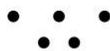




**Quality Enhancement Research  
Peer-review report**

**Royal Conservatoire  
University of the Arts, The Hague**



**Koninklijk  
Conservatorium  
Den Haag**

**Site visit dates: 15-17th February 2017**

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## Introduction

In October 2016, the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague (KC) commissioned MusiQuE - Music Quality Enhancement - to conduct an evaluation of its research policy and activities.

The review took place in the framework of the Branch Protocol Quality Assurance Research ('Brancheprotocol Kwaliteitszorg Onderzoek – BKO') 2016-2022. This protocol suggests that each research unit should undergo an external peer-review on a regular basis that aims to assess the quality of the research that has been carried out by the research unit and to get an impression of which quality assurance measures are in place that will help the research unit to monitor the quality of its research activities internally.

As MusiQuE had recently developed a *Framework for the External Evaluation of Research Centres*, structured in *Domains and Pillars*, a joint set of standards was prepared for this quality enhancement procedure, including both the five standards of the *Branch Protocol for Quality Assurance in Research* and the MusiQuE *Domains and Pillars*.

The review followed a three-stage process:

1. The Royal Conservatoire prepared self-evaluation documentation - including a self-evaluation report structured according to the merged set of standards mentioned above, and material such as samples of student and staff research projects, videos of research presentations, etc.
2. An international Review Team studied the self-evaluation report (SER) and documentation provided by the institution and conducted a site visit in The Hague on 15-17th February 2017. This comprised meetings with Lectors and management, Master's supervisors, Master's circle leaders, students and faculty researchers. The Review Team used the merged set of standards noted above as the basis of its investigations.
3. The Review Team produced the report that follows, using the merged set of standards. The report is structured according to the five BKO standards (each with its short generic description); the MusiQue *Domains and Pillars* are mapped to these standards.

The Review Team consisted of:

- Darla Crispin, Director of the Arne Nordheim Centre for Artistic Research (NordART), Norwegian Academy of Music (Review Team Chair)
- Celia Duffy, Former Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (Review Team member and Secretary)
- Dinko Fabris, Professor of the History of Music, University of Basilicata at Matera and Conservatorio di Musica San Pietro a Majella, Naples and President of the International Musicological Society 2012-2017 (Review Team member)
- Henrik Frisk, Associate Professor, Royal College of Music in Stockholm (Review Team member)

- Giuliano Bracci, composer, PhD Student in Composition at docARTES - Orpheus Institute, Ghent / Leiden University / Conservatorium van Amsterdam (Review Team member)

The Review Team would like to express its sincere thanks to the KC for its hard work in preparing the SER and all the material, for the organisation of the visit and for welcoming the Review Team in a friendly and hospitable way. The quality of engagement in the various meetings demonstrates a community of students and professionals that is admirable in its engagements with the challenges and the promise of the development of research in a conservatoire.

Please note that because of the specific focus of this quality enhancement review, this procedure may not be compatible with all principles of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*.

## 1. Branch Protocol for Quality Assurance in Research Standard 1

The research unit has a relevant, ambitious and challenging research profile and programme with accompanying objectives that have been operationalized in a number of indicators.

**BKO Generic description:** The research unit's research profile and research programme are indicative of how and to what degree the unit is distinctive: relevant, ambitious and challenging in education, in professionalizing practice and in the knowledge domain. The research profile is in synergy with the research vision of the University of Applied Sciences and can count on support from internal and external stakeholders. The research programme has specific objectives. To measure these and make them visible the research unit has set indicators that make clear: input, products, use and rating.

### MusiQuE mapping:

**MusiQuE Domain 1. The profile of the institution: to what extent is the profile of the institution as research centre academically and socially relevant in the wider context of the international music and arts sector, how is this relevance expressed in specific research programmes, and what ambitions are apparent from the research programmes?**

*MusiQuE Pillar 1: How does the University formulate its vision and mission in society?*

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**Final assessment of the quality of the research unit as a whole: Good**

### MusiQuE Domain 1:

KC's research profile and research programme are indicative of a distinctive, relevant, and ambitious institution which is challenging specific norms in conservatoire education, in professional practice and in the knowledge domain. In particular, KC is taking the much-debated field of artistic research and committing substantial intellectual and human resources to its presence in this area, particularly at Master's level, but indeed in all the educational cycles. This is of significance both nationally and internationally because artistic research remains an area of debate, inquiry and growth, and is intrinsic to the kinds of work being undertaken as part of day-to-day life in a conservatoire. Moreover, this work is finding its way into the music sciences, and is being scrutinised ever more intently by experts, both inside and outside music, with a view to challenging and changing the nature of research as a whole.

The artistic research field is also in a period of differentiation - with different national models developing according to social contexts - which in turn means that KC is strategically very well-placed in the development of its innovative practices at this time. Additionally, the research strategy at KC builds productively upon areas which KC can regard as internationally-leading, such as Composition, Early Music and Sonology, and on the considerable professional experience of the practitioners who make up its community.

The indications of the Review Team's investigations are that this quite varied research profile is in synergy with the research vision of the University of the Arts, The Hague (SER, p.13). It is also networked to an exceptional degree (SER pp.11-12 and Section 2, below), and thus can count on support from internal and external stakeholders, in part because of these sophisticated relationships.

### ***MusiQuE Pillar 1:***

The research programme has specific strategic objectives, although with respect to research, the Review Team did not see these articulated in the concise form of vision and mission statements; rather the sense of direction was gleaned more gradually, and mainly through the study of documentation and the feedback from staff and students. In order to measure KC's research objectives and make them visible, the institution uses set indicators (SER, p.23 and p.47). The use of quantitative instruments, especially those imposed externally, presents challenges, and a full-scale internal audit of research activity within the institution has yet to be realised in a way that would enable such information to be truly powerful in a political context. To this end, KC is involved with the instrument, UMultirank, which allows a more detailed interrogation of specifics of institutional provision, but this instrument is not yet disclosing its information in a meaningful way (see also Section 5 below).

### **Recommendations:**

The many networks and instruments that KC uses in developing its work are admirable, but they sometimes confound staff and student understanding of the institution's strategic direction with respect to research. Clear communication to all stakeholders is needed about how their participation in research, as well as being beneficial for personal and professional development, is important to the institution's strategic development. The Review Team recommends:

1. The collection of more detailed and systematic quantitative information concerning research outputs per annum at KC, with a view to understanding trends and communicating such information more clearly; but more importantly:
2. The development and publication of a clear, concise institutional research strategy document, which can be developed largely from the documentation prepared for this Review, but would need to be fashioned as addressing staff and students, so that they genuinely understand their role in the large-scale evolution of their research environments;
3. In the development of a research strategy, instead of reinforcing separations, to consider the benefits of creating bridges among the different fields of music research.

## 2. Branch Protocol for Quality Assurance in Research Standard 2

The research profile can be realised because of the way the unit is organised, how personnel and resources are used and through the internal and external partnerships, networks and clients.

**BKO Generic description:** This standard embodies the conditions for achieving the research profile and the research programme based on it. The portfolio and the way the unit is organised support the implementation and guaranteeing of the research programme. The input of personnel and funds is sufficient in qualitative and quantitative respects. The internal and external partnerships, networks and clients are sufficiently relevant, intensive and sustainable.

### **MusiQuE mapping:**

**MusiQuE Domain 2. The organisation of the research in music: how does the institution's internal organisation guarantee the intended quality of the artistic research results and how does cooperation with external partners in the music industry and the sector at large reinforce research quality?**

***MusiQuE Pillar 2:** How does the institution achieve its proposed objectives and how does the structure and internal organization of the institution ensure that the results are obtained?*

***MusiQuE Pillar 3:** How does the institution support its researchers from the start to the finish of the research assignment and how is their progress monitored?*

***MusiQuE Pillar 5:** How does the institution ensure that there are sufficient funds, requisite facilities and support staff?*

***MusiQuE Pillar 6:** What mechanisms and structures does the institution envision to ensure optimum internal communication, institutional organisation and decision-making?*

***MusiQuE Pillar 8:** How is the institution active in the public cultural arena, and how is it anchored in the wider social context?*

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### **Final assessment of the quality of the research unit as a whole: Good**

The organization of research at the KC appears to be sound and well-structured and students and teachers confirm that they know how it is organized (Meeting 4 with Students, 16.02.2017 and Meetings 2 and 5 with Staff, 16.02.2017 and 17.02.2017).

The conscious ambition of KC to improve both the competence and the interest of its teachers in artistic research is clearly feeding into the quality of both first and second cycle programmes, and research is clearly becoming part of the 'DNA' of the whole institution (Management Meeting 1, 16.02.2017). It is clear from the meeting with the teachers that they are intrigued by the possibility of undertaking a Master's and engaging in research. Any potential problems with this effort appear to be relatively few although they do exist, and the line of handling them was discussed briefly

in Meeting 2 (16.02.17), where it became clear that at Master's level, there is a high reliance upon the Head of Master's Research to act as a trouble-shooter. Despite subsequent clarification that a Master's Research Team does exist (consisting of both the Head of Master's Research and the Master's Research Co-ordinator), the Review Team remains concerned that, given the large cohort number at Master's level, and given its increasingly international student profile, not enough attention is being paid to aspects of risk management; to allay this, formal procedures in case of problems should be transparent and the responsibilities of each Master's Research Team member should be clearly articulated.

Researchers gave evidence that they are both encouraged and allowed to present at conferences and other professional events. In both Meeting 2 (16.02.2017) and Meeting 5 (17.02.2017), staff members gave accounts of their work through funded conference attendance and the financial backing of selected research projects in-house, although the process through which the funding is granted is not entirely transparent.

The Master's Circle is a good format that allows Master's students and teachers to discuss both research and practice. It is a good model for group supervision. The Review Team's observations of a Master's Circle for teachers demonstrated the value of this forum when led by a skilful facilitator – in this case, the newly-appointed Lector: 'Music, Education and Society'.

The Lectorate, 'Research in the Arts', is a sensible construction and an asset in the process of developing an internal research culture. It is also clear that the connection to ACPA (the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts, a research institute within the Faculty of Humanities, University of Leiden) is a resource to KC and that the department of Sonology has well developed contacts to the outside world. docARTES is also a strong network for KC. Students and staff appear to have a clear understanding of the style of research at both docARTES and Leiden University, although KC's elaborate networks are confusing to some (Meeting 5, 17.02.2017).

The Review Team noted that there is quite a large conceptual gap between first and second cycle research expectations (from programme notes at Bachelors to fully worked out research proposals for Master's, see Royal Conservatoire Study Guide 16/17 and SER, Items 3.2 and 3.3, pp. 33-38). It was also acknowledged in the supervisors Meeting 2 (16.02.2017) that there is also a gap between second and third cycles: that only a few students progress from KC to docARTES and that only rarely do second cycle research presentations have the potential to be transformed into PhD research. One student commented in Meeting 4 (16.02.2017) that they were clear that their potential PhD topic would not be accepted at either docARTES or Leiden, although not necessarily due to a lack of quality.

It has been noted that the KC research unit is exceptionally well-networked and in the Management meeting the Review Team heard how this can directly benefit students and staff, exposing them to different ideas and approaches. The Review Team did, however, have some concerns that essentially 'contracting out' its doctoral

researchers to docARTES as a 'service provider' could potentially diminish the KC research community and environment. On the other hand, the Review Team also heard (in the Management Meeting 1, 16.02.2017) about a group of 'research associates' who can stay in close touch with KC as current PhD students in the department of Sonology. The Review Team heard in the Supervisors Meeting 2 (16.02.2017) that docARTES has a particular vision of what artistic research is (for example, excluding pedagogy) and that its restricted definitions can be limiting.

It is the Review Team's impression that human resources for the Master's research programme are not adequate, although it is difficult for us to prove this from the information available. 200+ Master's students (figure obtained from Head of the Quality Assurance Office) takes up a good deal of resource in supervision and administration. The Team also had concerns over the very heavy dependence on one individual as a Lector with many roles but note that this will be ameliorated to some extent by the recent appointment of a new Lector.

Teachers could be given better research career opportunities and preferably be better supported in their continued pursuit of artistic research following the Master's programme. There is a sense of the impending return to 'business as usual' following the completion of the programme by staff. Since KC has articulated the desire to avoid instrumentalizing its Master's training, the staff should have a sense of its long-term potential, rather than needing to regard it as a necessary hurdle to be negotiated in order to retain teaching work.

Research quality could be improved through a more open and/or clear attitude towards what artistic research can be and how this notion is communicated between departments and levels. Informal negative definitions of types of research surfaced at times in the interviews (Students' Meeting 4, 16.02.2017, and multiple, derisive references to "me-search" that potentially denigrate legitimate questions about the subjective that need to be asked in the artistic research field). The sophisticated level of understanding of the nature and practice of artistic research in the SER did not always tally with what the Review Team heard in meetings, for example, in the Student meeting (Meeting 4, 16.02.2017) only half the student group felt confident that they understood the nature of artistic research and among staff researchers (Meeting 5 17.02.2017), there was considerable uncertainty. In the Meeting with research supervisors it was acknowledged that Master's teacher-students may have difficulties in understanding the different modes of research and can feel overwhelmed; however, the Review Team also heard from supervisors of very positive and professional ways to deal with such eventualities.

As regards the different branches of music research, it has been observed that there is a "self-evident kinship between artistic research and research in musicology"<sup>1</sup>; however, the Review Team observed at KC an often rigid separation of these fields. There can be unnecessary separation between performance-based activities and research activities even if the same teacher is involved; sometimes the student's own research does not involve their main teacher. In Meeting 4, (16.02.2017), the Review Team heard that the repertoire one student was preparing for

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<sup>1</sup> Henk Borgdorff, 'The Production of Knowledge in Artistic Research' (2011): 48.

research was not deemed by the instrumental teacher to be the 'right' repertoire for an advanced performer. The Review Team noted another Master's student (Master's Circle meeting, 15.02.2017) investigating historical material on performance practice but with results not seemingly linked to any direct practical usage.

Concerts and internally organized conferences/festivals are not mentioned as part of research output, which points to an unnecessarily limited view of what research output in an artistic research project is or can be. There is a strong belief in the Research Catalogue (RC) as a means for disseminating research but this should not be at the expense of active development of material musical practice, or of a regard for what best supports the student's individual development.

The Master's Circles, good as they are as a construct, appear not to be working so well in all cases and are dependent on high-quality facilitation. The Review Team noted a very high standard of facilitation in its observation of a Master's Circle (15.02.2017) but heard from students (Meeting 4, 16.02.2017) of widely varying quality. Interaction and sharing of practice between circle leaders could be improved and other forms for continuously improving quality should be investigated.

#### **MusiQuE Pillar 2:**

The institution achieves its proposed objectives by: raising research awareness in first cycle programmes, allowing Master's students to engage in research projects, allowing teachers to continue their education with a research Master's, allowing teachers to engage in the docARTES PhD program and allowing teachers to discuss and develop research proposals with their colleagues under supervision.

A question on the more philosophical side that may be asked is how KC sees its programmes as an instrumental solution of a structural challenge and how this affects the view on research content and quality, provided that this division between research structure and research practice is relevant. There is a feeling in the Review Team that there is a lack of a widely communicated strategic view on research development (as noted above in Section 1) which could become very important in the continued work of improving research quality.

#### **MusiQuE Pillar 3:**

The institution supports its faculty researchers by allowing them to engage in research projects on several levels with support from KC, providing a platform for discussion within the Lectorate 'Research in the Arts' and allowing them to travel to conferences and similar events.

The institution monitors the progress of researchers mainly through the RC. It is not however clear if this is working efficiently or not. There is some evidence that it is not working (Meetings 2 and 4, 16.02.2017 and Meeting 5, 17.02.2017). For the Master's students, their progress is monitored through the circles, and this construction is

efficient, however not always functional in practice.

#### **MusiQue Pillar 5:**

Assessment of physical facilities was not a major part of the Review Team's work (although the Review Team notes below comments on library and archival resources).

The allocation of finances was difficult for the Review Team to unpack; for example, the complex network of institutional partnerships, which institution pays for which work and which funding corresponds to which activity. In general terms, however, the Review Team understands that the institution prioritizes support for research on all levels and spends more than specific research funding allows (Management Meeting 1, 16.02.2017). In the same meeting, the Review Team learned that KC also makes research an explicit and rewarded part of teachers' contracts (not a general 'add-on').

In feedback from the Faculty (Meeting 5, 17.02.2017) it is clear that they feel hindered in their continued development as researchers by the lack of research time. From other meetings with staff (Meetings 1 and 2, 16.02.2017) the Review Team can conclude, however, that there are resources available for conferences and similar events.

Support staff were also positively commented upon in connection with the Research Catalogue. The Review Team heard (Meeting 2, 16.02.2017 and Meeting 5, 17.02.2017) that, although there is specific support, the RC is not 'user-friendly' and this is a significant obstacle for staff new to research. The Review Team notes the central importance given to the RC as a strategic instrument to publish results of research; it should not, however, decrease the usage of all other resources available for any research, artistic or not, in the field of music. These resources include all kinds of repertoires and databases available on the internet but also recourse to more traditional instruments, including libraries and archives.

A music library should be still central in the normal life of a music institution and any research project should imply a fruitful usage of traditional library/archive resources as well as of new technologies. The fact that in the new site of the Royal Conservatoire will not include the physical presence of the music library (transferred into the body of the Public Library of Den Haag, near but physically separated) gives the Review Team some concerns. In particular research in the field of Historical Performance Practice should involve direct (physical) examination of original books and manuscripts, not just their digital or photographic reproductions as well as of original instruments in museums or private collections. There are many important collections of early music sources and instruments in the Netherlands but also funding travelling to examine original sources abroad (already provided to students and teachers on a limited scale) will open new directions for specific research.

**MusiQuE Pillar 6:**

The SER (p.24) describes the human resources for research at KC and gives a diagram (p.25) of how the various groups and levels interact. Internal communication is covered thoroughly under BKO Standard 5 (SER p.49) which describes many feedback mechanisms, including thoroughgoing surveying of staff and students. The Review Team also heard about the annual meeting of all supervisors and another annual meeting of Master's circle leaders (Meeting 1 with Management, 16.02.2017) and other mechanisms for internal communication, e.g. in the Master's Circles. The Review Team has less evidence from the documentation about decision-making processes as regards research processes, including how research funds are distributed (and this was reflected in Meeting 5, 17.02.2017).

**MusiQuE Pillar 8:**

The SER (p.28) describes the many connections with national and international organisations and the particular contribution of Lector Henk Borgdorff. The Review Team has noted elsewhere (Section 1 above) how KC's strong networks firmly place it in the forefront of the specialist music higher education sector, both nationally and internationally. However, KC's activity in the wider public cultural arena is somewhat underplayed in the SER. In the view of the Review Team the contribution to wider arts and culture from artistic research carried out by often highly distinguished staff members could be better reflected. The new Lectorship with the specific remit of exploring connections to the outside world and relevance to society, will help to articulate and develop the links between KC and its wider social context.

**Recommendations:**

1. Given the very large cohort of Master's students, formal procedures in case of problems should be transparent and the responsibilities of members of the Master's Research Team clearly articulated; staffing of the Master's programme should also be reviewed to ensure it is adequate for such a large cohort, and that it is fully aware of the need for proactive risk-management.
2. The criteria and mechanisms for funding in-house research projects should be made clearer.
3. Staff researchers should be encouraged to view the long-term potential of their research for their professional development, rather than regarding it as a necessary 'hurdle'.
4. KC should encourage a more open and clear attitude towards what artistic research can be and ensure that this is communicated between departments and levels.
5. See also Recommendation 1, Section 3 below on the Research Catalogue.
6. See also Recommendation 2, Section 4 below on widening the definitions of artistic outputs as research 'product'.

### 3. Branch Protocol for Quality Assurance in Research Standard 3

The research unit's work complies with the prevailing standards for carrying out research in the discipline.

**BKO Generic description:** This standard relates to the quality of the research process. The validity and reliability of practice-oriented research have priority. The research unit has an explicit standard for preparing, implementing and evaluating practice-oriented research. The guideline is the 'Code of conduct for practice-oriented research for Universities of Applied Sciences' (2010), approved by the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences [Vereniging Hogescholen]. The research is or will be carried out in accordance with the methodological rules, the ethics of research and the profession and the values that apply within the discipline and the research domain. In the course of the visitation the visitation committee forms an opinion of the degree to which the research processes are in accordance with the explicit standard by means of a random sample. The research unit reflects on the explicit standard for the preparing, implementing and evaluating practice-oriented research in its self-evaluation.

**MusiQuE mapping:**

**MusiQuE Domain 3. The qualitative evaluation of the artistic research results: how does the institution check its research results and how does it assess these results in an international context?**

**MusiQuE Pillar 4: How does the institution ensure the quality of its researchers and their research results?**

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**Final assessment of the quality of the research unit as a whole: *Excellent***

There are a number of mechanisms through which KC can check its research results and ensure their quality. KC's network of partners and collaborators is important in this respect: e.g. the strong connection with ACPA and doctoral researchers, inter-institutional peer exchange and the numerous connections with other conservatories and universities in the EU (as part of collaborative projects).

The way in which KC deploys its staff and their contribution to the research community and environment also contributes to ensuring quality. For example, internationally-recognised research leadership is provided by the two Lectors (SER pp. 24 and 60). Research supervision for the Master's is carried by a team of PhD alumni and PhD students; moreover, research supervision is carried out by teachers who are involved and supported in their own research development in second and third cycle programmes. The number of supervisors has significantly enlarged over the years (Meeting 2 with supervisors, 16.02.2017, SER p.24) and there is an incentive scheme for staff research development. Other elements of good practice include the strong philosophy of sharing practice. This is evident through the use of the Research Catalogue, the Master's Circle and through twice-yearly meetings of all supervisors (Meeting 1 with management, 16.02.2017).

The published outputs of researchers are a clear indicator of research quality and many such outputs, some of a high international standard, were made available to the Review Team. It might have been enlightening to see examples

that were not from the high end of the qualitative spectrum, and to learn more about how the Lectors and teaching staff deal with cases of resistance and deficiency, although this kind of scrutiny is more normally undertaken as part of annual QA activity. Nonetheless, in Meeting 2 (16.02.2017), supervisors discussed at some length the considerable challenges when working with those who are unskilled in research writing and/or who do not have English at their command.

The introduction of an Ethics Committee (Meeting 3, 16.02.2017, and SER p. 45) is a welcome addition to the operationalization of research standards.

As noted above, the Review Team appreciates the significant investment in the Research Catalogue and its use as a tool to archive and disseminate research outputs, with the caveat that its limitations should also be clear: e.g. this is not the only place that researchers should look for research outputs (Meeting 5, 17.02.2017). The Review Team also questions its usefulness as a tool for supervision. It also questions whether, and at this stage in its evolution, this is the optimum way to connect artistic and research practice or indeed present artistic research (much of the content appears to be in the form of .pdf documents). Moreover, the wearing of 'two hats' by the relevant Lector (President of SAR and leader of the Lectorate 'Research in the Arts'), creates a double task of ensuring both the sustained evolution of the Research Catalogue and the research progress of KC students and staff. There are times when these two roles may not have compatible aims; for KC's purposes, there should be a clear means of addressing this problem in support of students, should it arise.

KC research activity is very diverse (as evidenced in the description of student projects in Meeting 4, 16.02.2017 and the outputs available). The Review Team agrees with the view expressed in the Management Meeting 1, 16.02.2017 that (perhaps as part of the research strategy document recommended above) identifying a number of research clusters could help to organize research without losing the richness and variety of approaches that is important to the KC research environment.

In Meeting 1, 16.02.2017 representatives from Management acknowledged that KC is not systematic enough about keeping track of research outputs and that there is a need to track the 'invisible research economy'. The Review Team also believes that artistic activity can form an important output of artistic research and should be properly accounted for (see Section 4 and 5 below).

### **Recommendations:**

1. KC should undertake a review of the Research Catalogue, evaluating its fitness for purpose, and how it is used and regarded by its users, prioritizing the needs of all research students and staff.
2. KC should consider 'research clusters' as a useful way of organizing research.
3. See also Recommendation 1, Section 1 on tracking and documenting research activity across the institution.

#### 4. Branch Protocol for Quality Assurance in Research Standard 4

The research unit achieves sufficient relevance in the field of:

- Professional practice and society;
- Education and professionalization;
- Knowledge development within the research domain.

The research has sufficient impact on the fields referred to above.

**BKO Generic description:** The standard is about the results and the impact of the research and thus to what extent the indicators used by the research unit are achieved. The indicators show what types of products are involved subdivided into the three fields referred to.

- Professional practice and society. The research at Universities of Applied Science is rooted in professional practice and mostly tied to the context in which it is applied. Research problems derive from professional real life situations in both profit and non-profit sectors. The research subsequently generates knowledge, insights and products that contribute to the solving of problems in professional practice and/or the development of that professional practice and/or the wider community;
- Education and professionalization. The research at Universities of Applied Science is closely connected with other activities in higher professional education. By and large these follow two tracks: the link with education and the professionalization of teaching staff (from teacher to teacher-researcher) for the benefit of education and/or carrying out research.
- Knowledge development. The research at Universities of Applied Science contributes to knowledge development within the research domain in question. Knowledge and insights are transferred to the various target groups through a variety of channels for example: publications, contributions to professional journals, artefacts, experimental set-ups, prototypes, talks and presentations or by means of a variety of media such internet, newspapers, radio and television.

**MusiQuE mapping:**

**MusiQuE Domain 4. The impact of the results of the research into music: to what extent does the research carried out by the institution make a contribution to improving higher music education, artistic performance practice which is part of the professional music sector and to the further academic deepening of the themes researched?**

**MusiQuE Pillar 8:** *How is the institution active in the public cultural arena, and how is it anchored in the wider social context?*

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### **Final assessment of the quality of the research unit as a whole: *Excellent***

KC's SER documentation (p.46) uses the framework of the BKO indicators to respond to this standard, showing input products, use of the products and evaluation of the products against the three dimensions above. The Review Team found these classifications awkward and not entirely fit for purpose as a framework for artistic research, and endorses the view expressed in the SER (p.47) that a more structured approach towards the collection of data on research output is desirable and that (as noted above) there is a need to track the 'invisible research economy' at KC. The Review Team notes the relative paucity of citations of artistic output as research 'product' on the grid and has the impression that the contribution of KC research in this respect is very much under-represented (see also Section 5).

In responding generally to this standard on the impact and relevance of KC's research activity, the Review Team notes four areas of major impact. This impact is described below in terms of what has changed as a result of KC activity.

Firstly, the nature of conservatoire education, the conservatoire research profile and its activity has changed. The Review Team heard from students (Meeting 4, 16.02.2017) about how the research focus of KC had positively influenced their choice of institution. The current vigorous development of a research culture at KC is having an effect on conservatoire higher music education internationally, and KC is in the vanguard in this respect and is differentiating itself from its competitors. Its many partnerships and collaborations also enrich and enlarge its influence and impact.

It may also be argued that the discipline of artistic research has changed as a result of KC's activity. KC has, in its research leadership, had a profound impact on shaping the discipline of artistic research in music and through its actions and institutional strategy and is following this through with significant initiatives for both students and staff. This, as noted above in Section 1, is having impact beyond the conservatoire sector.

The state of knowledge has changed. KC's research builds on solid foundations: the research carried out at this institution has had a marked impact on professional practice and knowledge over many years in particular in areas such as Sonology and Early Music performance practice; there is ample evidence of this in research outputs and high reputation of these areas (noted in Meetings 2, 4 and 5, and evident in the written outputs and video archive provided for scrutiny by the Review Team). This is likely to increase for other disciplinary areas as research in those areas matures.

Finally, 'artistic performance practice' has changed. In areas such as Early Music and Sonology the impact of research is rather more easily identified than in other areas of music performance; nevertheless, changes will become evident in other areas too as a result of artistic research activity.

The Review Team noted in KC a pervading climate of continuous development and enhancement. For example, the Review Team welcomes the new Lectorship which has the specific remit of exploring connections to the outside world and relevance to society, opening up a new set of questions as a part of the research environment and research discourse. The Review Team also commends the CAAR initiative (SER, p. 59), which is specifically about the nature of engagement with KC and other institutions in the city of The Hague. Both are important contributions to increasing the visibility and relevance of KC research.

This climate also extends to consistent support for staff to undertake research activities. The Review Team heard from staff researchers (Meeting 6, 17.02.2017) about profound impacts on their professional outlook: from a fundamentally more enquiring way of undertaking their artistic practice to becoming more articulate and able to engage in public advocacy and political debate.

The relevance of research to the community at large is relatively underdeveloped and could be strengthened; the following comments elaborate this theme. The Review Team notes the positive development of introducing the new Lectorship in this area.

Finding views from outside KC and evaluations of its research impact from external sources was not easy (e.g. there were no externals present in meetings); it would be useful to have external input specifically about impact.

As noted in the previous Section, there are many public activities that would/should contribute as impact indicators for artistic research. These are not listed in the documentation or the BKO indicator grid; these are important for indicators of impact in the public domain as KC has a prominent public presence and profile.

The social relevance of research at KC is not clearly articulated: the Review Team heard from a researcher (Meeting 2, 16.02.2017) about historical research into electronic music that had benefitted the world at large; there are many such research outputs, but their societal relevance could be more clearly articulated. In a political climate that is hostile to arts funding this is a priority.

**Recommendations:**

1. KC should gather external input on its research activity specifically as regards impact in the wider cultural sector.
2. A review of the policy for inclusion of 'product' in the BKO grid should be undertaken with a view to widening the criteria for inclusion.
3. The social relevance of research at KC should be more clearly articulated.

## 5. Branch Protocol for Quality Assurance in Research Standard 5

The research unit carries out regular and systematic evaluation of the research processes and results. Where necessary the research unit makes improvements based on the findings

**BKO Generic description:** The standard is intended to guarantee care for the quality of practice-oriented research. For this purpose the research unit has at its disposal relevant management information and makes use of a cohesive whole of measuring and evaluation instruments. The follow-up to the external visitation is part of this. The measuring and evaluation results lead to reflection and to steps to improve the research profile, the research programme and the organisation and implementation of the research.

**MusiQuE mapping:**

**MusiQuE Domain 3. The qualitative evaluation of the artistic research results: how does the institution check its research results and how does it assess these results in an international context?**

**MusiQuE Pillar 7: How does the institution work on structural internal quality control and improvement?**

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**Assessment of the research activities of the Royal Conservatoire by the Review Team: Satisfactory**

The SER (p.49) outlines the tools and processes used to assess the quality of research activities at KC and notes that research has been fully incorporated into the overall institutional QA system for the past six years. The Review Team notes the positive results of internal feedback (much of it gleaned through surveys) and the perspective provided by various engagements with external experts. The Review Team congratulates KC on its thorough and systematic approach and further endorses (as noted above) its pervasive attitude of continuous enhancement.

With this overarching good practice in mind the Review Team offers some observations on the use of instruments and indicators: the BKO indicator grid is not entirely suitable for framing the products of artistic research (see previous Section). Nevertheless, it seems that KC undersells its research 'products' and that it should have the confidence to declare more of its artistic outputs in this grid. As the Review Team understands it, only 'discursively framed concerts' are counted (n=16); this seems an unnecessarily restrictive definition. The Review Team would also expect to see the many research-led encounters with the music professions (including recordings, orchestras and ensembles, broadcasters, festivals) represented here.

If KC is undersold in the BKO grid, the U-Multirank example (SER p. 55) gives rather the opposite picture. The Review Team understands and endorses the use of a benchmarking tool for international comparisons, but until it is more widely adopted and unless there is some consistency in the definition of research-based artistic activities, its usefulness will be limited.

**Recommendations:**

As for Recommendation 2, Section 4 above on artistic research outputs.

## **6. Final assessment on the quality of the research unit as a whole and Summary of the Review Team's findings, comments and recommendations**

### **Final assessment on the quality of the research unit as a whole: Excellent**

This section offers a summary of the attributes of KC research which stand out as being strong relative to both the BKO and MusiQuE standards and areas which could be further developed. In the opinion of the Review Team the overall assessment as 'Excellent' is based on KC's research leadership in relation to peer institutions in the conservatoire sector; the high quality of its Master's provision; the strong emphasis on and creative approach to staff development in research; areas of world-leading research (in particular Composition, Sonology, and Early Music); and the investment of the institution in pioneering support for research such as the Research Catalogue.

### **Strong points**

The Review Team commends and acknowledges:

- the ambition of KC's research activities and its investment in its development, particularly in Master's programmes for both staff and students and in the new Lectorship
- KC's strong national and international research networks, partnerships and connections
- the high internationally-recognized quality of its research leadership and many of its outputs
- KC's pervasive attitude of enhancement and critical self-reflection, evident throughout, and particularly in the final section of the SER
- the excellent standard of documentation
- a strong QA ethos and precise understanding of QA processes
- investment in and support for staff researchers

### **Further developments**

The Review Team recognizes that shifting a conservatoire culture is very challenging and acknowledges the forward-looking and energetic research agenda of KC. However, the Review Team found that there is still uncertainty over a fundamental aspect: the definition and practice of artistic research among staff and students. The standpoint expressed in the documentation is not universally shared or understood and there are mixed messages. To an extent, it is still early days for the development of research at KC, and both confidence and a clearer understanding will emerge as more staff 'find their feet' as researchers. But the Review Team also believes that there needs to be an institutional conversation about the nature and practice of artistic research, and how it plays out in all cycles; a conversation which recognizes the differentiation emerging in the field, challenges orthodoxy and is open to different research fields and approaches.

As noted throughout, the Review Team appreciates the significant investment in the Research Catalogue and its use as a tool to archive and disseminate research outputs. It does, however, have significant limitations: it seems not

intuitive or easy to use for many users and its purpose appears to be often misunderstood. It should be regarded as a help, not a hindrance by its users.

Finally, the Review Team heard powerful testimony from staff members in Meeting 5 (Staff researchers. 17.02.2017) about how KC's research support had helped develop their voices as advocates for the arts. The Review Team commends the new Lectorship as a significant step in assisting KC in articulating its relevance to society, but it encourages KC to promote its artistic-research outputs more effectively, including by considering widening the definition of 'products' of artistic research in the public domain.

## BKOs, MusiQuE Domains and Pillars and Links to Recommendations:

Protocol Number	Description	Assessment: BKO	Recommendations:
			<b>Pertaining to MusiQue Domain 1 and Pillar 1</b>
1. Branch Protocol for Quality Assurance in Research Standard 1	The research unit has a relevant, ambitious and challenging research profile and programme with accompanying objectives that have been operationalized in a number of indicators.	<b>Good</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The collection of more detailed and systematic quantitative information concerning research outputs per annum at KC, with a view to understanding trends and communicating such information more clearly; but more importantly:</li> <li>2. The development and publication of a clear, concise institutional research strategy document, which can be developed largely from the documentation prepared for this Review, but would need to be fashioned as addressing staff and students, so that they genuinely understand their role in the large-scale evolution of their research environments;</li> <li>3. In the development of a research strategy, instead of reinforcing separations, to consider the benefits of creating bridges among the different fields of music research.</li> </ol>

			<b>Pertaining to MusiQue Domain 2 and Pillars 2, 3, 5, 6, 8</b>
2. Branch Protocol for Quality Assurance in Research Standard 2	The research profile can be realised because of the way the unit is organised, how personnel and resources are used and through the internal and external partnerships, networks and clients.	<b>Good</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Given the very large cohort of Master's students, formal procedures in case of problems should be transparent and the responsibilities of members of the Master's Research Team clearly articulated; staffing of the Master's programme should also be reviewed to ensure it is adequate for such a large cohort, and that it is fully aware of the need for proactive risk-management.</li> <li>2. The criteria and mechanisms for funding in-house research projects should be made clearer.</li> <li>3. Staff researchers should be encouraged to view the long-term potential of their research for their professional development, rather than regarding it as a necessary 'hurdle'.</li> <li>4. KC should encourage a more open and clear attitude towards what artistic research can be and ensure that this is communicated between departments and levels.</li> <li>5. See also Recommendation 1, Section 3 below on the Research Catalogue.</li> <li>6. See also Recommendation 2, Section 4 below on widening the definitions of artistic outputs as research 'product'.</li> </ol>

			<b>Pertaining to MusiQue Domain 3 and Pillar 4</b>
3. Branch Protocol for Quality Assurance in Research Standard 3	The research unit's work complies with the prevailing standards for carrying out research in the discipline.	<b>Excellent</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. KC should undertake a review of the Research Catalogue, evaluating its fitness for purpose, and how it is used and regarded by its users, prioritizing the needs of all research students and staff.</li> <li>2. KC should consider 'research clusters' as a useful way of organizing research.</li> <li>3. See also Recommendation 1, Section 1 on tracking and documenting research activity across the institution.</li> </ol>

			<b>Pertaining to MusiQue Domain 4 and Pillar 8</b>
4. Branch Protocol for Quality Assurance in Research Standard 4	<p>The research unit achieves sufficient relevance in the field of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional practice and society;</li> <li>• Education and professionalization;</li> <li>• Knowledge development within the research domain.</li> </ul> <p>The research has sufficient impact on the fields referred to above.</p>	<b>Excellent</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. KC should gather external input on its research activity specifically as regards impact in the wider cultural sector.</li> <li>2. A review of the policy for inclusion of 'product' in the BKO grid should be undertaken with a view to widening the criteria for inclusion.</li> <li>3. The social relevance of research at KC should be more clearly articulated.</li> </ol>

			<b>Pertaining to MusiQue Domain 3 and Pillar 7</b>
5. Branch Protocol for Quality Assurance in Research Standard 5	The research unit carries out regular and systematic evaluation of the research processes and results. Where necessary the research unit makes improvements based on the findings	<b>Satisfactory</b>	1. As for Recommendation 2, Section 4 above on artistic research outputs.

## Mapping the Branch Protocol for Quality Assurance in Research for the MusiQuE Domains and Pillars

### About the use of the Branch Protocol for Quality Assurance in Research

The core purpose of the visitation is to assess the quality of the research that has been carried out by the research unit. The assessment is made on the basis of five standards focusing successively on the research profile and the research programme, the organisation of the research unit, the quality of the method of the research, the results and the impact of the research and the guarantee of quality. In each case when assessing the five standards it is about the development that the research unit has gone through (where have we come from), the current situation (where are we now) and the prospects for the future (where are we going). The visitation is carried out on the basis of the five standards. The visitation committee passes a reasoned opinion on the first four standards on a four point scale: unsatisfactory; satisfactory; good; excellent. A two point scale is used for standard five: satisfied / not satisfied. The committee then goes on to formulate a final assessment on the quality of the research unit as a whole supported by reasons, again on a four point scale.

### Mapping the Branch Protocol for Quality Assurance in Research for the MusiQuE Domains and Standards

<p><b>Branch Protocol for Quality Assurance in Research Standard 1: The research unit has a relevant, ambitious and challenging research profile and programme with accompanying objectives that have been operationalized in a number of indicators.</b></p>	<p><b>MusiQuE Domain 1. The profile of the institution/research unit: to what extent is the profile of the institution as research centre academically and socially relevant in the wider context of the international music and arts sector, how is this relevance expressed in specific research programmes, and what ambitions are apparent from the research programmes?</b></p>
<p>The research unit's research profile and research programme are indicative of how and to what degree the unit is distinctive: relevant, ambitious and challenging in education, in professionalizing practice and in the knowledge domain. The research profile is in synergy with the research vision of the University of Applied Sciences and can count on support from internal and external stakeholders. The research programme has specific objectives. To measure these and make them visible the research unit has set indicators that make clear: input, products, use and rating (see chapter 6).</p> <p><i>Assessment: unsatisfactory; satisfactory; good; excellent.</i></p>	<p><b><i>MusiQuE Pillar 1: How does the university/research unit formulate its vision and mission in society?</i></b></p>

<p><b>Branch Protocol for Quality Assurance in Research Standard 2: The research profile can be realised because of the way the unit is organised, how personnel and resources are used and through the internal and external partnerships, networks and clients.</b></p>	<p><b>MusiQuE Domain 2. The organisation of the research in music: how does the institution's/unit's internal organisation guarantee the intended quality of the artistic research results and how does cooperation with external partners in the music industry and the sector at large reinforce research quality?</b></p>
<p>This standard embodies the conditions for achieving the research profile and the research programme based on it. The portfolio and the way the unit is organised supports the implementation and guaranteeing of the research programme. The input of personnel and funds is sufficient in qualitative and quantitative respects. The internal and external partnerships, networks and clients are sufficiently relevant, intensive and sustainable.</p> <p><i>Assessment: unsatisfactory; satisfactory; good; excellent.</i></p>	<p><b>MusiQuE Pillar 2:</b> <i>How does the institution/research unit achieve its proposed objectives and how does the structure and internal organization of the institution ensure that the results are obtained?</i></p> <p><b>MusiQuE Pillar 5:</b> <i>How does the institution/research unit ensure that there are sufficient funds, requisite facilities and support staff?</i></p> <p><b>MusiQuE Pillar 6:</b> <i>What mechanisms and structures does the institution/research unit envision to ensure optimum internal communication, institutional organisation and decision-making?</i></p>
<p><b>Branch Protocol for Quality Assurance in Research Standard 3: The research unit's work complies with the prevailing standards for carrying out research in the discipline.</b></p>	<p><b>MusiQuE Domain 3. The qualitative evaluation of the artistic research results: how does the institution/research unit check its research results and how does it assess these results in an international context?</b></p>
<p>This standard relates to the quality of the research process. The validity and reliability of practice-oriented research have priority. The research unit has an explicit standard for preparing, implementing and evaluating practice-oriented research. The guideline is the 'Code of conduct for practice-oriented research for Universities of Applied Sciences' (2010), approved by the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences [Vereniging Hogescholen]. The research is or will be carried out in accordance with the methodological rules, the ethics of research and the profession and the values that apply within the discipline and the research domain. In the course of the visitation the visitation committee forms an opinion of the degree to which the research processes are in accordance with the explicit standard by means of a random sample. The research unit reflects on the explicit standard for the preparing, implementing and evaluating practice-oriented research in its self-evaluation.</p> <p><i>Assessment: unsatisfactory; satisfactory; good; excellent.</i></p>	<p><b>MusiQuE Pillar 3:</b> <i>How does the institution/research unit support its researchers from the start to the finish of the research assignment and how is their progress monitored?</i></p> <p><b>MusiQuE Pillar 4:</b> <i>How does the institution/research unit ensure the quality of its researchers and their research results?</i></p>

<p><b>Branch Protocol for Quality Assurance in Research Standard 4: The research unit achieves sufficient relevance in the field of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional practice and society;</li> <li>• Education and professionalization;</li> <li>• Knowledge development within the research domain.</li> </ul> <p><b>The research has sufficient impact on the fields referred to above.</b></p>	<p><b>MusiQuE Domain 4. The impact of the results of the research into music: to what extent does the research carried out by the institution/research unit make a contribution to improving higher music education, artistic performance practice which is part of the professional music sector and to the further academic deepening of the themes researched?</b></p>
<p>The standard is about the results and the impact of the research and thus to what extent the indicators used by the research unit are achieved. The indicators show what type of products are involved subdivided into the three fields referred to.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional practice and society. The research at Universities of Applied Science is rooted in professional practice and mostly tied to the context in which it is applied. Research problems derive from professional real life situations in both profit and non-profit sectors. The research subsequently generates knowledge, insights and products that contribute to the solving of problems in professional practice and/or the development of that professional practice and/or the wider community;</li> <li>• Education and professionalization. The research at Universities of Applied Science is closely connected with other activities in higher professional education. By and large these follow two tracks: the link with education and the professionalization of teaching staff (from teacher to teacher-researcher) for the benefit of education and/or carrying out research.</li> <li>• Knowledge development. The research at Universities of Applied Science contributes to knowledge development within the research domain in question. Knowledge and insights are transferred to the various target groups through a variety of channels for example: publications, contributions to professional journals, artefacts, experimental set-ups, prototypes, talks and presentations or by means of a variety of media such internet, newspapers, radio and television.</li> </ul> <p><i>Assessment: unsatisfactory; satisfactory; good; excellent.</i></p>	<p><b>MusiQuE Pillar 8: How is the institution/research unit active in the public cultural arena, and how is it anchored in the wider social context?</b></p>

<p><b>Branch Protocol for Quality Assurance in Research Standard 5: The research unit carries out regular and systematic evaluation of the research processes and results. Where necessary the research unit makes improvements based on the findings</b></p>	<p><b>MusiQuE Domain 3. The qualitative evaluation of the artistic research results: how does the institution/research unit check its research results and how does it assess these results in an international context?</b></p>
<p>The standard is intended to guarantee care for the quality of practice-oriented research. For this purpose the research unit has at its disposal relevant management information and makes use of a cohesive whole of measuring and evaluation instruments. The follow-up to the external visitation is part of this. The measuring and evaluation results lead to reflection and to steps to improve the research profile, the research programme and the organisation and implementation of the research.</p> <p><i>Assessment: satisfied / not satisfied.</i></p>	<p><b><i>MusiQuE Pillar 7: How does the institution/research unit work on structural internal quality control and improvement?</i></b></p>