



# Guidelines for Peer Reviewers



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## Glossary of terms

AEC	Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen
DEQAR	Database of External Quality Assurance Results
EMU	European Music Schools Union
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines (for Quality Assurance in the European
ESU	European Students' Union
EUA	European University Association
EURASHE	European Association of Institutions in Higher Education
MusiQuE	Music Quality Enhancement - The Foundation for Quality Enhancement and Accreditation in Higher Music Education
Pearle*	Pearle* Live Performance Europe, the European Federation of Music and Live Performance Organizations

## Summary

The guidelines herein provide reviewers, either registered or interested in registering on the MusiQuE Peer Reviewers' Register, with information and guidance on their roles and responsibilities during the various phases of MusiQuE evaluation procedures.

In the Introduction, the document provides an overview of MusiQuE and its basic principles for MusiQuE review procedures. It then continues, in Chapter 1, with information about the MusiQuE Peer Reviewers' Register, criteria for acceptance onto the Register, information about the training of peer reviewers, and about the process and the principles of selection employed to assign peer reviewers from among the MusiQuE Register and beyond in various MusiQuE Procedures.

Chapter 2 lays down shared responsibilities between all parties involved in MusiQuE procedures - the applicant institutions, the peer reviewers assigned to conduct certain procedures, the MusiQuE Office and the MusiQuE Board. Chapter 3 provides an overview of MusiQuE Standards which represent the framework of assessment, and the levels of compliance to these standards that the peer reviewers are tasked to evaluate in different procedures. Chapter 4 discusses the code of conduct that all peer reviewers need to comply with when conducting MusiQuE procedures, as well as the roles and responsibilities divided between Review Team members in procedures where a minimum of 4 peer reviewers are being assigned.

Practical information about the review visit is included in Chapter 5, while the outcome of the review and the review report are thoroughly detailed in Chapter 6. In turn, Chapter 7 provides information about follow-up procedures: the process, the tools and the methods employed are being explained in detail.

Lastly, Chapter 8 explains the feedback mechanisms, and the impact that peer reviewers can have in the continuous improvement of MusiQuE processes and procedures.



## Introduction

### An Overview of MusiQuE

MusiQuE – Music Quality Enhancement is an external evaluation agency dedicated to the continuous improvement of the quality of higher music education across Europe and beyond and, through its accreditation, quality enhancement and advisory services, to assisting higher music education institutions in their own enhancement of quality.

MusiQuE has been created by the following three organisations, which have become MusiQuE's direct partner organisations:

- the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC);
- the European Music Schools Union (EMU);
- Pearle\* Live Performance Europe, the European Federation of Music and Live Performance Organizations.

In 2020 the European Association for Music in Schools (EAS) was invited as a fourth partner in the governing structure of MusiQuE, and has since then nominated one of its representatives on the MusiQuE Board.

Through such a stakeholders' model, MusiQuE is able to involve in its governing body, as well as in its procedures, not only representatives of higher music education institutions but also stakeholders from the profession and the cultural sector, such as:

- music schools, which employ higher education graduates, but also train students at pre-college level (before they enter professional education), and reach out to society at large, from children to adults;
- national associations of orchestras, ensembles, theatres, festivals and other music organisations and venues.

### Characteristics for quality assurance in higher music education

Music shares many common features with other disciplines in terms of assessment and quality assurance at higher education level. However, in order for a quality assessment procedure to be accurate as well as fair, it is necessary to consider the individual discipline's special characteristics. These features, which should be taken into account for effective quality assurance and accreditation reviews of professional music schools in conservatoires are listed and explained in detail in **Section 6.1 of [MusiQuE's Internal Regulations](#)**.

### MusiQuE's services

A comprehensive overview of all MusiQuE services and procedures is included in **Section 6.3 of [MusiQuE's Internal Regulations](#)** published on the MusiQuE website.

### Basic principles of MusiQuE review procedures

All MusiQuE review procedures have the following core features:

- They are designed from a subject-specific perspective;





- They are conducted by peer reviewers with specific subject expertise and an international background;
- They are conceived as an engagement of equals rather than a top-down management-driven exercise.

MusiQuE's offer is aimed at supporting higher music education institutions in the enhancement of their quality processes and procedures. Although its accreditation procedures necessarily involve assessing the performance of institutions and programmes against a set of standards, this same principle of support in quality enhancement applies even in this more formal context.

The role of peers is at the core of the system. Their expertise is combined with an intimate understanding of the realities that apply in higher music education institutions. They are perfectly placed to engage with the procedures as 'critical friends'<sup>1</sup>, delivering their qualitative judgements in a spirit of constructive dialogue with the institution, its leaders, teachers, students and administrative staff, thus emphasising the peer-to-peer aspect of all MusiQuE procedures.

The other most important constituency within higher music education institutions is that of the students. Students are systematically included as members of the Review Teams assembled under the procedures organised by MusiQuE. The role of students is the same as that of the other peer reviewers, and their perspective is equally valued. Comprehensive details regarding the selection of peer reviewers and the criteria employed by MusiQuE in creating review teams for different procedures are included in **Sections 4.1 and 4.3 of [MusiQuE's Internal Regulations](#)** and in **Section 1 herein**.

MusiQuE conducts its review procedures in a manner that is characterised by the following principles:

- Respecting the special characteristics of higher music education and the contexts and traditions in which music is created;
- Encouraging higher music education institutions to reflect on their own practice, development and challenges;
- Assisting them in the enhancement of their quality by focusing on learning and experience-sharing;
- Striving towards a higher level of objectivity (through the involvement of international review teams);
- Bringing a European/international dimension to the procedure;
- Striving for the improvement of higher music education as a whole.

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<sup>1</sup>Bringing the 'critical friend' philosophy to the next level, MusiQuE has recently introduced in its portfolio a new procedure - the Critical Friend Review. Further details about the Critical Friend Review are provided in the [Handbook for Critical Friend Review](#).



## 1. Peer Reviewers Register

MusiQuE works with a pool of competent review and accreditation experts, listed in the MusiQuE Peer Reviewers Register. They are usually recruited from among AEC, EMU, EAS and Pearle\* memberships. Peer reviewers listed onto the MusiQuE Peer Reviewers Register are being selected and assigned to carry out services and reviews commissioned by the MusiQuE Board either individually or in teams, depending on the type of procedure to which they are being assigned.

### 1.1 Criteria for acceptance onto the Register

Each peer reviewer listed on the Register should have:

- an appropriate qualification (degree or professionally-oriented diploma) and recognised expertise in areas relevant to higher music education and / or the specific review in question;
- broad knowledge of the teaching and learning models and methods relevant to higher music education;
- international experience that provides a basis for making international comparisons;
- been trained through a training for peer reviewers delivered by MusiQuE.

In addition, potential members of the Register representing the education sector should meet the following requirements:

- have experience in quality assurance in higher music education;
- have experience in the development, design, provision and evaluation of higher education programmes in music and related artistic domains<sup>2</sup>.

Students applying for the MusiQuE Peer Reviewers' Register should:

- be enrolled in a higher music education programme<sup>3</sup>;
- demonstrate proficiency in English (minimum C1 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages<sup>4</sup>), or in another language in the rare cases where the language of the procedure will be other than English;
- ideally, be involved in the student association/union/other equivalent body in their institution and, as a result, be experienced in representing other students in decision-making processes;
- have an international experience (project, course, ERASMUS year, etc.) during their studies that provides a basis for making international comparisons;

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<sup>2</sup>MusiQuE has been increasingly asked to conduct external reviews at programme or at institutional level focused on related artistic domains (drama, visual arts, dance). In this context, professional expertise in other arts and experience in higher arts education are criteria that are being considered in recruiting peer reviewers assigned to conduct such reviews

<sup>3</sup>Upon acceptance in the Register, students will remain listed as MusiQuE peer reviewers for 2 more years after graduation.

<sup>4</sup>See [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/CADRE1\\_EN.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/CADRE1_EN.asp).



- be critical, solution-oriented and open-minded to various perspectives and methods.

### 1.1.1 Admission procedure

Interested individuals who meet the above requirements and are willing to act as peer reviewers for MusiQuE review procedures and consultancy services should apply to MusiQuE by filling in an online form for peer reviewers (available on [MusiQuE's website](#)).

All applications are considered by the MusiQuE Board during its ordinary annual meetings or, where deemed necessary, during its additional online meetings. The Board will evaluate the suitability of the applicant's profile based on the criteria set out above, as well as on the needs of maintaining a balanced Register (in terms of gender, geographical spread, languages spoken, etc.).

Applicants will be informed by email about the decision reached by the Board within three weeks after its meeting.

### 1.1.2 Data collected and data confidentiality

The data collected through the online form for peer reviewers refers on the one hand to the specific skills, level of expertise, knowledge, experience, professional and artistic background and, on the other hand, to personal details such as country of origin, professional and personal postal address, and other contact details that are treated as sensitive information.

In full compliance with GDPR requirements and [MusiQuE's privacy policy](#), a short professional profile of the peers may be shared with institutions undergoing a review procedure if so requested, but under the condition that this data is treated with confidentiality. The consent for this type of data to be shared with third parties is collected from the peers through the online application form to the Register.

Personal data, such as contact details and personal address, provided by applicants is treated as sensitive confidential data by the MusiQuE Board and the MusiQuE Office. As such, it is not included in the types of data that can be shared with third parties.

In the case of a joint procedure with other national quality assurance and accreditation agencies, the full profile of reviewers may be provided to the national agency. In this case, the consent of the peer reviewers is collected in advance.

### 1.1.3 Maintenance of the Register

The composition of the Register is reviewed by the MusiQuE Board every three years (including in terms of evaluating the continuing suitability of individuals). As a preliminary to this exercise, regular updates are being conducted by the MusiQuE Office as follows:

- All peer reviewers are invited to update their profile and to manifest their wish to remain or, where the case, to withdraw from the Register as a preamble to the invitation to register for the annual MusiQuE Training for peer reviewers.
- When the results of the feedback questionnaire sent to peer reviewers after a review procedure indicates that there might have been some problems within the Review Team, the Office (and if necessary the Board) will seek confidential feedback from



the Chair and/or the Secretary of Review Team on the performance of individuals within the Review Team, with the aim to bring this information to the Board for its evaluation.

## 1.2 Training for peer reviewers

MusiQuE organises an annual training for current peer reviewers and for potential peers and students who have expressed their interest to join the Peer Reviewers' Register. In addition, in specific cases when Review Teams include peers who are not listed in the Peer Reviewers' Register (see section 1.3.2 below), MusiQuE Office provides an online training for peers external to the MusiQuE Register at the start of the review procedure. Further information regarding MusiQuE's annual training workshop for peer reviewers is included in **Section 4.2 of [MusiQuE's Internal Regulations](#)**.

## 1.3 Selection of peer reviewers in MusiQuE procedures

### 1.3.1 General principles

For all MusiQuE procedures, the general principles that apply in selecting the peers from amongst the Peer Reviewers' Register to act as members of Review Teams, as critical friends<sup>5</sup> or simply as advisors in tailor-made consultative visits, are as follows:

- the particular needs of the applicant institution<sup>6</sup> in terms of specialised expertise (e.g. expertise in jazz, in early music, in composition, etc.) and on the number of peers<sup>7</sup> necessary to conduct the procedure appropriately are addressed; in case of joint procedures with national quality agencies, specific requirements might need to be taken into account concerning the composition and selection of peer reviewers, and these will be clearly set in the cooperation agreements.
- an overall balance with respect to specialised knowledge in terms of institutional management and governance, artistic and academic management, and artistic and professional experience across the review team shall be ensured.
- knowledge of the country-specific system of higher music education and of the legislation applicable in that country will be addressed where possible and as appropriate.
- peer reviewers assigned on a procedure will have been professionally active principally outside the country in which the institution is located, and are not in a position of conflict of interest<sup>8</sup> with the applicant institution.
- where more than one peer reviewer is assigned to conduct a procedure, the MusiQuE Board is to make sure that, although some familiarity with the national system of the country of the applicant institution is desirable, an international

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<sup>5</sup>See the [Handbook for Critical Friend Review](#).

<sup>6</sup>In some cases, where the national regulations require, the institution is also consulted in the selection of peers appointed to conduct the procedure chosen by the applicant institution

<sup>7</sup>For quality enhancement reviews and accreditation procedures, a minimum of 5 peer reviewers are considered for a review team, including the Chair, the Secretary and the student peer. In case of tailor-made advisory services - e.g. consultative visits, benchmarking exercises or variations of the Critical Friends Review, a single peer reviewer may be tasked to conduct the procedure

<sup>8</sup>See section 1.3.3 below – Conflicts of Interest



perspective can be properly conveyed by the review team; in this regard, diversity in terms of nationality and geographical profile across the Review Team is to be ensured.

- all peer reviewers appointed to conduct MusiQuE procedures shall be proficient in English; except in rare cases, the language of the review and the documents provided by the institution shall be in English<sup>9</sup>, unless agreed otherwise between MusiQuE, the institution and the Review Team.

### 1.3.2 Process

Once a contract for a certain MusiQuE procedure has been signed with the applicant institution, depending on the institution's specific needs, the MusiQuE Office will preselect from among the Peer Reviewers' Register the profiles that best fit the pre-defined requirements. A wide range of factors are being considered during this preselection: the number of peers needed, the areas of expertise identified by the institution, the profiles of the peers (level of experience in reviewing institutions, languages spoken, etc.) as well as gender balance. More emphasis will be put on the collective level of competence and experience of the team than on individual competences and experiences. Hence, where appropriate, a team may also include a newcomer in order to allow for an element of training / learning-by-doing to take place.

The proposal is then submitted for endorsement to the MusiQuE Board and it should include at least two names for each type of expertise considered necessary for the exercise or, when a Review Team is being composed, two names for each position in the panel (Chair, Secretary, or regular peer). This is meant to ensure that, in case of unavailability of certain peers, the composition of the panel will not be delayed.

Having in mind the subject specificity and the small world of higher music education, institutions may be allowed to suggest experts deemed suitable to conduct the procedure. Furthermore, if the required profile for experts is not covered by peers from the Register, the MusiQuE Office may conduct a call for proposals and suggest to the Board an expert outside of the Register. Following endorsement by the Board, the MusiQuE Office will ensure that appropriate training is provided for the new recruit(s) either during the MusiQuE annual training or through an online training prior to the site visit (see Section 4.2 of [MusiQuE's Internal Regulations](#)).

Student members are considered as equal members of the Review Team. They are selected from among the students listed on the Peer Reviewers Register, taking into account that they be enrolled on a programme at least at the level of studies being considered during the review (e.g. the student recruited for a review concerning Bachelor programmes will be enrolled in a Bachelor's, Master's or Doctoral programme). Recently graduated students (up to 3 years upon graduation) can be included and considered as student members of Review Teams, on a case by case basis. The MusiQuE Office selects

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<sup>9</sup>At the same time, it is essential that institutional representatives have the opportunity to express themselves in the language of the country where the review is being conducted. It is therefore recommended that the Review Team include at least one member who is able to understand/speak the language in question. In cases where it is felt necessary, the institution will be asked to hire (provide) a translator.

the student based on the expertise required. In case of unavailability of the students listed on the Register, the MusiQuE Office will contact representatives from higher music education institutions for support in identifying alternative student profiles. Should students not listed on the Peer Reviewers Register be assigned on particular procedures, they too will either take part in the MusiQuE annual training or will undergo an online training prior to the site visit.

### 1.3.3 Conflicts of interest

A conflict of interest may arise from past, current or planned association between an expert and members of the institution. It is the responsibility of all parties (MusiQuE, the reviewers and the institution) to make an immediate disclosure should they become aware of a potential conflict of interest.

First of all, reviewers who have conducted a consultative visit will not be selected for any external quality assurance activity requested by the institution where the consultative visit has taken place.

Once the MusiQuE Board endorsed the composition of the Review Team, or the appointment of critical friends or other types of advisors to conduct a specific procedure, the MusiQuE Office will formally invite the selected peers to take part in the procedure (see section 1.3.4 below). The invitation includes a Declaration of Honour and Confidentiality which peers are asked to read carefully and sign only if they comply with the criteria listed therein, and if they agree with the code of conduct included in MusiQuE's Guidelines for Peer Reviewers. This step is meant to prevent any possible conflicts of interest - namely, the Declaration states that the peers have no direct or indirect affiliations, nor have they maintained such connections or ties with the institution / programme to be assessed during the past five years. In cases of doubt, where a connection of some sort is acknowledged but is either slight or well in the past, the MusiQuE Board will be consulted as to whether it disqualifies the individual.

Subsequently, the institution is also asked to point out any potential conflict of interest from its own perspective and it can request that a peer reviewer be replaced or removed, if duly justified. In cases when the institution has been involved in the discussions on the Review Team's composition (depending on the national regulations), such a consultation is not applicable.

### 1.3.4 Formal appointment of the peer reviewers

Once endorsed by the MusiQuE Board to conduct a specific procedure, the selected peer reviewers receive an invitation message from the MusiQuE Office where the procedure and its context are presented in detail. The invitation includes:

- A briefing paper mentioning the type of procedure to be conducted, the working language, an overview of the responsibilities related to the role of peer reviewer within the respective procedure, and an indicative timeframe of the procedure;
- The MusiQuE Guidelines for Peer Reviewers;
- The MusiQuE Guidelines for Institutions;

- The Declaration of Honour and Confidentiality by which the peers are asked to certify that they are free of conflicts of interest, and that they are willing to comply with the MusiQuE Code of Conduct included in the Guidelines for Peer Reviewers.

Depending on the availability of peer reviewers, the MusiQuE Office confirms their participation to the procedure and informs the applicant institution accordingly.

## 2. Shared responsibilities in MusiQuE procedures

All MusiQuE procedures assume shared responsibilities between all parties involved, as follows:

### **The institution/programme applying for a MusiQuE procedure will:**

- Designate a contact person, upon signing the contract for the MusiQuE procedure the institution chose to undergo, who will be responsible for all contact with the MusiQuE Office in relation to the procedure in question.
- Organise the self-evaluation process or, where the case, the process circumscribed to the production of the necessary documentation requested by the ‘critical friend’, or other type of advisor, as presented in MusiQuE Guidelines for Institutions made available for applicant institutions at the beginning of the procedure.
- Depending on the national regulations and the type of procedure chosen, suggest specific profiles and expertise that should be taken into account by the MusiQuE Office and Board in the composition of the Review Team, in the selection of the critical friends, or of other advisors assigned to conduct the procedure.
- Provide any additional documentation requested by the MusiQuE Office on behalf of the Review Team or, where applicable, on behalf of the ‘critical friend’, or other type of advisor, that is deemed necessary for the preparation of the site visit, or for the benchmarking exercise, respectively.
- Cooperate with the MusiQuE Office in planning and implementing the site visit, where a site visit is part of the MusiQuE procedure the applicant institution chose to undergo.
- Supply the Review Team, the ‘critical friend’, or the advisor conducting the procedure with all information required during the site visit, where a site visit is included in the chosen MusiQuE Procedure.
- Provide factual comments to the draft review report or, where applicable, the advisory report, as requested by the MusiQuE Office.

### **The Review Team, the critical friend, or the advisor assigned to conduct a specific MusiQuE procedure will:**

- Partake in the MusiQuE Annual Training for Peer Reviewers or, where applicable, in the online training provided by the MusiQuE Office.
- Study the documentation provided by the institution and the tools provided by the MusiQuE Office related to the procedure (briefing documents, guidelines for peers, code of conduct, applicable standards, analysis templates, report templates, guiding questions etc.) and conduct the evaluation or the benchmarking exercise accordingly.
- Produce or contribute to the production of the review report, or of the advisory report where applicable.
- Address or, where applicable, support the Secretary of the Review Team to address the comments to the Draft Report made by the MusiQuE Board or by the institution.



- Comply with all other protocols related to the procedure, including the clause of confidentiality.
- Transfer to MusiQuE the intellectual property of all works created in relation to the procedure.
- Respect all deadlines related to the procedure, partake in all its phases, and submit all information deemed necessary, as indicated in the relevant documentation provided by the MusiQuE Office.

**The MusiQuE Office will:**

- Select a shortlist of profiles from among the peers listed on the MusiQuE Peer Reviewers Register that are deemed suitable to respond to the specific needs of the applicant institution, and present them to the Board, ensuring that the peers selected for a particular procedure form a well-balanced and qualified team, or hold the specialised expertise to conduct the procedure in question.
- Where necessary, seek the approval of the Board for a reviewer not yet listed on the Register whose special expertise is needed to complete the team, or to respond to particular needs defined by the applicant institution.
- Provide support to institutions during the self-evaluation process or the process leading to the production of requested documentation, if necessary.
- Perform a preliminary check of the self-evaluation report to ensure it follows the MusiQuE guidelines (e.g. coverage of all MusiQuE Standards, size, list of annexes and how they are referenced).
- Cooperate with the institution and the Review Team, the ‘critical friend’, or other type of advisor, in planning and preparing for the site visit, where such a visit is part of the MusiQuE procedure the applicant institution has selected.
- Brief the Review Team, the ‘critical friend’, or other type of advisors, on the specificity of the applicable procedure, if required.
- Organise an online training for Review Team members, for critical friends or other advisors, if required.
- Perform a preliminary check of the report and coordinate the approval process by the Board and the factual accuracy check by the institution.
- Submit the final report to the institution with the formal decision by the MusiQuE Board and ensure its publication on the MusiQuE website, where applicable.
- Coordinate the follow-up process, where applicable.
- Register complaints and appeals, where the case, and notify the Board on the necessity to take appropriate measures.
- In the case of procedures undertaken jointly with national quality assurance agency, coordinate the cooperation process (exchange of practices, comparison of standards, of templates used, etc.).

**The MusiQuE Board will:**

- Assess and approve proposals for Peer Reviewers selected from the Register by the MusiQuE Office for each review procedure and advisory process, based on the relevance of their expertise.
- In the case of procedures conducted on the basis of another set of standards than the MusiQuE Standards, review and approve the mapping of standards and the merged set of standards prepared by the MusiQuE Office.
- Review all reviewers' reports before these are first submitted to the institution for the accuracy check and once they are finalised, and notify the applicant institution in writing about the final outcome of the review or advisory service requested:
  - In the case of **external evaluation procedures** (accreditations or quality enhancement reviews), the Board:
    - ensures the overall quality of the report, its relevance to the review standards, and its consistency with the other review reports;
    - checks if the justifications listed by the review team for each standard support the proposed level of compliance with that standard;
    - takes the final formal decision on the accreditation of the institution/programme/joint programme based on the proposal of the Review Team;
    - when a decision for conditional accreditation has been taken, agrees and approves the conditions set to the institution
    - issues a formal decision by which it confirms that the institution / programme / joint programme have been reviewed by MusiQuE in the framework of a quality enhancement procedure;
    - monitors the follow-up process relating to conditions and recommendations formulated in the report, with the support of the MusiQuE Office
  - In the case of **consultative visits and benchmarking projects**, the Board:
    - ensures the overall quality of the reports and their relevance to the applicable review standards or, where the case, the expectations of the institution or programme visited or benchmarked.
- Receive complaints and requests for appeals from institutions and decide whether they meet the grounds for their formal acceptance; subsequently activate the Appeals Committee following the steps described in MusiQuE's Complaints and Appeals Procedure and communicate the result of the complaint or appeal to the institution.

### 3. Review standards

MusiQuE is working on the basis of the following sets of standards, which have been designed to meet different institutional needs:

- Standards for Institutional Review, to be used for reviews covering the whole institution
- Standards for Programme Review, to be used for the evaluation of one or more programmes within an institution
- Standards for Joint Programme Review, to be used for the evaluation of a study programme jointly developed by several partner institutions from different countries (not necessarily leading to a joint degree)
- Standards for Classroom Music Teacher Education Programmes to be used for the evaluation of music teacher training programmes.

In addition, MusiQuE has developed standards and evaluation frameworks for its procedures and activities outside the scope of the ESGs as follows:

- Framework for the Evaluation of Research Activities Undertaken by Higher Music Education Institutions
- Standards for Music Schools and Pre-College Music Education to be used for evaluations of music schools, pre-college music institutions and programmes
- Standards for project evaluation.

All the above sets of standards are available online at <http://www.musique-ge.eu/documents/musique-standards>.

Depending on the context and aim of the review procedure, one of these sets of standards will apply. This set will then be used by the institution to write its self-evaluation report and compile supportive evidence, as well as by the Review Team during the site visit to structure and inform its fact-finding exercise, and after the site visit as a basis on which to assess the institution / programme / joint programme and build the review report.

MusiQuE Standards are equally used outside review procedures, as a tool of reference for reviewers and institutions alike partaking in consultative visits or benchmarking exercises tailor-made to fit specific needs. All sets of standards share a common philosophy and address similar areas; their differences lie in the way that they are specifically tailored to the review task in question.

With the exception of the evaluation framework for research activities, these standards are organised into four main areas of inquiry<sup>10</sup>:

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<sup>10</sup>MusiQuE has been undergoing a complex process of revision for all of its frameworks of assessment. Currently, the revision of MusiQuE's Standards for Institutional and for Programme Reviews has been completed and the revised standards, organised in the four areas of inquiry mentioned herein, have been available on the [MusiQuE website](#) since 2023. The Standards for Music Schools and Pre-College Education, for Classroom Music Teacher Education Programmes, for Joint-Programmes, and for the evaluation of Research Activities are undergoing a similar revision to be finalised in 2025.

1. **Institutional Responsibilities**, where topics related to national context, institutional governance and decision making processes, overall institutional policies and strategies are being addressed;
2. **Educational Processes**, which looks into topics related to the sum of the total work and processes of learning and teaching that take place in classrooms, studios, performance spaces, reading rooms, practice rooms and during individual study;
3. **Learning Resources and Student Support, which** addresses topics related to all means and resources and the ways in which these make learning and teaching be conducted most effectively and in a most sustainable way;
4. **Quality Culture**, which pays attention to the ways in which quality assurance and enhancement are embedded in the day-to-day working patterns and procedures such that institutions and programmes are enabled to work towards an all-encompassing quality culture.

The standards are further grouped under 7 themes listed below, serving as threshold (minimum) standards:

1. Institutional Policies and Governance
2. Students' Perspectives
3. Teachers' Perspectives
4. External Perspectives
5. Resources
6. Communication Processes
7. Quality Culture at Institutional Level

Further, a series of '**Guiding Questions**' are listed under the text of each standard. They serve as **guidelines** aimed at facilitating the understanding of each standard, and at illustrating the range of topics that could be covered by that standard. Therefore, the function of these questions is **not** that of a checklist: not all questions need to be answered separately in detail. Rather they are meant as a support for the institution or programme to select the possible issues to be addressed in the self-evaluation process, in relation to each standard. These issues may differ according to the institutional context and the review procedure being used.

Similarly, the '**Suggested evidence / supportive material**' listed under each standard **should not be seen as an obligatory list**, but rather provides examples of the kinds of supporting material which an institution team could provide to the peer reviewers as evidence of good practice.

In any review procedure, each standard will need to be addressed, while the *Guiding Questions* and *Suggested Evidence / Supportive Material* are only meant as **guidelines** for the self-evaluation process.

Aside from the set of standards representing the applicable framework of assessment in a certain procedure, peer reviewers will receive an indicative template for their review report

structured along the questions included in the respective MusiQuE standards. These questions are meant as support in the analysis of the self-evaluation report and related documentation provided by the institution, and as a basis for interviews with the institution's internal stakeholders during the site visit.

### 3.1 Levels of compliance

Peer reviewers will carry out reviews in accordance with the relevant standards and procedures, and will explore the compliance of the institution/programme/joint programme with each standard. The work of reviewers should be seen as a peer-led quality enhancement process; MusiQuE Teams, critical friends or other individual reviewers will focus on providing advice and suggestions to the institution for its improvement and its further development, even where this is done within a framework of formal recommendations concerning accreditation.

The MusiQuE scale for each standard has 4 levels of compliance. The Review Team should assess the level and substantiate their argument for each assessment. The 4 levels of compliance are as follows:

- **Fully compliant** - A standard is fully compliant when the approaches, structures or mechanisms relevant to that standard are fully implemented in a coherent and consistent way
- **Substantially compliant** - A standard is substantially compliant when the standard is in place, while minor gaps have been observed but the manner of implementation is most effective. In such cases Review Teams are asked to include a recommendation as to how full compliance can be achieved.
- **Partially compliant** - A standard is partially compliant when the standard is in place, while significant gaps have been observed or the manner of implementation is not sufficiently effective. In such cases Review Teams are asked to include a recommendation as to how full compliance can be achieved or a condition
- **Not compliant** - A standard is not compliant when the approaches, structures or mechanisms relevant to that standard are lacking or implemented inadequately. In such cases Review Teams are asked to include a strong recommendation or a condition.

### 3.2 MusiQuE standards and the European Standards and Guidelines for internal quality Assurance (ESG)

[The Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(ESG\)](#) have been developed in 2005 and revised in 2015 by the key stakeholders in the field of quality assurance at European level: the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the European Students' Union (ESU), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and the European University Association (EUA). A major goal of these Standards and Guidelines is to contribute to the common understanding of quality assurance for learning and teaching across borders and among all stakeholders. One of the principles they are based on is the primary responsibility of higher education institutions for the quality of their provision and its assurance.

The first part of these standards (Part 1) aims to provide higher education institutions with standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance. The MusiQuE Board has the responsibility of ensuring that the MusiQuE Standards are in line with Part 1 of the ESG. In this regard, the Board performs regularly a mapping of the MusiQuE Standards against Part 1 of the ESG. This mapping is included among the tasks assigned to the Working Group responsible for the revision of the MusiQuE Standards

## 4. Roles, responsibilities and code of conduct for MusiQuE peer reviewers

Further to the responsibilities laid out in Chapter 2 which apply to MusiQuE procedures more broadly, the roles and responsibilities of peer reviewers detailed herein mostly refer to MusiQuE procedures conducted by Review Teams composed through the process described under Section 1.3. The Code of Conduct, however, is to be accepted and followed by all MusiQuE peer reviewers regardless of the type of procedure they agreed to undertake. The formal assignment of peer reviewers in MusiQuE procedures is pending the signature of a “Declaration of Honour and Confidentiality” certifying that they are free of conflicts of interest, and that they agree with the Code of Conduct listed herein (see Sections 1.3.3 and 1.3.4 above).

### 4.1 Roles and responsibilities of Review Team members

The duties of the Review Team include the assessment of documentation provided by institutions, the undertaking of a site visit to the institution and the production of a review report. The Review Team is composed of the Chair, the peers, the student and the secretary, whose respective responsibilities are outlined below.

#### 4.1.1 The Chair is responsible for:

- a) adequately preparing for the review (being familiar with the key documents from the institution and from MusiQuE);
- b) contributing in finalisation of the site visit schedule together with the MusiQuE Office and the institution;
- c) agreeing with the Review Team members and determining the areas of inquiry (themes to be covered) for each of the meeting with the various institutional representatives;
- d) determining the running order of the meetings (the sequence in which Review Team members will pose their questions);
- e) within meetings with institutional representatives:
  - making introductions (to this effect, all Review Team members will be introduced as representing MusiQuE and not only their own institutions);
  - taking responsibility for the first section of each meeting - outlining areas of enquiry, etc.;
  - directing the order of proceedings;
  - running to time;
  - within time constraints, ensuring that all peers are able to pursue their areas of enquiry in full and that, where appropriate, they are enabled to provide input into other areas;
  - concluding each meeting in a positive manner, having first given the institutional representatives time to add any other relevant information and comments;

- f) outlining the good practice, recommendations and other important points arising from the review in the concluding summary meeting;
- g) contributing to the draft review report during the site visit by assisting the Secretary to summarise the key outcomes of each meeting and, after the site visit, by providing short contributions in writing, and by giving input on the full report;
- h) contributing to the final review report by assisting the Secretary to integrate the comments formulated by the MusiQuE Office, the MusiQuE Board, and the institution reviewed upon receipt of the draft report;
- i) answering the feedback questionnaire after the review and notifying the MusiQuE staff of any problem in relation to the fellow peers' attitudes.

#### 4.1.2 Other reviewers (peers and students) are responsible for:

- a) adequately preparing for the review (being familiar with the key documents from the institution and those from MusiQuE);
- b) during the site visit:
  - referring to documents or previous discussions as appropriate;
  - ensuring that they observe the order of proceedings as agreed with, and directed by, the Chair;
  - ensuring that their questions are focused on the pre-agreed areas of enquiry (themes to be covered) unless otherwise invited by the Chair;
- c) contributing to the draft review report during the site visit by assisting the Secretary to summarise the key outcomes of each meeting and, after the site visit, by providing short contributions in writing, and by giving input on the full report;
- d) contributing to the final review report by assisting the Secretary to integrate the comments formulated by the MusiQuE Office, the MusiQuE Board and the institution reviewed upon receipt of the draft report;
- e) answering the feedback questionnaire after the review and notifying the MusiQuE staff of any problem in relation to the fellow peers' attitude.

#### 4.1.3 The Secretary is responsible for:

- a) adequately preparing the review (being familiar with the key documents from the institution and from MusiQuE);
- b) delivering a short briefing session for the other Review Team members during the first Review Team meeting;
- c) during the site visit meetings:
  - writing minutes of each meeting;



- actively assisting the peers during Review Team meetings by providing overviews of issues discussed and of areas of enquiry still to be covered;
  - ensuring that the peers comment on all areas of enquiry in order to collect sufficient material for writing the report;
  - preparing the feedback for the concluding summary meeting, in collaboration with the Chair and the other Review Team members, using the tools provided by the MusiQuE Office;
- d) writing the first draft of the review report within the allocated time frame based on:
- the self-evaluation documentation provided by the institution;
  - the minutes taken during the site visit meetings;
  - the comments of the other Review Team members collected during the site visit;
  - any written contribution provided by the other Review Team members shortly after the site visit and referencing evidence very specifically while maintaining the anonymity of interviewees;
  - adjusting the first draft of the review report after its circulation to the other Review Team members;
- e) preparing the final review report with the assistance of the other Review Team members;
- f) answering the feedback questionnaire after the review and notifying the MusiQuE Office of any problem in relation to the fellow peers' attitude.

#### 4.2 Code of conduct for peer reviewers

At the time of first contacting potential peer reviewers selected to conduct a certain MusiQuE procedure, all those responding positively are asked to confirm that they subscribe to the Code of Conduct for Peer Reviewers. This states that all MusiQuE peer reviewers should:

##### **Integrity**

- a) be free of conflicts of interest (as defined in the declaration of honour and the corresponding questionnaire);
- b) handle all data with the utmost confidentiality;
- c) observe and report any potential detection of fraud or corruption at the institution immediately to the Chair;
- d) refrain from using any information related to review procedures as a means of making monetary profit without notifying MusiQuE;

##### **Review attitude**

- e) ensure that a fruitful dialogue takes place during the site visit;

- f) be committed to acting as members of a team at all times, i.e., to work cooperatively, under the direction of the Chair;
- g) avoid referring to their own (institutional) experience, as well as giving informal advice and feedback, unless by permission of the Chair;
- h) avoid voicing any directly comparative value judgment during the meetings (be it negative or positive);
- i) avoid interruptions of colleagues or institutional participants, leaving time for the latter to have their say;
- j) consider the internal objectives and strategies of the institution in addition to the QA/accreditation standard (rather than the QA/accreditation standards only);
- k) consider the relationship between all aspects examined (such as facilities, teaching, research);
- l) reference the evidence provided in careful and specific terms while ensuring the anonymity of interviewees (e.g. by mentioning “students met by the Committee” instead of just “students”);
- m) agree to transfer to MusiQuE the intellectual property of all works created in connection with this procedure, including specifically any written reports. The results of services provided by the peer reviewer may be incorporated into reports issued by MusiQuE and shall not be attributed to the peer reviewer personally, except insofar as this is made clear in the published report;

#### **Ethical/Cultural Considerations**

- n) respect the local culture of the institution;
- o) be free of perpetrating any form of discrimination;
- p) report any case of emerging conflict or cultural discordance timely to the Chair, and avoid taking any individual action in such instances;
- q) notify the Chair in case of any unanticipated material exchange with the institution (such as receiving gifts).

## 5. The review visit

The review visit is an integral part of many MusiQuE procedures (see [MusiQuE Guidelines for Institutions](#) for further details in this regard). It is designed to provide Review Teams, critical friends or other types of advisors with the opportunity to explore more in depth the particular features of the institution, department, programme or joint programme reviewed, and thus enable them to mirror any existent gaps between projection and reality in the ways the institution perceives and presents itself.

### 5.1 Aim and focus

The main aim of the visit is for peer reviewers to collect evidence and information on the various areas of enquiry in order to complete and, where appropriate, to verify the picture of the institution/programme as described in the self-evaluation report and in the supporting materials. Thus, the external perspective brought in by MusiQuE reviewers, and informed by their expertise and international experience, takes as its point of departure the internal perspective as expressed in the self-evaluation report.

More specifically, the visit will give peer reviewers a unique opportunity to gain an understanding of the specificities of the institution/programme as these are experienced 'on the ground', and of the extent to which there is consistency between these and the way in which the institution presents itself. In addition, the peer reviewers will be able to explore whether, how and with what results the institution's strategic policies and procedures for quality enhancement are implemented throughout the institution – and, indeed, have the desired impact. Both of these foci are equally important. All the scheduled encounters with internal and external stakeholders of the applicant institution should aim at exploring issues that, in one way or another, have a direct bearing on them.

### 5.2 Duration

Review visits vary in length depending on the applicable MusiQuE procedure, and the particular features and requests of the applicant institution that form the scope and context of the review. For instance, site visits have a minimum length of 1.5 days for programme reviews, and of 2.5 days for institutional reviews. However, review visits' duration is subject to variation depending on circumstances. Peer reviewers will receive precise information on the duration of the review visit with the briefing papers provided by the MusiQuE Office upon acceptance of the assignment.

### 5.3 Practical and financial arrangements

All practical arrangements connected to the review visit, will be handled and arranged by the MusiQuE Office. The financial arrangements - e.g. payment of honoraria, reimbursement of travel and subsistence costs, are directly handled by the MusiQuE Office. Rules and conditions may vary depending on the procedure, but precise information in this regard will be included in the briefing papers provided by the MusiQuE Office to the peers upon acceptance of the assignment.

### 5.4 Review visit schedule

The schedule of the review visit is proposed by the institution based on a template relevant for the procedure in question, provided by the MusiQuE Office. Based on the documentation submitted by the applicant institution beforehand, the peer reviewers may

request adjustments to the proposed schedule as they see fit. As a rule of thumb for most of MusiQuE procedures though, the elements to be included in the programme of a review visit are as follows:

- Meetings with the head of institution and institutional/departmental/programme leaders
- Meetings with the Chair and/or a member of the relevant Board/Council (e.g. Academic Council, Conservatory Council)
- Meetings with artistic and academic members of staff (professors and teachers)
- Meetings with senior administrative officers (responsible for quality assurance and enhancement, the international office, financial services, the alumni office, the planning unit, coordination of artistic and research activities, public relations, etc.)
- Meetings with students representing all study cycles and different levels and subjects (including, where relevant, a representative of the student union/council)
- Meetings with former students
- Meetings with representatives of the profession (employers, organisation representatives, etc.) from the region
- [For a Critical Friend Review] Meetings (possibly by skype) with the Critical Friends
- Review of facilities (studios, concert venues, practice facilities, libraries, etc.)
- Review of assessed student works such as concert recordings, compositions and final papers to consider the standard and modes of assessment and the learning achievements of students
- Attendance of concerts or other public presentations of students' work and/or visits to classes delivered at the time of the review
- Attendance at performance examinations including the follow-up discussion by the examination committees.

The list of meetings might be adapted to take into account the specific nature of a certain procedure. Moreover, the institution may combine the personnel of meetings for the sake of efficiency – e.g. representatives of the profession and former students, or students and former students. However, **conflicts of interest should be avoided at all costs**. For example, members of staff should not be met by peer reviewers together with current students; members of the leadership team should not be met together with representatives of the profession, different levels of institutional hierarchy should not be mixed, etc.

In procedures where the site visit is conducted by a Review Team the schedule will also include:

- A private briefing session of the Review Team at the beginning of the site visit, before the meetings with institutional representatives are scheduled to take place:

During this briefing session, the Secretary takes the lead to explain the background of the procedure (mission and vision of MusiQuE, aims of the MusiQuE reviews), the expectations of the institution, as well as the role of

peer reviewers. The Secretary will take the Review Team members through the review procedure and standards being applied, remind them of the Code of Conduct and deal with any questions they may have. At the end of the session he/she will ask all reviewers to confirm that they have a full understanding of the procedure about to be embarked upon and of their role within it. The session then continues with a first exchange of thoughts, led by the Chair, based on the SER analysis which were prepared by the peers and were collated by the MusiQuE Office in advance. Under the guidance of the Chair and with the input of the fellow Review Team members, themes and questions to be addressed in the upcoming meetings with stakeholders are being prepared by the Secretary, making use of the Meeting Sheets provided by the MusiQuE Office in advance.

- Private debriefing meetings of the Review Team after each meeting with institutional representatives (including one for the preparation of the feedback session on the last day of the site visit). Alternatively, a more extensive debriefing period will be included in the schedule after every two meetings.

During these meetings, the Secretary will make sure to collect all input and relevant comments from fellow Review Team members with regard to the information provided by the relevant group of institutional representatives, and to keep track of themes and areas of inquiry that still need to be addressed in subsequent meetings.

- A feedback session by the Review Team to the institution/programme at the end of the visit. It is recommended that this session be open to any student, staff member or person linked with the institution, who wishes to attend.

During this meeting, the Chair of the Review Team will present the preliminary findings of the Team and clarify the further steps of the review procedure. At this moment, the Review Team would not expect to enter in an in-depth discussion with the representatives of the institution/programme about the preliminary findings. The institution/programme is encouraged to share the findings with all interested individuals, either by inviting a wide audience to attend this final feedback meeting or through other channels. During this feedback session, levels of compliance with any of the standards will not be discussed.

Meetings during the review visit will normally be conducted in English. However, it is essential that institutional representatives have the opportunity to express themselves accurately and with confidence during the review visit, and this will often mean doing so in the language of the country where the review is being conducted. If the experts are not conversant with this national language, appropriate translation arrangements should be decided in advance.

Institutions expecting much of the discussion during the review visit to be conducted other than in English will normally be asked to hire and cover the costs of a professional

interpreter – acquainted with the music field – in order to provide experts who are unfamiliar with the language with the best possible real-time translation of what is being said. Additional time for meetings with various groups of institutional representatives shall be taken into account under such circumstances.

In some special cases (where there is cooperation with national agencies, etc.) another language than English may be agreed upon for the whole procedure (preparation and coordination, self-evaluation report, site visit and final report).

### 5.5 Other elements of the review visit of interest to institutions and peer reviewers alike

- **Length of the meetings:** Most meetings should last between 60 and 90 minutes. Initial and final meetings with the leadership may be extended. Visits to classes will normally not last longer than 30 minutes. Adjustments will be made to the length of the session in cases where translation is provided. Where applicable, private debriefing meetings of the Review Team included after each meeting with representatives of the institution should be allocated between 15 and 30 minutes. A minimum of 2 hour time slot should also be allocated to the Review Team for the initial briefing session and for the preparation of the feedback session. The Review Team might also reserve lunch breaks to work privately in between meetings with institutional representatives.
- **Participants in meetings:** The institution should select participants who are able to speak and discuss with authority on the areas of enquiry relevant to the meeting. The number of participants in each meeting should normally be between 5 – 12 persons for a 90-minute meeting (maximum 8 participants for a 60-minute meeting). Representatives of the management should only be present in those meetings indicated for that purpose on the schedule.
- **Language:** Except in rare cases, the language of the review will be English. Key documents provided by the institution or, at least, crucial sections of longer documents should be available in English and, where necessary, should be translated to a professional standard.
- **Parallel meetings:** When the site visit is undertaken by a Review Team, it is possible – by agreement between the Team and the institution – to run parallel meetings of sub-groups from the team with different groups of representatives of the institution.
- **Flexibility of the schedule:** The institution is encouraged to leave one to three hours free at some point in the programme so that peer reviewers may explore more thoroughly specific areas, meet other representatives.
- **Informal meetings/encounters:** It is advised that peer reviewers be offered the opportunity to meet informally (perhaps at dinner or lunch) with the leadership and other key members of the institution. Such encounters will underline the important concept of peer review rather than inspection. The peer reviewers may also engage with students informally if, for instance, they act as guides to classes, facilities and events.
- **Concerts, recitals and visits to classes:** The institution is encouraged to provide the reviewers with a schedule of all the activities taking place in the institution during

the timeframe in which a visit to classes is planned, such as concerts, recitals, master-classes, lessons, etc. On the basis of this schedule, reviewers will then choose the classes they wish to visit (individually or in groups, by themselves or led by students) in order to gain a fuller picture and understanding of the provision. Institutions are requested to inform all staff members about the potential visit of the reviewers.

- **Performance examinations:** If the review visit takes place during a practical examination period, the institution may provide peer reviewers with the opportunity both to attend the performance part of the examination and to observe the deliberation of the jury that follows.

Schedules should be drawn up in a way that minimises the risk of delay and disruption.

## 6. Report and outcomes

This chapter broadly refers to MusiQuE procedures conducted by Review Teams composed through the process described under Section 1.3 above. Reports produced by critical friends within the Critical Friends Review procedure, or by peers assigned to conduct consultative visits or other types of MusiQuE procedures tailor-made to fit particular needs of an institution, while they follow the same pathway for approval by the MusiQuE Board, may be subjected to a shorter timeline depending on the quantity and quality of the materials provided by the institution for the specific exercise, on the length of the site visit where applicable, and on the deadlines agreed with the institution for the respective exercises.

### 6.1 The Review report

The Review Team will draft a report, normally in English and within eight weeks of the site visit. This report will be based on all the information made available to the Review Team through the institution's own self-evaluation report and on insights gained during the site visit.

#### 6.1.1 Structure and creation process of the draft report

The first version of the draft report is prepared by the Secretary, building on written contributions made by the other Review Team members. The report follows a template that reflects the applicable framework of assessment. More broadly, all reports contain the following elements:

- Table of Contents
- Introduction (information on the context of the review, and key data on the institution/programme and composition of the Review Team)
- Analysis of how each standard is met:
  - Description of the situation in the institution or programme, based on elements from the self-evaluation report and on findings from the site visit properly referenced;
  - Analysis of the situation and related recommendations;
  - Statement assessing the compliance of the institution/programme/joint programme with the standards that represent the framework of assessment for the procedure in question.
- Final conclusion
- A summary of the compliance with standards<sup>11</sup> and related recommendations; in case of accreditation procedures, the conditions imposed for each standard, if applicable

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<sup>11</sup> For each standard listed in the MusiQuE Standards applicable to the procedure in question, compliance needs to be assessed by the peer reviewers as explained under Section 3.1 above. The judgement on compliance should be properly evidenced and justified.





- A list of relevant annexes, as deemed necessary for the procedure in question.

In the case of an accreditation procedure, the Review Team is asked to conclude its report with a proposal to the MusiQuE Board concerning the accreditation of the institution/programme/joint programme that has been reviewed. The proposal should be expressed as follows:

“Based on the institution’s/programme’s/joint programme’s compliance with MusiQuE standards, it is proposed that the institution/the (joint) programme be accredited/ be accredited with conditions/should not be accredited”.

Within six weeks after the site visit, the Secretary is expected to send the draft version of the report to the other members of the Review Team, who will be given two weeks to provide their input and feedback. The revision process of the draft version is organised internally by each Review Team. The final draft of the report is subject to the Chair’s approval and, subsequently, it is submitted to the MusiQuE Office for scrutiny.

### **6.1.2 From draft to final report: approval and decision-making process**

Once the Draft Report has been approved by the Chair, it is submitted to the MusiQuE Office. Here the Draft Report is checked for relevance and consistency with the applicable framework of assessment, for language and compliance with the enhancement-led focus of MusiQuE procedures, for the relevance and substantiation of the arguments provided in support for the Review Team’s decision on compliance levels. The MusiQuE Office together with the Operations Sub-Committee of the MusiQuE Board will meet and compare notes on the overall quality of the report, and offer congregated feedback to the review team with suggestions for further revision.

The Secretary and the Review Team will address the suggestions by the MusiQuE Office and Board as they see fit. Following these amendments, the Draft Report is submitted for the approval of the MusiQuE Board. Having already reviewed the initial draft report, the Operations Sub-Committee will make a recommendation for approval to the extended Board, or will bring forward issues that still need to be considered by the Board and / or reconsidered by the Review Team. Based on the outcome of this discussion, the Review Team may be asked to make further amendments before the review report be shared with the institution for a factual accuracy check.

The dialogue between the MusiQuE Board and the Review Team in this process will be mediated by the MusiQuE Office until an agreement is reached with regard to the version of the report that will be submitted to the institution for the accuracy check.

The overall process of approving the Draft Review Report by the MusiQuE Board will take up to 7 weeks after the receipt of the initial draft.

Once approved by the MusiQuE Board, the MusiQuE Office shares the Review Report with the institution, with the invitation to comment on the factual accuracy of the Report. Factual comments are expected within two weeks since the reception of the report. Should the institution request an extension of the deadline, an additional week may be granted for this step in the process.

The factual comments submitted by the institution will be shared by the MusiQuE Office with the Review Team. A further amendment of the Draft Report aimed to ensure factual

accuracy will be thus implemented by the Review Team, making sure that consistency between the corrected factual information and the conclusions drawn is maintained.

Subsequently, the revised report is submitted again to the MusiQuE Board for the final endorsement or, in the case of accreditation procedures, for the formal decision on the accreditation of the institution/programme/joint programme based on the proposal of the Review Team. With the endorsement or formal decision of accreditation issued by the MusiQuE Board, the review report can be considered final and the review procedure closed.

The institution may expect to formally receive the final report within a maximum of five weeks since the submission of the factual comments.

## **6.2 Review outcomes and consequences**

### **6.2.1 Outcomes of a MusiQuE quality enhancement review**

In the case of a Quality Enhancement Review, the result of the procedure is the final report itself, which includes the list of standards met, substantially met and not met, highlights the institution's/programme's strong points, and provides advice and suggestions / recommendations for change.

The institution will receive a letter from the MusiQuE Board stating that the institution/programme/joint programme has been reviewed by MusiQuE with reference to the MusiQuE standards and procedures and referring to the summary of compliance with standards. The letter will also inform the institution about the possibility of a follow-up process, involving the filling in of a follow-up template within 6-12 months after the delivery of the final report (see section 7).

### **6.2.2 Outcomes of a MusiQuE accreditation procedure**

In the case of an accreditation procedure, in addition to the report and advice, the result will include a decision on the accreditation of the institution/programme/joint programme, with the following possibilities:

- Accreditation
- Conditional accreditation
- Institution/programme/joint programme not accredited:
  - in cases where there is non-compliance with a significant proportion (usually defined as 4 or more, of the 12 standards for Programme Reviews or the 13 standards for Institutional reviews);
  - exceptionally, when non-compliance is less substantial than this, but the extent and seriousness of the conditions needing to be met is such that the Review Team deems it unrealistic for them to be fulfilled within the maximum period allowable (24 months).

In all these cases, additional recommendations may be developed by the Review Team in order to assist the institution with its further improvement.

Where the decision is to grant accreditation, this will be for a period of 6 years unless national legislation sets a different interval. In this case, the institution receives the decision with the accreditation results, as well as accreditation certificates.

Where conditions are attached to accreditation, the institution will be given a period of 24 months to show that the conditions have been fulfilled (with adjustments to national contexts if the requirements are different) by filling in the follow-up template (see section 7.1). In exceptional, well justified cases, this period can be shortened or it can be extended (to a maximum of three years).

If, by the expiry of the maximum period allowed, an institution that has been given conditional accreditation fails to show that the conditions have been fulfilled, the MusiQuE Board will make an evaluation of progress achieved and, on that basis, take one of the following three actions:

- authorise a further extension to allow the fulfilment of any remaining conditions;
- call for a team of 2 people from the initial review team to visit the institution a second time, at the cost of the institution, to determine 'in situ' whether the condition has, in practice, been fulfilled or is close to fulfilment;
- in extreme cases, withdraw the conditional accreditation. If this should be the Board's decision, the institution has available the same courses of action to redeem matters as an institution not granted accreditation at the original decision (see below).

Where the decision is not to grant accreditation, clear reasons should be given. An institution is free to re-apply for accreditation after a period of one year. In such a case, a new self-evaluation document is required (but may be largely focussed on how the institution has addressed the previous reasons for withholding accreditation), and a new Review Team will be assembled.

### 6.2.3 Publication of results

MusiQuE makes a clear distinction between its activities within the scope of the ESGs and its activities outside the scope of the ESGs. Subsequently, all reports resulting from activities outside the scope of the ESGs include a statement in this regard and, where not subject to a confidentiality clause, they are published on the MusiQuE website, but [in an area clearly separated](#) from the reports of the quality enhancement and accreditation procedures. Concurrently, the institutions undergoing a quality enhancement or an accreditation procedure conducted by MusiQuE are compelled to act in full compliance with ESG 2.6., and agree with the publication of the reports resulting from such procedures, together with the formal decision issued by the MusiQuE Board in relation to these reports. MusiQuE publishes all reports resulting from activities within the scope of the ESGs directly on the Database of External Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR) through [a designated section of the MusiQuE website](#).

Reports are being uploaded on the MusiQuE website at the end of the procedure, when the final report is sent to the institution.

In case of accreditation procedures where conditions are formulated, the extent to which these conditions have been fulfilled is checked after 24 months, during the follow-up

process. The follow-up report and the related decision issued by the MusiQuE Board will be also published after having been officially communicated to the institution.

The institution is entitled, and encouraged, to use the summary of the report's findings, or extracts from it, in any responsible way that it sees fit – as part of the evidence base for formal quality assurance procedures or, where relevant, in its own institutional publicity and internal quality assurance processes.

Peer reviewers are therefore encouraged, aside from maintaining the anonymity of the interviewees, to write the review report in a manner that is clear and accessible for extended audiences.

## 7. Follow-up procedures

While not compulsory except for accreditation procedures where a decision of conditional accreditation was issued, the follow-up process has been embedded in the design of most MusiQuE procedures and services, regardless if these are implemented within or outside the scope of the ESGs. As such, with minor exceptions (e.g. benchmarking exercises), a follow-up procedure is included in the cost and among the services listed in offers extended to all institutions applying for services provided by MusiQuE. Given that MusiQuE consistently applies the same general principles for all its procedures, the section herein addresses the follow-up procedure in relation to quality enhancement reviews and accreditation procedures which form insofar the largest body in the MusiQuE portfolio. Peer reviewers involved in the initial review procedure will be contacted by the MusiQuE Office to partake in the corresponding follow-up procedure when such a procedure is undertaken by the institution in question.

### 7.1 Process

In order to assist visited institutions in implementing the recommendations listed in the review report, and to enable MusiQuE to assess its impact, a paper-based peer-reviewed follow-up procedure is offered to all institutions reviewed by MusiQuE.

[A specific template](#) was developed as a tool to facilitate the follow-up process. The template consists of three sections under each standard in the applicable framework of assessment, as follows:

- One section pre-filled by the MusiQuE Office for each follow-up procedure, consisting of the recommendations noted or, where the case, the conditions imposed by the Review Team as elements to be developed/ further developed.
- One section filled in by the institution reviewed and reflects the progress made in relation to each recommendation / condition received as well as the reasons for which, if the case, some of the recommendations were not given course.
- One section filled in by the peer reviewer(s) and reflects the assessment of the reported progress, and includes, if necessary, further related recommendations.

The template is sent to the institution together with the letter informing the institution of the MusiQuE Board's endorsement of the review report or of the accreditation decision. The letter also indicates the deadline by which the template needs to be sent back to the MusiQuE Office. In the case of accreditation procedures where formal conditions have been imposed, the accompanying letter stresses the crucial importance of observing this deadline and the potential threat of accreditation being jeopardised if satisfactory reporting on the fulfilment of the conditions is not made by that deadline.

### 7.2 In the case of quality enhancement reviews

There are no conditions, but only recommendations in the case of quality enhancement reviews; the follow-up process is therefore voluntary. Institutions are still systematically asked to fill in the MusiQuE follow-up template within 2 years and to provide evidence of what has been improved during that period. An extension of the deadline may be requested by the institution.

The MusiQuE Board will consult the Review Team which conducted the initial review of the institution/programme. One or more members of the team will be asked to study the template filled in by the institution and the related evidence provided, to comment on the progress made and, if appropriate, to offer suggestions for further enhancement, in the third section of the follow-up report template, for each standard where recommendations were given to the institution in the initial review report.

The MusiQuE Board will endorse the follow-up report and send it back to the institution with a letter by the Board.

The costs related to this follow-up procedure are included in the initial offer that has been signed by the institution.

If it is felt by the Review Team or the MusiQuE Board that the material is not sufficient to assess the fulfilment of the recommendations then, subject to the agreement of the institution, a team of two individuals from the initial Review Team will be asked to visit the institution a second time at the cost of the institution. The same additional action can be implemented at the request of the institution itself if it wishes an actual site visit as part of the follow-up process. Should a follow-up visit be deemed necessary, it can equally be organised online in agreement with the institution.

### 7.3 In the case of accreditation procedures

In the case of an accreditation, there are 2 levels of follow up: recommendations and conditions.

#### 7.3.1 Recommendations

The recommendations will be clearly listed in the review report and will need to be addressed by the institution in its self-evaluation report at the next renewal of accreditation. In addition, it is systematically proposed to the institution that the follow-up procedure applied to any conditions made by the Review Team also applies to the recommendations made. The procedure detailed below will therefore apply to the recommendations as well as the conditions.

#### 7.3.2 Conditions

The follow-up template will list all the conditions formulated by the Review Team. The institution will have up to 2 years to provide evidence that the conditions have been implemented and to complete the follow-up template accordingly. In exceptional circumstances, the MusiQuE Board may shorten or extend the deadline.

- The MusiQuE Board will proceed as for voluntary follow-up procedures “sur dossier”: the report template will be sent to the Review Team, who will study all the evidence provided by the institution and assess whether the conditions have or have not been met.
- The MusiQuE Board will then consider the follow-up report and the recommendations by the peer reviewer(s) and decide whether the conditions have been met or not.
- If it is felt by the Review Team or the MusiQuE Board that the material is not sufficient to assess the fulfilment of the conditions “sur dossier”, a team of 2 reviewers from

the initial Review Team will be asked to visit the institution a second time at the cost of the institution.

- If the evidence “sur dossier” suggests that the conditions have not been met, the Board may offer an extension of the deadline, arrange a follow-up visit as described above or, in extreme cases, withdraw conditional accreditation as described in Section 6.2.2. above.

#### 7.4 Periodicity of review procedures

In as much as internal quality assurance processes should be continuously undertaken to ensure a constant care for quality and a constant improvement of all provisions, external review procedures should additionally take place at regular intervals.

The period of time between two reviews will inevitably vary, as MusiQuE operates all across Europe, with different periods set by national regulations. All institutions choosing MusiQuE for their review will be encouraged to be reviewed every six years: the institution will normally be approached by the MusiQuE Office in the fifth year following the last review with a proposal to start a new review procedure. However, when the interval between two reviews set by the national legislation is shorter or longer than six years, it is this interval which will be taken as a reference and the timing of the approach from MusiQuE Office will be adjusted accordingly.

## 8. Feedback mechanisms

As part of its internal quality assurance processes, MusiQuE will collect feedback from peer reviewers involved in its procedures on three occasions throughout the year:

- after the Annual Training provided in the opening of the AEC Congress (see Section 1.2 above and in Section 4.2 of [MusiQuE's Internal Regulations](#));
- after the completion of the review visit in procedures where such a visit is included;
- after the final review report has been officially sent to the institution and published on the MusiQuE website.

Questionnaires addressed to Review team members aim at collecting feedback on:

- the adequacy and usefulness of training themes, topics and methods employed during the Annual Training;
- the adequacy and usefulness of the documentation produced by the institution and of the supporting material provided by MusiQuE;
- the composition of the Review Team (where applicable), the allocation of tasks within the team and the relevance of the briefing received;
- the relevance and clarity of the MusiQuE standards;
- communication with the other peer reviewers involved in the procedure, if the case, and with the representatives of the institutions reviewed;
- communication with the MusiQuE Office during all phases of the review;
- the post-review process and the approval of the review report;
- language issues.

When MusiQuE cooperates with other external quality assurance agencies, joint versions of these questionnaires are produced together with the partner agency in order to collect feedback on the joint procedure.

Once every year, usually between January and March, the MusiQuE Office compiles all results of the questionnaires received following procedures coordinated in the previous year and makes an analysis of any trends discernible in these results. The results, their analysis and a set of proposed actions for improvement are then considered by the Board, which also has access, if required, to the original questionnaires. The Board, normally at its Spring meeting, decides on any actions that it believes should be undertaken to improve the procedures. Any suggestions to change the Standards will be fed into the process for the revision of the standards.

If answers given by the peer reviewers to the feedback questionnaire, or direct contact with the Office reveal issues within the Review Team or in relation to the attitude of one of the reviewers, the following procedure applies:

- After informing the Director of MusiQuE, members of the MusiQuE Office investigate the matter further by contacting the respondent to the questionnaire, and possibly



other members of the Review Team concerned, in order to understand the issue. The matter may be pursued by the Director of MusiQuE.

- If deemed necessary, the Director will inform the Board, either verbally at the following Board meeting, or by email.
- Where there is found to be an issue, action will be taken to prevent another occurrence of the problematic situation. The MusiQuE Office may, for example, decide to add notes in the Peer Reviewers' Register concerning relationships between some reviewers, who should not serve together on the same team again; it may take action to remind a peer reviewer of his/her obligations in relation to the guidelines and Code of Conduct; or, should there be ground for such a measure, the Board may decide to suspend or remove the peer reviewer in question from the Register.

The feedback collected through the questionnaires delivered during the Annual Training for Peer Reviewers, is compiled and considered first by the Board at its following meeting, and by the Working Group in charge of preparing the annual training session.