

**Approval of the Application
by Music Quality Enhancement (MusiQuE)
for Inclusion on the Register**

Register Committee
5/6 June 2016

Ref. RC17/A31

Ver. 1.0
Date 2016-06-10
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Application of:	17/11/2015
External Review Report of:	November 2015
Review coordinated by:	National Association of Schools of Music (NASM)
Review Panel members:	Daniel Sher (Chair), Andrée Sursock, Jeffrey Sharkey (academic), Iring Wasser, Jordan Gregoris (student), Pieter-Jan Van de Velde (Secretary)
Decision of:	6 June 2016
Registration until:	30 November 2020
Absented themselves from decision-making:	none
Attachments:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Confirmation of eligibility, 15/12/2015 2. External Review Report, November 2015 3. Applicant statement: "Information on the financial sustainability of MusiQuE" 4. Applicant statement: "Actions undertaken by MusiQuE as a response to the recommendations formulated by the external Review Team" 5. Request to the Review Panel, 18/05/2016 6. Request to MusiQuE, 26/05/2016 7. Clarification by the Review Panel, 26/05/2016 8. Clarification by MusiQuE, 30/05/2016

1. The application of 17/11/2015 adhered to the requirements of the EQAR Procedures for Applications. Eligibility was confirmed on 9/12/2015.
2. The Register Committee considered the External Review Report of November 2015 on the compliance of MusiQuE with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015 version).
3. The Register Committee further considered MusiQuE's statements "Information on the financial sustainability of MusiQuE" and "Actions undertaken by MusiQuE as a response to the recommendations formulated by the external Review Team".
4. The Register Committee sought and received clarification from the chair of the Review Panel as well as from MusiQuE itself.

Analysis

5. The Register Committee found that the External Review Report provides clear evidence and analysis of how MusiQuE complies with the ESG.
6. With regard to the specific standards, the Register Committee considered the following:

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2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

7. The Register Committee noted that higher education institutions, teaching staff and professional musicians participated in the development of MusiQuE's methodologies and processes through their representative organisations Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC), European Music Schools Union (EMU) and Pearle*-Live Performance Europe.
8. The Review Panel found that students and representatives of the broader society were not involved in the initial development of MusiQuE's procedures. The Register Committee learned from the clarification provided by MusiQuE (Annex 8) that a Student Working Group has been established as part of the EU-funded "FULL SCORE" project, which is now involved in the further development of MusiQuE's methodologies through MusiQuE's annual calls for feedback.
9. While the Register Committee noted that it will require attention whether MusiQuE's ways of consulting students are sustainable and permanent, having considered the clarification the Committee was able to concur with the conclusion that MusiQuE complies with the standard.

2.3 Implementing processes

10. The Review Panel noted that the follow-up procedure is only compulsory for MusiQuE's accreditation reviews at present.
11. While the Register Committee acknowledged that it is more difficult to impose a follow-up procedure in a voluntary review than an obligatory one, the Committee underlined that MusiQuE is free to design the contractual conditions and requirements for institutions.
12. The Register Committee thus noted the Review Panel's recommendation that MusiQuE should implement a consistent follow-up policy for all different types of review.

2.5 Criteria for outcomes

13. The External Review Report did not address in detail the clarity and transparency of the decision-making process in those cases where the MusiQuE Board's decision differs from the experts' recommendation.
14. Having considered the clarification received from the Review Panel (Annex 7), explaining that the Panel had analysed the process followed in case the MusiQuE Board requires clarification or disagrees with the recommendation of the experts, and found that process adequate, clear and transparent, the Register Committee was able to concur with the conclusion that MusiQuE complies with the standard.

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3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

15. The Review Panel noted that, while the music education sector and the professional field are involved through the nomination of Board members by AEC, EMU and Pearle*, students, alumni and the broader society were not involved in the governance of MusiQuE.
16. According to its statement "Actions undertaken by MusiQuE as a response to the recommendations formulated by the external Review Team", MusiQuE considered to add a student member to its Board and planned to discuss a selection process at its May 2016 Board meeting.
17. In its clarification (Annex 8), MusiQuE noted challenges related to representation and continuity, and explained that it would invite a student observer to its Board. MusiQuE further noted that it would reconsider this decision in case a European association of music students would be created.
18. Considering the principle of independence, the Register Committee underlined that a student Board member should not be considered a representative of their organisation, but should serve in an individual capacity.
19. Furthermore, while acknowledging that a European association of music students would obviously be desirable for MusiQuE as a direct interlocutor at the European level, the Register Committee did not concur that the absence of such an association is an insurmountable obstacle to appointing a student Board member. Through its own database of student experts, or in contacts with generic student organisations, or national or regional music students' organisations, it should be feasible to identify a suitable student Board member.
20. Given that students are a key stakeholder, explicitly included in the ESG definition of stakeholders, the Register Committee was therefore unable

to concur with the Review Panel's conclusion and considered that MusiQuE only partially complies with the standard.

21. The Register Committee further underlined that MusiQuE is expected to make a Substantive Change Report (see §6.1 of the EQAR Procedures for Applications) when it implements changes to its organisational structure.

3.3 Independence

22. The Register Committee considered it usual and acceptable for one existing organisation, in this case AEC, to be the main initiator and (co-)founder of a new agency. The Register Committee, however, underlined that the requirement of independence should be understood to the effect that the new organisation, once it has been founded, should be able to function and develop independently, as required by the standard.
23. The External Review Report did not specifically address the implications of the proposals for Board members (by AEC, EMU and Pearle*) being binding, whether MusiQuE Board members serve in an individual capacity, and the guaranteed majority of AEC nominees on the MusiQuE Board.
24. In its clarification (Annex 7), the Review Panel considered that the binding nature of nominations to the MusiQuE Board was balanced by the fact that nominees had to be listed on MusiQuE's register of peer reviewers, which was entirely under the control of MusiQuE and its Board.
25. The Panel had further satisfied itself that MusiQuE Board members serve in an individual capacity and that their strategic thinking and orientation was independent, dedicated to the mission and values of MusiQuE. The Panel noted that it did not detect any allegiance of Board members to the nominating organisations.
26. The Review Panel explained that it had considered the majority of AEC nominees a strength, given that they were typically leaders of study programmes in music, had the strongest expertise in relation to quality assurance and thus MusiQuE's work. Notwithstanding the strong expertise brought by AEC nominees to the MusiQuE Board, the Register Committee considered that their structural majority might nevertheless affect MusiQuE's independence. The matter would thus have deserved specific attention in the External Review Report, including a more elaborate explanation how the Panel considered that MusiQuE's independence is safeguarded despite the decisive influence of one single organisation on the membership of its governing body.

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27. Having considered the clarification provided by the Review Panel, the Register Committee was able to concur with the conclusion that MusiQuE complies with the standard.

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3.5 Resources

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28. The External Review Report reported that the initial costs for the setup of MusiQuE were borne by AEC, as its main founder. Since – at the time of the review – MusiQuE did not have a sufficient amount of contracts or firm agreements with higher education institutions that would fully assure its ability to achieve self-sustainability, the Panel concluded that MusiQuE only partially complied with the standard.
29. MusiQuE submitted the statement “Information on the financial sustainability of MusiQuE”, which included an update on the number of reviews planned and contracted for the years 2016 and 2017, as well as a financial commitment by AEC, EMU and Pearle*, for the years 2016 and 2017, applicable in case MusiQuE will not achieve self-sustainability. Beyond that, further support would be at the discretion of the organisations’ boards.
30. The Register Committee considered that the financial commitment ensured MusiQuE’s equipment with sufficient resources for 2016 and 2017, while sustainability from 2018 onwards remained dependent on the number of reviews MusiQuE was able to carry out in practice.
31. Having considered the information provided by MusiQuE in addition to the report, especially the financial commitment, the Register Committee was able to concur with the conclusion that MusiQuE partially complies with the standard.
32. The Register Committee further underlined that MusiQuE is expected to make a Substantive Change Report (see §6.1 of the EQAR Procedures for Applications) in case its resource situation changes materially.
33. For the remaining standards, the Register Committee was able to concur with the review panel’s analysis and conclusion without further comments.

Conclusion

34. Based on the external review report and the considerations above, the Register Committee concluded that MusiQuE demonstrated compliance with the ESG (Parts 2 and 3) as follows:

Standard	Review panel conclusion	Register Committee conclusion
2.1	substantially complies	Compliance
2.2	fully complies	Compliance

2.3	substantially complies	Compliance
2.4	fully complies	Compliance
2.5	fully complies	Compliance
2.6	substantially complies	Compliance
2.7	fully complies	Compliance
3.1	substantially complies	Partial compliance
3.2	fully complies	Compliance
3.3	fully complies	Compliance
3.4	substantially complies	Compliance
3.5	partially complies	Partial compliance
3.6	fully complies	Compliance
3.7	(not expected)	Compliance (by virtue of applying)

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35. The Register Committee considered that MusiQuE only achieved partial compliance with some standards, but was confident that MusiQuE is able to manage these shortcomings appropriately and resolve them ultimately. **The Register Committee therefore concluded that MusiQuE nevertheless complies substantially with the ESG as a whole and approved the application for inclusion on the Register.**
36. **MusiQuE's inclusion shall be valid until 30 November 2020¹.**

¹ Inclusion is valid for five years from the date of the external review report, see §4.1 of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.

EQAR | Oudergemselaan/Av. d'Auderghem 36 | BE-1040 Brussels

MusiQuE – Music Quality Enhancement

Jef Cox

c/o AEC

Avenue des Celtes 20

1040 Brussels

Belgium

Brussels, 15 December 2015

Confirmation of Eligibility: Application for Inclusion on the Register

Application no. A31 of 17/11/2015

Dear Jef,

We hereby confirm that the application by MusiQuE for inclusion on the Register is eligible.

Based on the information and terms of reference provided, the external review coordinated by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) fulfils the requirements of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.

We confirm that the following activities of MusiQuE are 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

Please ensure that MusiQuE's self-evaluation report covers all the aforementioned activities.

Furthermore, the self-evaluation report and external review report should also address how MusiQuE ensures compliance with the ESG in those reviews that are organised in collaboration with other quality assurance agencies.

European Quality Assurance
Register for Higher Education
(EQAR) aisbl

Avenue d'Auderghem/
Oudergemselaan 36
1040 Brussels – Belgium

Phone: +32 2 234 39 12

Fax: +32 2 230 33 47

info@eqar.eu

www.eqar.eu

VAT BE 0897.690.557

EQAR Founding Members:



We confirm that the activity “Quality Assurance Desk” as such is not within the scope of the ESG. The external review report should, however, address the relation between this consultative activity and MusiQuE reviews, including the measures in place to avoid conflicts of interest.

We kindly ask you to forward this letter to NASM as the coordinator of the external review and request that NASM inform the review panel, so as to ensure that all these activities are analysed by the panel.

This confirmation is made according to the relevant provisions of the EQAR Procedures for Applications. MusiQuE has the right to appeal this decision in accordance with the Appeals Procedure; any appeal must reach EQAR within 90 days from receipt of this decision.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colin Tück".

Colin Tück
(Director)

Cc: NASM (review coordinator)

Information on the financial sustainability of MusiQuE



Introduction

MusiQuE – Music Quality Enhancement, the Foundation for Quality Enhancement and Accreditation in Higher Music Education, has been assessed in July 2015 by an external evaluation panel of experts with regard to its compliance with the 2015 version of the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). The analysis of the panel took shape in a Review Report, based on a review procedure coordinated by the USA National Association of Schools of Music (NASM).

In its Review Report, the evaluation panel expressed the opinion that MusiQuE fully complies with eight of the European Standards and Guidelines, substantially complies with five standards, and partially complies with ESG standard 3.5 at the time of writing. ESG standard 3.5 stipulates that “agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work”. The panel was, in regard to the assessment of ESG 3.5, convinced that MusiQuE would be capable to strengthen its financial stability and self-sustainability over time, and formulated specific recommendations to this end. The recommendations included, among other elements, the proposal to work out a method of financial support or a guarantee for such support from the founding organisations of MusiQuE, so that MusiQuE could be assured of continuing its work through 2016 and 2017, should any of the scheduled review procedures be delayed, cancelled or not materialise for whatever reason. At the final feedback session of the panel at the end of the review visit, the panel suggested to prepare information about such a guarantee, together with a recent update about the current financial situation of MusiQuE and an outline of anticipated activity for the coming years, which would be submitted with the external Review Report to the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). It was considered to be important to have this up-to-date information available at the moment of MusiQuE’s application to EQAR, as the outlook on the level of activity of MusiQuE was expected to develop considerably between the moment of the external review in July 2015 and the submission of the external review report at EQAR during the spring of 2016.

As a result, this document was drafted with the aim to illustrate MusiQuE’s current financial situation and its expectations for the upcoming years. In addition, it contains an overview of supplementary measures taken, in line with the recommendations made by the Review panel, in order to reassure MusiQuE’s future viability, to strengthen its financial capacity and to underpin MusiQuE’s continued operation in the unlikely event of it not being fully self-sustainable in the coming years.

In its current situation, having at least eight procedures scheduled in 2016 (as the sole coordinating review agency or in a collaborative arrangement with a national quality assurance agency), having ongoing formal negotiations with fourteen Higher Music Education Institutions about the possibility of MusiQuE reviews in 2017 and 2018, and

considering several other pending expressions of interest by several institutions, MusiQuE is confident to reach a level of activity that will provide sufficient income for its further development and sustainability in the next years.

The financial basis for MusiQuE operation

As mentioned in the self-evaluation report, the financial basis of MusiQuE is based on income generated by the reviews it will realise. The costs for the reviews are calculated on the following principle:

- There is a fixed management fee that is charged for each review activity. This fee contributes to the running costs of MusiQuE as an organisation.
- In addition, costs are charged for the implementation of the review itself. These costs include fees for the panel (including the secretary) and travel and subsistence costs. The level of these costs will vary depending on the size of the panel and the length of the visit.

In the operational model of MusiQuE with the above-mentioned financial basis, it has been calculated that self-sustainability of the organisation will be reached at 4 review activities per year. Below, information is given on the number of reviews planned for 2016 and the expected level of activity for future years.

Overview of ongoing and scheduled MusiQuE review procedures

The following eight procedures are confirmed to be executed by MusiQuE (on its own or in cooperation with national agencies which have approached MusiQuE for a collaboration) in 2016:

- Accreditation and re-accreditation procedure for eleven Bachelor and Master programmes offered by the Hochschule für Musik Karlsruhe, Germany (in cooperation with Zentrale Evaluations und Akkreditierungsagentur, Hannover, ZEVA) (June 2016);
- Cluster accreditation (limited programme assessments) at four conservatoires in The Netherlands (in cooperation with the Netherlands Quality Agency, NQA) (June 2016), including:
 - Bachelor of Music, University of the Arts The Hague, Royal Conservatoire;
 - Bachelor of Music, The Prince Claus Conservatoire of the Hanze University of Applied Sciences;
 - Bachelor of Music, Conservatoire of Amsterdam, School of the Arts;
 - Bachelor of Music, Conservatoire Maastricht;
- Institutional Quality Enhancement Review of the School for Young Talent, The Hague, The Netherlands (November 2016);
- External programme evaluation of the Bachelor programmes Instrumental and Voice Pedagogy offered by the Universität Mozarteum, Salzburg, Austria (in cooperation with the Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation, AQ Austria) (November 2016);

- Institutional accreditation of the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, Tallinn, Estonia (in cooperation with EKKA, the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education) (December 2016).

For the period after 2016, several institutions have approached MusiQuE concerning review procedures they will need to undergo in the near future. Negotiations for these procedures have already started with the MusiQuE staff. A list of institutions currently interested in inviting MusiQuE in 2017 or 2018 is shown below (sorted by country):

- Vorarlberger Landeskonservatorium, Feldkirch, Austria;
- Universität Mozarteum, Salzburg, Austria;
- Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst, Graz, Austria;
- Royal Conservatoire of Antwerp, Antwerp, Belgium
- HoGent School of Arts, Ghent, Belgium;
- Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel, Brussels, Belgium;
- Janaček Academy of Music and Performing Arts, Brno, Czech Republic
- Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, Tallinn, Estonia;
- University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia;
- Iceland Academy of the Arts, Reykjavik, Iceland;
- Royal Irish Academy of Music, Dublin, Ireland;
- Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music in Singapore, Singapore;
- Real Conservatorio Superior de Música de Madrid, Spain;
- HES-SO, University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland, Delémont, Switzerland.

In addition, MusiQuE has been contacted by several other institutions not listed here, which have shown interest but are awaiting MusiQuE's registration on EQAR to take the next steps in the preparation of their reviews. This is the case for a number of institutions in Poland, The Netherlands and Switzerland.

MusiQuE has also been approached by several Higher Music Education Institutions which have initiated discussions with the MusiQuE staff about its services without indicating a precise timeframe yet. Below, a tentative list of such institutions is provided:

- Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst, Vienna, Austria;
- Staatliche Hochschule für Musik, Trossingen, Germany;
- Kazakh National Kurmangazy Conservatory, Kazakhstan;
- Music Academy at Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania;
- Grieg Academy, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway;
- Universitatea Nationala de Muzica Bucuresti, Bucharest, Romania.

Taking in account the ongoing and scheduled activities in the upcoming months and years listed above, MusiQuE believes realistically it will have no difficulty in achieving self-sustainability from 2016 onwards. Nevertheless, MusiQuE has pursued the recommendation made by the external Review Team to acquire a financial guarantee arrangement with its three founding organisations: the European Association of Conservatoires (AEC), the European Music Schools Union (EMU) and Pearle*-Live Performance Europe (Pearle*). A formal written agreement, entitled *MusiQuE and its sustainability, 2016-2020: a statement of commitment from the AEC, EMU and Pearle**, has been drafted and signed by representatives of the three partner organisations.

Statement of Commitment from AEC, EMU and Pearle*

In their statement of commitment, the AEC, EMU and Pearle* acknowledge that, however unlikely, there might be a moment in which MusiQuE would suffer from cancellations of one or more ongoing procedures. In order to assure that such an event would not undermine MusiQuE financial viability for the coming years, the three partners engaged in their statement to offer their financial support, without compromising the independence of MusiQuE, whenever this would be required to sustain MusiQuE's activities during its first years of operation.

The Statement of Commitment from the AEC, EMU and Pearle* is attached to this document. It includes, in addition to the financial guarantee to underpin MusiQuE's viability, the modalities which the commitment is subject to. The Statement also contains a transparent and clear financial agreement with the AEC concerning MusiQuE's support staff (the MusiQuE support staff works on the basis of secondments of AEC office staff as described in the self-evaluation report and the Review Report), which stipulates that the AEC guarantees, if necessary, to meet the operational costs of MusiQuE that would be associated with a baseline provision of 0.4 FTE administrative support in the event of there being no reviews, rising to a maximum of 0.6 FTE depending on the additional workload of one, two, three or four reviews. This undertaking also covers the costs planned by MusiQuE for networking, membership and publicity activities designed to consolidate its profile and viability.

This guarantee has enabled the AEC and MusiQuE to agree with confidence a convention securing secondment arrangements for MusiQuE support staff spanning the entire period from the present until December 2017.

MusiQuE and its sustainability, 2016-2020: a statement of commitment from AEC, EMU and PEARLE*

As the founding institutions behind MusiQuE, AEC, EMU and PEARLE* all believe that the model on which it has been established, and the expressions of interest in its services received as at summer 2015, point to its being self-sustaining financially from the beginning of 2016.

However, all three organisations recognise that such a belief, however well-founded, falls short of concrete certainty and that, as a young enterprise, MusiQuE deserves a longer period of operation during which it can feel entirely secure about its financial viability and can concentrate on developing its position in the marketplace of quality enhancement and assurance for music.

With this in mind, and acting on expert reassurance that they would not be compromising the independence of MusiQuE, its Board or its decision-making by continuing to offer it support, AEC, EMU and PEARLE* confirm the following:

- Knowing that, in the operational model of MusiQuE, self-sustainability is achieved in the region of four events per year taking place, the three organisations guarantee that they will underwrite its operations in 2016 and 2017 in all scenarios involving four or fewer reviews, including that of there being no reviews at all. The basis of this guarantee is as follows:
 - All three organisations undertake, if necessary, to cover the travel and accommodation costs of their representative(s) on the MusiQuE Board to a maximum of one meeting per year
 - In addition, AEC undertakes, if necessary, to meet the operational costs of MusiQuE that would be associated with a baseline provision of 0.4 FTE administrative support in the event of there being no reviews, rising to a maximum of 0.6 FTE depending on the additional workload of 1, 2, 3 or 4 reviews. This undertaking also covers the costs planned by MusiQuE for networking, membership and publicity activities designed to consolidate its profile and viability. Among other benefits, this guarantee will enable AEC and MusiQuE to agree with confidence a convention securing arrangements for administrative support from AEC staff spanning the entire period from the present until December 2017
- From 2018 until 2020, further support for MusiQuE from AEC, EMU and PEARLE* will be at the discretion of their respective Boards but will be guided by the following principle:
 - Provided that MusiQuE has demonstrated financial self-sufficiency in at least one of the years 2016 and 2017 and that expressions of interest for future reviews suggest progress towards long-term sustainability beyond 2020, the assumption is that additional support, to be determined at the time but not exceeding that outlined above, will be approved
- After January 2020, if MusiQuE cannot demonstrate consistent financial sustainability, then its viability will need to be reviewed



Association Européenne des
Conservatoires, Académies de
Musique et Musikhochschulen



AEC, EMU and PEARLE* explicitly confirm that the additional guarantees of support offered here are made without any change to the firm principles of independence that they have taken care to embed at the heart of the conception, structure and operational practices of MusiQuE.

On behalf of AEC	On behalf of EMU	On behalf of PEARLE*
Signed by <i>Pascale de Groot</i>	Signed by <i>Adara Maffli</i>	Signed by
Date <i>15/09/15</i>	Date <i>17/09/2015</i>	Date <i>17/09/2015</i>
Signature <i>[Signature]</i>	Signature <i>[Signature]</i>	Signature <i>[Signature]</i>

Actions undertaken by MusiQuE as a response to the recommendations formulated by the external Review Team

Introduction

In July 2015, MusiQuE – Music Quality Enhancement, the Foundation for Quality Enhancement and Accreditation in Higher Music Education, was assessed by an external evaluation panel of experts. This evaluation took place in the context of MusiQuE's application for inclusion on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). The panel of experts assessed MusiQuE with regard to its compliance with the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). The analysis of the panel took shape in a final Review Report. In this report, the external Review Team formulated a set of specific recommendations to the MusiQuE Board, offered as helpful suggestions for the further development of MusiQuE as an evaluation agency. The MusiQuE Board gratefully welcomed the suggestions made by the panel and, immediately after the review visit, started to translate these into concrete actions.

This document has been drafted in order to illustrate which actions the MusiQuE Board and staff have taken since July 2015 based on the recommendations formulated by the Review Team. The information below follows the order of the recommendations as published in the external Review Report in chapter 7, page 34.

1. Further strengthening connections and collaborations with its various stakeholders

MusiQuE believes it is entirely able to monitor the main current and future trends in the music sector through its partnership with the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC), the European Music Schools Union (EMU) and Pearle*-Live Performance Europe (the Performing Arts Employers Associations League Europe). AEC, EMU and Pearle* are not only engaged with the activities of MusiQuE, they also contribute members to its Board. The presence of representatives of these organisations on the MusiQuE Board ensures that a structured dialogue between higher music education, other levels of music education and the profession that is crucial to long-term quality enhancement is a constant feature in its deliberations.

In order to even further strengthen the connection and collaboration with its various stakeholders, MusiQuE has taken into account the following suggestions of the Review Panel:

- At least once per year, a MusiQuE Board member will attend an AEC Council or Executive Committee meeting, in order to update the AEC about ongoing matters and to discuss areas of mutual interest. A

reference to these regular meetings has been added in the MusiQuE Framework Document, under 'Role and Responsibilities of the MusiQuE Board' in order to specify how the interaction with MusiQuE partner organisations works in practice. This new measure will be implemented from March 2016 onwards, as the Chair of the MusiQuE Board will join the next AEC Council meeting planned on 31st March.

- The Chair of the MusiQuE Board attended the recent Pearle* General Assembly in November 2015 to present MusiQuE and its activities, and Board and staff members will be invited to future events. Also at the upcoming EMU General Assembly in May 2016, a MusiQuE session is scheduled. In this way, it is not only assured that MusiQuE receives regular updates on the work and interests of both organisations as recommended by the Review Team, but that these organisations are also fully informed about the existing opportunities to propose review experts for the MusiQuE activities and to suggest changes to the MusiQuE standards.
- The further involvement of experts from the networks of Pearle* and EMU in the MusiQuE Peer-reviewers Register has been envisioned since the creation of MusiQuE and already discussed at the first Board meeting in 2014. MusiQuE has planned to include reviewers from the music profession by inviting experts within the Pearle* and EMU communities to future MusiQuE Peer-reviewers training sessions. The next session is scheduled in November 2016 and the criteria for the recruitment of peer-reviewers are currently being adjusted to allow for a greater diversity of profiles.
- The MusiQuE Board will consider the recommendation to add a student profile to the Board's composition very carefully. At the next Board meeting, which will take place in May 2016, a selection procedure to include a student member will be discussed. The Board members are also committed to exploring a further involvement of other stakeholders (alumni, national and professional arts organisations ...) as part of the further development MusiQuE, wherever relevant for the improvement of its services.

2. Enhancement of MusiQuE's services and procedures

As with any organisation that practises a policy of continuous quality enhancement, MusiQuE operates both internal and external quality assurance procedures for further enhancement. The key focus of internal quality assurance for MusiQuE is upon its review procedures: how they are run, how they are perceived by institutions and by Review Teams and how they can be improved. MusiQuE employs a variety of feedback mechanisms (questionnaires for peers, for reviewed institutions ...) and draws up each year a report informed by this feedback so that its actions to implement continuous enhancement are transparent and readily available to interested parties. MusiQuE also works with an external evaluator, who is appointed for 2 years and is in charge of producing an annual evaluation report with comments addressed to the Board. For this role, Stefan Delplace, former Secretary-General of the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), has been contacted by the MusiQuE Board. Mr. Delplace

has accepted MusiQuE's invitation and has already started his tasks as external evaluator. He is expected to present a first evaluation report which will also contain specific recommendations at the Board meeting scheduled in autumn 2016.

With regards to the concrete suggestions to further improve MusiQuE services and procedures made by the external Review Team, the MusiQuE Board has taken the following elements into consideration:

- A specific training session is currently being developed and will be organised for institutional (quality assurance) representatives in order to train and assist them in writing self-evaluation reports. These training sessions will be organised annually in addition to the regular MusiQuE Peer-reviewers training session, and will take place during the AEC Annual Congress. The first session is scheduled in November 2016.
- Although a number of students have already successfully completed the Peer-reviewers training session, the Board recognises the value of actively encouraging students to take part in Peer-reviewers training sessions on a structural basis. As recommended by the Review Team, MusiQuE is committed to broaden the amount of students on the Peer-reviewers Register. The Board has suggested to set up a structural cooperation with the AEC Student Working Group for this purpose.
- The Board acknowledges the need to integrate the follow-up (of review procedures) as a more regular part of the process and to ensure an even greater consistency between accreditation procedures and quality enhancement procedures. In this context, the Board appreciates the recommendation to establish specific guidelines and timetables for institutional responses to reviewers' reports for both types of procedures. An agenda item of the Board meeting in May 2016 is dedicated to discussing this suggestion.
- MusiQuE believes that its review reports are accessible to a broad public through the publication on the MusiQuE website, but will consider the recommendation of the Review Panel to publish a shorter executive summary of the report in English and in the national language as well. The Board has also already considered different dissemination forms in order to increase MusiQuE's visibility, such as press releases, once review procedures are finished. Furthermore, concerning the panel's recommendation on marketing strategies, the MusiQuE Board is committed to find other, innovative ways to convince its target audience of the added value of MusiQuE's services and quality enhancement in general, as suggested by the external Review Team.
- Finally, a discussion on whether to expand the current Code of Conduct is planned to take place at the next Board meeting in May 2016.

3. Achieving greater financial stability and sustainability of MusiQuE

In its Review Report, the panel expressed to be, in regard to the assessment of ESG 3.5, convinced that MusiQuE would be capable to strengthen its financial stability and self-sustainability over time, and formulated specific recommendations to this end. The recommendations included, among other elements, the proposal to work out a method of continuing financial support or a guarantee for such support from the founding organisations of MusiQuE, so that MusiQuE could be assured of continuing its work through 2016 and 2017, should any of the scheduled review procedures be delayed, cancelled or not materialise for whatever reason. A document entitled *Information on the financial sustainability of MusiQuE* has been drafted with the aim to illustrate MusiQuE's current financial situation and its expectations for the upcoming years. This document has been submitted to the Register Committee as part of its application for inclusion on the Register.

Furthermore, MusiQuE has started to implement the recommendations made in the Review Report: a financial and contractual arrangement with AEC for the compensation (and benefits) of support staff is being discussed with AEC Council (which has first been consulted on this matter during its meeting in September 2015), alternative strategies for appointing and deploying staff are to be discussed at the May 2016 Board meeting, and MusiQuE has established contact with the relevant tax administration and consulted other evaluation agencies operating internationally to clarify its situation with regards to VAT.

Finally, MusiQuE has taken note of the panel's recommendation to develop a comprehensive business plan. In fact, such a plan was produced before the establishment of MusiQuE in order to prepare the transformation of the AEC Review Scheme into a self-sustainable agency. Based on the information MusiQuE now possesses about the level of activity for the coming years, the original business plan is currently being reviewed and adapted to ensure the necessary resources are taken into account and a contingency fund can be established.

EQAR | Oudergemselaan/Av. d'Auderghem 36 | BE-1040 Brussels

University of Colorado Boulder

College of Music

Daniel Sher

– via email –

Brussels, 18 May 2016

Application by MusiQuE for inclusion on EQAR

Dear Mr Sher,

Music Quality Enhancement (MusiQuE) has made an application for inclusion on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

We are contacting you in your capacity as chair of the panel that prepared the external review report of November 2015 on which MusiQuE's application is based.

The EQAR Register Committee's rapporteurs have been considering the application and the external review report. We would be obliged if you could clarify, in consultation with the panel members, some matters in order to contribute to the consideration of MusiQuE's application:

1. In relation to **ESG 2.5** (Criteria for outcomes):

How did the panel judge the clarity and transparency of the decision-making processⁱ in those cases where the MusiQuE Board's decision differs from the review team's recommendation? In particular, do the published reports document if such a situation occurred?

2. In relation to **ESG 3.3** (Independence):

- a. Did the panel establish whether the Board members exercise their function as representative of the nominating organisation or in an individual capacity?
- b. The panel's report notes that the founding partners (AEC, EMU and Pearle*) "propose" Board members. Did the panel establish the precise implication of the provision in MusiQuE's Statutes

European Quality Assurance
Register for Higher Education
(EQAR) aisbl

Avenue d'Auderghem/
Oudergemselaan 36
1040 Brussels – Belgium

Phone: +32 2 234 39 12

Fax: +32 2 230 33 47

info@eqar.eu

www.eqar.eu

VAT BE 0897.690.557

EQAR Founding Members:



that these proposals are “binding”ⁱⁱ, and how did the panel judge the impact of this provision on MusiQuE’s independence?

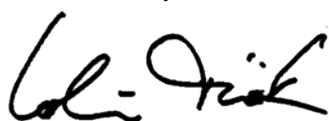
- c. How did the panel judge the impact of the guaranteed majority of AEC nominees/representatives on the Board?

We be would grateful if it was possible for you to **respond by 30 May 2016**, and we would appreciate if you get in contact with us should that not be feasible.

Please note that EQAR will publish this request and your response together with the final decision on MusiQuE’s application. We, however, kindly ask you to keep information related to the application confidential until the final decision has been published.

We acknowledge that it might not be possible to clarify all of the above. However, we appreciate your assistance and I shall be at your disposal if you have any questions in relation to this request.

Yours sincerely,



Colin Tück
(Director)

Cc:

- Pieter-Jan Van De Velde, secretary of the review panel
- National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), coordinator
- Music Quality Enhancement (MusiQuE)

ⁱ See annex 2 to MusiQuE’s Self-Evaluation Report, p. 61.

ⁱⁱ See annex 1 to MusiQuE’s Self-Evaluation Report, Article 4, § 1.b/c

EQAR | Oudergemselaan/Av. d'Auderghem 36 | BE-1040 Brussels

Music Quality Enhancement (MusiQuE)

Jef Cox

– via email –

Brussels, 26 May 2016

Your application for inclusion on EQAR

Dear Jef,

We would like to thank you for submitting the external review report of November 2015 to complete your application for inclusion on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

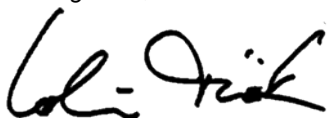
During their initial scrutiny of the report, the Register Committee's rapporteurs noted that in your document "*Actions undertaken by MusiQuE as a response to the recommendations formulated by the external Review Team*", submitted together with the external review report, you stated that the MusiQuE Board will discuss a selection procedure to include a student member on the Board at its May 2016 meeting.

We would be obliged if you could inform us of the results of this discussion.

In order to expedite proceedings we kindly ask you for a reply **by 1 June 2016**. Please inform us if any difficulties arise in meeting this deadline. Please also note that this request and your response will be published together with the final decision on your application.

I shall be at your disposal if you have any further questions or inquiries.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colin Tück".

Colin Tück
(Director)

European Quality Assurance
Register for Higher Education
(EQAR) aisbl

Avenue d'Auderghem/
Oudergemselaan 36
1040 Brussels – Belgium

Phone: +32 2 234 39 12

Fax: +32 2 230 33 47

info@eqar.eu

www.eqar.eu

VAT BE 0897.690.557

EQAR Founding Members:



Mr. Colin Tück
EQAR
Oudergemselaan/Av. d'Auderghem 36
1040 Brussels
Belgium

May 26th 2016

Dear Colin,

On behalf of the MusiQuE Review Panel, it is my honor respond to the questions you pose on behalf of the EQAR Register Committee. It is based on the materials submitted by MusiQuE, on our recollections of our on-site discussions, on our review of our notes from those discussions, and on input over the past several days from the Panel, and from our scribe, Pieter-Jan Van de Velde. We hope this is helpful to the Committee's evaluation of MusiQuE's application.

Please don't hesitate to be in touch if there is any further explanation or clarification that you or the Committee require.

Most Sincerely,

Daniel Sher

Question 1: "How did the panel judge the clarity and transparency of the decision-making process in those cases where the Board's decision differed from the review team's recommendation? In particular do the published reports document if such a situation occurred?"

The review panel believes that there is clarity and transparency in the decision-making process, based on the following:

1. In the "Background Mission and Regulations " (BMR) document crafted by MusiQuE, section 3.3 discusses the roles of the MusiQuE Board and Review Team members in meticulous detail, which makes it clear to all concerned that the Board has the final decision on judgements and decisions. Those statements set the stage for transparency.
2. In sections 11.1.1 through 11.1.5, the BMR demonstrates the care and attention that has been taken to address the Review Team's decision-making process, the opportunity for the institution to respond to the draft report, and the drafting of the Final Report, which must first be transmitted to the MusiQuE Board for its consideration.
3. Sections 11.3.1 and 11.3.2 make clear that the MusiQuE Board has the obligation to ensure that the review team has done a thorough job of applying the standards objectively and consistently, based on their findings.

In fact, the BMR explicitly states that its only purpose in evaluating the Review Team Report is to check for the consistent and accurate application of the ESG's. The process outlined in the BMR for the disposition of any disagreement that might occur between the Board and the Review Team makes clear that if the Board disagrees with the reviewers they can override the review team's conclusion but that such override must be unanimous (taken from the BMR, Section 11.3.2):

"Where the Board is in agreement with the Review Team's recommendation, the decision on accreditation is made by simple majority. Where the Board feels it necessary to modify the Team's recommendation, it is normally necessary for its decision to be unanimous."

4. In our on-site discussions with Review Team members from recent MusiQuE reviews, and with music executives whose institutions had undertaken a review, our panel learned of the full trust they all had in the integrity of the process. Based on each panel member's assessment of the MusiQuE documents, our discussions with all stakeholders (and, I might add, our panel's own extensive backgrounds and experiences in quality assurance, assessment and accreditation), we are convinced that there is sufficient clarity and transparency in MusiQuE's decision making process.

With regard to the question as to whether the published reports document if such a disagreement situation has ever occurred, our notes confirm that there were no differences of agreement between the Board and the Review Team. In our discussions with the Board at the time of our visit, the question arose as to whether any such differences had ever occurred. The Board reported that there was one instance in which they had a question for the Review Team about a particular issue, which was resolved in a brief communication.

The track record of MusiQuE over the course of all the reviews it had conducted which resulted in no disagreements, speaks to the thorough vetting and training that is undertaken by Board members and prospective team members.

So, with regard to ESG 2.5: "Any outcomes or judgments 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," the Panel reaffirms its judgement that MusiQuE is in full compliance.

In fact, our revisit of this issue that the EQAR Register Committee has asked us to consider in this particular dimension, has confirmed and strengthened our Panel's judgement: We find that MusiQuE judgements are based on explicit and published criteria, and that the criteria are applied consistently.

Question 2, in relation to ESG 3.3

- a. "Did the panel establish whether the board members exercise their function as representative of the nominating organization or in an individual capacity?"

In the course of our discussions with the MusiQuE Board and with all stakeholders in a position to judge this matter, our Panel found that in every instance, Board members exercise their function in an individual capacity.

- b. "The Panel's report notes that the founding partners (AEC, EMU, and Pearle*) 'propose' Board members. Did the panel establish the precise implication of the provision in MusiQuE's statutes that these proposals are 'binding', and how did the panel judge the impact of this provision on MusiQuE's independence?"

The Panel, understanding that MusiQuE is essentially a creation of the AEC, and aware that it shares staff with the AEC, in the course of the site visit looked very closely at the relationship between the two organizations and questioned all parties closely to determine if MusiQuE was, in fact, truly independent. In all ways, the Panel found, and so stated in its Report, that MusiQuE fully complies with ESG 3.3.

In the course of its study of the materials submitted by MusiQuE, the panel noted the following:

The BMR in section 3.2.1 lists the following criteria for nomination of Board members:

- ~ *"A good working knowledge of professional musical life and/or higher education procedures*
 - ~ *Experience of evaluation and/or accreditation procedures"*
- (See page 20 of the BMR).

Curiously, the BMR adds criteria for Board members in the Section, 3.2.2 and we point out the most pertinent of those:

- ~ *Board Members ... "should ... be listed on the MusiQuE peer reviewers register"*
- (See page 21 of BMR).

At this point in our evaluation we further examined the procedures for admission to the MusiQuE Peer Review Register; excerpts follow:

- ~ *"The Board advertises across the AEC, EMU and Pearle* memberships for new individuals...*
 - ~ *All profiles will be considered by the MusiQuE Board...*
 - ~ *The Board will evaluate suitability based on the criteria...*
 - ~ *Applicants will be informed about the decision by the Board..."*
- (See BMR, 4.1, page 25).

We noted, therefore, that though the partner organizations presented a slate of candidates for Board membership that is binding, the criteria for selection specifies membership on the Peer Review Registry, in which the process for selection is solely at the discretion of MusiQuE. Therefore, we conclude that MusiQuE plays a crucially important role (albeit at an earlier stage of the process) in determining eligibility for Board membership.

It seems important to point out that, in the effort to be collaborative with key sectors of the music discipline, there is clearly a delicate balance that must prevail, between collaboration with the sectors and independence and autonomy from them. Our Panel directly observed that Board members brought the exceedingly important perspectives from the sectors they represent, but crucially (and as noted in the answer to question 1, above), their strategic thinking and orientation to the Mission and values of MusiQuE was independent; the panel did not detect any allegiance to the organizations from whence they came.

In closing, the Panel notes that this very same delicate balance is to be found the ESG's. ESG 3.3 addresses independence: "Agencies should be independent and act autonomously" while ESG 3.1 states that "Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work." The Panel, noting the strong independence of the MusiQuE Board during discussions, aimed to shore up the collaborative involvement of stakeholders by recommending that the MusiQuE Board meet annually with the AEC Council "to discuss areas of mutual interest, concern and opportunity." Our Panel could not possibly have made such a recommendation without full confidence in the independence of the MusiQuE Board.

c. "How did the Panel judge the impact of the guaranteed majority of the AEC nominees/representatives on the Board?"

The Panel viewed this quite favorably, in fact, it was considered a strength of the organization. Of the three partner organizations represented on the Board, AEC members, typically leaders of music programs, have an experiential background in music as a discipline from the perspective of the higher education institutions they lead and represent. They are constantly engaged in program development and innovation, and they are giving thought to the challenges their students will face in the field upon graduation. In short, they are the experts in the field of music in higher education. Thus, their opinions and perspectives, to the Panel's point of view, rank first among their peers on the Board. When one adds to this the fact that they must have all the eligibility requirements referenced above, with the experiential background in accreditation as well, it seems to the Panel to be both prudent and appropriate for AEC members to hold a continuing majority on the Board.

Clarification concerning MusiQuE's application to EQAR (requested by EQAR on 26 May 2016)

In the document "Actions undertaken by MusiQuE as a response to the recommendations formulated by the external Review Team", the MusiQuE Board indicated that it would consider the recommendation to add a student profile to the Board's composition at its next meeting and that a selection procedure to include a student member would be discussed.

The MusiQuE Board meeting took place on 18th May 2016. An excerpt of the meeting minutes is provided here:

"2. Internal Matters

c. Board composition

- Discussing the recommendation from the external review report to integrate students on the Board (Appendix I, p. 37)

The external review report stated: "The review panel suggests that MusiQuE adds a student member to its Board, to ensure that there are the strongest possible ties with, and robust input from this vitally important consumer sector."

The Board starts by listing all ways in which MusiQuE currently involves students. The following elements are mentioned:

- Students are systematically involved in MusiQuE Review Teams. The role of students is the same as that of the other peer reviewers, and their perspective is equally valued.
- Students have participated in the MusiQuE trainings for peer-reviewers.
- Students are systematically interviewed by review panels during MusiQuE review processes.
- Students are consulted on the MusiQuE standards as part of the annual revision process of the standards.

For the first annual call on suggestions to improve the standards, MusiQuE has indeed addressed a specific request to the FULL SCORE Student Working Group (WG)¹ in order to receive specific feedback from student representatives. The feedback received is to be discussed under agenda item 2.f.

The Board members in charge of preparing this agenda item and exploring a possible selection procedure to include students on the Board share the following views:

- 1) Representation: the members of the MusiQuE Board are proposed by the three European representative partner organisations as clearly stated in the MusiQuE statutes. However, there

¹ [Note for EQAR Committee] Within the FULL SCORE project, which receives support by the Creative Europe programme of the EU, a Student Working Group has been established in order to draw upon the perspectives of young musicians, in higher education and beyond, so as to make systematic use of their views about how best to facilitate their access to professional opportunities and how to engage in new and innovative ways with contemporary audiences. One of the aims of the Working Group is to research the feasibility of establishing a European Music Student Association. More information on the composition and work of the group can be found at: <http://www.aec-music.eu/projects/current-projects/full-score/f1-young-musicians-as-international-networkers>.

is currently no European or international higher music education student body bringing together national or institutional bodies/associations/unions of higher music education students, which makes it difficult to find a student having the mission of representing her/his colleagues beyond an institution or a country (where music students are organized on a national level). Requests in the past to the European Students' Union (ESU) for the identification of a music student interested and suitable for being involved in reviews in higher music education have not been successful.

- 2) Need for continuity: as MusiQuE is still in an early phase of development, it is crucial that continuity is ensured on the Board. The experience with the FULL SCORE Student Working Group has showed that students come and go (the composition of the WG has already changed several times in less than two years due to decisions to leave the WG in order to focus on final study year, due to a lack of time or due to graduation). At the same time, a substantial amount of time was necessary to ensure that the students would get familiar with the issues discussed at European level.

The Board agrees with the principle of integrating a student in its membership, even though such a step seems challenging in practice at this very moment.

The following decisions are made:

- ⇒ **MusiQuE will invite a member of the FULL SCORE Student WG as an observer to the Board meetings.**
- ⇒ **MusiQuE will continue encouraging students to participate in its annual training for peer-reviewers by mentioning this explicitly in the invitation for the training.**
- ⇒ **The Board will re-consider this decision in case a European Music Student Association would be created (as it is one of the aims of the FULL SCORE Student WG): a permanent student seat could then be formally established on the MusiQuE Board."**

"2. Internal Matters

f. Standards

- Discussing the comments submitted by the FULL SCORE Student WG:
- 1. *From a student perspective, there are no 'blind spots' in the MusiQuE standards. No additional assessment area should be added. Also student representation and the importance of student involvement in for example internal decision-making processes are stressed properly in the standards.*
- 2. *For those who are less familiar with MusiQuE and the use of assessment standards, it is complicated to understand the aim of the MusiQuE Standards for institution, programme and joint programme review document. Especially for a student who has not been involved in review procedures before, it takes time to understand the structure of the document and the way the standards should be used during reviews. Therefore, the WG suggests to add a one page introduction, explaining:*
 - *why MusiQuE has created these 3 sets of standards and how;*
 - *how the standards should be used by the institutions or (joint) programmes and by the Review Teams;*
 - *how the document is structured, making use of a diagram.*

The MusiQuE Board welcomes the comments of the FULL SCORE Student WG. The information referred to in the second comment and mentioned as lacking, is actually included in the MusiQuE Framework Document: section 6 'Review Standards' explains what each of the three set of standards is for, how it shall be used by the institution and Review Team, and presents its structure in 17 standards and 8 areas.

The following decision is made:

⇒ **As requested by the Student WG, an introduction to the Standards Document will be added, using relevant existing text from the Framework Document."**