. The institution has a strong internal quality culture, supported by clear and effective quality assurance and enhancement procedures.	Substantially compliant
8. Public interaction	
Standard 8.1. The institution engages within wider cultural, artistic and educational contexts.	Fully compliant
Standard 8.2. The institution actively promotes links with various sectors of the music and other artistic professions.	Fully compliant
Standard 8.3. Information provided to the public about the institution is clear, consistent and accurate.	Fully compliant