

Executive summary

Report

Programme quality enhancement review

KASK & Conservatorium, the School of Arts of HOGENT and Howest Music Programme (Ghent, Belgium)

Site-visit: 22-24 May 2022

Introduction

The Music Programme is rooted in two renowned and historical institutions: the Royal Academy of Fine Arts (KASK), which was founded in 1751 by artist Philippe-Carel Marissal, and the Royal Conservatoire (Conservatorium) which was founded in 1835 by Joseph-Martin Mengal. The programme offer has continuously been expanded; first with jazz (1987); music instrument making (1996); music production (1999) and most recently with pop music (2010). In 1995 KASK and the Royal Conservatoire became departments of the University College of Applied Sciences and Arts Ghent (HOGENT) and with the Bologna agreement (1999), the three-cycle higher education system was adopted. In 2008 KASK and The Royal Conservatoire merged into one School of Arts: KASK & Conservatorium¹.

¹ SER p. 7

KASK & Conservatorium is one of five Schools of Arts that constitute higher music education (HME) in Flanders. Flanders' higher education has a three-cycle degree structure comprising Bachelor, Master and PhD degrees.

Quality assurance within higher education in Flanders is safeguarded by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) who oversees accreditation and institutional reviews. The institutional review is a periodic assessment of the quality of the educational policy pursued by a university or university college and is based on NVAO's *Assessment framework institutional review*². An institutional review was conducted at University College Ghent in 2021-2022.

The Music Programme of KASK & Conservatorium is housed in five locations in Ghent across two campuses: Campus Grote Sikkels and Campus Bijloke³. It consists of Bachelor, Master and English Master cycles. The English Master is formally identical to the Dutch but taught in English. Three specialisations are offered within the programme: Music Performance (with three directions of specialisation: jazz, pop and classical music), Music Creation (with three directions of specialisation: composition, music production and music theory) and Musical Instrument Making⁴. Four departments are involved in the realisation of the programme: the Design department (DP), the Classical Music department (CM), the Music Production, Jazz & Pop Music department (JPMP) and the department of Theory of Art Practices⁵.

As the programme is officially accredited until 30th September 2026, this programme quality enhancement review brings together Peer Reviewers as a review team, perceived as critical friends by KASK & Conservatorium⁶. At the request of KASK & Conservatorium, the programme review will offer recommendations regarding the further development and enhancement of the Music Programme on the basis of the goals and ambitions set by the institution. KASK & Conservatorium has completed an extensive SWOT analysis in which 47 teachers and 26 students from all specialisations of the Music Programme took part, identifying strengths and challenges relating to each of the *MusiQuE Standards for Programme Review*⁷. This analysis forms the basis of the *Self-evaluation Report (SER)*.

² [Assessment framework institutional review](#)

³ *SER* p. 29

⁴ *SER* p. 6

⁵ *SER* p. 34

⁶ *SER* p. 5

⁷ [MusiQuE Standards for Programme Review](#)



Summary of the compliance with the Standards and recommendations

The review team concludes that the KASK & Conservatorium programmes comply with the *Standards for Programme Review* as follows:

1. Programme’s goals and context	
Standard 1. The programme goals are clearly stated and reflect the institutional mission.	fully compliant
<p>Recommendations The Review Team suggests that a shorter vision statement would be agreed by all members within the Music Programme. Articulating this statement would help the Music Programme to communicate their identity and goals both internally and externally.</p>	
2. Educational processes	
Standard 2.1. The goals of the programme are achieved through the content and structure of the curriculum and its methods of delivery.	substantially compliant
<p>Recommendations The review team recommends to continue developing a comprehensive curriculum redesign enabling students to embrace opportunities for interdisciplinarity that exist thanks to the Music Programme’s unique position as part of a School of Arts. The review team encourages creating specific research clusters that support and inform interdisciplinary development. In order to meet the demands of the changing artistic profession, the review team also recommends embedding contemporary professional skills into the curriculum.</p>	
Standard 2.2. The programme offers a range of opportunities for students to gain an international perspective.	substantially compliant
<p>Recommendations The review team suggests the institution to include a specific reference to the enhancement of relevant communication at all institutional levels to be in English within the actions to tackle their second priority namely internationalisation@home. The review team recommends that the institution enhances the internal bilingual communication within the Music Programme. Specially, action should be taken to ensure that all relevant information for students in the English Language Masters is in English as they represent the main body of non-native Dutch speakers.</p>	

Standard 2.3. Assessment methods are clearly defined and demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes.	substantially compliant
<p>Recommendations</p> <p>The review team recommends that the institution ensures that all teachers are familiar with the criteria and that the assessment committee chairs are held responsible for ensuring that student evaluations comply with the stated procedures and criteria.</p> <p>The review team recommends the institution to find ways to enhance professionalisation of staff taking part in assessment procedures, by focusing on assessment feedback in order to ensure consistency and objectivity in jury deliberations.</p> <p>The Review Team suggests that the Music Programme remains vigilant in order to ensure effective communication at all institutional levels and students receiving relevant information.</p>	
3. Student profiles	
Standard 3.1. There are clear criteria for student admission, based on an assessment of their artistic/academic suitability for the programme.	fully compliant
<p>Recommendations for further enhancement of the Music Programme</p> <p>The review team encourages the institution to ensure that the recruitment methods are aligned with the expectations of the Music Programme stated in the educational plan.</p>	
Standard 3.2. The programme has mechanisms to formally monitor and review the progression, achievement and subsequent employability of its students.	substantially compliant
<p>Recommendations</p> <p>The review team suggests the formulation of an alumni engagement strategy that reframes current and new collaborative spaces with alumni.</p>	
4. Teaching staff	
Standard 4.1. Members of the teaching staff are qualified for their role and are active as artists/pedagogues/researchers.	fully compliant
<p>Recommendations for further enhancement of the Music Programme</p> <p>The review team suggests that the institution considers a way in which members of staff can be celebrated through the website on the institution.</p> <p>The review team suggests that the institution develops a framework with guidelines ensuring that members of teaching staff can take advantage of mobilities and other</p>	

international opportunities.
 The review team recommends implementing a framework to support staff development. The review team recommends considering ways to enable staff from the different departments to come together in both formal and informal contexts to share best practices and stimulate debate.

Standard 4.2. There are sufficient qualified teaching staff to effectively deliver the programme.	fully compliant
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Recommendations for further enhancement of the Music Programme
 The review team encourages the institution to keep its focus on measures to enhance diversity within the teaching staff body.

5. Facilities, resources and support

Standard 5.1. The institution has appropriate resources to support student learning and delivery of the programme.	fully compliant
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Recommendations for further enhancement of the Music Programme
 The review team suggests that the institution keeps working on finding ways to ensure equal access to facilities across the different departments of the Music Programme. The review team suggests that the institution explores how its buildings can be used to foster interdisciplinarity and informal learning.

Standard 5.2. The institution’s financial resources enable successful delivery of the programme.	fully compliant
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Recommendations for further enhancement of the Music Programme
 The review team suggests that the institution explores ways to include the assessment and monitoring of risk in their current administrative processes. In relation to risk monitoring, review team also suggests that the institution analyses the spending linked to disciplines and student profile mix in order to explore what steps can be taken to address financial sustainability.

Standard 5.3. The programme has sufficient qualified support staff.	fully compliant
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6. Communication, organisation and decision-making

Standard 6.1. Effective mechanisms are in place for internal communication within the programme.	partially compliant
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Recommendations

The review team strongly recommends the creation of a clear communication policy for the full learning community to engage in relevant and efficient communication.

The review team recommends reassessing which of the currently existing communication tools should be used and drafting clear and transparent guidelines to ensure equal access to different communication platforms to contact members within the Music Programme. The Review Team strongly recommends that the Music Programme communicates their policy clearly and ensures it is understood and followed in the same way.

Standard 6.2 The programme is supported by an appropriate organisational structure and decision-making processes.

substantially compliant

Recommendations

The review team suggests developing communication strategies across decision-making bodies at the different institutional levels (HOGENT, School of Arts and Training Programme Committees).

The review team encourages the continued active participation of students in decision-making processes by organising themselves in student representation bodies and commends the institution on its current efforts to support this.

7. Internal quality culture

Standard 7. The programme has in place effective quality assurance and enhancement procedures.

fully compliant

Recommendations for further enhancement of the Music Programme

In order to further improve the quality assurance processes and motivate students and staff to actively participate, the review team encourages the institution to continue to seek feedback from students and staff ensuring accountability and transparency (closing the feedback loop).

As part of the development of an alumni engagement strategy, the review team encourages the institution to further develop the role of alumni of the Music Programme in quality enhancement processes.

8. Public interaction

Standard 8.1. The programme engages within wider cultural, artistic and educational contexts.

fully compliant

Recommendations for further enhancement of the Music Programme

The review team suggests further exploring community engagement activities both curricular and extra-curricular.

<p>Standard 8.2. The programme actively promotes links with various sectors of the music and other artistic professions.</p>	<p>fully compliant</p>
<p>Recommendations for further enhancement of the Music Programme The review team refers to the suggestion given under standard 3.2 regarding the development of an alumni engaging strategy. Further engagement with alumni could contribute to strengthening the link to artistic professions.</p>	
<p>Standard 8.3. Information provided to the public about the programme is clear, consistent and accurate.</p>	<p>fully compliant</p>
<p>Recommendations for further enhancement of the Music Programme The review team recommends that the Music Programme is given a dedicated website in order to enhance the visibility of the programme and its activities. The review team suggests prioritising that all relevant publishing and marketing materials are in English in order to reach a wider international public and applicant pool.</p>	

Conclusion

As it has been stated in this review report, the review team finds that the Music Programme of KASK & Conservatorium has a range of interesting and unique experiences to offer students and staff involved in the programme. Of these, the review team wants to highlight the placement of KASK & Conservatorium in Ghent, named UNESCO city of music, the great potential within the school to explore interdisciplinarity, the unique opportunity to study musical instrument making that the music programme offers and the open, engaged and caring atmosphere that is present throughout the school.

The Music Programme of KASK & Conservatorium offers high quality education that is well supported, which invites and encourages students and staff to take ownership of and involve themselves in the continued development of the programme, builds strong links with the artistic professions, seeks to embrace and enhance international collaboration and opens up and reaches out to society. The review team found the level of engagement and self-reflection of the community involved in the realisation of the Music Programme highly commendable and hope that this will continuously be appreciated and inspired.

The review team found it evident that KASK & Conservatorium has high ambitions for the development of the institution as a whole and of the Music Programme with its broad range of specialisations. The review team hope that the recommendations, suggestions and general feedback provided in this review report will be of help for the Music Programme to realise these.

Of the few areas of concern presented by the review team in the above, the internal communication processes, the lack of communication in English in relation to internationalisation efforts, the need for enhancing staff development, objectivity and uniformity in assessment and ensuring flexibility in the curriculum to fully embrace the opportunities for interdisciplinarity are the most pressing.

In order to be able to realise the ambitions for the further development of the Music Programme, the review team finds it necessary that these aspects are addressed and encourages the institution to do so.

As noted above, the review team finds the engagement, dedication, skills and care of the people involved in the Music Programme and the spirit of the school something truly worth celebrating. The review team felt that the Music Programme of KASK & Conservatorium and the people involved in it deserve this celebration. As stated by the review team in the feedback session during the site-visit: "you know who you are, make that known to the world." The review team will watch the development of the programme with interest and wish the programme and everyone involved the best

