

Music Quality Enhancement

MUSIQUE

TREND ANALYSIS

2019

Introduction

This trend analysis compares the findings of eight MusiQuE reviews reports. It identifies specific features of good practice and it highlights common areas for development which will be of relevance to a broad spectrum of the European higher music education sector. As in the 2017 Trend Analysis, the report does not make specific recommendations. It aims instead to provide MusiQuE with information that will enable it to plan its future priorities as a quality assurance agency and to inform the European higher music education sector. Where appropriate, attention is drawn to trends and areas for development discussed in the 2017 Trend Analysis. The following eleven reports are considered within the analysis and along with two Critical Friend reports:

Institution	Date	Classification of review
Vorarlberger Landes Konservatorium (VLK), Austria	31 January – 1 February 2017	Institutional Quality Enhancement Review
The Real Conservatorio Superior de Música de Madrid (RSMM), Spain	12-14 March 2018	Institutional Quality Enhancement Review
Moscow State P.I. Tchaikovsky Conservatory (MSTC), Russia	4-6 December 2018	Institutional Accreditation (joint with National Centre for Public Accreditation)
Kazakh National University of Arts (KNUA), Kazakhstan	14-16 March 2017	Accreditation of Music Programmes
College of Music, Mahidol University (CMMU), Thailand	22-24 November 2018	Accreditation of Bachelor of Music Programme
Escola Superior de Música de Lisboa (ESML), Portugal	11-13 December 2017	Accreditation of Programmes
Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre (EAMT), Estonia	22-23 November 2017	Programme Quality Enhancement Review
Royal Conservatoire Antwerp (RCA), Belgium	13-15 May 2018	Programme Quality Enhancement Review
Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussels (KCB), Belgium	16-18 May 2018	Programme Quality Enhancement Review
Malmö Academy of Music, Lund University, Sweden	30 September – 2 October 2018	Programme Quality Enhancement Review
Conservatorio della Svizzera Italiana (CdSI), Lugano, Switzerland	23-25 October 2018	Programme Quality Enhancement Review

Malmö Academy of Music, Lund University, Sweden	24 – 26 April 2018	Critical Friend Report, Jazz Improvisation and World Music Performance Programmes
Malmö Academy of Music, Lund University, Sweden	30 May – 3 June 2018	Critical Friend Report, Composition and Arrangement Department

As demonstrated within the above chart, there are three classifications of reviews and two Critical Friend Reports. The content and format of these MusiQuE reports therefore varied according to the purpose of the review (collaborative with a national agency with merged criteria, accreditation, peer review, Institutional Quality Enhancement etc.). As with the 2017 Trend Analysis, the following is therefore an extrapolation, synthesis and drawing together of common issues, using reports of varying formats with similar, but not identical purposes. The MusiQuE Standards are used as a common reference point.

As with any organism, an institution is at its best when all constituent parts are working together (in harmony) with shared understanding and a common sense of purpose, endeavour and commitment. Some of the paragraphs are highlighted by the use of boxed text. This boxed text identifies areas which go beyond small glitches and are organic and/or systemic. As such, if addressed, they have the potential to enhance significantly the well-being of the institution.

1. Institutional mission, vision and context/Programme's goals and context

Standard 1: the institutional mission and vision/the programme goals are clearly stated.

- 1.1 A significant percentage of the reports contained commendations for clear statements on the mission, vision and context of the programmes/institutions. Programme reviews evidenced good correspondence between aims and objectives of the curriculum and the global mission/vision of the institutions. Two institutions were commended on the extent to which the mission and vision had been shared with and understood by internal stakeholders, a feature of good practice highlighted in the 2017 Trend Analysis. Review teams identified a good balance at institutional and programme between strong national features and engagement at regional/international levels. In general, teaching programmes tended to be more national and regional in their focus so as to meet the needs of the domestic employment market. In contrast, performance programme were more likely to be international in outlook. However, several institutions were urged to develop and put into operation an international strategy with the aim of further developing the international profile of the institution/programme and achieving closer alignment with current international perspectives including Bologna. These recommendations included particular emphasis on student and staff mobility and international initiatives that are wider in scope than international student recruitment
- 1.2 Four institutions were recommended to carry out benchmarking with similar comparable institutions as a means to providing management information that would be capable of evaluating the institution's/programme's effectiveness and informing future strategies and developments.
- 1.3 Recommendations of three reports focussed on the need for further structure and definition to be clear within strategies, including heightened use of management information and action plans for delivering mission and vision. These recommendations also featured in the previous 2017 Trend Analysis.
- 1.4 Other recommendations and suggestions included developing a 10-15 year strategy, clearer definition of programme aims and institutional documentation and closer alignment between mission/vision and programmes. However, these recommendations were contrary to the overall trend of reports in this batch. Similarly, important themes such as gender, disability and diversity were highlighted in only two reports as in need of consideration.
- 1.5 Despite targeted recommendations for each institution/programme, there was much positive commentary in this section of reports, indicating an overall good correspondence with the first MusiQuE Standard.

2. Educational processes

2.1 The programmes/curriculum and their/its methods of delivery

Standard: the goals of the institution/programme are achieved through the content and structure of the study programmes/curriculum and their/its methods of delivery

2.1.1 Overall, there was a high degree of conformity with this standard with all institutions/programmes being considered as compliant despite a number of recommendations. Encouragingly, eight institutions/programmes were commended for the referencing and benchmarking of learning outcomes to those of the Association of European Conservatoires (AEC) and other national and international benchmarks.

2.1.2 Commendations for good practice in relation to student-centred learning were featured in five reports. Cited good practice included the facilitation of peer-learning, support for student projects (academic and performance) and the range of elective/individualised programmes of study which provide a flexible learning environment. However, some institutions were recommended to consider how the student voice could be more usefully shared within the programmes so as to use the information to improve provision and raise student satisfaction.

2.1.3 Research was commended in three reports. In one institution the Review Panel found that students were particularly well prepared for research elements of their programme and research was found to be very well embedded in programmes of two institutions.

2.1.4 Another emergent area of commentary relates to practice-based and/or pedagogical research and a number of institutions was recommended/encouraged to formulate more specific definitions of this area and to embed it further within the learning environment.

2.1.5 A small number of reports expressed satisfaction with the collaborative activity in the institution/programme exemplified by shared activity between different programmes and/or departments. It should be noted however that a similar number of reports commented that collaboration, inter-disciplinarity and cross-programme work could be given higher priority so as to enrich the curriculum.

2.1.6 Despite the high level of compliance with this standard, a very significant percentage of reports recommended that more work be carried out on learning outcomes, Polifonia Dublin Descriptors and the clarity of study guides. Some institutions were encouraged to ensure that internal stakeholders are fully aware of the purpose and function of learning outcomes. Additionally, some reports recommended that documentation of courses/modules which form part of the programme (but does not have specified course/module outcomes) should reflect and express more closely the programme aims and outcomes and the level of study.

2.1.7 An emergent area of commentary since the previous Trend Analysis is that of cultural entrepreneurship, music management and societal engagement. Several institutions/programmes were recommended to review the curriculum to see if there is scope for strengthening these areas of work. There was similar commentary in some reports in relation to lifelong learning, critical thinking, professional development and other transferable skills. Review teams were keen to point out the employability benefits of these areas of the curriculum.

2.2 International perspectives

Standard: the institution/programme offers a range of opportunities for students to gain an international perspective.

2.2.1 Overall review reports demonstrate a very positive outlook in terms of international perspectives. Virtually all of the institutions were recognised for their strategies or, their intentions to improve/develop a strategy. One institution was highly commended in every respect in relation to its approach to international perspectives.

2.2.2 Commendations were given to seven institutions in the areas of international networking, collaborations and the way in which the learning environment fosters international exchanges and ambitions.

2.2.3 Several institutions were noted for the way in which the language provision enabled international dimensions of the curriculum. Such provision includes the use of more than one language in teaching provision (usually including English). However, a number of institutions was encouraged to develop further provision in this area as a means to promoting student and staff mobility.

2.2.4 As manifest in the 2017 Trend Analysis, student and staff mobility was reported as being in need of more systematic support in several institutions – finance, administration, promotion etc., and participation in mobility projects is correspondingly adversely affected.

2.2.5 Despite the overall positive outlook expressed above, there was reference to the need for more strategic work to be carried out to promote international perspectives in over half the reports. Such work included the creation of a strategy and/or more comprehensive action plans with attributed responsible officers supported by data analysis. This theme echoes the trend identified in the 2017 Trend Analysis. A minority of reports suggested that programmes needed to be more closely aligned with the international aspirations and strategy.

2.3 Assessment

Standard: assessment methods are clearly defined and demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes.

2.3.1 Although the reports under consideration pinpoint some positive features, it is clear that further developmental work is needed in this area.

2.3.2 One of the principal areas of positive commentary relates to clear definitions of assessment tasks and methods and most institutions were commended for this. However, this finding was not universal and a number of institutions was recommended to provide more detail and clarity to students within their programme descriptions.

2.3.3 A number of additional deficiencies relating to the above were identified. These included, lack of awareness and understanding of the relationship between programme aims, outcomes, assessment and criteria on the part of staff, lack of consistency, lack of comparability between disciplines, and assessment criteria which are not entirely fit for purpose. This theme was equally evident in the 2017 Trend Analysis.

2.3.4 Three institutions were commended on the feedback given to students after assessment. These commendations included the use of face-to-face feedback, the employment of formative assessment and

promptness of feedback. Conversely, three institutions were found in need of improving feedback procedures in areas such as consistency, record keeping, detail, standardisation and record keeping for the purposes of monitoring student progression.

2.3.5 Review teams highlighted specific areas of good practice such as integrated assessment practices between discrete but complementary areas of the curriculum, the use of external stakeholders (professionals/employers) in the assessment process and the use of cross-departmental examiners.

2.3.6 In some cases, review teams suggested that assessment procedures could be improved by measures such as further staff development, internal debate, consideration of peer-assessment strategies and standardisation of processes and benchmarking.

3. Student profiles

3.1 Admission/Entrance qualifications

Standard: clear admission criteria exist, which establish artistic/academic suitability of students. / There are clear criteria for student admission, based on an assessment of their artistic/academic suitability for the programme.

3.1.1 The trend in this area is very positive despite the need for some institutions to carry out further work. All institutions/programmes received affirmation in one or more of the following: clear procedures; explicit and easily accessible information; useful supporting materials; and fitness for purpose.

3.1.2 Three institutions were commended for the way in which data is used for evaluating issues such as admissions, progression and completion (awards). Another was commended for giving high profile to internal debates and discussions on admissions and the way in which admissions procedures are reviewed.

3.1.3 Affirmation was given to four institutions for their engagement at pre-college level in this area. One example included permitting applicants to observe lessons in the HE school. Another was offering applicants to be coached by members of staff in the HE school.

3.1.4 Other areas of identified good practice includes differentiating between candidates' "real-time" achievement and potential and high levels of involvement of the teaching staff in the admissions process.

3.1.5 Notwithstanding this very positive trend, four institutions were encouraged to review standards, policies and issues including: level of spoken language (English); unsatisfactory level of applicant potential/achievement; better match of applicant to the mission of the institution/programme; improved strategic planning; and improved use of data so as to provide information relating to attrition (drop-out) and the quality of entrants.

3.2 Student progression, achievement and employability

Standard: the institution/programme has mechanisms to formally monitor and review the progression, achievement and subsequent employability of its students.

3.2.1 A significant majority of institutions/programmes were deemed as compliant with this standard and most of them had good systems in place. In two cases, the integral use of technology was reported as an important enhancement feature of the process.

3.2.2 Review teams noted good practice in a number of individual cases including maintaining strong links with alumni and supporting these stakeholders (post-studies) to find employment and make contacts within the profession.

3.2.3 Although all institutions were found to be compliant, review teams identified various areas for development. An important area was focussed on progression, achievement and employment data and operational systems.

3.2.4 A small number of institutions/programmes were identified as in need of strengthening student support mechanisms in the areas of careers guidance.

3.2.5 Some review teams reported the need for greater vigilance in terms of employment markets (national and international) with an underlying implication that in some cases, curriculum needs to be more flexible and responsive to changes (real and potential) in the job market to avoid being left behind.

4. Teaching staff

4.1 Staff qualifications and professional activity

Standard: members of the teaching staff are qualified for their role and are active as artists/pedagogues/researchers.

4.1.1 Review teams noted that there was a high degree of compliance with this standard and many institutions are well-served by a committed and highly skilled teaching staff. For various reasons including national regulatory frameworks, heritage and context, a wide range of teaching staff contractual terms and conditions pertained to the institutions/programme. Reports therefore indicated considerable variation in terms of staff make-up (gender, part-time, full-time etc.), balance and employment flexibility.

4.1.2 Several points of good practice were identified. Some institutions/programmes were commended for including pedagogical elements within the teaching staff recruitment process. Four institutions were reported to demonstrate strong commitment to ensuring that staff had access to the appropriate continuing professional development activities. One institution was noted for its effective appraisal system, another for its approach to encouraging a staff lesson observation scheme and another for its policy guidance (code of conduct) for teaching staff.

4.1.3 A significant area for development in the majority of programmes/institutions concerned the need for more formal and/or explicit systems of staff support in areas ranging from external artistic activity, pedagogical engagement and ERASMUS (staff mobility). In some cases, review suggested that support for part-time teachers in the area of continuing professional development was not as satisfactory as the provision for full-time teachers.

4.1.4 Other areas of development for a small number of institutions included more formal staff appraisal, and better systems (forums) within the institution/programme for the dissemination of good teaching practice.

4.1.5 Four institutions were encouraged to review approaches to research – define practice-based research in music more fully (see 2.1.4 above) and/or set out clearly the expectations of the institution in respect of staff research.

4.1.6 Four institutions were recommended to raise the profile of up-to-date pedagogy, perhaps adding new elements to the curriculum.

4.2 Size and composition of the teaching staff body

Standard: there are sufficient qualified teaching staff to effectively deliver the programme(s).

4.2.1 Reports evidenced strong compliance for this standard across reviewed institutions and programmes.

4.2.3. There were two related commendations for recruitment flexibility and an institutional strategy for diversifying staff competencies (i.e. facilitating teaching staff to extend their teaching practices into new realms).

4.3.4 One institution was commended for the employment of short-term contracts which provide both staff and the institution a degree of flexibility. (This commendation is not repeated in other reports.)

4.3.5 Areas for long-term development and planning included: consideration to the balance of short-term and long-term contracts; the balance within teaching contracts between teaching and administrative duties; the relationship between teaching duties and professional performance commitments for instrumental teachers; contractual expectations of research and pedagogical activity; the extent to which contracts enable members of the teaching staff to be integrated into the decision making process of institutions/programmes; and ensuring sufficient contractual flexibility to cater for the needs of new programmes and curricula.

5. Facilities, resources and support

5.1 Facilities

Standard: the institution has appropriate resources to support student learning and delivery of the programmes.

5.1.1 Given the diversity of institutions reviewed and the varying contexts, reports evidenced a wide-range of findings. Four institutions were commended on the high quality of the overall quality of facilities.

5.1.2 Review teams considered supporting facilities including libraries and IT. Five institutions were commended for library provision and a similar number of IT where online learning and digital lending were singled out as positive developments.

5.1.3 Three institutions were commended for the quality of instrument stock.

5.1.4 Review teams identified a range of issues relating to medium/long term strategic planning which included the development of instrumental stock; logistics and the need to formulate digital strategies.

5.1.5 Other short/medium terms issues include practice/rehearsal room availability and restricted opening hours and/or management of rooms at peak times.

5.1.6 Review teams identified two emergent areas since the 2017 Trend Analysis. Online learning is clearly a burgeoning area and developments continue at a very fast pace. Student health is another important area as exemplified and underlined by recent controversy on issues such as orchestral player hearing loss.

5.2 Financial resources

Standard: the institution's financial resources enable successful delivery of the study programme(s).

5.2.1 Compliance in this area was very high with only one institution formally noted in reports as experiencing financial pressures. That is not to say that review teams found institutions to be exempt from financial constraints or the need for prudence.

5.2.2 Six institutions were urged to carry out more strategic financial planning for the future. Review teams identified a range of issues in this area which included: planning for sustainability; better measures to protect/improve the teaching budget; improved financial risk management (new funding sources etc.); and planning for new facilities and growth. In some cases, teams suggested that consideration be given to re-allocation/devolution of the budget so as to improve efficiency of curriculum delivery.

5.2.3 There were recommendations for improved financial and budgetary transparency in three reports.

5.3 Support staff

Standard: the institution/programme has sufficient qualified support staff.

5.3.1 Mirroring the contributions of teaching staff, review teams reported overwhelming that members of support staff make very positive contributions to the running of the institutions/programmes. Reports frequently characterise these contributions as committed, dedicated, efficient and engaged.

5.3.2 At best, as reported by review teams, members of support staff are highly integrated into the institution/programme and have appropriate access to continuing professional development.

5.3.3 However, reports expressed a number of reservations and recommendations and in the case of four institutions, support staff were found to be under pressure. Factors such as over-work, multi-tasking, staff being required to be over-flexible, sometimes in areas outside their expertise contributed to the reservations.

5.3.4 Continuing professional development was another theme identified by review teams of five institutions. Opportunities for support staff are sometimes insufficiently developed and/or informal and in some institutions, opportunities to participate in ERASMUS mobility placements could be improved.

5.3.5 Two institutions were recommended to carry out reviews of structures, roles and policies for support staff so as to optimise the use of resources and improve work flow.

6. Communication, organization and decision-making

6.1 Internal communication process

Standard: effective mechanisms are in place for internal communication within the institution/programme.

6.1.1 Despite a number of recommendations for improvement, there was universal compliance with this standard. Strong points identified by review teams included good use of technologies, open lines of communications (sometimes informal) and well-conceived organisational structures that facilitate good internal communications.

6.1.2 Eight institutions were recommended to make improvements in a number of areas. Sometimes communications between the institution, programme teams/department (academic managers, teaching and administrative staff) and students of programmes needed to be improved. In one institution, part-time teaching staff were particularly affected.

6.1.3 Other individual recommended measures included more systematic action relating to strategic planning, improved use of technology and better formal records of meetings.

6.1.4 Improved student representation, heightened student awareness and drawing students further into the organisation were recommended in three cases.

6.2 Organisational structure and decision-making processes

Standard: the institution/programme is supported by an appropriate organisational structure and clear decision-making processes.

6.2.1 As in the previous standard, there was universal adherence along with a number of recommendations for enhancement for some institutions/programmes. In some cases, reports gave commendations for structures that facilitated a two-way approach and good dialogue which enhances the involvement of stakeholders.

6.2.2 There were recommendations and suggestions in six of the reports. One recurrent suggestion concerned reviewing and amending the structure, giving consideration to, for instance, reviewing the top-down approach and delegation.

6.2.3 Some institutions/programmes were urged to provide more clarity as to how the structure should be operating. The use of organisational charts, operational descriptions, statements of responsibility and formal record keeping were suggested as a possible improvement within the respective reports.

6.2.4 Most reports made some commentary on structures in relation to students. Common themes included the need for more formal support for student councils and formal mechanisms for student involvement in the structures and operation of the institution/programme.

6.2.5 Two institutions were urged to consider how external stakeholders such as employers might be more formally involved in institutional/programme structures.

7. Internal Quality Culture

Standard: the institution has a strong internal quality culture, supported by clear and effective quality assurance and enhancement procedures. / The programme has in place effective quality assurance and enhancement procedures.

7.1 Reports evidenced a considerable range in terms of correspondence with this Standard. One institution was highly commended for its overall approach. Six institutions were commended for their formal processes such as the involvement of stakeholders including students, data collection, analysis and subsequent processing of the information.

7.2 Six institutions/programmes were noted for their positive approach to a culture of quality assurance and enhancement, some combining formality and informality along with an honest, open and self-critical methodology.

7.3 One review report noted that the institution considers that over-reliance on hard data collected for instance, through surveys, has the potential to compromise less formal but nonetheless rich sources of information. The review team expressed its respect for the institution's informal procedures whilst at the same time recommending that the institution take steps to ensure that the formal procedures are better understood and engaged with by stakeholders and acted upon by the institution and its programme teams.

7.4 Most review reports contained suggestion and recommendations for enhancement and tightening up of procedures. Some recommendations focussed on systems (data collection, analysis, more consistency between institutional quality assurance and programme quality assurance). There were individual cases where systems need to be stronger with regard to assessment or student admissions. One report recommended that the institutions benchmark its procedures against the Association of European Conservatoire's Handbook and other comparable benchmarks. Another report recommended the instigation of an improvement plan along with periodic review of the system.

7.5 Low return rates for student evaluations/questionnaires was reported in a number of cases and it was recommended to three institutions that students be more systematically involved in the process.

7.6 A similar number of institutions were urged to use a wider range of stakeholders in the quality assurance process including alumni and external employers.

7.7 Overall, reports evidence a picture that is very similar to that of the 2017 Trend Analysis.

8. Public interaction

8.1 Cultural, artistic and educational contexts

Standard: the institution/programme engages within wider cultural, artistic and educational contexts.

8.1.1 Evidenced by all reports, there is little doubt that this standard is well embedded and one institution was highly commended in every respect. Positive endorsements included: engagement at all levels of education; high levels of accessibility to the public; strong partnerships with external bodies; strong leadership; a wide range of engagement including performance, pedagogy and research; effective use of new technologies; engagement in regional, national and international domains. Two review reports noted the necessity for adequate institutional resources and communications with the public for this activity to be fully achieved.

8.1.2 Six institutions/programmes were nonetheless encouraged to consider extending the scope of engagement and/or influence, either geographically or with other professional/artistic/likeminded bodies.

8.1.3 Demonstrating some commonality with 2.1.7 and 3.2.5 above, four institutions/programmes were encouraged to enable students to become more engaged in this area as potential artistic leaders and entrepreneurs.

8.2 Interaction with the artistic professions

Standard: the institution/programme actively promotes links with various sectors of the music and other artistic professions.

8.2.1 As manifest in the previous standard, reports noted a very high level of correspondence and the range of interaction is truly impressive. Interaction ranges from participation in festivals, orchestras, church music, and amateur music-making bodies to internships (some integrated into programmes through assessment). At another level, some institutions involve professional stakeholders in activities such as programme design and recruitment of staff. In the case of some institutions, it is clear that their graduates are well represented in the professions. Lifelong learning is another area in which institutions can play a major role.

8.2.2 Six institutions/programmes were encouraged to expand their activities, perhaps with the aim of becoming a regional/national coordinator in a particular area. Review teams recommended the expansion and diversification of links through projects and collaborations. In some cases reports recommended diversification beyond music to multidisciplinary projects. Expansion might also include continual professional development, lifelong learning and internships.

8.2.3 Five institutions were recommended to bring employers further into the fabric of the institutions and/or curriculum through for example, curriculum development activities, the staff recruitment process and student assessment (juries).

8.3 Information provided to the public

Standard: information provided to the public about the institution/programme is clear, consistent and accurate.

8.3.1 Review teams reported universal correspondence with this standard alongside a number of recommendations for improvement.

8.3.2 Reports evidenced a wide-range of effective dissemination methods including website/online, digital audio and visual files/images, social media, brochures, newsletters and prospectuses. One institution was commended for the use of its own TV broadcasting studio.

8.3.2 Five institutions were recommended to improve English Language content so as to enhance international profile, recruitment and mobility.

8.3.3 A small number of recommendations were made with respect to specific areas of technical information. These areas included: clearer programme information (ECTS, student admissions, programme specifications); quality assurance policies and structures; simplification of materials where appropriate; and tighter version control so as to enhance accuracy.

9. Summary and conclusion

9.1 Overall, this Trend Analysis paints a very positive picture. Taking the first Standard as just one example, review teams reported on institutions/programmes that have strong mission, vision and identity and play a prominent role within their respective contexts. The reviews evidence a huge amount of careful and painstaking work by MusiQuE teams, sometimes in collaboration with other quality assurance bodies and colleagues. That there have been so many successful review outcomes is a tribute to institutions, programme teams and those responsible to MusiQuE for the reviews.

9.2 A large number of recommendations and suggestions for improvement have been proposed by review teams as summarised within this report. Some of them are very specific to an institution's/programme's context and others could be considered as relatively minor. The following chart highlights significant issues which are applicable to some of the reviewed institutions/programmes. The organic and systemic nature of these issues will be of interest to all institutions in terms of enhancing the quality of education more widely in the sector.

Issue	Commentary
<p><i>The curriculum</i></p> <p>2.1.6 Despite the high level of compliance with this standard, a very significant percentage of reports recommended that more work be carried out on learning outcomes, Polifonia Dublin Descriptors and the clarity of study guides. Some institutions were encouraged to ensure that internal stakeholders are fully aware of the purpose and function of learning outcomes. Additionally, some reports recommended that documentation of courses/modules which form part of the programme (but does not have specified course/module outcomes) should reflect and express more closely the programme aims and outcomes and the level of study.</p>	<p>Learning outcomes and Polifonia Dublin Descriptors are statements relating to the curriculum and standards. A lack of clarity in this area has the potential to create staff and student uncertainty and at worst, confusion. This can lead to inconsistencies in the education and its delivery. A coherent approach in this area should impact positively upon the student and staff experience and enhance well-being of the institution and its programmes.</p>
<p><i>Assessment</i></p> <p>2.3.3 A number of additional deficiencies relating to the above were identified. These included, lack of awareness and understanding of the relationship</p>	<p>Assessment is perhaps one of the most important activities in music higher education. Degrees are awarded to students on the basis of assessment and as such, assessment serves as a benchmark of the</p>

<p>between programme aims, outcomes, assessment and criteria on the part of staff, lack of consistency, lack of comparability between disciplines, and assessment criteria which are not entirely fit for purpose. This theme was equally evident in the 2017 Trend Analysis.</p>	<p>institutions standards. Students are acutely aware of statements made about their abilities through the assessment process. Well understood, consistent and fair assessment procedures should impact positively on staff and student perceptions of standards, enhance confidence within the institution and build respect externally.</p>
<p><i>Staff working conditions</i></p> <p>4.1.3 A significant area for development in the majority of programmes/institutions concerned the need for more formal and/or explicit systems of staff support in areas ranging from external artistic activity, pedagogical engagement and ERASMUS (staff mobility). In some cases, review suggested that support for part-time teachers in the area of continuing professional development was not as satisfactory as the provision for full-time teachers.</p>	<p>Music higher education teaching demands a significant level of professional expertise and interface, particularly within performance related programmes. This creates a complicated set of dynamics relating to employment of teaching staff in conservatoires which is not easy to manage. Effective support mechanisms, training, continuing professional development and access to mobility have the potential to create a stable and effective workforce thus impacting positively on the student experience and standards. Although not highlighted, paragraphs 4.3.5 (staff contracts) and 5.3.3 (administrative staff support) are equally important and arguably should be considered at the same time.</p>
<p><i>Quality assurance</i></p> <p>7.4 Most review reports contained suggestion and recommendations for enhancement and tightening up of procedures. Some recommendations focussed on systems (data collection, analysis, more consistency between institutional quality assurance and programme quality assurance). There were individual cases where systems need to be stronger with regard to assessment or student admissions. One report recommended that the institutions benchmark its procedures against the Association of European Conservatoire's Handbook and other comparable benchmarks. Another report recommended the instigation of an improvement plan along with periodic review of the system.</p>	<p>Quality assurance is sometimes perceived as a "Cinderella" factor. Used properly, quality assurance provides objective, reliable and valuable information which can assist institution and programme managers to improve the quality of provision. Definitions of quality are perhaps not sometimes as tangible as they are, for example, in some scientific and business sectors but the effects of poor quality in music higher education can nonetheless create a negative impact. A self-critical, vigilant and aspiring outlook on quality assurance should therefore result in improvement of standards and in so doing create further well-being and stability within the institution.</p>

9.3 MusiQuE is a specialist music higher education quality enhancement body. Its purpose is not to make institutions and programmes exactly the same. Rather, its purpose is to help us recognise what is high quality, why it is so, and how it could be better. This is surely the same process as high quality music making, teaching and research. The reviews along with this Trend Analysis will play their part in furthering the mission and vision of MusiQuE and creating dialogue that will assist the sector more widely in its search for continual improvement.

Christopher Caine

21st October 2019



MUSIQUE