

ENQA TARGETED REVIEW

MUSIC QUALITY ENHANCEMENT (MusiQuE)

OLIVER VETTORI, LINEKE VAN BRUGGEN
EVA FERNANDEZ DE LABASTIDA, CARLO MAZZINI
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This targeted review analyses the compliance of Music Quality Enhancement (MusiQuE) with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). As MusiQuE has undergone two successful reviews against the ESG Parts 2 and 3, it is eligible and has opted for a targeted review following the methodology described in the Guidelines for ENQA Targeted Reviews. With this targeted review, the agency aims at renewing its registration in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

The external review of MusiQuE was conducted between August 2024 and May 2025. The site visit took place from 18 – 20 February 2025 at the office of MusiQuE in Brussels, Belgium.

MusiQuE was established in 2014 and is a cross-border, subject-specific, international, external quality assurance agency dedicated to the continuous improvement of the quality of music education. The agency offers a wide range of external quality assurance activities for programmes and institutions providing music education. For that the agency developed their own procedures and standards in line with the ESG. As MusiQuE works internationally, part of the work of the agency are joint procedures with national agencies.

In 2024, the agency submitted 3 substantive changes reports to EQAR: One on the Revised standards, a second on the Revised procedure for complaints and appeals and a third on the Change in the Board structure, including EAS who can nominate a member. It was also mentioned, how Covid influenced some of the processes of their procedures, but not the procedures themselves.

The ESG standards that are reviewed in this targeted review are the standard that is always part of the review, standards where substantive change reports were submitted to EQAR and the two standards that were previously found to be partially compliant by the EQAR committee, meaning that ESG 2.1, 2.3, 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7 are part of this targeted review.

Summarizing, the review panel found MusiQuE compliant with ESG 2.1, 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7 and partially compliant with regard to ESG 2.3 and 3.1. The review panel also made some additional observations regarding some ESG standards that were not part of the targeted review. This has no bearing on the conclusion of compliance for these standards, but these are observations that can be taken into account in the next 5 years and the next full review. In light of the documentary and oral evidence considered by it, the review panel is satisfied that, in the performance of its functions, MusiQuE is overall in compliance with the ESG.

ESG 3.1 was chosen by the agency as the self-selected enhancement standard, but the panel also had some observations related to the agency's ESG compliance regarding this standard, therefore the review panel decided to also review this standard in detail beyond the enhancement focus. The review panel finally finds the agency only partially compliant on ESG 3.1, recommending that MusiQuE should more clearly distinguish between the two activities within what it calls the Critical Friends approach. The enhancement area (standard 3.1) was approached in the form of a workshop formulating and discussing scenarios. Overall, the panel felt that MusiQuE could consider more strongly that strategy is about abandoning options for the sake of others, and setting priorities more than anything else.

The agency's compliance with the ESG (Parts 2 and 3) can be summarised as follows:

| ESG | Compliance according to the targeted review¹ | Compliance transferred from the last full review² based on EQAR Committee judgements |
|------------|--|--|
| 2.1 | Compliant | N/A |
| 2.2 | N/A | Fully compliant → Compliant |
| 2.3 | Partially compliant | N/A |
| 2.4 | N/A | Fully compliant → Compliant |
| 2.5 | Compliant | N/A |
| 2.6 | Compliant | N/A |
| 2.7 | Compliant | N/A |
| 3.1 | Partially compliant | N/A |
| 3.2 | N/A | Fully compliant → Compliant |
| 3.3 | N/A | Fully compliant → Compliant |
| 3.4 | N/A | Fully compliant → Compliant |
| 3.5 | N/A | Substantially compliant → Compliant |
| 3.6 | N/A | Fully compliant → Compliant |
| 3.7 | N/A | Fully compliant → Compliant |

¹ Compliance refers to the focus areas that were evaluated in depth and are part of the Terms of Reference, i.e., standards that were only partially compliant with the ESG during the last full review, ESG Part 2 for newly introduced or changed QA activities of the agency, ESG 2.1 for all QA activities and any standard affected by substantive changes since the last full review. If any of the standards of Part 2 of the ESG are covered due to the newly introduced or changed QA activities, a remark “for new or changed QA activities only” is added in brackets to the compliance assessment.

² Compliance refers to the last EQAR Register Committee decision for renewal of inclusion on the Register. Compliance refers to the QA activities of the agency that were reviewed during the previous full review.

INTRODUCTION

In this targeted review the compliance of Music Quality Enhancement (MusiQuE) with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) is analysed. It is based on an external review conducted between August 2024 and May 2025 and should be read together with the external review report of the agency's last full review against the ESG. With this targeted review the agency aims at renewing its registration in EQAR.

BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW AND OUTLINE OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

Registration on EQAR is the official instrument established by the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) for demonstrating an agency's ESG compliance. An external review is a prerequisite for registration.

As MusiQuE has undergone two successful reviews against the ESG Parts 2 and 3, the agency is eligible and has opted for a targeted review. The purpose of a targeted review is to ensure the agency's compliance with the ESG by covering standards that were found partially compliant during the agency's last renewal of registration in EQAR and on standards that could have been affected by substantive changes³ during the past five years while at the same time further strengthening the enhancement part of the review.

MusiQuE is an affiliate of ENQA and does not opt for a review for ENQA membership.

SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

MusiQuE is carrying out the following activities within the scope of the ESG:

- Quality enhancement reviews of institutions
- Quality enhancement reviews of programmes
- Quality enhancement reviews of joint programmes
- Institutional accreditation
- Programme accreditation
- Accreditation of joint programmes
- Critical Friend Review

The following activities of MusiQuE are outside the scope of the ESG:

- Quality Assurance Desk
- Quality enhancement review and accreditation of pre-college institutions and programmes
- Consultative visits
- Coordination of benchmarking projects
- Evaluation of projects
- Evaluation of research activities undertaken by higher music education institutions

This review will evaluate the extent to which MusiQuE continues to fulfil the requirements of the ESG. The targeted review aims to place more focus on those parts that require attention and provide sufficient information to support MusiQuE's application to EQAR.

³ e.g. organisational changes, the launch of new external QA activities.

Focus areas

- A) Standards with a partial compliance conclusion in the Register Committee's last renewal decision:
- ESG 2.6 Reporting
 - Consider if the agency ensures publication of all reports in all activities, in particular the ones resulting from the activity "Critical Friend".
 - ESG 2.7 Complaints and Appeals
 - Address whether the revised appeals procedure is applied to enhancement type reviews in practice, whether the (new) appeal process and the existing complaints' procedure are easily accessible and clearly communicated to institutions, and whether the new way of nominating and appointing the members of the Appeals' Committee ensures avoiding conflicts of interest.⁴
- B) Standards 2.1 to 2.7 for the following activities:
- n/a
- C) Standards affected by other types of substantive changes⁵:
- ESG 2.1 Consideration of Internal Quality Assurance
 - Analyse whether all aspects of ESG Part I are covered in practice per the updated guidelines for programme reviews and institutional reviews.
 - ESG 2.3 Implementing Processes & 2.5 Criteria for Outcomes
 - Analyse how the agency ensures that the updated guidelines of the programme reviews and institutional reviews are consistently implemented and whether they guarantee consistency of the final outcomes resulting from those procedures.
- D) ESG 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance;
- E) Selected enhancement area: ESG 3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance
- F) Other matters regarding ESG compliance that come up during the targeted review and that may affect the agency's compliance with the ESG (if any). In this case ESG 3.1 was chosen by the agency as the self-selected enhancement area but the review panel also decided to include ESG 3.1 in this review. The review panel saw issues related to the agency's ESG compliance regarding this standard, specifically related to the Critical Friend Review which was still in a pilot state at the time of the last review.

During the review the review panel did not come across substantive changes not included in the terms of reference and not submitted to EQAR.

MAIN FINDINGS OF THE 2020 REVIEW

Summary table from the conclusion of the review panel and the EQAR Register Committee of 2020

| ESG | Review Panel conclusion | Register Committee conclusion |
|-----|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2.1 | Fully compliant | Compliant |
| 2.2 | Fully compliant | Compliant |
| 2.3 | Substantially compliant | Compliant |
| 2.4 | Fully compliant | Compliant |
| 2.5 | Fully compliant | Compliant |
| 2.6 | Fully compliant | Partially compliant |

⁴ See the EQAR Register Committee decision on the [Substantive change report of 02-07-2024](#)

⁵ See the EQAR Register Committee decision on the [Substantive change report of 04-04-2024](#)

| | | |
|-----|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2.7 | Substantially compliant | Partially compliant |
| 3.1 | Substantially compliant | Compliant |
| 3.2 | Fully compliant | Compliant |
| 3.3 | Fully compliant | Compliant |
| 3.4 | Fully compliant | Compliant |
| 3.5 | Substantially compliant | Compliant |
| 3.6 | Substantially compliant | Compliant |
| 3.7 | Not expected | Compliant (by virtue of applying) |

In relation to MusiQuE's previous review in 2020, The EQAR Register Committee found ESG 2.3, 3.1, 3.5 and 3.6 compliant, while the Review panel found them substantially compliant. EQAR Register Committee found ESG 2.6 and 2.7 partially compliant, while the review panel found ESG 2.6 fully compliant and ESG 2.7 substantially compliant.

From the EQAR decision 2020 the following remarks were made regarding standard 2.6 and 2.7:

Considering the non-publication of critical friend review reports, the Register Committee was unable to concur with the panel's conclusion of (full) compliance and concluded that MusiQuE complies only partially with ESG 2.6.

Considering the several above-mentioned issues the Register Committee could not follow the panel's conclusion of (substantial) compliance but considered that MusiQuE complies only partially with ESG 2.7.

The review panel found compliance for the standards that are not in this targeted review, but were found compliant by the EQAR Register committee in 2020: ESG 2.2, 2.4, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7. The review panel confirms their compliance. However the panel made some observations related to some standards that are not in the targeted review (ESG 2.4, 3.4 and 3.6) which do not affect the level of compliance.

REVIEW PROCESS

The 2025 external targeted review of MusiQuE was conducted in line with the process described in the Guidelines for ENQA Targeted Reviews, the EQAR Procedures for Applications, and in accordance with the timeline set out in the Terms of Reference. The panel for the targeted review of MusiQuE was appointed by ENQA and composed of the following members:

- Oliver Vettori (Chair), Dean, Accreditation & Quality Management / Director, Program Management & Teaching and Learning Affairs at WU Vienna (Vienna University of Economics and Business) Austria, Academic (EUA nominee);
- Lineke van Bruggen (Secretary), Senior expert/consultant Internationalisation and Higher Education (retired from NVAO), country manager for Benin at PUM, The Netherlands QA professional (ENQA nominee);
- Eva Fernandez de Labastida (panel member), Internationalisation and projects manager at Agency for Quality of the Basque University System (Unibasq), Spain, QA professional (ENQA nominee);
- Carlo Mazzini (panel member), Teacher at the Italian National Education Ministry and student at the Milan conservatory, Italy (ESU nominee, member of the European Students' Union Quality Assurance Student Experts Pool).

Milja Homan (ENQA Project and Reviews Officer) acted as the review coordinator. Elena Cirlan (ENQA Senior Policy and Project Coordinator) participated as an observer.

The review took place from August 2024 to May 2025. The review panel received the SAR in December 2024 and held its first meeting on 10 January 2025. During this briefing meeting, the review panel was provided with the input from the review coordinator and the representative from EQAR, Director Aleksandar Šušnjar. On 24 January 2025 the review panel had its kick-off meeting to prepare for the site visit and an online clarifications meeting with the agency's resource persons. On 17 February the review panel had the pre-visit meeting to finalise the preparations for the site visit at the ENA office in Brussels. The site visit took place from 18 – 20 February 2025 at the office of MusiQuE in Brussels, Belgium. On 20 February the review panel formulated its decisions on the various standards and offered oral feedback to the agency. After that, the secretary drafted the report which was sent to the other panel members on 16 March and, after the feedback of the review panel members, the draft report was sent to the ENQA coordinator for screening. On 29 April 2025 the finalised report from the review panel was sent to the agency for a check on factual inaccuracies. The panel reviewed this and made corrections in the report. The report was finalised by the panel on 25 May 2025. After this it was sent to the ENQA Agency Review Committee (ARC).

The review panel would like to confirm that the arrangements by ENQA ensured a smooth and well-coordinated review process. The review panel would also like to thank the MusiQuE team for making the panel feel welcome, for all the time and effort invested in the review, and for providing everything needed for the review.

All the findings and conclusions of this review report are the joint opinion of the review panel and have been agreed on during the report drafting process.

Self-assessment report

The self-assessment report (SAR) is the outcome of a collaborative self-assessment process conducted by the MusiQuE Board in collaboration with the MusiQuE Office. The agency gave a thorough description of the process that led to the SAR in the introduction to the SAR. MusiQuE decided to opt for a targeted review with ESG standard 3.1 as the elective enhancement-oriented standard for this process in order to use this opportunity to collect external feedback on MusiQuE's strategic plan, mission, vision, and the ways these are translated in the agency's day to day activities.

In September 2024, the MusiQuE Board and Office had a series of meetings to discuss MusiQuE's strategy for the next five years and to work on MusiQuE's SCOT (Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, Threats) analysis. During the self-assessment process, formal and informal feedback from MusiQuE-registered peer reviewers and evaluated institutions was also examined and incorporated. Also input from a conference marking the agency's 10th anniversary were fed back into MusiQuE's self-assessment process. The MusiQuE Office finalised the self-assessment report and presented it to the MusiQuE Board for a round of feedback in November 2024. The SAR endorsed by the MusiQuE Board was shared with the ENQA Secretariat on 25 November 2024. Following the feedback received from ENQA, further amendments were incorporated by the MusiQuE Office. The final version of the SAR was then endorsed by the MusiQuE Board and shared with the external review panel on 13 December 2024.

The review panel considered the self-assessment report of the agency a well-structured and clear document of 45 pages with several annexes. The SAR started with the background of this review with explanations of MusiQuE's approach to quality enhancement and changes since the last full re-

view. In the second part the focus areas of compliance that were included in this targeted review were described. In the third part the enhancement area and a SCOT analysis were presented. The self-assessment report of the agency was a valuable document in providing evidence for the various standards, evidence which was verified by the review panel in the various meetings and other documents.

Site visit

The site visit took place from 18 – 20 February 2025 at the office of MusiQuE in Brussels. On 18 February all the meetings were in person, on 19 February the scheduled meetings were online and on 20 February the meetings were in a hybrid form. There was an agreement between the review panel and the agency before the site visit on which meetings would be in person and which meetings would be online.

The schedule for the site visit was discussed beforehand with the agency. As it is a rather small agency it was decided to merge certain meetings into one meeting and take more time for these meetings (see annex I for the detailed programme of the site visit).

On 18 February the review panel had (in person) meetings with:

- The Director and the Chair of the Board and other Board members
- All staff of the agency and the intern
- The MusiQuE Board and staff members on the agency's self-selected enhancement area (to discuss ESG 3.1 in the form of a workshop)

On 19 February the review panel had (mostly online) meetings with:

- The Complaints and Appeals committee
- Heads of some reviewed HEIs/ HEI representatives and quality assurance officers of HEIs
- Representatives from the reviewers' pool
- Stakeholders (MusiQuE partners and national agencies MusiQuE has collaborated with)
- Meeting with the Director to clarify any pending issues (in person)

Despite the partly hybrid format, the review panel felt that it got a good picture of the agency and its work. The interlocutors were open and frank in their answers and the review panel was able to get a clear picture in order to come to their conclusions. The site visit as a whole was well organised. On 20 February the review panel had its final meeting to agree on the main findings of the review and to prepare the oral presentation. At the end of the morning, the chair of the review panel presented the findings of the review panel to the staff and Board members of MusiQuE.

The review panel felt the feedback was appreciated, everyone was open and forthcoming. The agency also kindly obliged to all the requests for additional documentation very timely.

With regard to the enhancement area (standard 3.1), this was approached in the form of a workshop and led to formulating and discussing scenarios for strategic developments (see later in this report). These discussions were conducted in an open and frank way. The enhancement area was also discussed in various other meetings.

CHANGES WITHIN THE AGENCY

HIGHER EDUCATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

MusiQuE describes itself as a subject-specific international quality assurance agency, which offers a wide range of external quality assurance activities for programmes and institutions providing music education. According to the SAR, since its establishment in 2014, the agency has gained increasing

international recognition for its work. In addition to the usual activities related to quality assurance, the agency also focuses specifically on the international perspective and the engagement with the wider cultural, artistic, and educational contexts.

During the past five years since its last external review, MusiQuE took steps towards strengthening its position in the quality assurance for higher education landscape.

MUSIQUÉ'S ORGANISATION/STRUCTURE

The governance and structure of MusiQuE involve stakeholders from both the education sector (at various educational levels) and the professional field of music and performing arts. Considerations on lifelong learning and the needs of the profession are aspects embedded in MusiQuE's work.

The five elements of MusiQuE's structure are as follows:

- Board
- Office
- Peer Reviewers Register
- Complaints and Appeals Committee (C & A Committee)
- External Evaluator

According to the agency, MusiQuE's organisational structure, with its five constitutive elements, are tightly and harmoniously integrated in a transparent and inclusive decision-making process.

The MusiQuE Board signed an agreement with the European Association of Music in Schools (EAS) in January 2021 recognising EAS as a partner organisation. Since then, EAS is "empowered to make nominations for appointment of board members" and the MusiQuE Board has an additional new member. Also a Memorandum of Understanding was signed in February 2024 between MusiQuE and Southeast Asian Directors of Music (SEADOM) to join efforts in promoting quality enhancement in music education at all levels in South-East Asia.

In September 2022, the Board established two sub-committees, the Operations Sub-Committee, that monitors reviews and the Peer Reviewers' Register, and the Strategy Sub-Committee, that deals with strategic management. They prepare the Board discussions and do not have decision-making powers.

Since the last review the Complaints and Appeals procedures had been revised and a completely independent Complaints and Appeals Committee was installed.

The office of MusiQuE consists of a small office in Brussels with a staff of around 5 people, including a director. The MusiQuE Board is very involved and active.

MUSIQUÉ'S FUNDING

The review procedures and advisory services remain MusiQuE's main source of income. At the meetings with the review panel, it was stated that about 20% of the funding comes from consultancy, with contributions from project-related work growing. The agency is exploring possibilities for additional sources of income, however, due to the limited number of staff of the agency, there is limited capacity for exploring alternative sources of income (projects, consultancy, etc.).

In the latest annual report of 2023, it is explained that 2023 has seen an increase in the total income received by MusiQuE since 2022. There has been a gradual increase in the income received from review procedures since 2021, despite a minor decrease in 2022 due to the planning of the related

site-visits, while the income generated from the MusiQuE Training almost doubled in comparison to 2022.

On the other hand, the total expenditure of 2023 was significantly higher than in 2022 and 2021 due to an increase in the staff and to additional operational costs resulting from a larger number of review procedures planned in 2023 and activities such as the revision of the MusiQuE Standards.

The profit and loss statement shows a positive result of €4,487.00. The complete data from 2024 was not available at the time of the visit.

MUSIQUÉ'S FUNCTIONS, ACTIVITIES, PROCEDURES

The main changes in the last five years as indicated by the agency were:

1. The impact of Covid-19 outbreak. This led to altered procedures and a stagnation in the number of contracted procedures. This also meant that following the recommendations of the previous review panel was delayed. The digital shift in the pandemic period also led to revised review procedures, introducing an additional online preparatory meeting of the review team members. MusiQuE relatedly developed a protocol for online visits and revised training workshops for peer reviewers. MusiQuE developed a hybrid formula which now consists of a half-day online training focusing mostly on theoretical aspects related to MusiQuE's philosophy, principles, standards and procedures. This is complemented by a two-day interactive training conducted in person.
2. The agency is in the process of revising all their standards. The Revised standards for programme and institutional reviews are ready and are already used in the procedures.
3. The agency also revised the Complaints and Appeals procedure in line with the recommendations made by the previous review panel, and they installed a completely independent Complaints and Appeals Committee. The procedure now also includes an option for institutions undergoing enhancement-focused reviews to submit an appeal in case of dissatisfaction with the outcomes.

Since the previous review, the agency aimed at a greater diversity in procedures and a larger geographical outreach through diversifying services (e.g., evaluation of the performance of research institutes in Flanders), growing interest for Critical Friend reviews, expanding the geographical outreach beyond Europe (like Tunisia, Thailand, Singapore and Qatar), and reaching other arts (like visual arts, drama and dance). The most important changes/improvement are the revision of the standards which took into account the feedback from the stakeholders and evaluations. Since its inception, MusiQuE has been conducting external reviews with the same set of standards. Feedback collected during MusiQuE's first 5 years of existence and the various external quality assurance procedures it conducted, as well as the rapid changes in the institutional dynamics brought forth by the global Covid-19 pandemic, led to a thorough revision of MusiQuE's Standards for Programme and for Institutional Reviews. Its aim was to simplify the structure of the standards and to address topics that better reflect the current reality of higher music education institutions - e.g. sustainability, digitality, mental and physical wellbeing, students' role in decision-making processes.

The revision process began in 2020 and it was completed in 2023 after consultations with internal and external stakeholders. The revised standards were being piloted in external review procedures that were carried out in 2024. With the feedback from institutions / programmes and peer reviewers who used the revised standards in 2024 there will be further fine tuning of these revised standards. The current (revised) structure and the number of standards will, nevertheless, be maintained.

The revisions in the two sets of standards cover the following activities:

- Quality enhancement reviews of institutions

- Institutional accreditation;
- Quality enhancement reviews of programmes;
- Programme accreditation;
- Critical Friend reviews

For the activities that had a direct bearing the compliance with the ESG the agency presented three substantive change reports to EQAR, all in 2024.

FINDINGS: COMPLIANCE OF [AGENCY] WITH THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA (ESG) WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

ESG PART 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

ESG 3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY, AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard:

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.

2020 review recommendation

- The Review Panel recommends the agency further refine its strategy for the coming years, which steers the actions and priorities of the agency.
- The Review Panel recommends the agency broaden its stakeholder concept and search for ways to involve more diverse stakeholders representing broader society in its governance and work.

EQAR did not provide recommendations.

Evidence

As outlined in the ToR, MusiQuE is carrying out the following activities within the scope of the ESG:

- Quality enhancement reviews of institutions
- Quality enhancement reviews of programmes
- Quality enhancement reviews of joint programmes
- Institutional accreditation
- Programme accreditation
- Accreditation of joint programmes
- Critical Friend Review

In an annex to the self-assessment report the agency presented the number of reviews that were carried out in the last 5 years:

2. Statistics from 2020 to 2024

| Type of review | 2020-2024 (upcoming reviews not included) | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|---|--|----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Number of reviews (ESG and outside ESG) | 37 | 6 | 8 | 4 | 8 | 12 |
| Within the scope of the ESG | 23 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 7 |
| Quality Enhancement reviews | 11 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| <i>These reviews included regular reviews and:</i> | | | | | | |
| • reviews in collaboration with other agencies | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| • critical friends reviews* | 6 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| <i>(Indication of the total number of critical friends visits within these critical friend reviews)</i> | <i>(8)</i> | | <i>(2)</i> | <i>(2)</i> | | <i>(4)</i> |
| Institutional level | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Programme level | 6 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Number of programmes reviewed | 4 | | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| - follow-up procedures** | 2 | | | 1 | 1 | |
| Accreditation procedures | 12 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| <i>These procedures included regular accreditation procedures and:</i> | | | | | | |
| • procedures in collaboration with other agencies | 5 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| • critical friends reviews* | 4 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| <i>(Indication of the total number of critical friends visits within these critical friend reviews)</i> | <i>(10)</i> | | <i>(3)</i> | <i>(1)</i> | <i>(1)</i> | <i>(5)</i> |
| Institutional level | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Programme level | 9 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 4 |
| Number of programmes reviewed | 25 | | 4 | | 11 | 10 |
| - follow-up on conditional accreditation procedures** | 1 | | | 1 | | |
| IN TOTAL | | | | | | |
| Institutional procedures | 5 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Programme procedures | 15 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 5 |
| Critical Friend reviews (QA and Accreditation) | 10 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Critical Friend visits (QA and Accreditation) | 18 | 0 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 9 |
| In collaboration with other agencies | 7 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Number of programmes reviewed | 29 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 12 | 10 |
| Outside the scope of the ESG | 14 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| - evaluations of research activities | 2 | 1 | | | 1 | |
| - reviews of pre-college institutions and programmes | 0 | | | | | |
| - project evaluations | 6 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 3 |
| - benchmarking projects | 4 | 3 | | 1 | | |
| - series of consultative visits | 2 | | 1 | | | 1 |
| <i>(consultative visits included in the series)</i> | | | <i>(5)</i> | | | <i>(1)</i> |

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* Each institution with which we have an ongoing Critical Friend Review is counted as one every year as the contract is ongoing.

**Follow-up procedures are not included in the total number of procedures, as they are part of the review.

The table shows that the number of procedures is more or less on the pre-covid level and the forecast for 2025 is that there will be an increase in procedures. The agency is active in exploring possibilities to increase the number of procedures (see also 3.1 enhancement area).

In the discussion with the Board, the review panel learned that concerning the involvement and broadening of stakeholders (as per the second 2020 recommendation) there was the addition of EAS to the Board. The agency is also more active in reaching out to its stakeholders by means of the conference organised for their 10th anniversary, while MusiQuE also organises trainings and webinars and provides the MusiQuE's Quality assurance support desk for institutions. They also want to offer a more creative and flexible service to institutions and invest in partnerships outside Europe. These future aspects are taken up in the enhancement area section.

With regard of the other recommendation of 2020 to refine the strategy for the coming years, as indicated before, the MusiQuE Board in 2022 established two sub-committees, one of which is the Strategy Sub-Committee, that deals with strategic management in order to prepare the Board discussions on strategic matters. The agency has updated its strategy, yet at the time of the review was already in the process of developing its next strategic plan. For this reason, MusiQuE also decided to choose the future strategic directions as its enhancement area. More observations on this can thus be found in the respective area of the report.

Among the review services available, mentioned above and outlined in the ToR within the scope of the ESG, the agency also offers a Critical Friend Review procedure. In the previous review of 2020 this procedure was in a pilot phase. Since then, it has become part of the standard repertoire of the agency. As described at MusiQuE's webpage the Critical Friend Review for institutions, programmes and joint programmes is an "innovative approach to external quality enhancement reviews and accreditation procedures, (where) MusiQuE organises visits by international Critical Friends focusing on a specific discipline, department or on a transversal area. These visits are part of an overarching review process that ends with a visit of a full panel. The results of the procedure and the feedback are more specific, more personal and more recognisable."

The review panel addressed the Critical Friends Review procedure in almost all meetings (with, the Board, the staff of the agency, the reviewers, the institutions, partners and other stakeholders).

Various institutions and reviewers that worked with the critical friend visits see it as having an added value and helping institutions and programmes to improve the quality (culture) of their education.

To guide reviewers and institutions on the use of the Critical Friend Review, the agency provides the Handbook for Critical Friend Review. In the handbook, it is stated that as part of MusiQuE's ambition to continuously improve its relevance and effectiveness, MusiQuE offers institutions an innovative approach to external review, in addition to the regular external review model, which typically consists of a review visit by an external panel every 5 to 6 years, as it is commonly used by most quality assurance agencies. Within the Critical Friend Review procedure, there are visits by so-called critical friends (i.e. selected experts from the field) that help the institution to develop its QA system and self-assessment. The procedure may well end with the feedback by the critical friend (as a sort of consultative activity); but, depending on the contract agreed on between MusiQuE and the institution may also be followed by a somewhat lighter version of MusiQuE's regular review visits as an External Quality Assurance Activity.

In the handbook for Critical Friend Review it is described that the critical friend can be given the assignment to visit and review a specific study programme, a cluster of similar programmes or a department/faculty/section offering more than one programme (i.e. when departments or sections are

organised according to genres or disciplines that offer both bachelor and master level programmes [e.g. jazz, classical music, dance, etc.] or according to levels [e.g. bachelor or master]). He or she can also address a 'horizontal' or cross-sectoral theme, e.g. curriculum development, internationalisation, research, quality assurance, etc. The scope of the Critical Friend visit depends on the needs and the organisational structure of the institution. The critical friend is asked to perform his or her task during a visit of approximately three days.

In the SAR MusiQuE's Critical Friend Review is described as trying to take an additional step towards building a quality culture based on continuous improvement. According to the agency, the Critical Friends Review includes a range of visits to the institution by independent external experts (who are trained MusiQuE Peer Reviewers) who review the institution's activities and deliver an analysis which represents the starting point of the subsequent "regular" review process (quality enhancement or accreditation at programme, joint programme, or institutional level): the reports by critical friends inform the self-evaluation process and are included in the self-evaluation report, thus further informing the work of review teams. As such, the review of an institution is extended over a larger period of time, and is conducted through an interactive approach which allows for an in-depth input, beyond that which may result from the more regular site visit model.

The agency explains that with regard to Critical Friend Reviews, one or several frameworks of assessment may be employed, as follows:

- For the external review at the end of a cycle of critical friend visits the framework of assessment related to the main object of evaluation will apply – i.e. if it is a Critical Friend Review at institutional level (either for quality enhancement or for accreditation), the review team will use MusiQuE's Standards for Institutional Reviews to conduct their external evaluation;
- For critical friend visits conducted in between two external evaluations, given their smaller and more targeted focus, the MusiQuE Standards for Programme Reviews are being used to create the guidelines for structuring critical friends reports. If transversal themes (e.g. governance, quality culture, etc.) are the focus of critical friend visits in certain procedures, then MusiQuE Standards for Institutional Reviews may also be used to address certain topics.

The review panel learned about an example where a procedure started as a Critical Friend Review procedure but due to an early termination of the contract ended as a consultancy activity. The agency explained that this was an incident. However, the review panel wants to stress that very clear boundaries need to be kept between consultancy and Critical Friend Review procedures.

The review panel learned that MusiQuE also delivers consultative visits that are called 'critical friend visits' and using a similar procedure as the critical friend visits which are part of the Critical Friend Review.

The panel understood that these are actually two variants:

- the critical friends' visits as a consultative activity (i.e. ending with the feedback)
- and the Critical Friend Review procedure as an external review (that builds on the earlier phase).

In addition to MusiQuE's own procedures, the agency also carries out some other procedures together or in addition to national procedures. In the meeting with representatives of other (national) agencies they expressed that the collaboration with MusiQuE is good and constructive and could be continued in the future.

Analysis

The review panel for most part agrees with the conclusion of the review panel of 2020 and is positive about steps that have been taken since then. It also understands that due to the covid pandemic not all that was intended is achieved.

The two recommendations from 2020 were addressed by the agency with the broadening of the Board with a member of a new stakeholder organisations (EAS) and various other activities to involve the stakeholders in the work of MusiQuE (like webinars, helpdesk etc. see above), and also establishing two subcommittees of the Board one of which specifically focussing on strategy. The involvement of the stakeholders was discussed with the Board, the staff and the stakeholders and the review panel learned that this was an improvement. With the Board and the staff, the work of the sub-committees of the Board was discussed and this was seen as a valuable development by all parties involved.

The panel commends the agency for choosing this standard as the enhancement area for this review (see later in this report). The review panel understands and supports that it is necessary to reflect on the options for the future especially for a small agency that operates in a subject-specific field.

In the previous review of 2020, the Critical Friends Review (CFR) was in a pilot phase and the review panel was positive about this initiative. After the 2020 review the procedure became part of the repertoire of MusiQuE's more standard procedures.

Depending on what the scope of the Critical Friend Review is, one (or both) of MusiQuE's sets of standards (for Institutional Review or for Programme Review) apply.

After reading the documents (the SAR and the revised Handbook for Critical Friend Review) and the discussion with stakeholders and reviewers, and additional information from the management of the agency the panel realised that the status of the Critical Friend Review is not clear to everyone involved. As can be read in the evidence section above, in the handbook and the SAR there are some slight differences in how the procedure is described. In the various descriptions of the procedure, the order of steps as such seems clear (even though information is not completely consistent), but when discussing various possibilities of being a critical friend with peer reviewers that carried out Critical Friend Reviews and with the agency's staff the review panel perceived some different perceptions on how the procedure is carried out in practice. The procedure is seen differently from different perspectives, which caused disagreements even among interviewees in the same session. The review panel observed that there are basically two procedures, yet stakeholders use the same wording for it: one with a purely consultative function (and contracted as such) and one as part of a larger assessment procedure (and contracted as such), which to some degree overlap. The main difference, conceptually, lies in the contract/purpose for the procedure: if an institution goes for the consultative variant, they cannot go for the assessment variant. But in people's perception (and in practice) this difference in origin might not be enough to prevent the approaches from becoming blurry.

In theory the panel saw that there are clear rules regarding the potential conflicts of interest, but in practice it is not always clear to parties involved and there seems to be a grey area that sometimes can also shift during the procedure.

For the review panel it is important that there is a clear distinction between consultancy and Critical Friend Reviews. There should be clearer rules and separate guidelines regarding the consultancy part and review part that should be mutually exclusive and interpreted consistently by all actors involved.

Using the same language, partly the same guidelines and templates and the same reviewer pool can be misleading, even if there is evidently no intent to mislead.

As there may be a thin line between advice/consultancy and review it should be completely clear to all that reviewers in all circumstances remain independent and at a certain professional distance from the reviewed.

The review panel is of the opinion that it may already help if in the preparation of the Critical Friend visit more attention is given to the above mentioned issues while making explicit the do's and more importantly also the don'ts of the reviewer(s) and the reviewed, meaning to behave according to the code of conduct, abiding by the rules and separate guidelines and avoiding unsubstantiated judgments. As the critical friend expert(s) in these setups often act alone, it is important that the reviewer is well aware of his or her role and acts accordingly, as there are no other panel members to discuss issues with. As the review panel understood from the different meetings, the preparation of critical friend experts is the same for both variants and therefore sees a need for more explicit instructions and a follow-up during the process. There is already some guidance from the agency, which is a good thing, but this could be more formalized.

As the panel sees and understands it, the Critical Friend Review supports the internal quality assurance, quality culture and quality enhancement of the institution or the programme. Indirectly, the critical friend reports will come up in the self-evaluation reports of the institution or programme and eventually in the review report of MusiQuE. Critical friend reports are published, either as summaries of recommendations or in full alongside (i.e. as annexes of) the review report resulting from the final review panel visit.

What differs are the phases leading into the actual external review. The review panel therefore recommends MusiQuE to adjust their communication about the Critical Friend accordingly in order to avoid confusion and make a visible separation between quality assurance and enhancement procedure and consultancy (giving advice) that pertains to all information material, guidelines - and, as a strong suggestion, also adjust the wording used.

Concludingly, the review panel would like to stress that the activities, policies and processes for quality assurance are well in place at MusiQuE. With the exception of the Critical Friend Review analysed above, all are clear for all parties involved and the review panel has no concern, on the contrary. Regarding the Critical Friend Review, the review panel understands how important it is to MusiQuE and it also seems much appreciated by their clients and reviewers. Using the same term and concept under different circumstances, and framing it as consulting (consultative visits) or a quality assurance procedure, depending what offer clients are asking for, is confusing and needs to be disentangled urgently, though. It is due to the confusion around the critical friend - and the fact that keeping consultancy and reviews as separate as possible on all levels is a key element of a QA system that garners the trust from all stakeholders - that the panel has come to the conclusion of finding MusiQuE partially compliant with this standard. However, the review panel is confident that the agency can solve the issues that are raised.

Panel recommendations

1. The agency should clearly distinguish between the two activities within the Critical Friends approach. While both are grounded in the same philosophy, each should be supported by its own clear guidelines, rules and expectations.

Panel conclusion: partially compliant

ESG PART 2: EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

ESG 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard:

External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part I of the ESG.

2020 review recommendation

No recommendation from the panel nor EQAR.

ToR: Analyse whether all aspects of ESG Part I are covered in practice per the updated guidelines for programme reviews and institutional reviews.

Evidence

The review panel in 2020 found MusiQuE fully compliant with ESG Standard 2.1. Since then, the agency explains in the SAR, that MusiQuE did not undergo major changes in its structure, activities and methodology. MusiQuE expressed that they continue to uphold and advance the quality of music education internationally, and to assist higher music education institutions in their own enhancement of quality, through well rounded expertise, and tailor-made services and support.

The standards for Institutional and programmes reviews were revised in 2023. Based on the feedback from the various stakeholders (institutions, partners, HEIs) the following objectives were laid down for the revision:

- a) Streamline (simpler structure, with less standards and less duplication),
- b) Differentiate (clearer distinction between reviews for programme and institutions),
- c) Student-centred (to refer explicitly to ESG 1.3. Student-centred learning, teaching, and assessment),
- d) Reflect change (reflecting the more recent themes, as well as the recent reframing of existing themes),
- e) Stimulate the shift from compliance-based Quality Assurance to enhancement driven Quality Culture.

The revisions of the standards was guided by a working group composed of the various stakeholders (board and staff of MusiQuE, peer reviewers, partners and institutions).

In annex 6 to the SAR the agency gave a large overview of how the specific standards for programmes and institutions align with the ESG. Below, in the figures and tables, a summary is given of this alignment.

In the SAR the agency explains that it tries to be true to its concept of quality culture, and as an agency that is not rooted in any particular national higher education system, MusiQuE designed and developed its own frameworks of assessment which take into account the specific features, and the high degree of cultural diversity intrinsic to external quality assurance and accreditation in European music education.

MusiQuE currently operates with the following sets of standards, depending on the type of procedure it conducts:

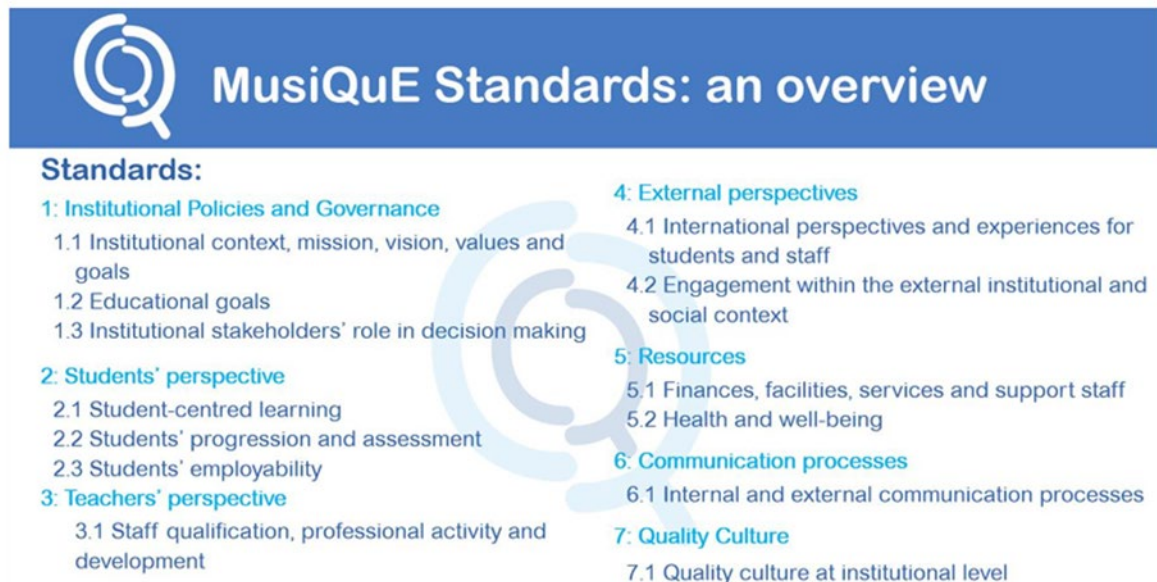
For review procedures within the scope of the ESG:

- MusiQuE Standards for Institutional Reviews (revised in 2023)

- MusiQuE Standards for Programme Reviews (revised in 2023)
- MusiQuE Standards for Joint Programme Reviews (currently under revision)
- MusiQuE Standards for Classroom Music Teacher Education Programmes (currently under revision)

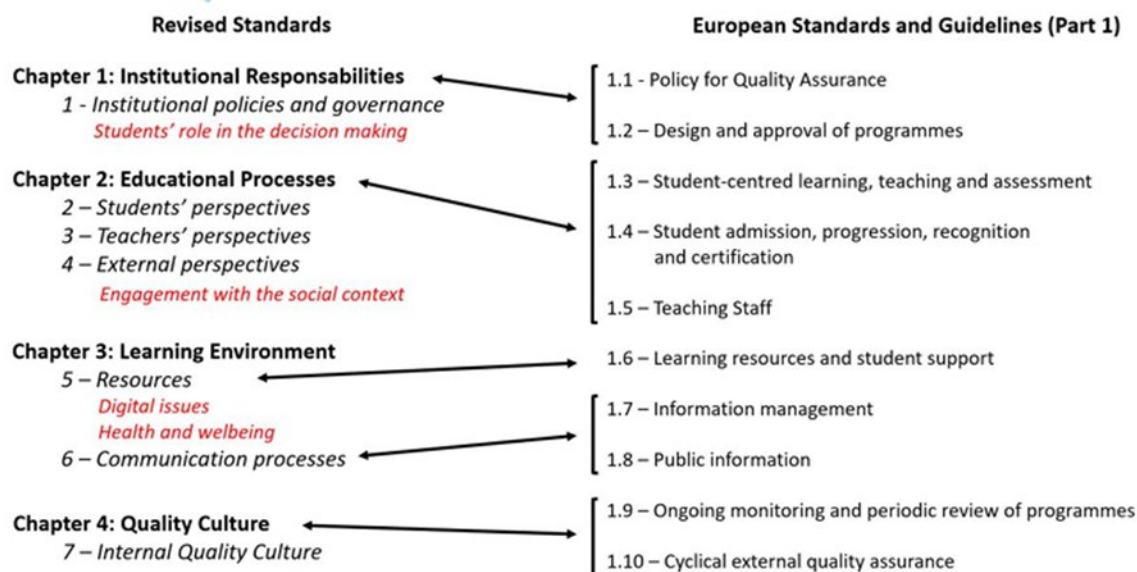
The agency describes that MusiQuE's Standards for Institutional and for Programme Reviews represent the core set of standards applicable to most procedures conducted by MusiQuE – i.e. quality enhancement reviews and accreditation procedures at institutional, or at programme level respectively. Drawing on these standards, separate frameworks of assessment were developed since the very creation of MusiQuE, in order to better reflect MusiQuE's service portfolio, to address the specific traits of certain programmes and/or institutions, and to better respond to the particular needs of the various groups of beneficiaries – i.e. in the evaluation of joint programmes, classroom music teacher education programmes.

The agency states that the revised standards for Institutional and for Programme Reviews adopt a simplified structure that is more clearly in line with the structure of the ESG part I. An overview of MusiQuE's new standards, and how they align with ESG part I are captured in the diagrams and table presented below.





Revised Standards and the ESGs



The agency carried out a mapping exercise for the revised standards against the ESG. A summary of the results of the self-assessment of MusiQuE's Revised Standards compliance with ESG Part I is captured in Table I below.

| ESG PART 1 | MusiQuE's Revised Standards for Institutional Reviews (quality enhancement reviews and accreditation procedures)* | MusiQuE's Revised Standards for Programme Reviews (quality enhancement reviews and accreditation procedures)* |
|---|--|--|
| *Numbers in the table refer to the relevant MusiQuE standard. | | |
| 1.1 Policy for quality assurance | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| 1.2 Design and approval of programmes | 1.2 1.3 | 1.1 1.2 |
| 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification | 2.2 2.3 | 2.2 2.3 |
| 1.5 Teaching staff | 3.1 | 3.1 |
| 1.6 Learning resources and student support | 5.1 | 5.1 |
| 1.7 Information management | 6.1 | 6.1 |
| 1.8 Public information | | |
| 1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes | 7.1 | 7.1 |
| 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance | | |

Table 1. Self-assessment of compliance with ESG Part 1 for MusiQuE's Revised Standards for Institutional and for Programme Reviews

The agency explains in the SAR, that all standards address the effectiveness of internal processes and procedures, how these are being monitored and continuously revised, and how feedback loops are being closed at different decision-making levels. All these strings, revealing information on the outcomes of internal quality assurance processes, are then brought together in the overarching Standard 7.1. Quality Culture that takes the consideration of internal quality assurance a step further, and looks into how internal and external feedback is sought and connected, and how staff and students are actively involved in an ongoing dialogue about the quality of education, of programme activities, and of institutional strategies and policies respectively. Institutions and programmes are thus enabled to ensure the quality of their educational programmes, or of their curriculum and educational processes respectively, and to work towards an all-encompassing quality culture.

In cases of joint accreditation or quality enhancement procedures conducted in cooperation with national quality assurance and accreditation agencies, either MusiQuE Standards are being used as the sole framework for the evaluation (case in which Standard 7.1 will always be addressed by review teams), or a mapping of both agencies' standards applicable for the procedure is being realised, case in which any standards from MusiQuE missing from the set of standards of the partner agency will be included in the evaluation framework. Insofar, it has never been the case that (internal) quality assurance or enhancement be missing from frameworks of agencies that MusiQuE cooperated with.

With each revision of standards, whether the ESG in 2015 or MusiQuE's Standards in 2023, MusiQuE conducts a mapping exercise between its own frameworks and ESG Part I, in order to demonstrate how the ESGs from I.1 to I.10 are being considered and addressed in MusiQuE's evaluation criteria and processes for institutions and/or programmes.

Analysis

The previous review panel had no recommendations on this standard and found the agency fully compliant. The changes that are made in the revised standards are seen as an improvement by the agency, stakeholders and reviewers. Stakeholders were also involved in the revision of the standards as was confirmed in the interviews. The agency is still in the process of revising some standards that will be ready soon (within a year).

The structure of the set standards for institutional reviews comprises a total of 13 standards. These standards are organised into four main areas of inquiry:

1. Institutional Responsibilities;
2. Educational Processes;
3. Learning Resources and Student Support;
4. Quality Culture.

The standards are further grouped under 7 themes:

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

Besides, for each of the 13 standards a series of 'Guiding Questions' are listed under the text of the standard. They serve as guidelines to facilitate the understanding of each standard, and illustrate the range of topics that could be covered.

In addition, "suggested evidence / supportive material" provides examples of the type of supporting material an institution could provide as evidence.

In the case of the standards for the programmes reviews it is similar (same structure but with 12 standards and, of course, some difference in the denominations as the focus is on the programmes).

The complete mapping is included in Annex 6 of the SAR and a summary is given in the table above. The review panel concludes that each of the standards in ESG part I is addressed.

For each of the MusiQuE standards for institutional and programme level the review panel considers: ESG I.1 Policy for quality assurance. It is considered through the standard I.1. The programme's goals and context in the MusiQuE standards for programme reviews. In the case of institutional level

reviews, this aspect is covered by the standards 1.1. Institutional context, mission, vision, values and goals and 1.2 Educational goals.

ESG 1.2 Design and approval of programmes. It is considered through the standard 1.2. Programme's stakeholders role in decision making for programme reviews. In the case of institutional level reviews, this aspect is covered by 1.2. Educational goals and 1.3. Institutional stakeholders' role in decision making.

ESG 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment. It is considered through the standard 2.1. Student-centred learning and 2.2. Students' Progression and Assessment for both programme reviews and institutional reviews.

ESG 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification. It is considered through the standards 2.2. Students' Progression and Assessment and 2.3. Students' employability for both programme reviews and institutional reviews.

ESG 1.5 Teaching staff. It is considered through the standard 3.1. Staff qualification, professional activity and development for both programme reviews and institutional reviews.

ESG 1.6 Learning resources and student support. It is considered through the standards 5.1. Finances, facilities, services and support staff and 5.2. Health and wellbeing for both programme reviews and institutional reviews.

ESG 1.7 Information management. It is considered through the standard 6.1. Internal and external communication processes for both programme reviews and institutional reviews.

ESG 1.8 Public information. It is considered through the standard 6.1. Internal and external communication processes for both programme reviews and institutional reviews.

ESG 1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes. It is considered through the standard 7.1 Quality Culture at Programme Level for programme reviews. In the case of institutional level reviews, this aspect is covered by the standard 7.1 Quality Culture at Institutional Level.

ESG 1.10 Cyclical external quality. It is considered through the standard 7.1 Quality Culture at Programme Level for programme reviews. In the case of institutional level reviews, this aspect is covered by the standard 7.1 Quality Culture at Institutional Level.

In addition to ESG part I MusiQuE has a standard 4. External perspectives, in line with their international orientation. It is considered through the standard 4.1. International perspectives and experiences for students and staff and 4.2. Engagement within the external institutional and social context for both programme reviews and institutional reviews.

In the SAR and as expressed by various stakeholders MusiQuE's frameworks of assessment have been conceived by higher music education institutions as a support mechanism to those within them who are responsible for quality assurance, and higher music education institutions have been largely involved in their revision.

In the various meetings with stakeholders, reviewers and partners, they signalled satisfaction with the standards that are used by MusiQuE, and the revised standards were seen as an improvement and simplification by the stakeholders and reviewers that worked with them.

In the meeting of the review panel with (national) quality assurance agencies that worked on a joint procedure with MusiQuE, they expressed that it worked well and could be continued in the future. The panel reviewed the revised standards and several reports and concluded that the mapping grid of the agency provides an adequate representation.

In comparison with the “old” standards, the relations between MusiQuE’s revised standards and the ESG is more clear.

Panel conclusion: compliant

ESG 2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES

Standard:

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent
- an external assessment normally including a site visit
- a report resulting from the external assessment
- a consistent follow-up

2020 review recommendation

The Review Panel suggests that the agency further develop its approach to follow-up further in order to guarantee a consistent follow-up in each of its external quality assurance processes.

EQAR did not provide recommendations.

ToR: Analyse how the agency ensures that the updated guidelines of the programme reviews and institutional reviews are consistently implemented and whether they guarantee consistency of the final outcomes resulting from those procedures.

Evidence

MusiQuE conducts reviews that employ pre-defined processes:

- Self-evaluation: a self-assessment exercise carried out by the institution and resulting in a self-evaluation report for which a tailor-made template is provided by MusiQuE;
- External evaluation: an external assessment made by an expert panel and informed by a site visit;
- Reporting: a report produced by the panel according to a defined sequence of actions, each with a specified timeframe;
- Follow-up: a follow-up procedure (part of the external review, but not compulsory).

To ensure consistency in its implementing processes, the following elements are routinely embedded in each external review procedure:

- Templates have been developed to assist those preparing the documentation: templates for the self-evaluation report and one for the review panel’s report. These are both published online, and shared directly both with reviewed institutions and with reviewers.
- MusiQuE aims at ensuring the draft report of a review panel is analytical and well-referenced, that supporting evidence is provided for the observations and quality judgements

made, and that a list of points for further development is included. The Office produced a check-list for secretaries and for the Office itself to check the reports. In addition, the Operations Sub-Committee of the MusiQuE Board considers the report by focusing on three areas: 1) the overall quality of the report, 2) the compliance levels and their justification and 3) the consistency with the other reports.

- In order to assist visited institutions in the post-site-visit process and to enable MusiQuE to assess its impact, a peer-reviewed follow-up process is offered, 2 years after the initial review.

When asking about the follow up procedures, the panel learned that:

- Follow-ups are now in the contract for all institutions, meaning that the cost of follow-ups are included in the review fee;
- Not all institutions engage in the follow-up activities though; some never send their progress report to MusiQuE.
- The agency falls short on means to pursue institutions about these reports, hence, if the institution refuses to provide an update, the process is not technically completed;
- In many subsequent reviews previous recommendations are revisited; but there are no templates or clear rules safeguarding this.

Analysis

The review panel could verify by reading the documentation and discussions with the various parties involved that there are no further changes, besides the revised standards themselves as described under ESG 2.1, in the implementing process since the previous review and considers the implementing process well documented.

In this standard 4 elements of the external quality assurance processes need to be addressed:

1. a self-assessment or equivalent;
2. an external assessment normally including a site visit;
3. a report resulting from the external assessment;
4. a consistent follow-up.

The first 3 are all present in all procedures. The fourth, the follow-up, while it is officially part of the procedures, it is not compulsory: the institution can choose not to do the follow-up procedure.

This implies that there are no stringent follow-up mechanisms in place. In other words, there are follow-ups, but they are not safeguarded to ensure a consistent implementation.

In light of the positive experiences expressed by institutions that underwent follow-ups and the positive impact on future procedures for these institutions the panel found no explanation why this procedure is not made compulsory.

The previous review panel already suggested that the agency develops its approach to follow-up further in order to guarantee a consistent follow-up in each of its external quality assurance processes. The agency made a technical change (including follow ups in the contract), but did not go much beyond this.

The review panel also noted that it is not explicitly stated in the instructions for the procedures that a review panel takes the recommendations of the previous panel into account in the next review. It is taken for granted that this is done, but is not explicitly addressed. The panel thinks that for an effectively closed loop, regularly taking previous findings into account should be a prerequisite.

This review panel considers that the entire follow up step is not where it could and should be, not in the least because the issue already had been raised in the previous review. The review panel

acknowledges the recent efforts of the agency, but there are still too many loopholes: Even though technically paying for it, institutions are not always reporting their progress. In light of the fact that MusiQuE promotes an enhancement-led approach, the review panel thinks there should be a priority systematising follow-ups and these should be compulsory. This review panel comes to the conclusion that the follow-up is still not a fully integrated part of all review procedures. Concludingly, the panel finds the agency only partially compliant with regard to ESG 2.3.

Panel recommendations

2. MusiQuE is advised to make the follow-up compulsory in the procedures for institutions and programmes in order to close the PDCA-cycle. This should include making it necessary to take the recommendations (if any) of the previous review panel into account in the next review.

Panel conclusion: partially compliant

ESG 2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES

Standard:

Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

2020 review recommendation

No recommendation from the previous review panel nor EQAR.

ToR: Analyse how the agency ensures that the updated guidelines of the programme reviews and institutional reviews are consistently implemented and whether they guarantee consistency of the final outcomes resulting from those procedures.

Evidence

Apart from the revision of MusiQuE's Standards for Institutional and for Programme reviews MusiQuE did not implement further changes with respect to the ways in which its criteria for evaluation are being used in the review procedures it conducts.

With regard to explicit and published criteria the agency describes that for all their activities in the scope of the ESG, the relevant MusiQuE Standards constitute these criteria against which the outcomes and judgement of all MusiQuE reviews are made.

The corresponding self-evaluation report template, as well as the Guidelines for Institutions are also shared with all relevant and interested parties together with the applicable framework of assessment.

The outcomes of MusiQuE review procedures can be the following:

- For Quality Enhancement Reviews: The review report itself represents the final result. It includes a summary of compliance levels to the standards in the applicable framework, it highlights the institution's / programme's strong points, and it provides advice and suggestions / recommendations for change.
- For Accreditation Procedures: The accreditation report represents the final result. It also includes a summary of compliance levels to the standards in the applicable framework, the

strong points and the areas for further development identified, as well as recommendations for change and, where the case, conditions for accreditation. In addition, the report includes a decision on the accreditation of the institution/programme/joint programme, with the following possibilities: Accreditation (if only recommendations are expressed in the report); Conditional accreditation (if one or more conditions, and a timeframe to meet them, are included in the report); or Not accredited.

For all MusiQuE's activities in the scope of the ESG, the following steps are in place:

- All review team members receive the MusiQuE Guidelines for Peer Reviewers that comprise an explicit section on reports and outcomes.
- Review team secretaries are provided with guidelines for writing the report.
- Review teams also receive short guidelines to assess compliance levels. The intended purpose is to enhance the level of consistency of the assessment process across all reviews and facilitate the work of the teams.
- The MusiQuE Office and the Operation Sub-committee of the MusiQuE Board conduct a first check of the report when delivered by the Review Team. In this phase, the report's structure, format, and consistency with other reports are being considered. Particular attention is given to ensuring that the MusiQuE Standards are applied consistently, and that outcomes or quality judgments are justified appropriately with reference to evidence gathered by the review team.

The MusiQuE scale for each standard has 4 levels of compliance (fully compliant, substantially compliant, partially compliant and non-compliant).

In the meetings with the various delegations it was confirmed that the templates provided for various procedures by the agency were used and appreciated. The trainings for reviewers and secretaries were considered useful and the further guidance given by the agency was appreciated. The review panel also concluded that all the relevant material could be found on the MusiQuE's website.

Analysis

In discussion with the agency and the various stakeholders the review panel concludes that any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance is based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision. The standards are revised which also means the guidelines are adjusted to be in line with the revised standards. They appear to be more clear to all parties involved. Stakeholders were also involved in the revision (See ESG 2.1 above). The consistency between and within the reports is guarded by the MusiQuE's Board, the staff of the agency and the reviewers, who are trained by the staff of the agency, and reviewers with a lot of experience in the process of the review. The secretaries of the review team are provided with guidelines and as indicated before there are templates for the different procedures and the reports.

However, the review panel sees possibilities to further improve the safeguarding of the outcomes in the consistent application of the criteria in the procedures as the staff of MusiQuE is not always present during the site visits of all procedures and the secretaries of the review team are given the same training as the other reviewers. MusiQuE staff is present when the reviews are in Belgium or the Netherlands, but not in other countries. The review panel sees here possibilities to enhance the consistency. The review panel would recommend either for the staff of MusiQuE to try to be more present in the review panel as coordinators being on site with the panel or to give more specific training to secretaries to safeguard the consistency during the site visit as these play a crucial role. The review panel thinks it is worth considering expanding the staff's participation, also because in

that case the staff can directly see what the custom is in the various countries and in case of combined procedures learn for the next time.

Panel recommendations

3. In order to further safeguard the outcomes and consistency of the procedures, the panel recommends the staff of the agency to be more present during the site visits in the review procedures in different countries or to provide a specific training for the secretaries of the panel.

Panel conclusion: compliant

ESG 2.6 REPORTING

Standard:

Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

2020 review recommendation

- The Review Panel recommends the agency further optimise the process of report writing, in order to reduce the time between the site visit and the publication of the final report.
- The Review Panel recommends the agency clearly define which language version constitutes the primary report, in order to avoid any discussion in case of discrepancies between the different languages.

EQAR:

Considering the non-publication of critical friend review reports, the Register Committee was unable to concur with the panel's conclusion of (full) compliance and concluded that MusiQuE complies only partially with standard 2.6

ToR: Consider if the agency ensures publication of all reports in all activities, in particular the ones resulting from the activity "Critical Friend".

Evidence

Since the previous review, MusiQuE underwent a full rebranding process which included the redesign and restructuring of its website. The new website was launched in 2021 and since then, the DEQAR database has been integrated on the Review Reports section of the MusiQuE website.

According to the SAR, MusiQuE reports had already been published in full, together with the accompanying decision by the MusiQuE Board. Since 2017, an executive summary is also being published together with the full report. Reports resulting from follow-up procedures are published online together with the decision by the Board and with a reference to the initial review report.

The agency provides templates for the reports, which the review panels of MusiQuE and institutions found very helpful and it also ensures consistency. The review templates follow the structure of the framework of the assessment used during the review.

Members of the review panel read the reports of the various MusiQuE's review panels that had used the "old" and the revised standards and concluded that all the reports follow the same structure. They contain different sections:

- Abstract
- List of abbreviations
- Introduction
- Key data on the institution/programme
- Assessment of the specific standards
- Summary of the compliance with the standards and recommendations
- Conclusion
- If needed, recommendation for accreditation
- Annexes including the site-visit schedule and a list of reviewed annexes.

Under each standard there is a part on evidence, another one on analysis of the review panel and a last one regarding the fulfilment of the standard. The conclusions seem consistent with the justification.

The agency explained that following the revision of MusiQuE's Standards for Programme and for Institutional Reviews, the corresponding review report templates have been adapted to match the revised frameworks.

One of the recommendations received from the external panel during MusiQuE's full review in 2020, and underlined by the Register Committee in its corresponding decision, referred to the optimisation of the report writing process in order to reduce the time between the site visit and the publication of the final report which was reported to last up to one year, in certain situations. In the SAR, the agency describes that since the agency's 2020 external review, the following steps were undertaken to give course to the recommendation received:

- The deadline for producing the first draft report by the review team has been reduced from ten to eight weeks;
- As mentioned before, a Board sub-committee - the Operations Sub-Committee - was established in 2022 to review all reports for quality, compliance, and consistency with other MusiQuE reviews. Its conclusions are then presented to the full Board for formal approval before reports are sent to institutions for accuracy checks, thus expediting decision making on review reports.
- Previously, the MusiQuE Office reviewed draft reports for layout and content consistency before passing them to the Board. Now, the MusiQuE Office and the Board's Operations Sub-Committee provide combined feedback in a single step. The review team revises the report based on this feedback, and it is then sent to the institution for a factual accuracy check. After the institution's comments are integrated, the final report is approved by the full MusiQuE Board.

In this way the time length between the site visit and the publication of the final report has been reduced to four up to maximum five months.

The review panel discussed these improvements with the various parties involved and there is great satisfaction with these improvements, reducing the time between the site visit and publication indeed to about 5 months.

The previous review panel also recommended in its 2020 review report that MusiQuE clearly defines which language version constitutes the primary report in order to avoid any discussion in case of discrepancies between various languages. Consequently, the service contracts and agreements

signed by MusiQuE ever since comprise a provision that states, in addition to the official language of the procedure, which report will be considered official and which language versions are to be considered secondary translations. In the discussion with the various parties this issue was discussed and it was seen as an underestimated issue that can slow down processes because of the translations and make interpretations tricky. The agency was referring to their hope of AI-assistance regarding operations in foreign languages.

In its decision the Register Committee noted that MusiQuE does not publish Critical Friend review reports, neither separately nor with the final review report. The Committee emphasized that all expert-prepared reports, covering full evidence and analysis, should be published. They indicated it would be sufficient to include the critical friend reports alongside the final external review report. Considering that the Critical Friend review reports are not public, the Register Committee was unable to concur with the panel's conclusion of (full) compliance and concluded that MusiQuE complies only partially with ESG 2.6. Consequently, as explained in the SAR, MusiQuE pondered extensively the course of action with the aim to find a compromise that would rise to the Committee's expectations without altering the core principles and philosophy of the Critical Friend Review.

The review panel learned that critical friend reports are (will be) published (either as summaries of recommendations or in full) alongside (i.e. as annexes of) the external review report.

In the SAR the agency extensively discussed why they do not agree with the EQAR register Committee's remark on the (non)publication of Critical Friend reports. The agency argues that within the Critical Friend Review process, it is important to emphasize the link between the Critical Friend visits and the final panel review: Critical Friend reports and institutional responses always form part of the self-evaluation report for the final review, and the final review report integrates the full Critical Friend Review process. The agency explains that during the site visit, the MusiQuE panel engages directly with Critical Friend reviewers, thus ensuring that the whole Critical Friend Review process is incorporated and reflected in the final review report.

According to the agency it is not a requirement for higher (music) education institutions to publish their self-evaluation report, and in some national contexts such information may even be treated as confidential. Thereby MusiQuE refrained up until now to publish individual Critical Friend reports while making sure that such reports are being reflected and integrated in the final review report published on DEQAR. Further, according to the agency, in contrast to formal external reviews, which typically convey an overall perspective of a programme or an institution, a Critical Friend visit has a very specific, and usually small-scale focus, thus making the feedback more personal, and more recognisable.

MusiQuE explained that they carried out discussions with institutions currently undergoing a Critical Friend review, aiming to explore ways in which compliance to the requirement of publication be attained without altering the spirit of the overall procedure. It was unanimously accepted that summaries of recommendations from Critical Friend reports be published together with the review report by the external panel, may it be a quality enhancement review or an accreditation procedure. And, where institutions feel comfortable with the publication of full Critical Friend reports alongside the final review report, MusiQuE will act accordingly.

MusiQuE also amended the Handbook for Critical Friend Reviews to include, as guidelines, more specific suggestions for the structure of Critical Friend reports – for instance a clear indication that each topic addressed be concluded with a summary of commendations and recommendations. These guidelines are implemented for procedures conducted from 2024 onwards.

Analysis

The review panel agrees with the reasoning of the agency regarding the publication of critical friend reports. The critical friend report can be considered part of the preparation for the external review (and follow-up on the previous review), and an addition to the SAR. However, if it has an added value, and if all the actors involved agree, and, in cases where Critical Friend Reviews were meanwhile completed, they are already published alongside the final review report.

Therefore, the review panel sees no urgent need to publicise the critical friend reports separately. In one way or another, the results of Critical Friend reports find their way in a publication that is accessible to all. However, this does not change the panel's position on the issues raised regarding the Critical Friend Review overall, as mentioned in relation to the ESG 3.1.

The review panel considers that the way in which the review reports from external reviewers are published is in line with the requirements of this standard. All reports and decisions are published on the MusiQuE's website and are easily accessible. The changes made on the website and in the structuring of the procedure are an important improvement. In discussions with the various stakeholders the improvement in the timeline to draft the reports was recognized. The length between the start and end of the procedure is shorter and, in the way it is structured now, it is also more manageable, as it becomes more clear where the bottlenecks are in order to solve them promptly.

The review panel conforms that the agency addressed the recommendation of 2020 adequately.

With regard to the primary language of publication the review panel sees language as an underestimated and undervalued issue in the ambitions to grow and, according to some interviewees, even causing challenges in past reviews in countries where English is not a common language. It is necessary to carefully weigh pros and cons, as the language barrier goes far beyond the writing of a report and cannot be fully mitigated via Generative AI applications; or, in the worst case, might even aggravate a problem. Finding an effective way of dealing with language issues is a key issue for an agency that aims to operate internationally, and maybe even globally. MusiQuE is thus encouraged to develop an action plan tackling this issue, beyond the hope invested in AI.

Taking all the arguments into consideration the review panel found this standard compliant.

Panel commendations

- I. The review panel commends the agency on the streamlining of the process to reduce the time between the start and end of the procedure.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

- I. The agency is encouraged to form a road map and make a cost-benefit analysis to tackle the language issue (decide on the primary language of reporting) that is already surfacing and will only become more challenging the more international MusiQuE becomes.

Panel conclusion: compliant

ESG 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Standard:

Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

2020 review recommendation

The Review Panel recommends the agency to further enhance its appeals and complaints procedures, and to communicate them clearly to all stakeholders in order to avoid any lack of clarity.

Remarks from EQAR: The Register Committee could not follow the panel's conclusion of (substantial) compliance but considered that MusiQuE complies only partially with ESG 2.7.

ToR: Address whether the revised appeals procedure is applied to enhancement type reviews in practice, whether the (new) appeal process and the existing complaints' procedure are easily accessible and clearly communicated to institutions, and whether the new way of nominating and appointing the members of the Appeals' Committee ensures avoiding conflicts of interest.

Evidence

MusiQuE was found partially compliant with ESG 2.7 Complaints and appeals by the EQAR Register Committee during its last full external review in 2020. The agency explained that the recommendations received both from the external panel and from the EQAR Committee in its decision to renew MusiQuE's registration in 2020 were fully taken into account in the process of revising this procedure. The MusiQuE's Complaints and Appeals policy was revised by the MusiQuE Office and Board, starting in 2023 with benchmarking against similar policies of national agencies involved in joint accreditations with MusiQuE (e.g., NVAO Netherlands, AQU Catalunya). A preliminary proposal was completed in Autumn 2023 and shared with experienced peer reviewers for external input. Suggestions received during this consultation phase led to a second proposal for revision presented to the MusiQuE Board in February 2024.

In the SAR, the agency describes that after the Board feedback, additional research was conducted, including insights from ENQA's thematic analysis on agencies' approaches to complaints and appeals (Ed. December 2023) as well as further benchmarking with cross-border and national QA agencies (e.g. EUA's Institutional Evaluation Programme, AEQES) was done. A final revision was endorsed by the Board in May 2024, along with a shortlist of potential Complaints and Appeals Committee members. The Revised Complaints and Appeals Procedure was officially published in June 2024, with the Complaints and Appeals Committee's composition confirmed in July 2024, following members' acceptance.

From the discussions with the current Complaints and Appeals Committee the review panel learned that they were also involved in discussing the terms of reference and gave input.

The appeals procedure no longer applies only to accreditation procedures. It can be introduced to contest the outcomes of quality enhancement procedures as well.

In the official revised appeals and complaints procedures the following definitions are used:

- Complaints:

An institution may submit a complaint when it considers that the service provided by MusiQuE has not been delivered in line with the MusiQuE Guidelines applicable for the procedure, and/or with the MusiQuE Code of Conduct for Peer Reviewers. A complaint may therefore concern a perceived procedural failure, or may relate to the conduct of one or more peer reviewers involved in the process. Challenges regarding the outcome of a review, outside those mentioned above, are handled through the appeals process.

- Appeals:

Appeals may be submitted when it is considered that the statements in the review report constitute a flagrant misjudgement and all other means of obtaining what is considered a just outcome have been exhausted. The correction of factual errors is handled during the review procedure, before the report is deemed final, or can otherwise constitute the object of a complaint process (see above). The appeal represents an action of last resort for addressing the quality judgements expressed in the review report. As such, an appeal should be undertaken only in the following circumstances: 1) failure to explore relevant facts, 2) disregard for, or misinterpretation of the evidence provided, 3) or quality judgements contrary to the weight of evidence provided.

- Complaints and Appeals Committee:

The Complaints and Appeals Committee is composed of three voting members nominated by the MusiQuE Office and appointed by the MusiQuE Board for a fixed term of three years, renewable once. The members of the Complaints and Appeals Committee should be experienced in quality assurance processes, possess specialist knowledge pertaining to higher music and related arts education, and, for the period of their appointment, may not participate in MusiQuE reviews. To be appointed to the Complaints and Appeals Committee one should not have been involved in any of MusiQuE's decision making or executive bodies for a period of five years. Former Committee members may not act as MusiQuE peer reviewers until one year after their mandate came to term, provided that they fulfil all requirements in this regard. Should a conflict of interest arise between the complainant and any member of the Committee during the period of their office, the member in question will withdraw from the complaint or appeal process. In the unlikely event that two of the three members of the Complaints and Appeals Committee declare a conflict of interest in relation to a specific complaint or appeal, a temporary replacement of at least one of the two recused members will be specially appointed by the Director of the MusiQuE Office.

According to the official Complaints and Appeals procedure description, all complaints will be considered by the MusiQuE Board, except for the cases in which the object of the complaint is the MusiQuE Board itself or any of its individual members. In that case the complaint goes directly to the Complaints and Appeals Committee. The MusiQuE Board shall notify the Complaints and Appeals Committee on the outcome of the complaint once it has reached a final decision. Under the exceptional circumstances that the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of a complaint, as communicated by the MusiQuE Board, they can formulate a response within ten calendar days upon receipt of the Board's decision. In such cases, the MusiQuE Board will then refer the case to the Complaints and Appeals Committee whose decision on the matter will be final and irrevocable. In case of appeals the Complaints and Appeals committee is always involved and the Complaints and Appeals committee takes the final decision.

The Appeals and Complaints committee has yearly meetings in which the members are updated on the activities of MusiQuE. Members of the Complaints and Appeals Committee were also involved in the creation of the terms of reference linked to the new Appeals and Complaints procedure.

Analysis

In the procedure for the revised Complaints and Appeals procedure various stakeholders such as the Board, staff, partners and reviewers have been involved and were informed. The revised procedures can be found on the website, and the procedure on filing a complaint or appeal is described in detail as are all the other relevant aspects that may arise regarding complaints and appeals.

From the discussions with the agency and the current Complaints and Appeals Committee it became clear that this committee is an independent committee (with no conflicts of interest) with experienced members. The Complaints and Appeals Committee told the review panel that they have a yearly meeting with the Board to get an update on the agency. Until now they did not have to treat any complaints or appeals.

The review panel finds that the recommendations of the previous review panel and the EQAR Registers Committee's related decision were seriously taken into account and led to a revision of the procedure and the creation of an independent Complaints and Appeals Committee with safeguards against conflicts of interest.

This review panel reviewed the new Complaints and Appeals procedure and the description in the SAR regarding the changes that were made. The review panel also discussed this topic with the Complaints and Appeals Committee and with the Board and staff of MusiQuE and in other meetings. Moreover, the Complaints and Appeals procedure is communicated to the HEIs, according to the interview the panel had with them, and it is included in the published procedures. Due to the lack of actual procedures with the revised policy, the panel was not able to verify how it worked in practice for HEIs.

In the introduction to the new Appeals and Complaints procedure the agency states:

"Institutions are encouraged to offer feedback on the quality of the services provided by MusiQuE in several phases of an ongoing procedure – i.e. through surveys after the completion of the site visit, and upon the receipt of the final review report. Further, peer reviewers appointed to conduct external assessments on behalf of MusiQuE are trained to be mindful, to accommodate an open dialogue throughout the procedure, and to request real time feedback during the site visit. Such feedback helps MusiQuE to apply principles of continuous quality enhancement to its own activities, and to take action in real time in case issues arise during a review procedure."

The panel reads this in a way that the agency is proactive in preventing appeals and complaints. In the discussion with the stakeholders and the Appeals and Complaints committee this seems to be working as there were no appeals and complaints filed since the previous review. This also meant that in the discussions with the new Complaints and Appeals Committee the review panel could not discuss real cases, but discussed the procedure as such in comparison to the previous one.

The review panel considers that the steps that are taken are adequate and is of the opinion that there is now a fair and impartial system in place.

The review panel concludes that the recommendation and remarks from 2020 are fully addressed. The review panel considers the steps that are taken since the previous review commendable.

Panel suggestions for further improvement

2. The panel would suggest evaluating the Complaints and Appeals procedure after the procedure is put into practice and the first few cases have surfaced.

Panel conclusion: compliant

ENHANCEMENT AREAS

ESG 3.1: ACTIVITIES, POLICY AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

The agency chose standard 3.1 as enhancement area for this targeted review.

MusiQuE is a subject-specific international quality assurance agency, which offers a wide range of external quality assurance activities for programmes and institutions providing music education. Since its establishment in 2014, it has gained international recognition for its work. In addition to traditional topics, the agency also focuses specifically on the international perspective and the engagement with the wider cultural, artistic, and educational contexts.

MusiQuE's current mission and vision, goals and principles, as well as how these are translated in the agency's daily work and in the activities it conducts, were described in the SAR. A summary of MusiQuE procedures implemented for each of the EQA activities it conducts was included in Annex 2 of the SAR. (Re)assessing what exists was not the primary goal that MusiQuE pursued when selecting this standard. Rather, advice and support in shaping its vision for the future was MusiQuE's main reason for this choice. As MusiQuE is in the process of revising and updating its Strategy Paper (which currently covers the period 2020-2025), the agency felt that any feedback for the next strategic period (2026-2030) would be valuable.

With regard to the enhancement area, MusiQuE had formulated the following questions:

- How can MusiQuE “move beyond a demand-driven growth model, where the agency develops and broadens its offerings to respond to specific requests by higher education institutions, to a more streamlined, planned, and strategic-growth model”? (recommendation from the 2020 external review panel).
- How can the unique expertise of MusiQuE better help its positioning in the international higher education sector, more specifically in relation to national governments and agencies?
- How can a broader body of stakeholders, at both European but also national level, help shape the future and scope of MusiQuE's operations?

The review panel proposed to address the enhancement area in the form of a workshop. The review panel aimed for an interactive on site workshop with about 10 participants from MusiQuE and the review panel. The session took 90 minutes and it was split into two parts. Part one delved into the “SCOT” (Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, Threats) analysis (as already described in the SAR) and ended with some joint conclusions from it. Part two focused on the strategic options already identified by MusiQuE and how they could be weighted and prioritised.

As a preparation for this workshop the agency got some ‘homework’ from the panel:

In order to facilitate an effective workshop rather than a collective brainstorming exercise, the review panel asked the agency to prepare the following:

1. Prioritising their current SCOT analysis by either ranking the existing items per category; or selecting the top five for each category. In the “challenges” category highlight which are seen as “inherent” (i.e. challenges lying within the agency) and external.
2. Ranking the strategic development options as identified in section 4.1 in the SAR (or add others if necessary); if impossible to come to a unified view, to mark where there was dissent and why some options could not be easily prioritised against each other.
3. Identifying up to five ideas they already have in terms of increasing their international visibility/enhancing their international positioning.

The review panel received this information shortly before the site visit.

Based on the preparatory documents, in the first part of the workshop the review panel asked questions about the SCOT analysis, to get an idea on what was really important for the agency. What were they particularly proud of and what was their passion? The Board and staff representatives appeared to be most proud of the fact that they were offering context sensitive procedures in a flexible and creative way. The agency emphasised the values and passion driving its work, and was proud of their involvement in many international networks.

The areas of improvement the agency prioritised included getting a steadier stream of procedures, a need for investing more in regular webinars, toolkits and database and access to good practices. The agency sees threats outside their scope of manoeuvring that harms them in seizing opportunities and overcoming challenges. Most discussion in the Board and the agency were on AI and whether it is an opportunity or a threat. MusiQuE concluded to see it as an opportunity (keeping in mind that it also may be a threat). The legal framework in various countries is also a challenge as there might be reluctance for being the first in a country to employ or collaborate with a supranational agency.

According to the review panel and the agency the SCOT analysis may be used for strategic decisions and a strategic plan. That was elaborated in the second part of the workshop. In the second part, the panel worked on different scenarios (best case/worst case/realistic case) for the agency's key strategic options. The key question was, where the representatives saw the agency in five years from now in each scenario. The main options discussed were:

Option 1: spreading out geographically/tapping into new markets, which included establishing business in other European countries, but also outside of Europe, such as in the Middle East or Canada. Through the discussion it became clear that in the best case this would mean growth for the agency; in worst case, spreading themselves too thinly and even shrinking; and that many steps toward the realistic scenario were already under way.

Option 2: Diversifying MusiQuE's offer/adding new activities and procedures to the roster, which included more project evaluations, consultancy work and creating innovative new services. To some degree this option also entails becoming a primary "standard setting body" for the field. In the best case scenario, this would in essence mean growth, but also MusiQuE becoming "more" than an QA agency; in the worst case version this could mean a decrease of business but also a loss of reputation; in the realistic scenario it would mean a little bit more of things already happening.

After this inventory of the different scenarios there was a discussion on what would be useful for the coming 5 years and what would be realistic or feasible. It became clear that "risk" plays a key role: At least in the form discussed, the second strategic option comes with greater risk than the first one, as it also entails potential damage for the agency's reputation. Both realistic scenarios could be a first step and discuss what may be the best one. In order words: The regional focus (option) seems safer.

Overall, the panel felt that MusiQuE could consider more strongly that strategy is about abandoning options for the sake of others, and setting priorities more than anything else. It is about balancing individual ideas and ambitions with the organisation's capacity and capability; and about balancing what might be beneficial for the sector of European music education with what can be achieved via a quality assurance agency, while concentrating on the sustainable future of the agency. Moving forward will not be possible without making sometimes difficult choices, which might even touch upon some things the agency holds very dear. As a "niche player" they can more easily afford to stay true to their core values mirrored in their methodology. If they intend to grow, they will not only need to prioritise and be more specific about their strategic direction, but also strategic in the way they

move in this direction. How to win over national agencies and even Ministries for collaboration will likely need to be part of this. Rethinking their organisational model might help.

A suggestion related to the remarks made under ESG 2.5 is that the presence of staff members of the agency during procedures can also have the added value of coming in direct contact with the agencies and institutions in other countries, which also may help in attracting more procedures in these specific countries. As was mentioned in several of the meetings, it is difficult to get a first procedure in a country, but if there is already one institution with a MusiQuE procedure it becomes easier. This is not a major point as the review panel also understands that the costs that are involved may be an issue. While it may also be improved by providing more specific training to secretaries.

The panel hopes the following suggestions might be helpful on this way:

- In any scenario, there is a need to prioritise and to let go of ideas and desirables. This is even more difficult due to the composition of the Board as a stakeholder representation committee, where different constituencies have, understandably, different wishes and worries, but the overall culture is very much consensual. In going forward, MusiQuE needs to find a way to “moderate” the discussions, which is difficult to achieve from within.
- There is also yet no “business case” developed for either option: the resources needed (and gained) for pursuing a certain direction need to be clarified, in order to avoid the risk of “overextending”.
- Last but not least, conducting a systematic risk assessment beyond the threats included in the SCOT analysis will enable the agency to better weigh benefits and (opportunity) cost, but also potential financial and reputational damages.

ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

OTHER STANDARDS THAT WERE NOT PART OF THE REVIEW

The review panel wants to make some observations related to standards that were not part of this review, but were touched upon during the preparation and meetings at the site visit. This has no bearing on the conclusion of compliance for these standards, but these are observations that can be taken into account in the next 5 years and the next full review.

ESG 2.4: Peer-review experts

The review panel observed that reviewers were generally well-trained and committed, often bringing valuable expertise from the sector. However, the review panel observed that several MusiQuE reviewers are affiliated with stakeholder organisations that are also represented in the agency's governance or are formally partnered with MusiQuE, such as AEC. While such interconnections can foster shared understanding and commitment to quality, they might also underscore the importance of safeguarding role, clarity and independence. The review panel is not particularly concerned, but would suggest to reflect on this and make sure experts understand their role independently of the organizations they might be part of.

ESG 3.4: Thematic Analysis

The review panel sees how the activities of the agency to share findings from its work, not least in the form of trends reports, have been decreasing over the last years, after an impressive early phase after the agency's start. The review panel acknowledges and appreciates the agency's non-thematic analysis publications but systematically analysing markets, systems and their own experiences will not only form a sound basis for their strategic options, but also function as a stepping stone towards more research/publication oriented goals. In other words, the panel observes that there is trend analysis in the pipeline, but it has slowed down. The panel suggests making a plan serving the agency's own ambitions in that respect.

ESG 3.6: Internal Quality Assurance and Professional Conduct

The review panel thinks that the follow-up of recommendations and suggestions from the previous review panel was not as swift and effective as could have been. Especially in the light of their own ambitions related to enhancement it could be more ambitious. The agency mentioned it in the SAR and also confirmed that during discussion with the review panel. The panel would suggest to be more ambitious and speedy in the next round of follow-ups, demonstrating MusiQuE's dedication to quality enhancement.

CONCLUSION

SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS

ESG 2.6:

1. The review panel commends the agency on the streamlining of the process to reduce the time between the start and end of the procedure.

OVERVIEW OF JUDGEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the documentary and oral evidence considered by it, the review panel is satisfied that, in the performance of its functions, MusiQuE is in compliance with the ESG.

The review panel finds MusiQuE compliant with ESG 2.1, 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7 (and partly even improved in comparison with the previous review), but partially compliant with ESG 2.3 and 3.1. The partially compliant judgment is meant as an incentive to improve and clarify procedures. In particular, the agency is advised to take more effective action on the follow-up procedures (as was also recommended by the previous panel), and to reflect on the Critical Friend Review procedure, as it is no longer a pilot, but a procedure that has already been in use for some years.

ESG 3.1:

1. The agency should clearly distinguish between the two activities within the Critical Friends approach. While both are grounded in the same philosophy, each should be supported by its own clear guidelines, rules and expectations.

ESG 2.3:

2. MusiQuE is advised to make the follow-up compulsory in the procedures for institutions and programmes in order to close the PDCA-cycle. This should include making it necessary to take the recommendations (if any) of the previous review panel into account in the next review.

ESG 2.5:

3. In order to further safeguard the outcomes and consistency of the procedures, the panel recommends the staff of the agency to be more present during the site visits in the review procedures in different countries or to provide a specific training for the secretaries of the panel.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENT

ESG 2.6:

1. The agency is encouraged to form a road map and make a cost-benefit analysis to tackle the language issue (decide on the primary language of reporting) that is already surfacing and will only become more challenging the more international MusiQuE becomes.

ESG 2.7:

2. The panel would suggest evaluating the Complaints and Appeals procedure after the procedure is put into practice and the first few cases have surfaced.

ANNEXES

ANNEX I: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT

| SESSION NO. | TIMING | TOPIC | PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW | LEAD PANEL MEMBER |
|--|---|---|---|-------------------|
| [Friday 24.01.2025] - Online meeting with the agency's resource persons | | | | |
| 1 | 120 min 9:30 - 11:30 | Review panel's kick-off meeting and preparations for site visit | | |
| 2 | 90 min 15:30-16:30 AGENCY 16:30-17:30 PANEL | An online clarifications meeting with the agency's resource persons to clarify the agency's changes since the last full review against the ESG and to understand the background and motive of the agency's choice of the self-selected ESG standard for enhancement (next to the overall HE and QA context of the agency) | MusiQuE director and Chair of the MusiQuE Board | |
| [Monday 17.02.2025] – Day 0 (pre-visit) | | | | |
| 3 | 60 min 17:00 -18:00 | Review panel's pre-visit meeting and preparations for day 1 | | |
| | 19.00 | Dinner (panel only) | | |
| [Tuesday 18.02.2025] – Day 1 | | | | |

| SESSION NO. | TIMING | TOPIC | PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW | LEAD PANEL MEMBER |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|---|--|-------------------|
| | 30 min 9:00 | Review panel's private meeting | | |
| 5 | 60 min 9:30-10:30 [in person] | Meeting with the CEO and the Chair of the Board (or equivalent) and other Board members if available | MusiQuE director, Chair of the MusiQuE Board, 5 MusiQuE Board members including student representative | |
| | 15 min 10:30 - 10:45 | Review panel's private discussion | | |
| 6 | 90 min 10:45- 12:15 [in person] | Meeting with representatives from the Senior Management Team and with key staff of the agency/staff in charge of external QA activities | Policy Officer, Review Officer, Administrative & Review Officer, Intern | |
| | 15 min 12:15-12:30 | Review panel's private discussion | | |
| | 60 min 12:30: 13:30 | Lunch (panel only) | | |
| | 15 min 13:30 -13:45 | Review panel's private discussion | | |
| 7 | 90 min 13:45-15:15 [in person] | Meeting with MusiQuE Board and others like the agency staff/representatives on the agency's self-selected enhancement area (to discuss ESG 3.1) | Chair of the MusiQuE Board, 6 MusiQuE Board members including the student representative, MusiQuE director, Policy Officer, MusiQuE Senior Advisor and former Board member | |

| SESSION NO. | TIMING | TOPIC | PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW | LEAD PANEL MEMBER |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--|-------------------|
| | 15 min 15:15- 15:30 | Review panel's private discussion | | |
| 8 | 60 min 15:30- 16:30 | Wrap-up meeting among panel members and preparations for day 2 | | |
| | 19:00 | Dinner (panel only) | | |
| [Wednesday 19.02.2025] – Day 2 | | | | |
| | 60 min 9:00-10:00 | Review panel's private meeting | | |
| 9 | 45 min 10:00 - 10:45 [online] | Meeting with Complaints and Appeals committee | Senior Adviser and former Deputy Secretary General at EUA, Director of Studies at mdw, former Secretary-General of EURASHE | |
| | 15 min 10:45 - 11:00 | Review panel's private discussion | | |
| 10 + 11 | 75 min 11:00 - 12:15 [online] | Meeting with heads of some reviewed HEIs/ HEI representatives and quality assurance officers of HEIs | Head of the Quality Assurance Office at KC The Hague, The Netherlands, <i>CF accreditation</i> ; Head of Quality Assurance at KASK & Conservatorium Ghent, Belgium <i>Programme QE</i> ; Head of Classical Music, Royal Conservatoire Antwerp, Belgium, <i>CF QE</i> ; Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs and Research, EAMT Tallinn, Estonia, <i>Institutional Accreditation</i> ; Head of Music and New technologies department, ISMS Sousse, Tunisia, <i>Pro-</i> | |

| SESSION NO. | TIMING | TOPIC | PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW | LEAD PANEL MEMBER |
|-------------|---|--|--|-------------------|
| | | | <i>gramme Accreditation; Dean for International Affairs, College of Music Mahidol, Thailand, Programme Accreditation; Director of Academic Administration and Student Experience, RWCMD Cardiff, UK, Institutional QE</i> | |
| | 15 min 12:15- 12:45 | Review panel's private discussion | | |
| | 60 min 12:45 - 13:45 | Lunch (panel only) | | |
| 12 | 45 min 13:45 - 14:30 [online] | Meeting with representatives from the reviewers' pool | Critical Friend, visits in 2021 and 2024, Secretary and Peer Reviewer in 2021 and 2024, Chair in 2023, Peer Reviewer in 2021 and 2022, Chair in 2021 and 2024, Critical Friend in 2024, consultative visit in 2024, Chair in 2019/2020, Chair in 2023 and 2024, Critical Friend in 2021, Peer Reviewer in 2024, Student Peer Reviewer in 2023, Student Peer Reviewer in 2025 | |
| | 15 min 14:30 -14:45 | Review panel's private discussion | | |
| 13 | 60 min 14:45 - 15:45 [online] | Meeting with stakeholders | <u>MusiQuE partners:</u> Director of Pearle* – Live Performance Europe, AEC President, AEC Executive Director, EMU Board Member, EAS President, EAS Secretary | |

| SESSION NO. | TIMING | TOPIC | PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW | LEAD PANEL MEMBER |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|---|--|-------------------|
| | | | <u>National agencies MusiQuE has collaborated with:</u> Senior advisor, AQU Catalunya; Project manager and head of internal quality assurance, AQU Catalunya; Accreditation Policy Advisor, NVAO; Higher Education Sector Manager, HAKA <u>Other stakeholders:</u> EPASA Vice President | |
| | 15 min 15:45 - 16:00 | Review panel's private discussion | | |
| 14 | 45 min 16:00- 16:45 | A session to further investigate additional topics that may arise during the site visit regarding agency's compliance with the ESG (as necessary) | | |
| 15 | 60 min 16:45- 17:45 | Wrap-up meeting among panel members: preparation for day 3 and provisional conclusions | | |
| [Thursday 20.02.2024] – Day 3 | | | | |
| 16 | 60 min 9:00 - 10:00 | Meeting among panel members to agree on final issues to clarify | | |

| SESSION NO. | TIMING | TOPIC | PERSONS FOR INTERVIEW | LEAD PANEL MEMBER |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|---|--|-------------------|
| 17 | 60 min 10:00- 11:00 [in person] | Meeting with CEO to clarify any pending issues | Not necessary | |
| 18 | 60 min 11:00 - 12:00 | Private meeting between panel members to agree on the main findings | | |
| | | | | |
| 19 | 30 min 12:00 - 12:30 | Final de-briefing meeting with staff and Board members of the agency to inform about preliminary findings | <u>Joining in person:</u> Chair of the MusiQuE Board, MusiQuE Board, MusiQuE Board, MusiQuE director, Policy & Review Officer, Review Officer, Administrative & Review Officer <u>Joining online:</u> MusiQuE Board member, MusiQuE Board member - student representative, MusiQuE Board member, MusiQuE Board member, intern | |
| | 12:30 - 13:30 | Lunch (panel only) | | |

ANNEX 2: TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE REVIEW

Targeted review of MusiQuE - Music Quality Enhancement (MusiQuE) against the ESG

Annex I: TERMS OF REFERENCE

The present Terms of Reference were agreed between MusiQuE (applicant), ENQA (coordinator) and EQAR.

August 2024

1. Background

MusiQuE - Music Quality Enhancement-MusiQuE has been registered on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) since 2015 and is applying for renewal of EQAR registration based on a targeted external review against *the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)* coordinated by The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

MusiQuE - Music Quality Enhancement-MusiQuE has been an affiliate member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) since 2011, initially under the acronym AEC, renewed in 2021.

MusiQuE is carrying out the following activities within the scope of the ESG:

- Quality enhancement reviews of institutions
- Quality enhancement reviews of programmes
- Quality enhancement reviews of joint programmes
- Institutional accreditation
- Programme accreditation
- Accreditation of joint programmes
- Critical Friend Review

All these activities will be included on the agency's profile on the EQAR website and linked to DEQAR database. NB: The agency may not upload reports from other activities to DEQAR.

The following activities of the applicant are outside the scope of the ESG:

- Quality Assurance Desk
- Quality enhancement review and accreditation of pre-college institution and programme

- Consultative visits
- Coordination of benchmarking projects
- Evaluation of projects
- Evaluation of research activities undertaken by higher music education institutions

While these activities are not relevant to the application for renewal on EQAR, it is MusiQuE's choice – in agreement with the review coordinator – whether those activities should be commented upon by the review panel.

2. Purpose and scope of the targeted review

This review will evaluate the extent to which MusiQuE continues to fulfil the requirements of the ESG. The targeted review aims to place more focus on those parts that require attention and provide sufficient information to support MusiQuE's application to EQAR.

2.1 Focus areas

A) Standards with a partial compliance conclusion in the Register Committee's last renewal decision:

- a. ESG 2.6 Reporting
 - Consider if the agency ensures publication of all reports in all activities, in particular the ones resulting from the activity "Critical friend".
- b. ESG 2.7 Complaints and Appeals
 - Address whether the revised appeals procedure is applied to enhancement type reviews in practice, whether the (new) appeal process and the existing complaints' procedure are easily accessible and clearly communicated to institutions, and whether the new way of nominating and appointing the members of the Appeals' Committee ensures avoiding conflicts of interest.⁶

B) Standards 2.1 to 2.7 for the following activities:

- a. n/a

C) Standards affected by other types of substantive changes⁷:

- a. ESG 2.1 Consideration of Internal Quality Assurance

⁶ See the EQAR Register Committee decision on the [Substantive change report of 02-07-2024](#)

⁷ See the EQAR Register Committee decision on the [Substantive change report of 04-04-2024](#)

- Analyse whether all aspects of ESG Part 1 are covered in practice per the updated guidelines for programme reviews and institutional reviews.
- b. ESG 2.3 Implementing Processes & 2.5 Criteria for Outcomes
 - Analyse how the agency ensures that the updated guidelines of the programme reviews and institutional reviews are consistently implemented and whether they guarantee consistency of the final outcomes resulting from those procedures.
- D) ESG 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance;
- E) Selected enhancement area: ESG 3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance
- F) Other matters regarding ESG compliance that come up during the targeted review and that may affect the agency's compliance with the ESG (if any).

These issues should be investigated by the review panel as far as possible, providing an analysis and conclusion on the ESG standard(s) concerned.

Should any substantive changes occur in MusiQuE between now and the review (e.g., organisational changes, the introduction or changes of activities within or outside of the scope of the ESG), the agency should inform EQAR at its earliest convenience.

3. The review process

The review will be conducted in line with the requirements of *the EQAR Procedures for Applications* and *the Policy on Targeted Reviews*, and following the methodology described in the *Guidelines for ENQA Targeted Reviews*.

The evaluation procedure consists of the following steps:

- Agreement on the Terms of Reference between EQAR, MusiQuE and The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA);
- Nomination and appointment of the review panel by The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA);
- Self-assessment by MusiQuE including the preparation and publication of a self-assessment report;
- A site visit by the review panel to MusiQuE;
- Preparation and completion of the final review report by the review panel;
- Scrutiny of the final review report by ENQA's Agency Review Committee;
- Analysis of the final review report and decision-making by the EQAR Register Committee;
- Attendance to the online follow-up seminar.

3.1 Independence of the review coordinator

The coordinator has not provided remunerated (e.g. consultancy) or unremunerated services to MusiQuE during the past 5 years, and conversely MusiQuE has not provided any remunerated or unremunerated services to the coordinator.

3.2 Nomination and appointment of the review team members

The review panel consists of four members including an academic employed by a higher education institution, a student member and one other expert. At least two members are from another country.

At least one panel member should be a quality assurance professional that is currently employed by a QA agency and has been engaged in quality assurance within the past five years. When requested by the agency under review or when considered particularly pertinent, other stakeholders (for example, a representative of the labour market) may be included. In this case, an additional fee is charged to cover the reviewer's fee and travel expenses.

One of the members serves as the chair of the review panel, and one as the review secretary. At least one of the reviewers is an ENQA nominee (most often the QA professional[s]). At least one of the reviewers is appointed from the nominees of either the European University Association (EUA) or the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), and the student member is always selected from among the ESU-nominated reviewers. If requested, the labour market representative may come from the Business Europe nominees or from ENQA. At least two panel members come from outside the national system of the agency under review (if relevant).

The panel will be supported by the ENQA Review Coordinator (an ENQA staff member) who will monitor the integrity of the process and ensure that ENQA's requirements are met throughout the process. The Review Coordinator will not be the secretary of the review and will not participate in the discussions during the site visit interviews.

ENQA will provide the agency with the proposed panel composition and the curriculum vitae of the panel members to establish that there are no known conflicts of interest. The reviewers will have to agree to a non-conflict of interest statement that is incorporated in their contract for the review of this agency.

Once appointed, the coordinator will inform EQAR about the appointed panel members.

3.3 Self-assessment by MusiQuE, including the preparation of a self-assessment report

MusiQuE is responsible for the execution and organisation of its own self-assessment process and shall take into account the following guidance:

- Self-assessment includes all relevant internal and external stakeholders;

The self-assessment report is expected to contain:

- a description of the self-assessment process and the production of the SAR;
- a description of changes occurred within the agency since the last full review, including any eventual changes in the higher education system and quality assurance system in which the agency predominantly operates, the agency's structure, funding, its list of external quality assurance activities within the scope of the ESG, as well as the changes in the agency's quality assurance activities abroad (where relevant);
- a section that addresses the focus areas of the review, including standards that were considered to be partially compliant with the ESG in the last full review as well as ESG 2.1 and one self-selected ESG standard for enhancement (see 2.1 Focus areas);
- a SWOT analysis of the agency as a whole;
- for each of the individual standards enlisted above (see section 2) a consideration of how the agency has addressed the recommendations as noted in the previous EQAR Register Committee decision of inclusion/renewal (if applicable).

The report is well-structured, concise and comprehensively prepared. It clearly demonstrates the extent to which MusiQuE fulfils its tasks of external quality assurance and continues to meet the ESG and thus the requirements for EQAR registration.

The self-assessment report is submitted to the review coordinator, which has two weeks to carry out a screening. The purpose of a screening is to ensure that the self-assessment report is satisfactory for the consideration of the panel. The coordinator will not judge the content of information itself but rather whether or not the necessary information, as outlined in the *Guidelines for ENQA Targeted Reviews*, is present. If the self-assessment report does not contain the necessary information and fails to respect the requested form and content, the ENQA Secretariat reserves the right to ask for a revised version within two weeks.

The final version of the agency's self-assessment report is then submitted to the review panel a minimum of eight weeks prior to the site visit. The agency publishes the completed SAR on its website and sends the link to ENQA. ENQA will publish this link on its website as well.

3.4 A site visit by the review panel

The review panel will draft a proposal of the site visit schedule considering the aspects included under the focus area (as defined under point 2.1 of the Terms of Reference).

The schedule will include an indicative timetable of the meetings and other exercises to be undertaken by the review panel during the site visit. The approved schedule

shall be given to MusiQuE at least one month before the site visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The site visit should enable the review panel to explore how the agency has addressed the standards where it has been found to be partially compliant (if the case), aspects of substantive change, consideration of internal quality assurance (ESG 2.1) and the self-selected ESG standard(s) for enhancement. The panel will include extra time during the site-visit to address any other arising issues (if the case) that might have an impact on the agency's compliance with the ESG.

The site visit will close with a final de-briefing meeting outlining the panel's overall impressions but not its judgement on the ESG compliance of the agency.

Prior to the physical site visit, the panel attends a joint briefing call between the panel, ENQA and EQAR to clarify the review expectations and address any possible arising matters.

In advance of the site visit (at least two weeks before the site visit), the panel will organise an obligatory online meeting with the agency. This meeting is held to ensure that the panel reaches a sufficient understanding of:

- The specific national/legal context in which the agency operates;
- The specific quality assurance system to which the agency belongs;
- The key characteristics of the agency's external QA activities.

3.5 Preparation and completion of the final review report

The review report will be drafted in consultation with all review panel members and correspond to the purpose and scope of the review as defined under articles 2 and 2.1. In particular, it will provide a clear rationale for its findings concerning each ESG. When preparing the report, the review panel should bear in mind the *EQAR Policy on the Use and Interpretation of the ESG* to ensure that the report will contain sufficient information for the Register Committee for application to EQAR⁸.

The external report will present the facts and analysis reflecting the reality at the time of review. This will form the main basis for the Register Committee's decision making.

A draft will first be submitted to the ENQA Review Coordinator who will check the report for consistency, clarity, and language. After panel has considered coordinator's feedback, the report will go to the agency for comment on factual accuracy. If MusiQuE chooses to provide a position statement in reference to the draft report, it will be submitted to the chair of the review panel within two weeks after the receipt of the draft report.

⁸ See here:

https://www.eqar.eu/assets/uploads/2020/09/RC_12_1_UseAndInterpretationOfTheESG_v3_0.pdf

Thereafter, the review panel will take into account the statement by MusiQuE and submit the document for scrutiny to ENQA's Agency Review Committee and then to EQAR along with the remaining application documents (self-evaluation report, Declaration of Honour, statement to review report-if applicable). The report is to be finalised normally within 2-4 months of the site visit and will normally not exceed 30 pages in length. All panel members will sign off on the final version of the external review report. The coordinator will provide to MusiQuE the [Declaration of Honour](#) together with the final report.

4. Publication and use of the report

MusiQuE will receive the expert panel's report and publish it on its website once the ENQA Agency Review Committee has validated the report. Prior to the final validation of the report, the ENQA Agency Review Committee may request additional (documentary) evidence or clarification from the review panel, review coordinator or the agency if needed. The review report will be published on ENQA website regardless of the review outcome. The report will also be published on the EQAR website together with the decision on registration, regardless of the outcome.

ENQA will retain ownership of the report. The intellectual property of all works created by the review panel in connection with the review contract, including specifically any written reports, will be vested in ENQA.

5. Decision-making on EQAR registration

The agency will submit the review report via email to EQAR before expiry of the agency's registration on EQAR. The agency will also include its self-assessment report (in a PDF format), the Declaration of Honour and any other relevant documents to the application to EQAR (i.e. annexes, statement to the review report).

EQAR is expected to consider the review report and the agency's application at its Register Committee meeting in autumn 2025. The Register Committee's final judgement on the agency's compliance with the ESG as a whole can either be substantially compliant (approval of the application) or not substantially compliant (rejection of the application). In case of a positive decision (substantially compliant with the ESG), the registration is renewed for a further five years (from the date of the review report).

6. Indicative schedule of the review

| | |
|---|------------------------|
| Agreement on Terms of Reference | August 2024 |
| Appointment of review panel members | September 2024 |
| Self-assessment report (SAR) completed by MusiQuE | 22 November 2024 |
| Screening of SAR by ENQA Review Coordinator | November/December 2024 |

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable | January 2025 |
| Briefing of review panel members | January 2025 |
| Review panel site visit | February 2025 |
| Submission of the draft review report to ENQA Review Coordinator | April 2025 |
| Factual check of the review report by the MusiQuE | April 2025 |
| Statement of MusiQuE to review panel (if applicable) | May 2025 |
| Submission of review report to ENQA | May 2025 |
| Validation of the review report by the Agency Review Committee | June 2025 |
| EQAR Register Committee meeting and decision on the application by MusiQuE | Autumn 2025 |

ANNEX 3: GLOSSARY

| | |
|---------|---|
| AEC | Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musik-hochschulen |
| EAS | European Association for Music in Schools |
| EHEA | European Higher Education Area |
| ENQA | European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education |
| EQAR | European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education |
| ESG | <i>Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015</i> |
| HE | higher education |
| HEI | higher education institution |
| Pearle* | Pearle*-Live Performance Europe (the Performing Arts Employers' Associations League Europe) |
| QA | quality assurance |
| SAR | self-assessment report |
| SCOT | Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threats |
| SEADOM | Southeast Asian Directors of Music |

ANNEX 4. DOCUMENTS TO SUPPORT THE REVIEW

DOCUMENTS PROVIDED BY MUSIQUE

MusiQuE's self-assessment report (SAR) with the following Attached annexes:

- Annex 1. MusiQuE 10th Anniversary Conference
- Annex 2. Overview of MusiQuE's review activities and services (2020-2025)
- Annex 3. Draft Report by MusiQuE's External Evaluator (November 2024)²²
- Annex 4. Revision of Standards for Institutional and Programme Reviews
- Annex 5. Revision of Standards for Pre-College & Classroom Music Teacher Education
- Annex 6. Mapping of MusiQuE Standards against ESG Part I
- Annex 7. MusiQuE's compliance with ESG 2.7

Documents that were available online:

MusiQuE has a set of key policy documents that define its governance and operational aspects. This set includes:

- Internal Regulations
- MusiQuE Standards
- Guidelines for Institutions
- Handbook for Critical Friend Reviews
- Guidelines for Peer Reviewers
- Code of Conduct for Peer Reviewers
- Complaints and Appeals Procedure
- Strategy Paper and Action Plan 2020-2025

OTHER SOURCES USED BY THE REVIEW PANEL

- EQAR Policy on Targeted Reviews (2 July 2021)
- 3 substantive change reports submitted to EQAR
- ESG 2015

ENQA TARGETED REVIEW 2025

THIS REPORT presents findings of the ENQA Targeted Review of the Music Quality Enhancement (MusiQuE), undertaken in 2025.

enqa.

European Association for
Quality Assurance in Higher Education