

**Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC)**

**Quality Enhancement Process**



**Association  
Européenne des  
Conservatoires**



**Agència  
per a la Qualitat  
del Sistema Universitari  
de Catalunya**

**AEC Institutional Review**

**Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya (Esmuc)**

**Site visit: 15-17 September 2014**

**esmuc**  
ESCOLA SUPERIOR DE MÚSICA DE CATALUNYA

**Review Team:**

- Henk van der Meulen, Royal Conservatoire The Hague (Review Team Chair)
- Celia Duffy, former Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (peer-reviewer and secretary)
- Terrell Stone, Professor of Lute at the Conservatory “A. Pedrollo” in Vicenza, Italy
- Carmen Álvarez Escandell, Bachelor student in Musicology at Conservatorio Superior de Música “Óscar Esplá”, Alicante
- Mireia Freixa, Professor at the Department of Art History at the University of Barcelona and the director of GRACMON, Research Group of Catalan Art and Design Contemporary (appointed by AQU Catalunya)
  - Núria Comet Señal, Project Coordinator at AQU Catalunya

## **Introduction**

In January 2014, AEC received a request from the Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya (Esmuc) for an AEC Quality Enhancement Process/institutional review. At the beginning of June 2014, representatives from the AEC and AQU (Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya - Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency) met and decided to explore opportunities for co-operation between both organisations for this specific procedure as Esmuc works towards the planned site visit by AQU in 2016. A formal agreement between the two organisations, in consultation with Esmuc, followed in which AEC and AQU agreed to exchange practices and pool their complementary knowledge and competences. Specifically, AQU agreed to provide its competences in the area of assessment, accreditation and certification of quality in Catalonia via the inclusion of two representatives on the Review Team and English-language documentation; AEC agreed to provide its knowledge of the higher music education sector and its competences in the area of music-specific quality enhancement and accreditation. A process of comparison found that there was a close correspondence between the AEC Criteria for institutional review and the AQU Standards for Programme Accreditation. It was agreed, however, that the process should fully remain an AEC Review: all peers were to act under the coordination of the Review Team Chair, the criteria used for the visit and the final report were to be the AEC Criteria for Institutional Review (see pp. 32-36 of AEC Framework Document Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Music Education) and the process was to be managed by the AEC. In the event, AQU- and AEC-appointed colleagues worked together in a highly co-operative and collegial spirit and this joint approach was very successful.

The review thus followed the AEC's three-stage process:

1. Esmuc wrote a self-evaluation report (SER) based on, and structured according to, AEC criteria for institutional review (see AEC Framework Document "Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Music Education: Characteristics, Criteria and Procedures", pp. 32-36).
2. An international Review Team with the addition of two members appointed by AQU studied the self-evaluation report and conducted a site visit at Esmuc on 15-17th September 2014. This comprised meetings with representatives of the Esmuc management team, artistic, academic and administrative staff, students, employers and partners from the sector. The Review Team used the criteria noted above as the basis of its investigations.
3. The Review Team produced the report that follows, structured following the AEC Criteria for institutional review. Although as per the agreement, AQU representatives were given the opportunity to write a separate chapter in the AEC review report, this was not necessary due to the close correspondence between the standards of each organisation.

The Review Team consisted of:

Henk van der Meulen, Principal of the Royal Conservatoire The Hague, The Netherlands (Chair of the Review Team)

Celia Duffy, former Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (peer-reviewer and secretary)

Terrell Stone, Professor of Lute at the Conservatory "A. Pedrollo" in Vicenza, Italy

Carmen Álvarez Escandell, Bachelor student in Musicology at Conservatorio Superior de Música "Óscar Esplá", Alicante

Mireia Freixa, Professor at the Department of Art History at the University of Barcelona and the director of GRACMON, Research Group of Catalan Art and Design Contemporary (appointed by AQU Catalunya)

Núria Comet Señal, Project Coordinator at AQU Catalunya

Esmuc's senior representatives were:

Dr Josep Borrás: General Director

Dr Melissa Mercadal, Coordinator of Research and Masters Programmes

Mr Andreu Puig, Manager

Mr Josep Margarit, Head of Studies

Mr Josep Baucells, Academic Secretary

The Review Team would like to express its sincere thanks to Esmuc for its hard work in preparing the SER, for the organisation of the visit and for welcoming the Review Team in such a friendly and hospitable way. Senior Officers of Esmuc remained at the disposal of the Team during the whole visit and responded readily to requests for further materials or information. The Review Team heartily commends Esmuc's Senior Officers, staff and students for their spirit of openness, transparency and constructive discussion. In that spirit the Review Team would suggest that all staff and students who took part in the review are informed about where they can access the report.

The Review Team would like to stress that due to the fact that this was a quality enhancement process it did not have sight of a full and comprehensive set of English-language course and process documentation as it would for a formal accreditation visit. Finally, in view of the quality enhancement nature of this report, the text boxes in the body of the report and the summary points at the end are couched more as suggestions and reflections than formal recommendations.

## Review Visit Schedule

### Monday 15<sup>th</sup> September (half day)

Time	Session (venue as notified by the institution)	Names and functions of participants from the visited institution
In advance of the first meeting	Arrival of Review Team members	N/A
14:00-16:00	<b>Preparatory meeting of the Review Team</b>	N/A
16:00-16.30	Break	
16:30-18:00	<b>Meeting 1</b>  <i>Example: with members of the relevant board/academic council</i>	<b>As proposed by the institution</b>  Dr. Joan Mateo, General secretary; Department of Education  Ms. Olga Adroher, Head of the department of Artistic Education  Ms. Rosa Maria Girbau, Inspector from the Department of Education  <i>Dr. Josep Borrás: General director</i>
18:00-19:00	<b>Guided tour - Review of the facilities (studios, concert venues, practice facilities, libraries etc.)</b>	<b>Guides:</b>  <b>Dr. Josep Borrás, General director</b>  <b>Dr. Melissa Mercadal, Coordinator of research and master programs</b>
19:15-21:00	Dinner	N/A

**19:30—Concert by alumni: Orchestra room (Esmuc)**

### Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> September (full day)

Time	Session (venue as notified by the institution)	Names and functions of participants from the visited institution
09:00–10:30	<b>Meeting 2</b>  <i>Example: meeting with students</i>	(meeting personnel can be combined taking care to ensure conflicts of interest)  <i>Students: Irene del Valle, Eduard Balaguer, Maria Lamata</i>
10:30-11.00	Break	N/A
11.00-12.30	<b>Meeting 3</b>  <i>Meeting with the coordination team</i>	<i>Dr. Josep Borrás: General director</i>  <i>Mr. Andreu Puig: Manager</i>  <i>Mr. Josep Margarit: Head of studies</i>

		<p><i>Mr. Josep Baucells: Academic Secretary</i></p> <p><i>Dr. Melissa Mercadal: Coordinator of research and master programs</i></p>
12:30–13.30	Lunch	N/A
14:00-15:00	<b>Meeting: Attendance to the meeting with the new students</b>	<p>Mr. Josep Margarit, head of studies</p> <p>Dr. Josep Borràs, general director</p>
15:00-16:00	<p><b>Meeting 4</b></p> <p><i>Heads of the different departments and/or professors</i></p>	<p>Dr. Rolf Backer, Musicology (professor)</p> <p>Prof. Emilio Moreno, Early Music (head)</p> <p>Dr. Fèlix Pastor, Theory, Composition and Conducting (head)</p> <p>Prof. Francesc Capella, Jazz and Modern Music (head)</p> <p>Prof. Núria Sempere, Promotion and Management (professor)</p> <p>Dr. Enric Gaus, Sonology (head)</p> <p>Profs. Jordi Camell &amp; Ramon Torramilans, Classical and Contemporary (heads)</p>
16:00-16:30	Break	N/A
16:30-17:30	<p><b>Meeting 5</b></p> <p><i>Observation of classes</i></p>	<p><b>As proposed by the institution</b></p> <p><b>Non-instrumental classes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Notation and Edition II” (Musicology), Prof. Juan Carlos Asensio . Room 346</li> <li>- “Interpretation with electronic sources” (Sonology), Prof. Àlex Barrachina, Room 114</li> <li>- “Acoustics and organology II” (Sonology), Prof. Paul Poletti, Room 349</li> </ul> <p><b>Instrumental/Ensembles:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- JiMM Instrumental—Progressive Rock, Room A113</li> <li>- JIMM Combo Modern Music, Room A113</li> <li>- JiMM Comogo Horace Silver, Prof. Horacio Fumero, Room A103</li> <li>- Baroque violin, Prof. Emilio Moreno (Early Music), Room A110</li> <li>- Flamenco guitar, Prof. Rafael Cañizares (Traditional Music), Room A356 (until 16:30)</li> <li>- Flugelhorn class, Prof. Pep Moliner (Traditional Music), Room A108</li> <li>- Secondary conducting, Prof. Lluís Vila, (Theory, Composition and Conducting),</li> </ul>

		Room A356
17:30-19:00	<b>Review Team meeting</b>	N/A
20:00	Dinner	<b>As proposed by the institution</b>

**Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> September (full day)**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Session (venue as notified by the institution)</b>	<b>Names and functions of participants from the visited institution</b> (meeting personnel can be combined taking care to ensure conflicts of interest)
09:00-09:30	<b>Review Team meeting</b>	N/A
09:30-11:00	<b>Meeting 6</b> <i>Example: meeting with representatives of the profession and former students</i>	<b>As proposed by the institution</b> <i>Ms. Carol Duran (alumni), Dr. Jaume Ayats (Director Music Museum), Dr. Salvador Brotons (Conductor Barcelona symphonic Band).</i>
11:00-11:30	Break	N/A
11:30-12:30	<b>Meeting 7</b> <i>Example: meeting with Senior Administrative Officers</i>	Mr. Andreu Puig, Manager Mr. Josep Margarit: Head of studies and coordinator of Quality Assurance system Ms. Montse Urpí, Head of Library Dr. Melissa Mercadal: Coordinator of research and master programs
12:30-13:30	Lunch	N/A
13:30-14:30	<b>Meeting 8</b> <i>Example: extra session if required by the Review Team (members of the team may explore more thoroughly specific area, meet other representatives of their choice)</i>	Professors from the different departments. Names TBA2081
14:30-16:30	<b>Review Team meeting - Preparation for the feedback meeting</b>	N/A
16:30-17:00	<b>Feedback to the institution</b>	<b>Leadership of the institution (normally the same personnel as the first meeting)</b>
From 17:00	Departure of Review Team members	N/A

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## **1. Mission and vision**

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

The Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya (Esmuc – the Higher School of Music of Catalonia), was founded in 2001. It provides university-level education and is the only publicly-funded provider of higher music education in Catalonia. The Board of Trustees, chaired by the Minister of Education, is the highest governing body of Esmuc and approves main lines of work (SER (Self Evaluation Report), p.4).

Since 2010 Esmuc has offered a 4-year first cycle degree programme (called ‘Music Superior Title’), with 240 ECTS credits organized according to Bologna guidelines and the European Higher Education Area and approved by AQU (Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya). Esmuc also offers 4 ‘official’ Masters degrees (approved by AQU) including those shared with university partners that are approved by the AQU, and a number of non-official masters degrees and postgraduate courses (“non-official” is referring to those programmes, which are not approved by AQU and therefore are not accredited). Senior representatives from the Ministry of Education met by the Review Team underlined the significance for the conservatoire of alignment with the Bologna process and its positive outcomes. It appears, however, despite the official equivalence of an Esmuc degree and a university degree under Bologna, that in the HE sector as a whole there is still some separation between the two, as evidenced in the different title for first cycle degrees in Esmuc (called Music Superior Title, rather than Bachelor of Music) and different inspection arrangements.

Esmuc may wish to investigate changing the title of first cycle degrees to ‘Bachelor of Music’ in line with the agreements as part of the Bologna process.

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

Esmuc’s mission, aims and goals are very clearly articulated in the SER. Esmuc ‘understands music as a multidimensional phenomenon, advocates a comprehensive training model, assumes a dynamic role in the music industry and Catalan culture, and aims to become an international reference for its educational excellence.’

Esmuc offers in its programmes a diversity of musical disciplines that represent the different professions and realities of today’s musical world. Furthermore in Esmuc’s philosophy these disciplines are all interconnected: ‘Esmuc understands that all these different specialties all live together, mutually influence each other [...]. This musical diversity and mainstreaming is reflected both in the curriculum and in everyday life of the school.’ (SER, p.9)



In its meetings with both staff and students, the Review Team found that this concept and vision of ‘transversality’ was well understood, was highly valued and was indeed reflected in the curriculum and everyday life of the School.

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

The Review Team observed a very close correspondence between the goals of the educational programme and the institutional mission.

The SER (p.9) articulates the general objectives of the Superior Title in Music, defined in article 3 of Spanish Law 631/2010 of May 14 as follows:

1. ‘The artistic studies of the Bachelor of Music will have as main objective the qualified training of professionals so that they acquire the specific knowledge of music and the needed attitudes to become competent professionals and integrate in the different professional areas of this discipline.
2. The profile of somebody with a Bachelor Degree in Music is defined as a qualified professional who has acquired the maturity, the humanistic, and the technical training to fully carry out the most appropriate career choice according to their abilities and interests, by developing the skills common to the music studies and to each specialty.

The definitions also include meeting national and international standards and a necessity to reflect the wide range of opportunities open to musicians. In this respect, Esmuc offers a comprehensive range of music specialities in the following fields:

- Music performance (Classical and Contemporary Music; Jazz and Modern Music; Early Music; Traditional Music)
- Composition
- Conducting
- Musicology
- Sonology
- Production and Management
- Music Education

The goals of Esmuc’s Masters programmes are articulated on p.11 of the SER. Designed in line with the Tuning and Polifonia guidelines they enable students to ‘either acquire advanced skills and competencies in specific areas or to specialize in a specific strand [...] to strengthen the individual as an independent artist, to acquire independence in their work, enhance their knowledge, to increase students’ versatility,

broaden their mind and deepen their knowledge while also enhancing their professional potential.’ (SER, p.11)

Esmuc offers the following official Masters degrees (approved by AQU):

- Artistic Master in Advanced Studies in Performance: Instruments of Classical and Contemporary Music
- Master of Musicology, Music Education and Interpretation of Early Music with Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB)
- Master of Music as an Interdisciplinary Art (with Universitat Barcelona (UB) and Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URB))
- Sound and Music Computing (with Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF))

Esmuc also offers other postgraduate courses (non-official Masters) in collaboration with other Higher Education Institutions:

- Composition of Soundtracks and Music for Audiovisual Media - a new collaboration with ESCAC (Escola Superior de Cinema i Audiovisuals de Catalunya)
- Music Composition with Technologies in collaboration with IRCAM (Paris), Technische Universität (Berlin), Universität der Künste (Berlin), Musikhochschule Hanns Eisler (Karlsruhe and Weimar), Sibelius Academy (Helsinki), Muzyka Centrum Art Society (Krakow), Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre (Tallinn)
- Sonology (with UPF-IDEC)
- Pedagogy for Musicians (online)

ESMUC wishes to include in its academic offer three new official Masters:

- Barcelona Jazz Master (pending validation by AQU)
- Master in Flamenco (pending validation by AQU)
- Masters in Lied (pending validation by AQU)

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

The institutional Strategic Plan runs out in 2014. The Review Team did not have sight of this plan but the summary points offered on pp.4 and 13 of the SER indicate the general direction of travel.

Whilst acknowledging that the institution has been through a very severe period of financial cuts in which the main priority has been to maintain its activity, the Review Team nonetheless feels that a new Strategic Plan that takes account of the financial situation and operates within likely financial limits, is a priority.

## **2. Educational processes**

### **2.1 Programmes**

#### **2.1-a. Do the programmes take into account the various aspects of the ‘Polifonia/Dublin Descriptors’ (PDDs) and/or the AEC learning outcomes?**

As noted above, the SER specifically cites Polifonia learning outcomes in second cycle degrees and following Spanish government objectives for first cycle programmes. The SER (p.15) states that all study programmes have learning outcomes related to the overall learning outcomes of Esmuc and describes the transversal aspects of first cycle programmes. The Review Team did not have the opportunity to review programme learning outcomes and their correspondence with the various aspects of the ‘Polifonia/Dublin Descriptors’ (PDDs) or the AEC learning outcomes in detail.

The SER does not address Polifonia/Dublin Descriptors (PDDs) and/or the AEC learning outcomes in detail. In a future accreditation process the panel would need to see detailed course documentation and precise alignment of learning outcomes.

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

Esmuc offers a suite of first cycle and, recently, a large number of second cycle degrees. The Review Team did not pursue the question of connection between cycles with the institution in detail. One common thread running through each is research and this integration of research at every level (and perhaps eventual progression to offering PhDs) was emphasised in the Review Team’s meeting with Senior Officers.

The Review Team observed a proliferation of new Masters degrees and although obvious connections may be inferred in the subject matter, Esmuc should ensure that progression from first to second cycle is clearly articulated in documentation.

## **2.2 Delivery**

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

The Review Team did not examine course documentation closely or pursue this question in detail with the institution, although the Team noted a variety of approaches (including 1:1, masterclasses, group teaching, work experience) in the SER, in discussion with professors and Senior Officers and via its own observation of classes. The Review Team was interested to note that two Masters (non-official) programmes (Pedagogy and the Flamencology pathway of the Master in Flamenco) are offered on-line.

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

Research plays a prominent role within all programmes and the importance of research at all levels has become one of the core pillars of Esmuc's educational philosophy. The philosophy and practical steps that have been taken are described on pp.16-17 of the SER. The Review Team would have been interested to see some examples of student work in this area. The Review Team heard support for Esmuc's research approach in two staff meetings but also some caution from teaching staff about the balance of the research and purely practical elements of the undergraduate curriculum, particularly as regards ensuring there is enough time for students to experience ensemble playing.

The Review Team commends Esmuc on its strong research ethos and the practical steps it has taken to promote research. Research could be defined more precisely: for example, how a research outlook may differ from cycle to cycle and what artistic research means for Esmuc.

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

Students appear to be offered ample opportunities to present their work, whether in Esmuc's own premises, in the Auditori halls that adjoin Esmuc, the Museum of Music, or elsewhere in the city and region. In the SER, under Reference Material 6 (p.66) several examples of external presentations are listed. In its meeting with professors, staff expressed the wish for a more extensive programme of public concerts. This appears to be hampered by regulations concerning public entry into the Esmuc building and only very limited access to the Auditori halls. Esmuc does not have a concert hall as such (the orchestra room is the largest space) but is located next door to the Auditori which has 4 varied professional concert spaces.

As also noted below (5.1), the Review Team considers that the opportunities for partnership with the Auditori are of vital and strategic importance to Esmuc and they should be vigorously pursued.

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

P.18 of the SER outlines the formal arrangements for academic, career and personal guidance. All students are assigned a personal advisor, and time allocated diminishes as the student progresses through the first cycle degree. In the Review Team's meeting with students, they commented that the quality of their advising sessions was varied (some advisors were better than others) and that they were not always entirely sure who they should contact about a particular problem. Although the Review Team gained the impression that, overall, the advising system (whether formal or informal) works reasonably well, one student used the term 'a bit messy' to describe it.

As for careers guidance, the student met by the Review Team suggested that the bridge between the School and their entry into the profession could be improved, citing the fact that other schools in the city ran, for example, an agency helping students to find work. In the opinion of the Review Team, the importance of 'practicum' or work experience in several programmes counters this by introducing students into the world of work while they are studying.

Esmuc may want to consider some staff training and development for student advising.
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## **2.3 International perspectives**

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

The Review Team did not have sight of Esmuc's international strategy as such, although a bullet-point summary of the international strategy is given in the SER on p.18. The first bullet point is on student mobility and Esmuc's adherence to the Bologna values of mobility and equivalence.

A strong commitment to internationalisation is evident in many ways: including via the presence of international students and staff, visiting international artists, and a variety of international partnerships (SER, p.20).

The Review Team did not see a specific international student recruitment strategy but in its meeting with representatives from the Ministry of Education the Review Team heard that Barcelona was an attractive destination for Erasmus students (see data provided on p.19 of the SER) and that Esmuc's new Masters offerings would be attractive to an international audience. In their meeting with the Review Team, students confirmed that they enjoyed interacting with a variety of nationalities.

As regards English language proficiency, Esmuc students are expected to acquire a B1 level in English by the time they finish their studies. However, the institution does not offer English language courses. A language policy at Esmuc needs to be further developed.

Esmuc could perhaps usefully reflect on *what kind* of international institution it wishes to be: whether international through programme content (not specifically international in flavour at the moment), through staff and student diversity (as currently) or maybe most importantly through a decision on the language of instruction and communications.

Esmuc might reflect on whether it regards itself primarily as a Catalan institution with an international outlook, an institution which is accommodating international students and which includes international staff members (this is how the Review Team sees Esmuc currently) or whether it wishes to pursue internationalisation in a more vigorous and thoroughgoing manner (e.g. through changing the language of instruction and communications to English or at least providing more English-language instruction and communications than currently). The latter option, as well as possibly diluting Esmuc's mission as a Catalan institution, would also have considerable budgetary implications.

This is an important strategic question for Esmuc and needs to be debated. The Review Team would suggest that whatever path is decided, there needs to be a language policy and more information in English on the website would be beneficial (also see below in the sections on communications, e.g. 7.3).

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

An international approach to the curriculum itself is not especially evident in the programme documentation available to the Review Team. That said, the mainstream disciplines offered (e.g. Advanced Performance, Early Music) are in line with those offered by Esmuc's international competitors and would certainly appeal to international students. Esmuc's offerings in traditional music and Flamenco are possibly unique at this level and make Esmuc the leading provider in this area giving it an international competitive advantage.

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

The SER (p.20) outlines some of the international partnerships in which Esmuc is engaged. The Review Team commends the international networks and partnerships initiated by Esmuc's research arm; they ensure Esmuc is aligned with current European developments in this area.

## **2.4 Learning assessment**

### **2.4-a. What are the main methods for assessment and how do these methods support teaching and learning?**

The Review Team did not have sight of detailed course documentation or pursue this question in detail with Esmuc. The SER (pp.20-21) and Reference Material 2 (for final projects) outline various assessment approaches in different disciplines. Continuous assessment appears to be used extensively and the Review Team had some questions about ensuring objectivity in this method.

The SER also raises the issues of budgetary constraints as a barrier to use of external examiners. The Review Team is not clear on whether externals are used currently for all final projects for first and/or second cycle assessments.

The Review Team suggests using Erasmus as a mechanism for including international examiners and that external member of juries are vital for transparency and objectivity.

### **2.4-b. What kind of grading system is being used in examinations and assessments?**

Reference Material 2 of the SER gives templates for final project assessment using the 5-point national QF-EHEA grades (Matrícula d'honor, Excellent, Notable, Aprovat, Suspens). The Review Team did not examine this area in detail. In a full accreditation process the Review Team would expect to see detailed assessment criteria for each grade. It also questioned whether there are formal or informal quotas for each grade.

The Review Team would have liked to see recordings of examinations (e.g. final recitals) and suggests that all examinations are recorded (unedited, single camera) and available to review panels.



### **3. Student profiles**

#### **3.1. Entrance qualifications**

##### **3.1 In what ways do the entrance requirements assess the artistic, technical, academic and mental capacities of the applicants to accomplish the various aspects of the study programmes within the expected timeframe?**

Formal admission requirement and audition procedures are described in the SER (pp.22-23). Numbers of students applications from year to year is given in an earlier section of the SER (p.8) for first and second cycles degrees, and student enrolled in the past 3 years in the different specialities of first cycle degrees is given in Reference Material 1 on p.41. Documents used in audition and interview processes are given in Reference Material 4, pp.47-60. It would be useful to have these kinds of data in one location in the SER. Esmuc conducts open doors weekends and also runs simulated entrance examinations (SER, p.38).

The Review Team gained a good insight into the institution's admissions processes and commends Esmuc on its thorough approach, particularly in its mock auditions process and open doors weekend which would give prospective students a very clear idea of the level expected for successful entrance to Esmuc.

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

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

Dropout rates are reported in the SER (p.23) as not exceeding 12.5%; this needs to be further contextualised and specified. Specific data on student progression and drop-outs including at Masters level would be useful to include in the documentation. The SER also comments on how the advisor system assists in monitoring student progress.

The Review Team heard how students may extend their programme beyond 4 years if they do not complete the required number of credits. A policy or regulation on extensions is recommended.

### **3.3 Employability**

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

The SER reports on p.24 that Esmuc has been running annual graduate destination surveys for the last 6 years and outlines some results that appear to be encouraging (e.g. only 4.15% have not been employed in the field at all) and others that would require some further investigation.

Whilst Esmuc is to be commended for its attention to graduate destinations over the past years, it would be useful for the Review Team to see the questionnaire and for the reporting of statistics in the SER to be further contextualised and sharpened (e.g. there is no indication to which years these statistics apply; 1.55% are reported to be working in technical fields but we do not see specifically what percentage of the overall cohort was from the Production strand); it would be beneficial to present fuller statistics as an appendix and then extract ‘headlines’.

The SER also report an active Alumni Office; this office could perhaps be tasked with improving the returns of the questionnaire from the 56.7% reported.

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

As noted above, the Alumni Office offers job opportunities to graduates. In the meeting with representatives of the professions (from different sectors of the professions) all confirmed that they employed or worked with Esmuc graduates. Alumni questionnaires appear to indicate a reasonable level of graduate employment in relevant fields (but see above for suggestions as to reporting of these data).

### **3.4 Equal opportunities**

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

As a public institution Esmuc takes its responsibilities towards equality of opportunity seriously and makes appropriate statements in the SER (p.24). The SER does report a gender imbalance in the teaching staff and this was confirmed by the Review Team in the gender balance of teams of professors and Heads of departments they met.

Esmuc may wish to articulate what positive action it can take to reduce the gender imbalance in its teaching staff; this may include a review of recruitment policies and practices.

## **4. Teaching staff**

### **4.1 Artistic and scholarly activity and qualifications**

#### **4.1-a. Are members of teaching staff active as artists and/or scholars/researchers?**

There is good evidence that the majority of teaching staff are active in the music professions (see profiles on the Esmuc website). The Review Team was interested to hear from the meeting with Senior Officers that when the School was created, it was a requirement for staff to be active in the profession; this accounts for the relatively generous allocation of teaching hours for full-time staff which allows them time to pursue their artistic or research interests.

In addition, a number of staff have PhDs or are undertaking PhDs. Although Spanish law requires that Esmuc has a certain percentage of staff with PhDs it does not provide third cycle programmes itself (these have to be undertaken at a university).

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

The Review Team saw evidence of good practice e.g. in the encouragement of staff research, but as yet there is no formal institutional policy for staff development or provision of sabbaticals. There is a vigorous programme for the promotion of staff research (if not, as yet, specific funding to support it), for example the Research Day on 26<sup>th</sup> September.

The Review Team did not hear of any specific initiative to support the artistic work of staff other than via the institutional practice of allocating a relatively limited load of teaching hours to full-time staff to enable them to pursue artistic activity.

The Head of Studies, in the Senior Officers meeting also noted the particularly fertile environment that Esmuc potentially provides for staff development, given the diversity of the staff group and the opportunity to share experiences and learn from each other.

Non-teaching hours within staff contracts could be used for cross-departmental peer exchange and development; this would reflect the transversal approach of the institution.
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## **4.2 Qualifications as educators**

### **4.2-a. Does the institution ensure that all members of the teaching staff have appropriate qualifications as educators?**

The Review Team did not see detailed evidence of staff recruitment procedures or policies towards ensuring teaching staff have appropriate qualifications as educators, but in their meeting with Heads of Department the Review Team heard that selection of teaching staff involves the relevant Head of Department and an external committee, a public test lesson, playing, and an interview. This appears to reflect good practice in recruitment and selection. Any policy towards an increase in academic qualifications should always recognise the crucial importance of music-specific, often non-academic, competences.

### **4.2-b. Are policies and strategies in place for continuing professional development of teaching staff?**

As noted above and in the SER (p.25) formal policies and strategies are ‘in the process of being developed and implemented, including regulations and criteria to dedicate time for research activities [...] however the issues of sabbaticals is not contemplated at this time’. Given the financial restraints of the past few years it is not surprising that financial support for continuing professional development cannot be the highest priority, but there may be other ways to support staff development that do not create an unrealistic financial burden. The Review Team commends Esmuc on its imaginative promotion of research activity for staff so far, achieved in the face of very difficult circumstances.

In its meeting with members of staff, the Review Team was struck by their commitment and positivity towards Esmuc. Perhaps particularly in the light of the recent financial cuts and the inevitable effect on staff morale, an initiative to promote in-house staff development could be developed without major budgetary implications that would help further to harness and develop that commitment. Ways should be found to transfer non-teaching staff hours into a source of development. The Review Team suggests staff involvement as a priority for Esmuc.

### **4.3 Size and composition of the teaching staff body**

#### **4.3-a. Is the number of teaching staff adequate to cover the teaching volume and curriculum within a frame of acceptable quality?**

The number of teaching staff appears to be adequate to cover teaching volume and curriculum to an acceptable quality. The Review Team noted a relatively large proportion of full-time staff and an acceptable number of staff with PhD qualifications. The SER (p.27) indicates a need to increase further the number of staff with PhDs and this links to the School's strategy of developing both Masters degrees and research.

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

The notion of flexible adaptation to new professional requirements is very closely aligned to the underlying philosophy of Esmuc which aims to produce rounded musicians and expose students to a number of different aspects of musical study. The Review Team heard ample evidence of links with the profession (including a very supportive attitude from the music professionals it met) and well-established international networks (both formal/institutional and informal via teaching staff). All this leads the review team to have considerable confidence that the composition of the teaching staff is able flexibly to adapt to professional requirements.

## **5 Facilities, resources and support**

### **5.1 Facilities**

#### **5.1-a. Are the building facilities (teaching and practice studios, classrooms, rehearsal places, concert venues, etc.) adequate to support curricula/programmes requirements?**

The modern building and facilities provided by Esmuc are of a high standard, and they are accessible to people with mobility difficulties. They are certainly adequate to support curricula and programme requirements. Perhaps the one caveat to this is the lack of a large public concert hall, which was mentioned by both staff and students in meetings with the Review Team. As noted above, Esmuc has huge potential to benefit from its location within a complex of buildings which include 4 different-sized public concert halls, as well as a large musical instrument museum.

Students noted that in general they have enough practice facilities and that the mobile phone booking system works well.

Staff noted the lack of social space - a bar or café which could both facilitate social interaction with staff and students and perhaps, informally, assist good communications.

As also noted above (2.2-c), the Review Team considers that the opportunities for partnership with the Auditori are of vital and strategic importance to Esmuc and they should be vigorously pursued.

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

The Review Team observed a good collection of instruments, including specialist facilities for percussion and organ. The instrument park, loan and specialist technical advisory service for instruments appear to be ample in number and of a high standard.

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

The Review Team heard several comments from staff about how IT could be better integrated into the School from smaller details (e.g. sending a whole-School email to promote a concert or event) to larger issues such as timetabling. The SER does not specifically comment on computing and other technological facilities. However, Senior Officers, commented on the need for better IT processes. It was noted that in particular student records were extremely complex; this is due to the multifarious nature of the first cycles' curriculum and the fact that until recently Esmuc has been running two first cycle curricula side-by-side. This has resulted in more than 1,200 pathways and combinations. Student records online was considered an important priority.

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

Taking into account the relatively short history of Esmuc the Review Team were impressed with the Library and its holdings, particularly the high number of journals and magazines. However, we understand that due to the financial cuts and as an emergency measure, the Library has no regular budget. This situation cannot be sustained and would threaten student learning beyond a very short emergency timeframe.

The Review Team believes that an assigned regular budget for the Library that allows it to forward-plan is an institutional priority.

**5.2 Financial resources**

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

As mentioned throughout, Esmuc has been through a period of extremely tough financial restraint. The Review Team commends the School on how it has managed its finances and its funding throughout this period and managed to maintain quality. It was reported that at the most recent meeting of the Board of Governors the priority was to maintain the quality and level of work.

Detailed budget data was not available to the Review Team, but it notes that the student fee of 2,400 euros is quite high by average European standards (but much less than the UK or USA); however, at approximately 25% of the real cost (estimated at a mean 9,000 euros) and the same fee as university students pay, this represents a reasonable deal. Masters courses are self-supported and, we assume, bring in a useful income stream to the School.

The Review Team was heartened to note the staunch support of the representatives from the Ministry of Education who are committed to maintaining its public funding and the high reputation of Esmuc in Catalonia and in Spain. However, this situation cannot be sustained.

In the opinion of the Review Team, Esmuc cannot sustain any more financial cuts without damage to the quality of its offerings. Through the hard work and commitment of its staff, Esmuc has shown it is capable of coping with severe financial hardship, but this cannot be sustained.

Furthermore, if the government wants to retain Esmuc as a high-quality public institution, and a 'jewel in the crown' of Catalonian higher artistic education, it needs to increase its funding.

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

As noted above, Esmuc has been in the position of 'fire-fighting' for the last 2-3 years which has compromised longer-term financial planning. However, the Review Team feels that now is the time to ensure that strategic planning is in place that considers how the ambitions of the institution can be achieved within the likely funds available. There will be some hard choices to be made and priorities to be determined. The very model of transversal musical education is, by nature, expensive; imaginative solutions that do not compromise this core value of the institution will need to be found.

## **5.3 Support staff**

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

The Review Team did not examine the numbers and functions of technical and administrative staff in detail. In reviewing the list provided on p.32 of the SER, the Review Team noted that there appeared to be only very thin coverage of marketing, external relations, recruitment and communications and a relatively high number of general administrative personnel.

The Review Team heard comments on problems with support in both the Heads of Department meeting (where it was noted that Heads of Department tend to have to 'fire-fight' e.g. scheduling problems) and in the meeting with members of the professions (where it was noted that the area of communications seemed understaffed).

There is no doubt that Esmuc is a complex operation to run. The 'nuts and bolts', in other words, the basic operational and administrative functions like scheduling need to be working efficiently for the institution to flourish; some of these could work better perhaps through better co-ordination between administrative and academic areas. Staffing ties-in with strategy. If Esmuc decides, for example, on a strategic level, to pursue a more international agenda, the area of communications and recruitment will need to be strengthened.



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

The Review Team understands from the SER (p.32) that the need for policies and or strategies for continuing professional development of technical and administrative staff is acknowledged, but these have not yet been articulated.

## **6. Organisation and decision-making processes and internal quality assurance systems**

### **6.1 Internal communication process**

#### **6.1-a. Is there an internal communication strategy?**

The Review Team understands that there is no formal communication strategy and this is acknowledged in the SER (p.33). The topic of communications arose regularly in discussion with staff and students and the Review Team heard that this area could be improved.

In its meeting with teaching staff, the Review Team heard that there is a need for better internal processes for communications between departments and senior management. Even with the School's philosophy of transversality, we heard from members of staff that there are surprisingly few communications between departments and sometimes a lack of curiosity from department to department. We heard two reasons for this: first, that visiting teachers have very little time or motivation to explore these sorts of links; for those living and working away from Barcelona it is difficult to work on a joint project. Secondly, the way that the departments are structured can sometimes put up walls, for example, a department of wind or voice could deal with all genres (both early and classical and contemporary music) but in the current arrangements they are separated.

In its meeting with students the Review Team heard about the difficulties and complexity of timetabling and scheduling.

Particularly in a difficult financial climate, good communications with both the staff and student body can do much to maintain morale as well as achieve more tangible benefits and efficiency in operations.

As noted in the SER (p.33) an internal communications strategy and associated actions that avoid internal overlaps, simplify systems as far as possible and create overall transparency is highly desirable.

### **6.2 Organisation and decision-making processes**

#### **6.2-a. How are the curricula/programmes and the teaching and learning processes supported by:**

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

The SER (p.33) clearly delineates the organisational and decision-making structure of Esmuc. The Review Team noted that the school council which meets 2-3 times a year seems very large and questioned the efficiency and efficacy of such a large group. The team also would have liked more information on the nature of the input of the Student Association, having met with a very positive attitude towards student engagement in its meeting with students.

The SER (p.35) notes that the decision-making structure for strategic affairs works reasonably well with ‘constant ongoing dialogue at managerial level’ but that this is not matched by communications between some departments. This was confirmed to the review panel in the meeting with teaching staff, as noted above (6.1-a).

In the area of curricular affairs, the SER (p.35) outlines the main lines of responsibility. The Review Team was perhaps less clear on decision-making processes in this area, and would have liked to explore further how, e.g. the AQU QA processes as well as music-specific Polifonia/Dublin descriptors support decisions on the curriculum. We heard that each Head of Department makes detailed decisions on the curriculum and keeps the curriculum under review, but we felt that we lacked the full picture of how this decision making operates and how programme design and quality assurance processes are shared and disseminated. We had very useful conversations with the Head of Studies who appears to do the lion’s share of course documentation. We would have benefitted from further detail on decision-making and how far it is distributed, including how external guidelines such as the AQU or Polifonia/Dublin descriptors are disseminated to teaching staff and those with responsibility for curriculum design and whether these staff are familiar with them.

The Review Team notes that evaluative mechanisms for both teaching and services available to students have been introduced (SER p.35). Results of these evaluations and how any problems identified will be actioned would be useful for the Review Team to see.

<p>The Review Team felt they would have benefitted from more detail of how decisions on the curriculum are made. This is another potential area for staff development activity.</p>
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**6.2-b. Is there a long-term strategy for the improvement of the organisational decision-making structures?**

The Review Team did not pursue this question in detail with the School. The SER (p.33) acknowledges the need for a more simple formula for decision-making and p.36 describes some of the ways in which staff and students are involved (also see below 6.3-b). Both in discussions with Senior Officers and from the evidence presented in the SER, the Review Team gained the impression that organisational and decision-making structures are under development and not presently in a steady state. The goal of a full AQU accreditation in 2 years time and the ongoing work on quality assurance is driving these developments to some extent. A new Strategic Plan will also be a key driver of these developments.

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

The Review Team understands that there is a Health and Safety risk management strategy, but did not have sight of this or any other risk management documentation.

In the light of the current tough financial circumstances, a risk register, as part of the new Strategic Plan, would be a useful and necessary and planning tool.

### **6.3 Internal quality assurance system**

#### **6.3-a. What quality assurance and enhancement systems are in place and how do they relate to the national and local legislative requirements (where appropriate)?**

Esmuc is working towards a full accreditation from the AQU. The presence of the AQU representatives on the panel shows a positive relationship with the agency and a wish to work together co-operatively. The Review Team commends this approach. In its meeting with Senior Officers, the Review Team heard how the senior staff of Esmuc regard the quality assurance process not as a bureaucratic and legislative requirement, but as a positive driver for change and development in the institution. (Indeed, the very fact that Esmuc elected to put itself through the current AEC review process sends a very clear and positive message about Esmuc's enhancement agenda and willingness to be scrutinised.)

Although the Review Team did not pursue internal QA documentation in detail, its impression is that although some systems are in place, some others are nascent, and that the School still has some way to go to document these thoroughly and ensure that they are available for appropriate scrutiny. The design of the internal QA system will be assessed by AQU in December 2014. The Review Team heard that before evaluating all the processes in the School, it is first necessary to define them and document them and this is a lengthy and complex task. The Review Team also heard in its meeting with Senior Officers that getting buy-in from teaching staff is difficult as quality assurance can be regarded as over-bureaucratic. A Quality Assurance Committee, chaired by the Director and including appropriate staff, will also have a student representative in its next phase.

Clearly, there is much detailed work still to do in documenting quality assurance systems. The Review Team commends Esmuc for its willingness to be scrutinised at this stage (before many of these systems are fully operational). The Review Team urges Esmuc to be as inclusive as possible in its quality assurance developments and to involve both staff and students. This shares the workload, invites fresh thinking and helps to prevent the process being seen on the ground as a bureaucratic top-down initiative.

Finally under this heading the Review Team would like to note and commend current inspection arrangements. We heard in the meeting with representatives from the Ministry of Education that an Inspector from the Department of Education had been in place with the School since its inception. She described this as more like guidance than inspection. One function of the Inspector is to resolve problems between students and the administration: we heard that in her experience very few real problems need to be reported to the administration. The Inspector also attends classes (5-6 hours a year) and then will have a lengthy conversation with teachers and sometimes students. She reports an atmosphere in the School that is very positively engaged, open and dynamic. The Review Team understands that this inspection arrangement differs from that used in the university sector; we regard this close engagement with the reality of teaching (rather than its description in documentation) as good practice.

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

The SER (p.36) describes some of the ways in which staff and students are currently involved. It seems to the Review Team that staff involvement could be improved, and we heard in meetings with Senior Officers that this was the goal. The SER notes that large meetings are held once a semester with the entire faculty; the Review Team questions the effectiveness of these large meetings for exchange views and hearing concerns from staff.

As an example of what seems to be patchy inclusion of staff in quality assurance matters, the Review Team gained the impression that not many staff had seen or contributed to the current SER. We heard from the meeting with Heads of Department that often their regular meetings are taken up with administrative matters and that they would positively welcome being included in the 'big picture' thinking on strategy and direction. This engagement could perhaps be harnessed by bringing in more staff into quality assurance work.

Students complete electronic course evaluations once a semester. The SER also notes that some programmes conduct their own evaluations. It seems that there is a patchy system for student feedback and this needs to be addressed adopting a common method. The students met by the Review Team appeared to feel that they were listened to and included in committees. The Review Team recommends that, perhaps via the Student Association, students are systematically included and trained to take part in quality systems.

The Review Team feels that both staff and students should be systematically included in quality assurance work in the coming period of development.

We also note that in composing groups of students to be interviewed by a panel, care should be taken to ensure that the group is representative of the whole spectrum of the student population (in the present case the Review Team would have liked to see Masters and performance students).

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

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

Again, the Review Team were not able to determine in any detail how the student evaluation systems noted in the previous sections are acted upon for continuous enhancement. The SER (p.36) notes that the results of the evaluations are reviewed by the Director and that the Student Association reports issues and concerns to him in formal meetings. It would be useful to see more detail on these reviews and meetings, and the mechanisms for reporting. Esmuc may wish to consider some other lines of reporting and resolving more minor issues rather than straight to the Director.

Esmuc is working towards a full AQU accreditation in 2 years time. In the lead-up to that event several systems need to be designed, documented and put into operation. This should, as far as possible, be an inclusive process and should involve staff, students and if possible members of the professions.

## **7. Public interaction**

### **7.1 Influence on cultural life**

#### **7.1. Is the institution involved in the development of cultural and musical activities outside the institution?**

The Review Team saw ample evidence that Esmuc supports cultural and musical activities outside the institution in its role as the senior higher music institution in the city of Barcelona and the region of Catalonia (SER p.37 and Reference Material 5). This was most obviously evident in its meeting with members of the profession but also in other meetings. The Review Team wishes to commend Esmuc on the vitality of its public engagement.

### **7.2 Interaction with the profession**

#### **7.2-a. How does the institution communicate and interact with various sectors of the music profession in order to keep in touch with their needs?**

The SER (p.37) describes various ways in which the institution is in contact with the music professions. As is the case in all artistic areas, perhaps the strongest networks of communication with the professions are perhaps through the staff body – professors and staff of the institution are active members of the music profession and feed back directly into the School. In addition, graduates will keep in touch with and work with their former teachers, graduates will progress to freelance work for the institution. The ‘practicum’ or work experience element of many programmes also facilitates such interactions. The Review Team saw ample evidence of excellent communications and interactions with the music profession in the region and this particularly came into focus in its meetings with members of the professions.

For example, the Review Team heard very positive comments about side-by-side playing arrangements with one professional ensemble as regards the enthusiasm of the student players, the fact that they came very well prepared, their good attitude and professionalism and the fact that professional players also enjoyed playing alongside the young people. The Review Team also heard how the partnership between the Music Museum and the Department of Early Music benefits both partners (bringing audience and new social and educational activities to the Museum and giving the students very valuable experience of playing fine instruments).

These are just two specific examples from a wide range of interactions with the music professions. The Review Team gained the impression of an institution which, despite its young age, was very well networked with the music professions.

### **7.2-b. Is there a long-term strategy for the development of the links with the profession?**

The SER (p.38) describes vigorous activity of the Alumni Office which appears to be one of the success stories of Esmuc; the SER acknowledges the need further to cement ties with alumni as working professionals and the review team would endorse this. The SER notes how there is a good two-way flow of information and meeting between Esmuc staff and the professions; this could perhaps be formalised via an industry advisory board or specific input into curriculum design.

From a quality assurance point of view, it would be good practice to include members of the music professions on curriculum design boards, further cementing the good links in existence with the professions.

One of the stated elements of the strategic plan (SER, p.4) is that Esmuc would like to become ‘a service [...] which balances its professional training functions and transmission to society’. The Review Team considered that it might be able to further this aim by establishing a Catalan music centre at Esmuc. There appears to be no coordinated music information centre in Catalonia. Using its existing links with the professionals and cultural and artistic agencies, Esmuc could use such a mechanism to further develop its brand, its philosophy, its reach and its research, development and pedagogical projects in the region.

Building on existing excellent links with the professions and the cultural life of the city and region, Esmuc may want to consider how it might take a proactive role as a hub of music information in Catalonia.

### **7.3 Information to potential students and other stakeholders**

#### **7.3-a. Is the published information consistent with what the institution offers in terms of educational programmes?**

The Review Team was content that full information was available in Catalan and Spanish; the English language versions were more minimal and could be improved. The Review Team heard several comments in meetings on the website as regards the need to review and update it. On the understanding that upkeep of an institutional website is a Sisyphean task the Review Team would nevertheless support a review.

The management of each Department’s webpages is currently left to departments themselves (SER, p.29) in an attempt to improve information flow within Esmuc. The counter view is that a more co-ordinated approach, starting from a template with consistent information would be more effective. Esmuc acknowledges that there is work to do in improving its website.



**7.3-b. What are the communication strategies for the publication of information to the public?**

The Review Team understands that a communication strategy is in development and this work would include the website development mentioned above. Also as noted above (6.1), internal communication could be usefully addressed.

In its meeting with Senior Officers, the Director expressed the opinion that external communications were a significant issue for the School to address. He felt there was more work to do in order to get Esmuc more into the public eye and that the lack of a large public concert hall was one of the contributing factors.

Throughout this report, the Review Team have made some suggestions to address external communications issues: building on the success of the Alumni Office, the possibility of establishing a Catalan music centre; pursuing negotiations with the Auditori to enable Esmuc student work to be widely and publically disseminated; improving the external website, including more English language content. The Review Team noted the very small resource currently employed in communications which would need to be reviewed.

## 8. Summary

The Review Team formed a view of an ambitious and courageous institution which had faced an extremely severe financial climate but which had not only held firmly to its core values of transversality but had also managed to develop in new directions (e.g. its research initiative) that less strong institutions would probably have jettisoned long ago. It says a great deal about Esmuc that it elected to undergo the current review and subject itself to scrutiny, in the knowledge that some of its quality assurance systems and procedures were not yet fully in place. This indicates an institution which is outward-facing, and willing to learn and develop. The entire Review Team warmly commends Esmuc's Senior Officers, staff and students for their forward-looking and constructive attitude and actions.

### 8.1 Strong points

1. Clear institutional ethos of transversality
  - The original spirit and philosophy of transversality is still strong
  - Esmuc's offering reflects the complete spectrum of music study and aims to create a well-rounded and open-minded musician who is not just a specialist but has connection to other disciplines within the School and society
  - Transversality is well understood and commended by staff, students and the representatives of the professions met by the Review Team
  
2. Research
  - The attention given to the research agenda in the face of austerity is commendable
  - The research initiative can have a positive effect on morale and staff development
  - Esmuc's research arm is well networked and in line with good European practice
  - Esmuc is to be commended on its AGAUR funding
  
3. Esmuc's international outlook
  - Esmuc is outward facing, it is well networked in Europe, and is an active member of the AEC working parties
  - Course offerings are benchmarked against European standards
  - Esmuc attracts international, students and staff
  
4. Range and nature of Esmuc's offering
  - Esmuc offers a broad range of disciplines including highly specialist disciplines such as Flamencology
  - It has embraced different styles of provision with on-line offerings

#### 5. Esmuc's strategic position

- Esmuc is well positioned within society and there is ample evidence of external partnerships including projects and festivals
- There are further possibilities for development (e.g. a music centre for Catalonia)
- Esmuc enjoys support from Ministry of Education and benefits from the respect for the arts and culture in Catalonia
- Esmuc appears to be strong in comparison with its competitors in Barcelona

#### 6. Networks with the professions and connections with other institutions

- Esmuc's professional links are strong
- The Alumni Office has been a successful initiative
- Esmuc participates in several partnerships and joint course offerings with universities in Barcelona and elsewhere in Europe
- Esmuc also participates in or leads artistic and educational projects with various partners

#### 7. A lack of indifference

- The Review Team encountered highly engaged and often passionate advocacy for the School

### **8.2 Potential for development**

#### 1. Esmuc needs to take various actions in moving towards AQU accreditation in 2016, including:

- Tightening existing documentation, and producing a full and comprehensive set of course and process documentation
- Improving the monitoring of student progress, with complete and up to date information on the programme characteristics, delivery and outcomes
- Ensuring the QA process and external guidelines are clear and well understood in the staff body via staff development
- Ensuring that a greater range of staff and students are involved with the QA process
- Recording examinations and/or ensuring timing of external panels coincides with student concerts or exams
- Presenting a wider range of students to the panel

#### 2. Improving the 'nuts and bolts'

- Mechanisms for decision making processes and procedures need to be improved; these will enable the artistic side further to flourish

- IT provision and administrative procedures need to be improved

### 3. Internationalisation

- Esmuc needs to decide what kind of institution it wishes to be (e.g. a Catalan institution which faces outward and welcomes international students, or whether it should aim for more radical internationalisation which may result in losing its local strength and character)
- Esmuc should consider and formulate a strategic approach which embraces the local, national and international
- Notwithstanding the above, there is a need for an improved language policy, including student proficiency and English language communication on the website

### 4. Strategy development

- There is a great deal of development work in hand, and this needs to be guided firmly by strategy
- The strategic plan, risk registers, and KPIs need to be updated
- There needs to be an assigned budget for the Library
- All areas of the curriculum need also to be considered in a strategic plan, e.g. a re-consideration of the balance of the undergraduate curriculum; a statement of strategy on Masters offerings in the context of the current proliferation of degrees; progress towards eventual offering of third cycle degrees and a clear statement of defining Esmuc's approach and philosophy of research.

### 5. Mobilisation and development of staff

- Using the favourable contractual situation, staff could be better engaged and mobilised
- The research initiative has been a pathfinder in this respect
- Feedback loops need to be more two-way, as they are somewhat top-down at the moment; staff expressed a wish to be more involved with strategic direction – these opportunities can be created via involvement and staff development
- Training is needed for personal tutors

### 6. Communications

- Internal communications could be improved
- Better external communications could improve the visibility of Esmuc, which could be a beacon of musical life in Barcelona

- The relationship with the Auditori is an important element in this respect and it is vital to make it work more productively for both parties
  - Esmuc could host a Catalonian Music Centre
7. Gender equality and policy
- Esmuc should consider what positive actions it needs to take to ensure gender equality
8. Title of undergraduate degrees
- Although this is politically sensitive, and may also be sensitive with university providers, in line with Bologna, first cycle degrees should be called Bachelor of Music rather than Superior Title in Music

### **8.3 In conclusion**

1. There is a pressing need for firm funding commitments from the Ministry of Education as the current situation is unsustainable.
2. The whole QA process should be communicated to staff and students not as a bureaucratic imposition, but as a learning process and something that is everyone's responsibility; greater involvement should be encouraged; involvement with QA could be part of a learning process and positive staff development and mobilisation.
3. In view of the positive experience of AEC and AQU colleagues working together in this review and their complementary expertise, the upcoming AQU review in 2016 would be best carried out together with the AEC.
4. The School is at a crossroads and needs to consider at this juncture whether it is broadly happy with its current position and philosophy or whether it needs to re-think it. Esmuc's institutional philosophy and mission is strong, but nevertheless needs to be periodically revisited, questioned and refreshed. In Catalonia the one and only publically-funded higher music institution, an institution with the ambition and courage of Esmuc, deserves more funding and needs more funding. If that funding were forthcoming, there would still be a need to refresh strategy, to prioritise funds, and to ensure better involvement of staff in all areas of the School.