



Programme Review

REPORT

**Bachelor of Music
Royal Conservatoire The Hague
University of The Arts The Hague**

The Hague, The Netherlands

5-8 June 2023

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Introduction

About this report

The Bachelor of Music programme offered at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague was visited in June 2023 by an independent review team of international peers in the context of a quality enhancement review coordinated by MusiQuE - Music Quality Enhancement. In this report the review team presents its findings according to the MusiQuE standards for programme review.

Overview of the MusiQuE quality enhancement review procedure

The review procedure followed a three-stage process:

- the Royal Conservatoire prepared a self-evaluation report (SER) and supporting documents, offering background information and insights about the programme under review;
- an international review team studied the self-evaluation report, supporting documents, and a sample of graduation projects, and visited the institution and the programme on site;
- the review team produced the present report.

The review team consisted of the following members:

- Don McLean (Chair), Professor Emeritus and former Dean of the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto, Canada;
- Mist Thorkelsdottir, Head of International Programs in the Performing Arts at the University of Southern California, Thornton School of Music;
- Finn Schumacker, CEO and Artistic Director of Odense Symphony, Denmark;
- Claus Finderup, Programme Coordinator and Associate Professor at the Rhythmic Music Conservatoire, Denmark;
- Miranda Harmer, Master student in cello performance and composition at Leeds College of Music, UK;
- Mark Delmartino, Secretary (NVAO Certified), Belgium.

Context of the review procedure

The review team assessed the Bachelor of Music programme in the context of the Dutch external quality assurance system, which is regulated by law and implemented by the Accreditation Organisation of The Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO). For the assessment of the programme, the review team was asked to make use of the NVAO assessment framework for the 'Experiment Institutional Accreditation with a Lighter Programme Accreditation'.¹ The review team presented its findings resulting from the assessment

¹ The University of the Arts The Hague passed an Institutional Audit in 2020. Institutions that have successfully completed the Institutional Audit have the opportunity to apply for participation in the 'Experiment Institutional Accreditation with a Lighter Programme Accreditation'. The experiment was set up by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and is implemented by NVAO. The University of the Arts applied, and was permitted, to take part in the experiment. Existing programmes offered by institutions which have passed an Institutional Audit are normally assessed with a limited framework featuring four NVAO standards. In the context of the 'Experiment Institutional Accreditation with a Lighter Programme Accreditation', however, these programmes are being reviewed with a lighter framework: only the assessment in relation to standard 1 (Intended learning outcomes) and standard 4 (Achieved learning outcomes) is presented to NVAO as part of

based on this framework in a separate report.² When in the text on the following pages reference is made to this separate report, the title '*Assessment report*' will be used distinguishing it from the present '*Advisory report*'.

However, because of its international profile, the Royal Conservatoire expressed the wish to not only have the Bachelor of Music programme assessed on the basis of the relevant national framework, but also to receive feedback on the programme based on the internationally recognised assessment framework of MusiQuE – Music Quality Enhancement. In its self-evaluation report, the institution explains this choice as follows: “This is consistent with the opinion of the Royal Conservatoire that an institution can only call itself truly international if it is also willing to use internationally based methods for assessment and tools for external review. Therefore it is only the MusiQuE framework that can assist in a qualified comparison of programmes and institutions at an international level and confirm an international profile of a programme or institution.” (SER, p. 6) For this reason, the review team also assessed the programme against the MusiQuE standards for programme review. The review team’s findings in relation to the MusiQuE standards are presented in this report.

The Royal Conservatoire

Founded in 1826, the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague is the oldest music academy in The Netherlands. Together with the Royal Academy of Art, it currently forms the University of the Arts The Hague. As the Faculty for Music and Dance of the University of the Arts The Hague, the conservatoire is a centre for education, research, and production. It presents itself as an institute that has been dedicated to excellence for decades, with internationally renowned musicians as teaching staff and where tradition and craft are inseparably linked to experimentation and innovation. The principal objective of the Royal Conservatoire is to train talented young musicians and dancers to the highest artistic and professional standards and provide them with the versatility they need to function in today’s demanding, constantly changing and increasingly international professional environment.

The Bachelor of Music Programme

The Bachelor of Music programme at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague is a four-year full-time programme that amounts to 240 ECTS and leads to a bachelor’s qualification as a musician. In line with the conservatoire’s ambition to reflect the variety of artistic and professional contexts, the degree programme embraces ten profiles (e.g. Theory of Music, Sonology, etc.) and several disciplines (e.g. Jazz drums, Classical guitar, etc.). The full set of profiles is provided in the administrative data section in Annex 1. All Bachelor of Music students are trained to achieve a very similar set of end-level qualifications, in line with the AEC Learning Outcomes for first cycle studies, which were drawn up by the Association of European of Conservatoires in 2017.

The departments in the conservatoire are responsible for organising and delivering the profiles and disciplines. Each discipline has its own curriculum and consists of five

the application for accreditation of the programmes. The institution is responsible for organising the assessment of standards 2 and 3 independently, without involvement from NVAO in the review process.

² The *Assessment report* will be made publicly available through the online database of NVAO (<https://www.nvao.net/en>) and through the DEQAR Database of Quality Assurance Results on the website of the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) (<https://www.eqar.eu/>).

components: (i) artistic development; (ii) musicianship skills; (iii) academic skills, (iv) professional preparation, and (v) electives and minors. All curricula are divided in a propaedeutic (year one) and a post-propaedeutic (years two-to-four) phase. Each curriculum is designed in such a way that it encourages students to develop their craftsmanship, musicianship, and artistic vision.

The previous external assessment was held in 2016. The current Review Team noted that the Bachelor of Music programme considered the observations and recommendations of the previous panel. Moreover, the Royal Conservatoire has fine-tuned and continues to enhance its policies and practices that affect the bachelor programme under review. These developments are described in the main section of this report.

Structure and scope of this report

In order to bring the national and international frameworks together, the relevant NVAO and MusiQuE standards for programme review were mapped against each other. The conservatoire used this mapping to structure the self-evaluation report on its Bachelor of Music programme. As a result, the self-evaluation consisted of several thematic chapters according to the relevant NVAO standards and sub-chapters addressing the corresponding MusiQuE standards. The review team has adopted the same structure with thematic chapters and corresponding MusiQuE standards to give shape to the present report.

The full set of the MusiQuE standards for programme review are addressed, except for standard 5.2 on financial resources.³ Where relevant for the discussion of the MusiQuE standards, parts of the analysis presented in the *Assessment report* under NVAO standards 1 and 4 have been included. Each time this is the case, this is indicated in the text. Since the MusiQuE standards exceed the scope of NVAO standards relevant to the ‘Experiment Institutional Accreditation with a Lighter Programme Accreditation’, this report also addresses topics relating to NVAO standards 2 and 3 which were omitted in the *Assessment report*.

The review team is grateful to the Royal Conservatoire and its staff and students who contributed to the development of the self-evaluation report, for the warm welcome to the review team, and for engaging in sincere and open discussions. The review team encourages the institution to make the present advisory report available to all stakeholders by circulating it among its staff members and students and by publishing it in an appropriate place on its website.

³ The decision to omit MusiQuE standard 5.2 was made in agreement between the institution and MusiQuE at the request of the institution, as the topic addressed in this standard is fully covered in the Institutional Audit.

0. Quality culture, critical friends and accreditation

MusiQuE standard 7 – Internal Quality Culture

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

Factual information

Since 2016, the Royal Conservatoire has been developing a new approach to quality, adopting a concept of quality culture which addresses both artistic standards (linked to a particular artistic discipline) and educational quality (including generic issues such as curriculum management, communication and student involvement). According to the Self-Evaluation Report (SER)⁴, the main principles of this quality culture approach include: (i) linking educational quality to artistic standards, (ii) connecting and balancing the internal and external quality cycles, and (iii) developing new forms of evaluation that facilitate discussion of the quality and continuous improvement of the curriculum and increase teachers' and students' engagement with quality assurance.

In 2020, the conservatoire took stock of the initial developments and fine-tuned its quality assurance and enhancement plans for the future in the paper *Quality Culture at the Royal Conservatoire: 2020 and beyond*⁵. The concept of quality culture is visualised in the form of a 'Lemniscate of continuous improvement', connecting internal quality enhancement initiatives with input from external stakeholders in a continuous process of evolution. The lemniscate represents the intentional transition from an earlier system of quality assurance towards a new approach to quality culture in the programmes and the institution as a whole.

The review team was informed that the institution makes use of a wide range of instruments to put the concept of quality culture into practice. Internal stakeholders of the study programmes are consulted, for example, through student satisfaction surveys and student panels, subject and project evaluations, and staff satisfaction surveys. External stakeholders are involved by participating in professional stakeholders meetings, alumni surveys, and so on. In addition to balancing artistic standards with educational quality, the quality culture concept also brings together informal (short lines of communication) and formal (systematic opportunities for consultation) approaches to quality assurance. Moreover, the internal and external phases of the lemniscate are governed by a dedicated and systematic Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle, which fuels and activates a quality culture focused on continuous improvement. The review team understood, from the materials received and the discussions with programme representatives, that this quality assurance and enhancement system was developed institution-wide, and finds it effectively implemented in the Bachelor of Music programme under review.

During the site visit, the review team looked in particular at two instruments which are new to the system in comparison to the previous accreditation visit and constitute particular strongholds of the conservatoire's 'lemniscate approach'. In addition to a number of legally required internal quality assurance instruments, each department also uses input from a 'student panel'⁶ which usually meets twice a year. Subjects for discussion include student satisfaction surveys, annual (improvement) plans, and social safety, as well as topics brought forward by the students themselves. As it is the department – not the entire

⁴ Royal Conservatoire The Hague, Self-Evaluation Report Bachelor of Music, pp.8-9.

⁵ SER Appendix A.

⁶ SER p.30.

Bachelor of Music programme – that forms the unit of operation, the student panels allow for in-depth discussion and specific student feedback that will find its way in the plan-do-check-act cycles of the department, programme and institution. The review team gathered from the discussion with students who are on such panels that the system is implemented and effectively contributes to enhancing the educational quality of the programme/discipline. The students commented on several examples of department-level action on matters of curriculum design (professional development, performance opportunities) and improved assessment feedback. Students who weren't members of these governance mechanisms also noted their efficacy as platforms for concrete change.

In order to strengthen the external dimension of the quality culture approach, the conservatoire works with 'Critical Friends'⁷, who provide the departments - and thus the programmes, including the Bachelor of Music disciplines - with input for further quality enhancement from an external perspective. Critical friends are respected professional peers with knowledge of higher education and an authoritative standing in the discipline. Each department is visited by a critical friend every three years. After the visit, the critical friend produces a report with reflections from an international perspective. Just as it is the case with the student panels, the Critical Friends' focus on a specific department, and not on the entire programme, which leads to a report that contains more in-depth comments and specific recommendations. The input from the critical friend is incorporated into the improvement plans of the respective departments, and the implementation of the recommendations is presented to the same critical friend in a follow-up visit after three years. The review team gathered from the Critical Friends reports⁸ and from its online discussion with three Critical Friends that the system is implemented and effectively contributes to enhancing the quality of the programme / disciplines. The Critical Friends with whom the panel had the opportunity to discuss this process noted that recommendations and suggestions for programme improvements at the departmental level were carefully considered with evidence of revision and implementation of change between visits.

Although the critical friends instrument was developed long before the pilot of the Dutch Ministry of Education on the lighter programme accreditation was initiated, the Royal Conservatoire is now using the reports of the Critical Friends on an ongoing basis to monitor the quality of its programmes regarding the teaching-learning environment and assessment⁹. Moreover, the reports provided additional context for the external review team to assess programme quality according to both national (NVAO) and international (MusiQuE) evaluation frameworks¹⁰.

Reflection by the review team

The review team is impressed by the efforts of the Royal Conservatoire regarding quality enhancement. The institution has developed a clear and well-elaborated vision of quality culture, and translated this vision in sound quality assurance and enhancement

⁷ SER pp 9-11 and Appendix C.

⁸ SER Appendix I.

⁹ SER p.27 and Appendix I.

¹⁰ The SER contains Critical Friends Feedback sections on the respective MusiQuE and NVAO standards.

procedures and tools. These instruments are well implemented and effectively used in the Bachelor of Music programme. According to the review team, these quality assurance/enhancement efforts have led to a quality culture that is shared at all levels (conservatoire, programmes and departments) and by all stakeholders (management, lecturers, support staff, and students) in the institution.

The review team thinks highly of the self-critical approach of the institution and its desire to move forward and search for ways to strengthen the Bachelor of Music programme still further. This attention to enhancement was not only apparent in the various meetings on site, but also in the materials which the review team studied beforehand. Moreover, the self-evaluation documentation that the panel received, and the discussions carried out with programme representatives, demonstrated that the departments and support teams are not only self-critical, but also willing to share these self-critical observations with each other.

Furthermore, the review team was impressed by both the student panels and the Critical Friends as relevant instruments of internal and external quality assurance, respectively. It is clear that they contribute, each in their own way, to gathering discipline-specific information that helps the departments and the programme to improve their educational quality as well as improving the wider, more holistic, student experience. The introduction of the student panels has given the students agency and an opportunity to more accurately influence and make positive change. Although there is no formal Student Council, students as a group are formally represented in all bodies of the university and the conservatoire, and feel individually represented throughout the feedback ecosystem. One student even said that the institution was “active in changing itself”.

In sum, the review team would like to commend the Royal Conservatoire for the way it has designed the quality assurance and enhancement system, and to extend this appreciation to the departments involved in the Bachelor of Music programme for their implementation of the system and the ways in which they embrace the quality culture paradigm.

As a point for attention in the future – and in their continuous ambition for enhancement – the institution and the programme may want to organise the visits of the critical friend slightly differently. In fact, the review team gathered from the very interesting discussion with the Critical Friends that their visits and ensuing reports could become even more effective if they would have the opportunity to share their findings post-visit with each other. Moreover, it would be good if Critical Friends were invited around the time of the final presentations. Having attended a few graduation performances, the review team considers some form of this scheduling alignment would definitely add value to the observations of the Critical Friends, and thus to the relevance of their findings and recommendations.

The review team scores the programme as follows in relation to MusiQuE standard 7.

Standard 7	Bachelor of Music
The programme has in place effective quality assurance and enhancement procedures.	Fully compliant

1. Intended learning outcomes

Please note that part of the information and analysis included under this section can also be found in the Assessment report under NVAO standard 1 and in the introduction.

MusiQuE standard 1 – Programme’s Goals and Context

The programme goals are clearly stated and reflect the institutional mission.

Factual information

The University of Arts The Hague consists of two faculties, the Royal Academy of Art and the Royal Conservatoire. According to the mission of the university, “Art is of incalculable value, both intrinsically and in terms of the quality of life. The University of the Arts The Hague plays its part by educating artists who can play a prominent and inspiring role in the creation, development, performance and innovation in the arts in a global context.”¹¹

As the Faculty for Music and Dance, the Royal Conservatoire is a centre for education, research, and production that has been dedicated to excellence for decades, with internationally renowned musicians as teaching staff, and where tradition and craft are inseparably linked to experimentation and innovation. The university and the conservatoire believe that musicians have the best prospect of success when they display a high level of instrumental / vocal skills and artistic quality, possess a reflective and inquisitive attitude, and have the ability to function in a diverse artistic environment in which the boundaries between genres and disciplines are blurring. Hence, the principal objective of the Royal Conservatoire is to train talented young musicians and dancers to the highest artistic and professional standards and provide them with the versatility they need to function in today’s demanding, constantly changing and increasingly international professional environment.¹²

Furthermore, two things stand out in the profile of the conservatoire, which will be covered in depth in relation to the Bachelor of Music programme in other standards: first, the distinctly international dimension of the institution and the programme¹³, and, second, the focus on creating dynamic and active partnerships with organisations in the music profession and society at large¹⁴.

The Bachelor of Music at the Royal Conservatoire is a four-year full-time programme¹⁵ that leads to a bachelor’s qualification as a musician. In line with the institutional goals, the programme aims at laying a foundation for entry into the music profession by providing a well-rounded education, as well as encouraging the maximum development of individual students in various areas of music study that reflect the breadth of the musical world of today. In line with the conservatoire’s ambition to reflect the variety of artistic and professional contexts, the Bachelor of Music programme embraces ten disciplines with a variety of sub-disciplines:

- Classical Music + instrument
- Jazz + instrument / vocals

¹¹ SER p. 14.

¹² SER p. 4.

¹³ SER Appendix F

¹⁴ SER p. 17.

¹⁵ SER pp. 14-15.

- Early Music + instrument
- Organ
- Vocal Studies: Classical Music and Early Music
- Conducting: Choral Conducting, Wind Band / Fanfare / Brass Band Conducting
- Theory of Music
- Composition
- Sonology
- Art of Sound: Producing, Recording, and Sound Reinforcement

The departments in the conservatoire are responsible for organising and delivering the respective disciplines of the programme. Each discipline has its own set of learning outcomes and its own curriculum. Nonetheless, each curriculum is designed in such a way that it encourages students to develop their craftsmanship, musicianship, and artistic vision, while also developing competencies in preparation for professional life in an ever-changing sector. Moreover, all Bachelor of Music students are trained to achieve a very similar set of end-level qualifications, in line with the AEC learning outcomes set by the Association of European of Conservatoires. Each department has adapted the learning outcomes framework to articulate the specific objectives of their own disciplines and curricula. The review team acknowledges the choice of the conservatoire to adopt this international framework, which befits not only the international aspiration of the institution and the Bachelor of Music programme but also the character of the respective disciplines.¹⁶

The Critical Friends of the conservatoire mentioned in their reports¹⁷ that the aim of the programme is clearly expressed and that its goals are aligned with the Royal Conservatoire's positioning. Both the institution and the departments are influential centres in shaping the next generation of professional musical life in the Netherlands and internationally. The review team acknowledges this finding, as well as the statement by the Critical Friends that the variety in the curricula is viewed as an important contribution to the overall quality of the programme.

Reflection by the review team

The review team noted that there is clear alignment between the mission of the university, the ambitions of the conservatoire, and the objectives of the Bachelor of Music programme. In today's multifaceted musical landscape music students need to acquire a breadth of knowledge and skills, and this is exactly what the Bachelor of Music programme in The Hague is providing: an artistic and technically sound music education of a high standard that prepares students for their professional lives in the world of art and culture, while leaving as much room as possible for the personal artistic development of individual students. Hence, the review team subscribes to the goal choices made by the conservatoire, and thinks highly of the way in which these distinctive features find their way into the programme.

¹⁶ SER pp. 15-17 and Appendix K.

¹⁷ SER Appendix I.

In this regard, the review team considers that the choice of the conservatoire to adopt an international framework of learning outcomes is not only valuable as such but also confirms the international ambitions of the institution, its departments, and the bachelor programme. Similarly, the Bachelor of Music programme meets the institutional ambition of having their students profit from the dynamic and active partnerships with organisations in the music profession and society at large. Moreover, the programme allows students to take ownership of their personalised learning experiences and, in this way, not only to display a high level of instrumental/vocal skill but also to demonstrate individual artistic personality, be reflective and inquisitive, and function in a diverse artistic environment.

The review team gathered from its documented study that the learning outcomes of the Bachelor of Music programme are formulated adequately in terms of content (discipline), level (bachelor), and orientation (professional). The review team thinks highly of the way in which the programme and the departments have translated the AEC Learning Outcomes in programme objectives to ensure that there is both consistency across disciplines and room for individual discipline-specific accents.

In sum, the review team wants to commend the university, the conservatoire, and the programme for the way its mission, vision, ambitions, and objectives are aligned not only on paper but also in the day-to-day reality of the Bachelor of Music programme. The written materials received by the review team and the discussions carried out during the site visit have convinced the review team that the conservatoire manages, through the Bachelor of Music programme, to prepare artists-musicians for the current and constantly developing professional world.

With regard to the goals and mission of the conservatoire and the bachelor programme, the review team sees two opportunities for enhancement in the future. Firstly, the integration of the conservatoire into the university and the move to the new Amare building that houses several artistic organisations is the opportune moment for the conservatoire to reaffirm its position nationally and internationally, and to reformulate a vision and mission that encompasses the new internal and external situation. Secondly, the Bachelor of Music programme may want to consider simplifying its learning outcomes while still adhering to the relevant international framework. This suggestion would become all the more feasible when the AEC Learning Outcomes are revised in the near future and will incorporate current issues such as diversity and sustainability.

The review team scores the programmes as follows in relation to MusiQuE standard 1.

Standard 1	Bachelor of Music
The programme goals are clearly stated and reflect the institutional mission.	Fully compliant

MusiQuE standard 2.2 – Curriculum and methods of delivery

The programme offers a range of opportunities for students to gain an international perspective.

Factual information

Internationalisation is a key feature and policy priority of both the university and the conservatoire. It is mentioned as a priority in the overall Institutional Plan of the University¹⁸ while the Royal Conservatoire connects to the overarching institutional policy on internationalisation in its own Status Report and Policy Objectives.¹⁹ Both documents put forward the same three focus areas in terms of internationalisation (policy): (i) international qualification frameworks; (ii) international learning environment; and (iii) international benchmarking through comparison and review.

The review team gathered from the self-evaluation documentation²⁰ and the discussions with the programme representatives that these three policy priorities are also part and parcel of the Bachelor of Music programme. Firstly, the programme objectives refer to the AEC Learning Outcomes framework containing internationally agreed descriptors for the bachelor level. In this way, the formulation of the intended learning outcomes is placed in an international context. Secondly, the learning environment in the bachelor programme is truly international given that more than half of the students and a fair range of teachers are international, that students and teaching/support staff participate in ERASMUS+ mobilities and international networks, that professionalisation of the support staff also often has an international orientation, that the language of instruction is English, and that all written information is in English. Thirdly, external examiners, Critical Friends, and assessment panels are all international in order to ensure international benchmarking of the programme's performance. Hence also the conservatoire's wish to have the programme quality assessed through an internationally recognised evaluation framework, MusiQuE Quality Enhancement. Finally, students indicated in their meeting with the review team that the international characteristics of the Bachelor of Music programme are what attracted some of the students to the Royal Conservatoire.

In addition to their international outlook and profile, the Conservatoire and the Bachelor of Music programme also have a distinctly local dimension²¹. The management indicated during the site visit that with the transfer to the new Amare building, the conservatoire has developed a '*global*' dimension: both the institution and the bachelor programme combine their global outlook with a local embeddedness. This local orientation was already present when (Bachelor of Music) students were – and still are – practicing and performing in socially disadvantaged districts of The Hague. Further, with the conservatoire's move to Amare, the long standing culture of collaboration with local cultural-artistic organisations, including those who reside in the same building, has become much stronger.

¹⁸ SER Appendix D.

¹⁹ SER Appendix F.

²⁰ SER pp. 18-19.

²¹ SER pp. 20-21.

Reflection by the review team

Having analysed all evidence presented, the review team acknowledges that internationalisation is an integral component of the University of the Arts' strategy and focuses on improving the quality of teaching and research and on enriching the educational community. Similarly, the review team found that the Royal Conservatoire has a strong international orientation that goes beyond the traditional understanding of internationalisation in higher education.

Furthermore, the review team thinks highly of the focus areas of internationalisation and considers that these policy elements are very well embedded in every component of the Bachelor of Music programme. In this regard, the review team appreciates the choice of the conservatoire to adopt an international framework of learning outcomes and to rely on international peers and assessment frameworks to benchmark the institution, the departments, and the programme internationally.

The international orientation is visible in each and every aspect of the Bachelor of Music curriculum: the programme not only teaches in English and attracts international teachers and students, but, more fundamentally, it provides an internationally informed curriculum. The review team considers that the entire Bachelor of Music programme constitutes a comprehensive international experience that goes well beyond the terms of this standard about offering opportunities for students to gain an international perspective.

In sum, the review team wants to commend the conservatoire and the programme for its outstanding level of internationalisation. It subscribes to the statement in the self-evaluation report that the international dimension of the conservatoire is mainstreamed in all its actions. As a result, the mission of the university and the conservatoire to be international is deeply reflected in the Bachelor of Music programme. Affecting all stakeholders, internationalisation has become part of the quality culture in the institution and in the programme.

The review team scores the programme as follows in relation to MusiQuE standard 2.2.

Standard 2.2	Bachelor of Music
The programme offers a range of opportunities for students to gain an international perspective.	Fully compliant

MusiQuE standard 8.1 – Cultural, artistic and educational contexts

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

Factual information

The Royal Conservatoire in general, and its Bachelor of Music programme in particular, have various ways of engagement with the external world of culture, art, and education. They cooperate proactively with the music profession and the programme curriculum includes various elements of professional preparation and integration. In the self-evaluation report, the conservatoire distinguishes five ways of public interaction and connection to the music profession²²:

- the impact of the conservatoire on Dutch and international musical life;
- the role of the conservatoire as a cultural centre in the city of The Hague;
- the opportunities for Bachelor of Music students to engage in a wider cultural context as performers, community musicians and educationalists;
- the cooperation of the conservatoire with organisations in the profession to provide its students with professional opportunities already during their studies;
- the monitoring of the ongoing needs of the profession in order to inform and maintain the relevance of the conservatoire's educational offering.

The review team gathered from the self-evaluation documentation²³ and the discussions with programme representatives that external engagement is an important feature of the conservatoire. This engagement, moreover, was confirmed explicitly in the discussion with representatives of the profession. The Royal Conservatoire has a long tradition of being a leading force in Dutch musical life. This is due not only to its influence on the music profession through the training of student-musicians in the country, but also because it has established several new ensembles that have gained an international reputation.

On a local level, the Royal Conservatoire holds an important function as a regional cultural centre in the city of The Hague and its surroundings.²⁴ The conservatoire produces many events, both in-house and outside of the institution, and therefore is one of the largest cultural organisations and one of the most important producers of musical activities in the city of The Hague. This situation is likely to intensify now that the conservatoire is housed in the state-of-the-art performance venue Amare in the city centre.

The self-evaluation report furthermore provides several concrete examples of opportunities (concerts, festivals) for bachelor students in all disciplines of the degree programme to train and test their knowledge and skills, to present their work and to engage with professional practice as well as various societal entities in the city and region of The Hague.²⁵ The conservatoire has various intensive cooperation schemes with different professional ensembles and professional venues. Although many projects focus mainly on master students, bachelor students also have access to these professional opportunities on a regular basis.

²² SER p. 20.

²³ SER pp. 20-23.

²⁴ SER pp. 20-21.

²⁵ SER pp. 21-22.

During the visit, the review team inquired in several sessions about the curricular aspect of these professional opportunities, i.e. to what extent Bachelor of Music students can get involved in external engagement projects as part of a credited course in their curriculum. Students, tutors and support staff indicated that there are different curricular opportunities for students to engage in a wider cultural and societal context. For instance, second-year students from the performance departments take the compulsory Entrepreneurial Bootcamp course in which they realise short joint musical productions in a culturally diverse neighbourhood of The Hague. Moreover, the Career Development Office encourages second, third and fourth-year students to engage in activities outside the conservatoire and receive recognition with credit points for these activities through a formalised procedure. In the Education Minor, students organise an educational project with children or elderly people outside the conservatoire. As part of the elective space in the programme, students can participate in the 'Neighbourhood Musicians' project performing (mainly classical) music activities in various contexts (schools, local theatres, homes for the elderly, hospitals), and at various occasions (funerals, commemorative events) in a neighbourhood of The Hague.

Reflection by the review team

The review team collected sufficient evidence to conclude that external engagement is an important pillar of the Royal Conservatoire. In fact, creating dynamic and active partnerships with organisations in the music profession and society at large is a distinguishing feature of the conservatoire's profile. This external engagement takes on different forms, which, in turn, ensure that Bachelor of Music students also benefit from these opportunities.

In addition to its long-standing position in the Dutch higher music education field, the Conservatoire is becoming increasingly connected to the social, cultural and artistic context in the city and surroundings of The Hague. The review team noted that the conservatoire's recent move to the Amare building has opened additional opportunities for the institution – and the Bachelor of Music programme – to reach out to other arts disciplines, and to devise with the co-residents of the building new ventures for collaboration.

The review team welcomes the different curricular opportunities for Bachelor of Music students to practice as musicians in society as an integral – credited – part of their study. In this regard, the review team considers 'curricular projects' such as the entrepreneurial bootcamp, the neighbourhood musicians, the external educational activities, and the career development projects as examples of good practice; these formalised components of the curriculum allow students to both practice their skills and take an active role as musicians in society.

The review team scores the programme as follows in relation to MusiQuE standard 8.1.

Standard 8.1	Bachelor of Music
The programme engages within wider cultural, artistic and educational contexts.	Fully compliant

MusiQuE standard 8.2 – Interaction with the artistic professions

The programme actively promotes links with various sectors of the music and other artistic professions.

Factual information

In addition to offering students professional opportunities as part of their curriculum, the conservatoire and its departments also maintain links with the music and arts sector to monitor the relevance of their programme objectives and curriculum contents. The review team gathered from the evidence collected throughout the review²⁶ that this goal is accomplished in different ways.

Firstly, the teachers in the departments and on the programme are professionals in the world of music, which creates a natural and permanent dialogue with the requirements of the profession. Almost all teachers have part-time contracts²⁷ and are also active both nationally and internationally as performers, composers, sound artists, and researchers.

Secondly, the Critical Friends regularly visit the conservatoire and its programmes to provide an external perspective and advise on the performance of the institution and the quality of its educational offerings.

Thirdly, external examiners attend final presentations and offer feedback on the level that students demonstrate during their graduation performance. In addition to examining individual students, they also monitor and report back to the programme and the institution as to whether the students/graduates at the Royal Conservatoire perform at a level that is expected internationally of a bachelor graduate in their respective musical discipline.

Fourthly, several departments hold regular professional stakeholder meetings with representatives of the professional community to discuss the latest trends and ongoing needs in professional practice and the relevance of the curricula. While it is an explicit ambition of the conservatoire to organise such meetings in all disciplines, the COVID-19 pandemic somewhat reduced these activities. Nonetheless, the Classical and Early Music, Sonology, Vocal, and Music Education departments managed to organise such meetings in recent years. One of the purposes of these meetings is to collect feedback on the relevance of the intended learning outcomes of the various disciplines.

Following its study of the self-evaluation report, the review team asked for an overview of the external partners per specialisation. The extensive document it received lists per department a number of alumni with relevant (i.e. discipline-specific) careers, a range of conservatoires/music academies, and universities featuring conservatoire graduates, as well as the individuals who participate in the department's professional stakeholder meetings. With regard to the latter, the session on site with representatives of the professional field confirmed that these individuals and the institutions they represent are not only offering professional opportunities for students, but also think actively with the conservatoire and its departments about the relevance of the Bachelor of Music programme, offering advice and exchanging ideas.

²⁶ SER pp. 22-23.

²⁷ Overview FTE teaching staff Bachelor of Music 2022-2023.

Reflection by the review team

The review team welcomes the proactive approach adopted by the Royal Conservatoire to reach out to members of the profession. Across the departments/specialisations that together form the Bachelor of Music programme there are established links with the profession, and these connections become increasingly stronger. Overall, the review team is impressed by the number of high quality professional relationships which the programme has.

Regular meetings with a wide variety of professional stakeholders constitute a platform for discussing the expectations and needs of – and recent developments in – the sector, which, in turn, are accommodated in the objectives (learning outcomes) and content of the programme / disciplinary curricula. In this regard, the review team welcomes the specific attention that is paid by staff, critical friend, external examiners, and professional stakeholder groups to monitor and discuss the relevance of the programme curricula. According to the review team, including these various perspectives instils confidence that the Bachelor of Music programme is carefully monitoring its relevance and will make the necessary adjustments when needed.

In sum, the review team wants to commend the conservatoire and the Bachelor of Music for the breadth and depth with which it involves the professional field in developing the programme and keeping it futureproof.

The review team scores the programme as follows in relation to MusiQuE standard 8.2.

Standard 8.2	Bachelor of Music
The programme actively promotes links with various sectors of the music and other artistic professions.	Fully compliant

MusiQuE standard 8.3 – Information provided to the public

Information provided to the public about the programme is clear, consistent and accurate.

Factual information

The self-evaluation report²⁸ lists a variety of tools which the Royal Conservatoire uses to inform students and other stakeholders about the Bachelor of Music programme:

- The Royal Conservatoire hosts a comprehensive bilingual website, which provides detailed information about the institutions, its programmes, departments, concert activities and teaching faculty: www.koncon.nl. Information about the bachelor programme can be found under the relevant department, and contains details about curricula, structure, application and admission. New website sections have been added recently on specific subjects such as Professional Preparation, Research, Practice, Health & Wellbeing, Internationalisation, and Quality Culture, to inform current and future students, as well as the general public, about the conservatoire's approach to these topics.
- A Study Guide for all programmes of the Royal Conservatoire is published in English on an annual basis²⁹. It contains information on practical issues, the content of the programmes and the Education and Examination Regulations.
- The course descriptions follow the standard format of the ECTS Users' Guide to enhance comparability and transparency, and are published in the Curriculum Handbooks³⁰. In order to inform not only current and prospective students but also potential future ERASMUS students, all curriculum overviews and course descriptions have been posted on the conservatoire's website. Information about (contents, application, deadlines and assessment of) the many elective courses on offer can also be found on the website www.koncon.nl/en/electives.
- In 2022, the Task Force on International Students revised all the texts for applicants on the website and also reviewed the administrative communication sent to candidates and admitted students.
- Since the last accreditation procedure, an extensive internal online KC Portal has been established for students, teachers and non-teaching staff. All information is placed in four overarching sections: About the university, About the Conservatoire, Study at the Conservatoire, and Work at the Conservatoire. This portal is still under development but has already shown itself to be an important improvement with regards to internal communication.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, all information for students regarding the impact of the pandemic on their studies, as well as about the online audition and admission process for applicants, was made available in English and Dutch via www.koncon.nl/corona.

²⁸ SER pp.23-24.

²⁹ SER Appendix J.

³⁰ SER Appendix L.

Reflection by the review team

In its preparation for the site visit, the review team made extensive use of almost all above-mentioned information tools. It found that the information about the Bachelor of Music programme provided to the public is comprehensive, clear and reflecting the reality of the programme. The institution's website is user-friendly, easy to navigate and written in good-quality English. The curriculum handbooks constitute an important source of detailed, transparent, and accurate information about the content of the programme disciplines.

During the site visit, the review team had some specific questions on the Bachelor of Music curriculum and the way announced developments in assessment would find their way to the students in the respective disciplines. Not only did the panel receive an immediate answer, but it was also positively surprised to already see the written confirmation in the curriculum handbooks for the next academic year 2023-2024.

The review team commends the programme and the conservatoire for the attention and care invested in the design and development of all these information tools, and encourages the faculty and staff to maintain the high level of service in this department.

The review team scores the programmes as follows in relation to MusiQuE standard 8.3.

Standard 8.3	Bachelor of Music
Information provided to the public about the programme is clear, consistent and accurate.	Fully compliant

2. Teaching and learning environment

MusiQuE standard 2.1 – Curriculum and methods of delivery

The goals of the programme are achieved through the content and structure of the curriculum and its methods of delivery.

Factual information

As noted in the Introduction section, the Bachelor of Music is a four-year full-time programme culminating in a bachelor's qualification as a musician. It consists of a propaedeutic (first year) and a post-propaedeutic (years two-to-four) phase. Within the overall structure of the programme, every discipline has its own curriculum. Since the last accreditation, the structure of the programme has changed and now consists of five domains: artistic development, musicianship skills, academic skills, professional preparation, and electives and minors. The new structure allows for more alignment, comparability, and convergence between the curricula. Moreover, each curriculum has the same elective space as of the second year in order to facilitate cross-departmental cooperation and exchange.³¹

During the visit, the review team learned that the conservatoire can offer a wide variety of electives because these courses are compulsory for certain students and optional for others. Students also have access to the elective courses at Leiden University, for which special application and recognition procedures have been developed.³² Students indicated during the visit that they appreciate the new structure as it goes beyond mere specialisation in one “instrument”, and encourages them to develop additional skills and to explore new areas. In fact, some students reported that they enrolled in the Bachelor of Music programme in a particular discipline but realized through the opportunities for engagement in electives and cross-departmental initiatives that their passion and eventual professional path lay in a different direction.

Furthermore, several changes were made in the individual curricula, often bringing together sets of existing courses in structured components.³³ For instance, courses in the domain of professional preparation have been grouped in a career skills trajectory. Similarly, the career development office component has been enhanced making it easier for students to get external activities validated and credited. The educational skills component, which all Bachelor of Music students have to follow in the second and third year, has also been enhanced, while the musicianship skills part of the curricula have been further refined.

During the visit, both students and staff spoke in very positive terms about the changes in the curricula and the new opportunities this offers to students. In a dedicated session, the review team was informed about the career skills trajectory, and about how projects can get validated so that their outcomes become credited work.

One of the elements defining the Royal Conservatoire's profile is its focus on student-centred learning. According to the self-evaluation report³⁴, the features of the conservatoire's education comply with the definition of student-centred learning in the

³¹ SER pp. 28-31 and Appendix J.

³² SER pp. 28-29 and Appendix M.

³³ SER pp. 30-31.

³⁴ SER p. 17 and www.ehea.info/page-standards-and-guidelines-for-quality-assurance

European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG): addressing the diversity of student needs through an elective space, offering opportunities, using a variety of pedagogical methods, adopting a consistent and robust approach to the evaluation of education, and underlining the role of feedback and student involvement. The review team gathered from the self-evaluation documentation and the discussions with programme representatives that these characteristics are indeed present in the Bachelor of Music programme. Once students have passed the propaedeutic exam, they can determine the content of the curriculum depending on their own interests and potential for personal development, and can make full use of the breadth of the educational provision offered by the conservatoire.

The review team understood from the materials received and the discussions carried out that, in recent years, the conservatoire and the Bachelor of Music programme have put a lot of effort into aligning the course goals of the respective curricula with the learning outcomes at programme level. This results in more robust curricula with students and staff being aware of the exact position of each course in the overall programme. The results of these changes and the alignment between the course (goals) and the programme (objectives) are inscribed in the curriculum handbooks, which are updated every academic year.

In the online discussion, the Critical Friends confirmed the statements in their reports that the content and structure of the study programmes are generally consistent and balanced, and well adapted to the general and specific needs of the students. Moreover, each curriculum features a good balance between main subject lessons, theory subjects, general courses and electives.

Alongside education and production, research³⁵ is one of the three pillars of the Royal Conservatoire. This research is practical by nature and focuses on the practice of music or on the practice of education in music. The three pillars are closely related to each other and collectively contribute to the development of young talents into reflective music makers, performers and teachers. The educational programmes at the Royal Conservatoire – including the Bachelor of Music – are directed towards the artistic-musical development of the students, hence the research element is also aimed at this development. In the curricula, research is about research training – the learning of research skills by future musicians, which they can later apply to innovate and enrich their musicianship and professional profiles. In the Bachelor of Music, research training focuses on four fundamental academic skills that are prerequisites for doing research: argumentation, formulating questions and ideas, working with information, and presentation. These skills are addressed in a range of subjects and courses throughout the curricula.

In terms of academic and personal guidance³⁶, bachelor students are assigned a tutor during the first three years of their studies. The tutor's role is to help students reflect on their studies and to monitor their progress. Consultations with the tutor are confidential. In the tutoring course, the tutor and student work with a Tutoring Toolbox to enhance the students' overall practice. This toolbox covers four stages of the learning process (foundation, intention, attention, and reflection) and helps students to develop their study

³⁵ SER pp. 31-33.

³⁶ SER pp. 34-35.

skills. The student and the tutor jointly choose suitable projects or activities that fit the individual student.

The Royal Conservatoire seeks to provide a safe environment for study and work by creating a climate that prevents transgressive behaviour and attempts to tackle any signs of such behaviour swiftly. These objectives have been written down in the conservatoire's Social Safety Action Plan, which also contain a revised and updated set of complaint procedures. Moreover, the university and the conservatoire have formulated a new Code of Conduct and a new Integrity Code.³⁷ Several staff can provide students with assistance in cases of complaints or (personal) concerns: in addition to their tutors, students can visit the student counsellor at the conservatoire (for practical matters and personal problems) or a confidential counsellor (for undesirable behaviour, integrity, discrimination or social safety) inside or outside the university.

During the visit, students and staff indicated that social safety is a topic that is taken seriously at the conservatoire: it is a standard part of surveys and a returning agenda item at programme committee meetings. Moreover, students and staff know whom to contact in case of problems and where they can lodge complaints. Students, moreover, indicated that they feel safe to discuss their problems with tutors, student peers, and confidential counsellors.

Reflection by the review team

Based on the evidence presented above, the review team considers that the Bachelor of Music programme reflects the priorities and the key features of the conservatoire. It is impressed by the substantial changes to the programme structure and curriculum components, and considers that these are for the better. Hence, at the time of the site visit, the structure of the Bachelor of Music programme in general and the disciplinary curricula in particular were coherent. The review team also welcomes the recent efforts of the conservatoire and the programme to strengthen the alignment between the learning outcomes at programme level, the programme objectives per discipline, and the goals of the respective curriculum courses.

Moreover, the substantial reform in content and structure of the curricula reflects the student-centred nature of the programme. The many innovations in the programme and course offerings allow students to personalise the study programme to their own interests that go beyond the strict domain of their discipline and specialisation. In this regard, the review team thinks highly of the structural opportunities built into the programme curricula for cross-departmental cooperation and education through electives, minors, and projects.

The review team noted with satisfaction that staff and students endorse the ambition of the conservatoire for more cross-departmental cooperation and that students are enthusiastic about the new opportunities for tailoring the curriculum to their interests. The review team, moreover, appreciates the wide variety of electives on offer, as well as the range of projects that can be undertaken as part of the curriculum.

³⁷ SER pp. 35-36 and Appendix G.

The review team subscribes to the way in which the institution is embracing reflection and research as a third component next to education and production. Students in the Bachelor of Music receive appropriate research training which prepares them for more advanced forms of (artistic) research in the master programme. Similarly, the programme contains sufficient and interesting courses/components to prepare Bachelor of Music students for their professional life beyond the conservatoire.

The discussions with students and support staff convinced the review team that student guidance in the Bachelor of Music programme is well organised and effective. Moreover, the issue of social safety is not only addressed on paper but constitutes an integral part of the conservatoire's endeavour to create a 'safe haven' for its students and staff.

The review team scores the programme as follows in relation to MusiQuE standard 2.1.

Standard 2.1	Bachelor of Music
The goals of the programme are achieved through the content and structure of the curriculum and its methods of delivery.	Fully compliant

MusiQuE standard 4.1 – Staff qualifications and professional activity

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

Factual information

The Royal Conservatoire has an international teaching faculty whose members include leading names in the various disciplines.³⁸ Almost all members of the teaching faculty are (or have been) active in the music profession at an international level as performers, composers, and researchers. According to the review team, the CVs of the teaching staff on the Bachelor of Music programme confirm their expertise within the creative and cultural sector. During the visit, bachelor students indicated that they are satisfied with the quality of their teachers in terms of both disciplinary expertise and didactical skills.

The conservatoire adopts a proactive approach to the continuous professional development of its teachers, which is based on the view that it is vital for a higher education institution to continuously invest in the expertise of its teaching and support staff.

Among the many initiatives, two in particular caught the attention of the review team: firstly, ‘the Artist as a Teacher’ is a staff development programme that sharpens the didactical skills of teaching faculty³⁹; various issues such as one-to-one teaching, group teaching, assessment, entrepreneurship and social safety issues are being discussed in eight to ten sessions during one academic year. The course is tailor-made for conservatoire teachers and strongly based on methodologies developed by Innovative Conservatoire – ICON. Until now, more than 150 teachers have participated in this course, which leads to two certificates: the basic certificate in didactic capacity (Basiskwalificatie Didactische Bekwaamheid, BDB) and the basic certificate in assessment (Basiskwalificatie Examinering, BKE), which are recognised by all higher education institutions in the Netherlands.⁴⁰ Secondly, conservatoire teachers are given opportunities to upgrade their pre-Bologna second cycle diploma to an officially recognised master’s degree⁴¹. On the basis of previously acquired competencies gained in their professional practice and diplomas, they can execute a research project and obtain the degree. To date, 57 teachers have earned their master’s degree in this way or are in the process of doing so.

Reflection by the review team

According to the review team, the members of the teaching staff responsible for the Bachelor of Music have the appropriate qualifications to do so. They are expert in their artistic-musical field and have good didactic skills. Moreover, the review team noted – also through the feedback from students – that the staff are enthusiastic and very supportive. Hence, the review team endorses the statement of the Critical Friends that the teaching staff is of high quality with solid (international) credentials in the music profession. The level of teaching is high, and the communication with students engaging and encouraging.

³⁸ SER pp. 37-38.

³⁹ SER Appendix N.

⁴⁰ SER p. 38.

⁴¹ SER p. 38.

Furthermore, the review team commends the conservatoire for its staff professionalisation policy and activities, which has allowed many teachers to enhance their pedagogical and assessment skills, and where necessary top-up their initial second cycle credentials with a master's degree. In this regard, the Artist as a Teacher programme is definitely an example of excellent practice.

The review team scores the programme as follows in relation to MusiQuE standard 4.1.

Standard 4.1	Bachelor of Music
Members of the teaching staff are qualified for their role and are active as artists / pedagogues / researchers.	Fully compliant

MusiQuE standard 4.2 – Size and composition of the teaching staff body

There are sufficient qualified teaching staff to effectively deliver the programme.

Factual information

Following its study of the self-evaluation report, which contained comprehensive information on the staff quality, the review team asked the conservatoire for more details on the number of teaching staff. According to the overview provided, the Bachelor of Music programme has a total teaching load of just over 48 full-time equivalents (FTE), which is spread over more than 200 individuals: most staff are on permanent contracts, while freelancers represent about 5.5 FTE. The size of the teaching load is in line with the size of the department/specialisation: the Classical Music department has 13.5 FTE, while 0.175 FTE is allocated to Choir Conducting. Several staff involved in the Bachelor of Music programme top up their small assignments with additional administrative duties and/or teaching appointments in other programmes of the conservatoire.

Because many individual staff have small assignments in the programme, it is important to meet regularly to operate as an educational team. The review team noted that the teaching staff of the Bachelor of Music programme are increasingly communicating with each other, also beyond their own specialism. This, in turn, helps both staff and students to grasp the context of a given course and its position in the curriculum.⁴²

Furthermore, the review team was informed by the management that new staff are recruited and selected according to university-wide provisions, the so-called Job Application Code. The review team received a copy of the most recent version of this code (2022), which is designed to set a standard for a transparent recruitment and selection procedure and applies to procedures for which internal and/or external candidates are recruited.

Reflection by the review team

Based on the additional information provided, the review team considers that there is sufficient teaching staff to deliver the Bachelor of Music programme effectively. These teaching staff members are properly qualified and – notwithstanding their small individual assignments – encouraged to communicate and cooperate internally, and operate as valued parts of an educational team. The review team noted during the visit that the teaching staff they spoke to showed commitment to the students and ownership of the programme.

The review team scores the programme as follows in relation to MusiQuE standard 4.2.

Standard 4.2	Bachelor of Music
There are sufficient qualified teaching staff to effectively deliver the programmes.	Fully compliant

⁴² SER pp.41-42.

MusiQuE standard 5.1 – Facilities

The institution has appropriate resources to support student learning and delivery of the programme.

Factual information

Since the previous accreditation, the Royal Conservatoire has moved to new premises, called Amare. This house for culture, education, events and meetings opened its doors on 2 September 2021 and has four large theatres and concert halls, various meeting rooms, a good number of public spaces, including two restaurants. The conservatoire occupies the three upper floors of Amare and has a total of 177 rooms at its disposal, including one concert hall, seven large studios for general use, five dance studios, five music recording and production studios and five performance venues with state-of-the-art equipment. Apart from the 20 rooms belonging to the School of Young talent, all units can be used for teaching and practice.⁴³

The cohabitation with professional organisations in a building located in the very centre of the city, and with excellent performance and teaching facilities, provides unprecedented possibilities for the conservatoire. Since the move, the conservatoire has boosted its cooperation with the in-house *Nederlands Dans Theater* and the *Residentie Orkest*. Moreover, it invested substantially in new musical instruments and recording equipment. With regard to the latter, the facilities for Sonology and Art of Sound students have improved considerably in comparison with the situation in the previous premises, with students and staff remarking on being “above ground”.

The review team visited the library of the conservatoire, which is located on the ‘music floor’ of the Public Library opposite of Amare. It is one of the best-equipped conservatoire libraries in the Netherlands, according to conservatoire librarians and taking into account records of inter-library loan traffic. An increasing amount of information is available in digital form through paid and free subscriptions. The conservatoire was one of the first institutions worldwide to establish an institutional subscription for the digital sheet music library ‘nkoda’, which provides students and teachers with access to a huge online resource of sheet music.⁴⁴

Reflection by the review team

The review team considers that the move to Amare not only boosted the quality of the facilities, but also impacted positively on the profile of the Royal Conservatoire. Students are now offered not only better quality training and performance opportunities but also more opportunities for engagement with professional art organisations, and other arts disciplines. The review team deduces that the move to the new building facilitates the conservatoire’s ambition to reach out even more than before to the wider society in The Hague. Furthermore, the review team is impressed by the physical and online resources of the library.

Comparing the layout of the previous building with the current one, the review team noted that the offices of department heads, teaching staff and support staff are situated

⁴³ SER p. 40.

⁴⁴ SER pp. 40-41.

much closer to each other at Amare. This facilitates interaction among staff and across departments. The physical proximity along one or two corridors and the common coffee corners have boosted not only social networking but also professional and educational interactions among staff.

Students indicated during the visit that they are – understandably – very satisfied with the high quality of the new premises. However, the panel noted that the current setup of the conservatoire floors in Amare may not have the same boosting effect in terms of student interaction: apart from a very big agora, there are no ‘cosy’ places where students feel they can hang around, mingle, and foster a community feeling. Moreover, the canteens in the building are not part of the conservatoire and charge commercial prices. Finally, students complained that the current building regulation does not allow them to post materials on the walls, which in turn limits the opportunities for students to communicate with each other and to make the building their own. At the end of the site visit, the review team shared these student concerns with the institutional management and recommended they look for creative ways to accommodate these justified requests.

The review team scores the programme as follows in relation to MusiQuE standard 5.1.

Standard 5.1	Bachelor of Music
The institution has appropriate resources to support student learning and delivery of the programme.	Fully compliant

MusiQuE standard 5.3 – Support staff

The programme has sufficient qualified support staff.

Factual information

The Royal Conservatoire has a number of support departments that play key roles in the organisation of teaching in the bachelor programme. Most departments are to be found in every higher professional education institution yet often have a remit that is specific to the conservatoire: the Alumni Office for instance hosts so-called “Meet the Professional” classes preparing students for professional practice; the Logistics Service Centre includes an Electronics Workshop providing technical support for the many student concerts and presentations and for the production of audio and video recordings. The tasks of the different services are described in the annually updated Study Guide and on the internal portal of the conservatoire.⁴⁵

On request of the review team, a dedicated session with staff belonging to the service units was set up during the visit. Hence, the review team spoke with staff from alumni affairs, education services, student administration, international office, e-learning service desk, finance, IT, library, logistics, marketing and communication, public services, and quality assurance. The review team learned from these discussions that the conservatoire features many different services that each play a specific role in making the study at the conservatoire less cumbersome and more rewarding.

Reflection by the review team

The review team thinks highly of the breadth and depth of the support services and of the quality and experience that is accumulated by the staff in these units. The discussion on site demonstrated the commitment, professionalism, and determination of the support staff, who provide a strong backbone for the institution and play a crucial role in the delivery of the programme and wider running of the institution.

Moreover, the review team welcomes the conservatoire’s policy to have a dedicated budget for the continuous professional development of support staff. In this regard, it commends in particular the opportunity for support staff to engage – just as their teaching staff colleagues – in mobility and training schemes.

The review team scores the programme as follows in relation to MusiQuE standard 5.3.

Standard 5.3	Bachelor of Music
The programme has sufficient qualified support staff.	Fully compliant

⁴⁵ SER p. 39 and Appendix J.

MusiQuE standard 6.1 – Internal communication

Effective mechanisms are in place for internal communication within the programme.

Factual information

The Bachelor of Music programme consists of several disciplines and specialisations, which are managed by departments. While (internal) communication takes place within the frameworks set out by the university and the conservatoire, there is no dedicated unit or staff member who represents – or communicates on behalf of – the overarching Bachelor of Music programme. Communication either starts at the central conservatoire level or in the respective departments.

The review team gathered from the self-evaluation documentation⁴⁶ and discussions during the site visit that communications concerning the Bachelor of Music programme and its disciplines is generally comprehensive and transparent. Information that is crucial for applicants and students is to be found on the public website of the conservatoire and its dedicated department sections. Furthermore, curriculum related information is available in the Study Guide and the respective Curriculum Handbooks. More specific and short term communications are shared through the portal of the conservatoire. Students indicated to the review team that communication and information provision is generally transparent and timely.

Further to what was mentioned under staff quantity, the programme and departments have an important task in rallying the many teaching staff with small assignments around a common endeavour: delivering a coherent programme with relevant specialisations. The review team understood from the programme management and the teaching and support staff that the programme manages to do so increasingly well. The above-mentioned innovations to the overall programme structure and the new lay-out of the conservatoire building contribute to both formal and informal meetings and help individual staff members operate as part of an educational team.

The conservatoire also involves students in the internal communications structure: as part of the internal quality assurance provisions⁴⁷, students complete course evaluations, join student panels and represent the student voice in both study programme committees and the faculty board. The review team noted during the site visit meetings that the student voice is captured and disseminated multidimensionally: as commonly found among smaller institutions, and as was confirmed in one of the student sessions, students also relay communications from programme management and the wider institution to their peers.

Reflection by the review team

The review team considers that communication is well organised within the conservatoire and in the Bachelor of Music programme. There are different ways to communicate messages across departments and among all stakeholders, and both the content of the communications and the modes of transmission are appropriate.

The particular structure of the programme (featuring a central position for the departments) and the staff (many staff on often very small assignments) brings along

⁴⁶ SER pp. 41-42.

⁴⁷ SER p.8 and Appendix A.

challenges in terms of communication. According to the review team, these challenges have been appropriately addressed since the previous accreditation visit and the move to Amare.

Furthermore, the review team thinks highly of the way in which the voice of students is taken on board in the internal communications process.

The review team scores the programme as follows in relation to MusiQuE standard 6.1.

Standard 6.1	Bachelor of Music
Effective mechanisms are in place for internal communication within the programme.	Fully compliant

MusiQuE standard 6.2 – Organisational structure and decision-making processes

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

Factual information

The Bachelor of Music programme consists of several disciplines and specialisations, which are managed by departments.⁴⁸ Most departments consist of a head and a coordinator; some coordinators combine tasks in education management and the production of projects. There is no dedicated management unit or staff member overseeing the entire programme. The department heads discuss programme developments in regular Heads of Department meetings.

Envisaged changes to the programme curriculum are discussed – and eventually decided upon – at the level of the departments by the heads and the relevant teaching faculty, often in consultation with the Vice-Principal for Education. Each year in November, every department, represented by its head and coordinator, have a meeting with the Vice-Principal of Education and the Education Policy Officer to review the content of the curriculum handbooks, the programme objectives, curriculum overviews and course descriptions. During these meetings, changes in the curricula are discussed based on feedback collected through the various quality assurance tools. The changes are reported meticulously and shared with the Study Programme Committee, the Conservatoire Council, and the conservatoire's management.⁴⁹

In terms of policy priorities and follow-up, the review team noted that there is clear alignment between themes in the five-year Institutional Plan at the level of the university⁵⁰, the three year Faculty Plan at the level of the conservatoire⁵¹, and yearly Departmental Plans⁵². According to the Critical Friends, the organisational structure makes efficient decision-making possible. The annual plans are a good way to take the departments to a higher level in decision-making and help stimulate self-analysis. Heads of departments show initiative in generating effective and efficient decision-making mechanisms for reflective analysis and for hearing concerns and suggestions from students and staff. The views of support staff are also taken on board and valued in departmental meetings.

Reflection by the review team

Higher music education institutions have traditionally been structured 'vertically' around individual instruments, disciplines or departments. According to the review team, this structure is also predominantly present in the Royal Conservatoire and its Bachelor of Music programme.

Nonetheless, the review team noted with satisfaction that efforts have been made in recent years to increase the cooperation among departments, as well as the comparability and compatibility across the disciplines in the Bachelor of Music

⁴⁸ SER p. 41.

⁴⁹ SER p. 42.

⁵⁰ SER Appendix D.

⁵¹ SER Appendix E.

⁵² SER p. 12.

programme. The recent move to the new Amare building has already facilitated a more organic collaboration between department heads and coordinators, as well as with teaching and support staff, as they are all situated together.

Furthermore, the review team considers that in terms of policy, the alignment of topics between the plans at university, conservatoire and department levels is adequate and presents opportunities for further consideration. This appreciation also extends to the range of structural meetings across departments and with the conservatoire directorate.

The review team scores the programme as follows in relation to MusiQuE standard 6.2.

Standard 6.2	Bachelor of Music
The programme is supported by an appropriate organisational structure and clear decision-making processes.	Fully compliant

3. Student assessment

MusiQuE standard 3.1 – Student admission

There are clear criteria for student admission, based on an assessment of their artistic/academic suitability for the programme.

Factual information

The rules relating to admission, education, assessment and examination in the Bachelor of Music programme are laid down in the Education and Examination Regulations (EER) of the Royal Conservatoire. The EER are revised annually in consultation with the Study Programme Committee, the Exam Committee and the Council of Representatives. The full text of the conservatoire's EER can be found in the Conservatoire's Study Guide⁵³ and on the website.

In order to be admitted into the programme, candidates must have completed secondary school (or possess an equivalent certificate) and pass an entrance exam. Given that the language of instruction is English, a sufficient command of both written and spoken English is also required. According to the EER, the criteria for admission via an entrance examination as referred to in Article 7.29 of the Higher Education and Research Act are set out in the section 'Entry Requirements' on the pages of the individual programmes on the Royal Conservatoire's website. In the case of the Bachelor of Music programme, the entry requirements for each discipline can be found on a dedicated page of the conservatoire's website www.koncon.nl/en/apply. The same website section guides students through the online application process.

In so far as enrolment figures are concerned, the review team was informed during the session with the institution management that there are agreements among the different conservatoires in the Netherlands about the total number of Bachelor of Music students they can enrol every year. Provided the Royal Conservatoire remains within its share of students, the departments and sub-disciplines are at liberty to accept a few more or less students every year, depending on the capacity of the staff.

The panel gathered from the self-evaluation documents and the discussions during the site visit that the Critical Friends judge the selection process to be thorough. Moreover, the programme and its respective disciplines tend to attract the right students: the Critical Friends perceive the student population enrolled in the programmes at the conservatoire to be highly qualified and representing a large variety of nationalities.⁵⁴

During the visit, Bachelor of Music students indicated that they had obtained good quality information from the website and the programme staff to assist them in the application process. They also thought the entrance exam was well explained before and was organised in line with the information provided.

As a consequence of the pandemic all entrance exams took place online in 2020 and 2021. This proved a successful method of selection due to the high number of international applications and taking into consideration issues with regards to accessibility, equity, and ecological sustainability. As a result, it was decided to continue online entrance exams in

⁵³ SER Appendix J.

⁵⁴ SER p. 46.

the post-pandemic years 2022 and 2023.⁵⁵ The discussion with the institutional and programme management revealed that, on the one hand, there has been an undiminished interest in coming to study at the Royal Conservatoire, notwithstanding the pandemic. On the other hand, the quality of the recordings and the conditions / circumstances of auditioning varied considerably per student. Hence, department heads indicated that – in hindsight – they might have missed some very good-quality candidates due to poor quality recordings and difficult auditioning conditions, while a few others had been accepted who – again in hindsight – did not fully live up to expectations during their study.

Furthermore, the review team was informed by the programme management that there is no automatic ‘throughput’ from Bachelor to Master programme: bachelor students who envisage continuing their studies upon graduation, prepare in the fourth year of their bachelor study a Personal Activity Plan and a Master (Project) Plan. These plans are submitted to the committee of examiners before they take the practical entrance examination for the Master programme.

During the visit, the review team inquired about two elements related to admission: selection criteria and enrolment data. Firstly, the self-evaluation report contained little information on the selection criteria, i.e. on how the programme and its respective departments organise the selection of those students who fulfil all admission requirements. According to the institution management, the selection of students is governed by the respective departments, and is based on their application portfolio and their audition. Information on the assessment and selection criteria is available in the discipline-specific application form and is shared with students prior to their audition. During the visit, students confirmed to the review team that they knew on what aspects they would be judged in their audition and how they would be selected.

Secondly, the review team noted that there was little quantitative information in the materials on the number of persons interested in the programme, completing the application form, fulfilling all eligibility criteria, passing the audition/selection, and eventually enrolling in the programme. According to the institution management, this information is available at the level of the departments but not necessarily aggregated in detail at the central level. During the visit, the review team received a detailed overview per department and sub-discipline of the students who had applied and were accepted for the forthcoming academic year 2023-2024. According to this document, 621 students from 62 countries had applied; 154 students (25%) had been accepted.

Reflection by the review team

The review team considers that admission gets adequate attention at the Royal Conservatoire in general, and in the Bachelor of Music programme in particular. The information on admission requirements and application is comprehensive and transparent. While online auditioning has its pros and cons, the review team believes that over all the Bachelor of Music programme tends to attract relevant students who are artistically and academically suitable. Every cohort, moreover, has a very international composition, which aligns well with the profile of the conservatoire and the programme.

⁵⁵ SER p. 47.

Taking on board the additional information, the review team thinks that admission is well organised and contributes to the Bachelor of Music programme selecting overall the best possible candidates. Nonetheless, the review team encourages the institution to make the selection process used during auditions as transparent as the admission requirements and procedures. Such additional clarity would also help from a managerial/strategic perspective when discussing the distribution of resources between the departments, if needed. As a point for administrative improvement in the future, the conservatoire may want to collect more aggregate data on the entire selection process and use it as an additional instrument for quality enhancement and performance monitoring.

The review team scores the programme as follows in relation to MusiQuE standard 3.1.

Standard 3.1	Bachelor of Music
There are clear criteria for student admission, based on an assessment of their artistic/academic suitability for the programme.	Fully compliant

MusiQuE standard 2.3 – Assessment

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

Factual information

The Royal Conservatoire uses different ways to assess whether students fulfil the course requirements. While assessment in the Bachelor of Music programme aligns with the overall provisions of the conservatoire, each department organises assessment in its discipline-specific way to ensure that the assessment fits the requirements and objectives of the respective courses.⁵⁶ Many courses adopt the ‘four-eyes principle’, in which two teachers are involved in the assessment of written work with the aim to increase objectivity in grading. In performance and composition courses, students have to play, sing or present during artistic presentations in front of the committee of examiners, an assessment panel consisting of teachers of the conservatoire. For the assessment of the final presentations, a qualified external examiner is added to the panel of teachers. The Royal Conservatoire is increasingly using international external examiners in committees of examiners. These international experts not only judge the quality of the individual performance but also relate the level of the students to international standards.

While the Conservatoire has always aspired to be as transparent as possible, there has been critical feedback from students about assessment and feedback process in the period up to 2021. The students felt there was a disparity among departments and individual modules on both the grading system, and the quality of the feedback. Some modules are pass/fail from bachelor 1-3, and then graded in bachelor 4. Furthermore, the quality of the feedback can be disparate, which impacts a students’ understanding of where they lie on the qualification / assessment spectrum.⁵⁷

As part of its external review according to NVAO requirements, the review team studied a sample of 20 final presentations (from the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022) and their evaluations. Although the review team agreed in a qualified majority of cases with the overall grade given to the final presentation, the way this grade had been motivated in the evaluation form and the way the committees of examiners had connected their evaluation to the learning outcomes was in many cases rather limited, by incomplete or unfocussed comments on the examination forms. Acknowledging the issue, the institution and programme management indicated during the site visit that these flaws are being addressed.

In order to mitigate the concerns and improve the quality, the Royal Conservatoire launched an extensive enhancement project on Assessment & Feedback that was still running at the time of the review team’s visit.⁵⁸ Key elements of the project are: (i) reviewing and harmonising the course descriptions, with particular attention to the connection between course objectives and assessment; (ii) building assessment and feedback expertise among teachers; (iii) formulating criteria for performance assessment in artistic development; and (iv) strengthening the role of the Exam Committee.

⁵⁶ SER p. 47 and Appendix L.

⁵⁷ SER p. 47.

⁵⁸ SER pp. 48-49.

During the visit, the review team discussed at length the different components of this Assessment & Feedback project with all relevant stakeholders: management, staff, students and Exam Committee. While the harmonisation of course descriptions and the professionalisation of the staff has been addressed in other sections of this report, the review team noted that the position of the Exam Committee has successfully been enhanced. Moreover, a pilot exercise was set up to formulate more transparent and objective criteria for performance assessment. In three departments new dedicated assessment forms were used during the final presentations in spring 2022 where examiners were asked to write down their comments during the performance on the basis of the assessment criteria. Following the positive outcome of the pilot, the evaluation forms for the final presentation were adjusted across all departments and implemented in the academic year 2022-2023. During the visit, the review team studied the new template for the evaluation of final presentations and found that it indeed constitutes a major improvement compared to the previous forms. It was noted though, that students were unable yet to assess the impact of this change, as the evaluation forms were only being piloted at the time the review took place.

Reflection by the review team

The review team gathered from the materials received, but also from Bachelor of Music students and staff that the provisions for assessment (assessment methods, content of examinations, criteria for assessment) are clearly stipulated in the course descriptions in the respective curriculum handbooks. While Bachelor of Music students share a similar framework of learning outcomes, the ways in which students are trained to demonstrate and assessed to have achieved these outcomes differ per discipline. However, the review team noted that there is sufficient awareness among the departments about the overall assessment framework, which in turn assures that all Bachelor of Music students, irrespective of their discipline, are in a position to demonstrate the achieved learning outcomes.

Following its discussions on the conservatoire's Assessment & Feedback project, the review team considers that good progress has been made in implementing the key elements of the project. The discussion with Exam Committee members demonstrated that both the individual members and the committee as a whole have good expertise and constitute a trusted backbone of the conservatoire and the Bachelor of Music programme in assuring the quality of assessment. Furthermore, the review team noted during the four final presentations it attended on site that the new assessment forms are being used effectively: both the quantitative element (deciding on the final grade) and the qualitative part (motivating the grade along the key dimensions of the intended learning outcomes) are followed meticulously, which in turn leads to more objectivity, consistency, and transparency. Moreover, all members of the respective committees of examiners – chair, committee members and external examiner - were knowledgeable about the criteria and procedures of this collective inter-subjective method of assessment. Going forward, the main task of the Bachelor of Music programme and its teachers / examiners will be to ensure that students experience the impact of these changes through better quality evaluation forms featuring systematic and informative feedback.

Taking on board the additional information, the review team thinks that the conservatoire and the Bachelor of Music programme currently have an adequate assessment system in place. It welcomes the efforts that have been made since the previous accreditation visit and acknowledges the results of the enhanced Assessment & Feedback process to provide parity across disciplines, and greater transparency and understanding for students.

The review team scores the programme as follows in relation to MusiQuE standard 2.3.

Standard 2.3	Bachelor of Music
The assessment methods are clearly defined and demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes.	Fully compliant

4. Achieved learning outcomes

Please note that part of the information and analysis included under this section can also be found in the Assessment report under NVAO standard 4.

MusiQuE standard 3.2 – Student progression, achievement and employability

The programme has mechanisms to formally monitor and review the progression, achievement and subsequent employability of its students.

Factual information

Further to what was mentioned under standards 1, 2.1 and 2.3, the review team acknowledges the efforts that have been made since the previous accreditation visit to align course contents and programme objectives. In order to demonstrate that all intended learning outcomes are covered by the courses in the curriculum, matrices have been developed that show the connection between the programme objectives and the courses. Equally, in each course description the codes of the programme objectives addressed in the course are listed to show this connection. This information is provided to students in the respective Curriculum Handbooks.⁵⁹

Student progress is recorded in the study tracking system Osiris.⁶⁰ The aim of Osiris is for students, teachers and members of staff to have access to all relevant information on programmes, study progress and assessment results via a single portal. The study tracking system is fully operational for all programmes: students, teachers, tutors, heads of department, and management are able to log in and view the latest details on progress, grades, number of credits gained, and the remaining courses still to be completed by students. The team of tutors has the responsibility to stay in touch with all Bachelor of Music students in the first, second and third years of the programme and assist them with keeping track of and reflect on their study progress. It is worth noting that the students positively commended the tutoring system, but questioned why it was not included in the fourth year, which is arguably the year when students facing graduation would need additional guidance and support. Furthermore, the review team noted that the disparity of feedback received during examinations (see standard 2.3 above), may lead at times to a certain level of uncertainty that the students reported as to whether their progression was on the right track.

Every Bachelor of Music student completes the four-year study with a final presentation. In this presentation students do not demonstrate all programme objectives. However, all 51 learning outcomes of the AEC framework will have been addressed and assessed in the run-up to this final graduation test. Once the students have passed all required courses and gained all necessary credits, they can obtain the degree. The Exam Committee plays a crucial role in this process: the Bachelor of Music diploma will only be handed out to the student when the Osiris system shows that a minimum of 240 ECTS is obtained and all required courses have been passed. The conferral of the diploma is done by the Exam Committee, which gives out the degree following a final check of the information available in Osiris.⁶¹

⁵⁹ SER p. 52 and Appendix L.

⁶⁰ SER pp. 52-53.

⁶¹ SER pp. 52-53.

During the visit, the review team obtained extensive information and clarification from management, staff, and the Exam Committee that by successfully passing all courses in the four-year programme, students demonstrate that they have achieved all learning outcomes / programme objectives. In order to measure progress, students pass a comprehensive exam at the end of year one (propaedeutic phase), some (depending on the discipline) pass another exam at the end of year two, and all students are assessed again at the end of year three to establish that they are on track towards graduation and “ready” to enter the fourth year. During the site visit, members of the review team were able to attend a final presentation from a fourth-year student who had been advised in year three to undertake additional preparation, which was accomplished to achieve an adequate grade from the committee of examiners. Although the review team did not have data on the exact number (or proportion) of students for whom such additional work is recommended, the careful tutorial monitoring and regular learning outcomes assessments appears to keep such interventions minimal and their results successful.

Furthermore, the review team gathered from the materials⁶² and discussions that the Royal Conservatoire uses different quantitative and qualitative instruments to monitor the level of achievement of its students. According to the Critical Friends report⁶³, the graduates are well prepared for the profession and demonstrate a very high level that aligns with the requirements of the discipline and the international professional field. A similar appreciation comes from the external examiners who indicated to the review team during the site visit that the criteria used for the assessment of the final presentation fully correspond with the criteria in their own professional practice.

As noted under Standard 2.3 above, the review team studied a representative sample (in terms of discipline and score) of 20 student final presentations, and attended on site four final presentations for which they also observed the internal deliberations on the student performance in the examination committee. Overall, the review team found that the quality of almost all presentations ranged from good to excellent. Team members emphasised the strong musicality and performance presence from most students, the distinctive, innovative artistic visions throughout the works, the good ensemble support from fellow students and/or collaborative professionals, and the level of quality of these presentations especially in terms of craftsmanship – technique and sound. As points for attention, the review team noticed in several cases that the student was not connecting very well with the audience and that several students seem to have opted for in-the-box, middle-of-the-road, school-like presentations lacking projection and strong ideas.

Alumni, from their perspective, are increasingly positive (in the national HBO-Kunstenmonitor, Fine Art Monitor) about the study programme and its professional integration opportunities. The HBO-Kunstenmonitor data that were shared in the self-evaluation report⁶⁴ also indicate that, compared to their fellow graduates at other conservatoires in the Netherlands, alumni from the Royal Conservatoire are more often employed at the appropriate level, self-employed as musicians, and working exclusively as creative or performance artists.

⁶² SER pp. 53-54.

⁶³ SER Appendix I.

⁶⁴ SER p. 54.

Based on information provided in the self-evaluation report⁶⁵, around 30% of the conservatoire's Bachelor of Music graduates obtain one of the highly competitive positions on the Master of Music programme at the conservatoire, while a number of others do so at other institutions. About half of the alumni work as teachers. Apart from the period following the pandemic, there has been hardly any unemployment among Bachelor of Music graduates.

Finally, the Royal Conservatoire has enhanced its alumni policy.⁶⁶ During the visit, the alumni officer presented the online platform that enables alumni to virtually find, meet, and connect with fellow alumni. On the platform, alumni are invited to build their own profile and biography, and they can see and find others by name or geographical location. The data gathered through the platform gives the institution and the programme insight into the progress, achievements and subsequent employability of the alumni. Since its launch in 2019, the platform holds nearly 1800 active alumni records and this number is growing steadily; however, the full potential for gathering information about the working life of alumni has not yet unfolded.

Reflection by the review team

The review team considers that students who graduate the Bachelor of Music programme have achieved the intended learning outcomes formulated in the AEC framework for first cycle studies. Students manage to do so because, irrespective of the discipline, the programme is set up in such a way that all programme objectives are addressed and assessed in the courses and the intermediate exams that precede the final presentation.

The sample of final presentations which the review team studied at distance and experienced on site confirmed this observation: in almost all cases the final presentations were of a level that exceeds expectations of a typical bachelor exam. As a positive encouragement for the future, the review team thinks the programme may further explore possible avenues to stimulate students to strengthen the individual artistic dimension of their final presentations and better demonstrate their personal vision and creativity.

The review team concludes based on the evidence collected that students who successfully finish the Bachelor of Music programme move on to either relevant (self-) employment or follow-up study in their specialisation. This appreciation does not come as a surprise given the level of competency and artistry demonstrated in the final presentations.

Based on the written materials and the discussions on site, the review team commends the Royal Conservatoire for the number and variety of methods it uses to monitor the level of progress and achievement of its students. Similarly, the review team is impressed by the recent efforts of the conservatoire to keep track of its graduates through the new alumni platform.

In addition to these positive findings, the review team was somewhat surprised to notice that only limited quantitative information seems to be available on the individual

⁶⁵ SER p. 53.

⁶⁶ SER p. 54 and Appendix O.

graduate profiles in the Bachelor of Music and its respective disciplines. While the self-evaluation report referred to achievements of individual ‘high-fliers’ per specialisation, there was hardly any discipline-specific indication per department/specialisation regarding the professional/educational track that students follow post-graduation (e.g. how many and where do they continue their studies beyond the Royal Conservatoire, how many find employment and in which sectors of the professional field, are they still in the music or related artistic domains five or ten years after graduation, etc.). According to the institution management, the departments know about the individual professional whereabouts of “their” graduates, but do not/have not been asked to systematically collect this information. The review team agrees with the management that it should be possible for programme departments to collect this information more systematically in the future, for both internal use and external review. One way to facilitate this collection of information is through the recently created and properly resourced alumni portal, which looks impressive and should allow more involvement from alumni in the life of the conservatoire.

The review team scores the programme as follows in relation to MusiQuE standard 3.2.

Standard 3.2	Bachelor of Music
The programme has mechanisms to formally monitor and review the progression, achievement and subsequent employability of its students.	Fully compliant

Conclusion

Based on the written self-evaluation documentation and the discussions on site, the review team established that the Bachelor of Music programme at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague fully complies with all standards of the MusiQuE assessment framework it was expected to assess. As a result, the review team recommends the MusiQuE Board to take a positive accreditation decision.

This positive conclusion is based on the following considerations. Firstly, the review team found that the Bachelor of Music programme is embedded in adequate policy frameworks and procedures that are common to the University of the Arts and/or the Royal Conservatoire. This is notably but not exclusively the case in terms of profile, programme objectives, staffing, and quality assurance.

Secondly, the review team observed that at the time of the site visit there is a strong alignment between the profile, learning outcomes, programme curriculum, and assessment methods of the Bachelor of Music programme. The distinctive features of the programme – and in particular its international scope – reflect the priorities of the conservatoire and are effected in the learning outcomes, the curriculum courses, and the assessment system.

Thirdly, the review team noted that since the previous accreditation visit, the conservatoire has put a lot of effort into increasing the quality of the Bachelor of Music programme, among others through the Assessment & Feedback Enhancement Project. In this way, the programme effectively succeeded in enhancing the alignment between programme objectives and course goals, in delivering a student-centred curriculum, in improving the quality of its feedback and assessment forms, and in making course components compatible across disciplines.

Fourthly, the review team realised that the conservatoire's move to the new premises at Amare entails not only an enhancement of its teaching and practicing facilities, but also allows for more cooperation and communication internally among staff and externally with other art organisations.

Fifthly, the review team is particularly impressed by the quality culture that pervades all aspects of the Bachelor of Music programme and is shared among all interviewees it has met during the visit. While quality assurance has always been an important element in the endeavours of the conservatoire, the quality principles and provisions have been taken to a new and model level of excellence in recent years. An additional commendation is noted for the enhancement and championing of the student voice within the multidimensional quality culture.

In addition to this overall appreciation and its five commendations, the review team invites the conservatoire and the programme to continue the recent initiatives on cross-disciplinary curriculum innovation and on improvements to feedback and assessment. The first results are promising but require further monitoring and implementation.

The review team has no specific recommendations for improvement, only a few points for administrative attention in the future. Firstly, the work preceding the site visit has shown that the conservatoire and the Bachelor of Music programme could do more in terms of collecting quantitative information on admission and selection, as well as on the professional whereabouts of its graduates. Secondly, there is work to do in archiving the full set of final presentation materials.

Since the previous accreditation visit, the Royal Conservatoire has lived through 'interesting times'—the pandemic, the move to Amare, the increased attention to social safety, the revised governance situation at the university—and has worked hard to enhance the quality of its educational offerings. All these events and developments have had significant impact on the institution. According to the review team, the Royal Conservatoire could use the forthcoming accreditation period to devise a new strategy that takes stock of both the 'historic' features of the institution and the new opportunities that shape its exceptional profile.

Annexes

Annex 1. Administrative data

Administrative data regarding the programme	
Nomenclature of the programme in CROHO	Bachelor of Music / Bachelor Muziek
Orientation and level of the programme	Professional bachelor
Number of credits	240 ECTS
Length of the programme	4 years
Graduate profiles and disciplines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classical Music + instrument • Jazz + instrument/vocals • Early Music + instruments • Organ • Vocal Studies: Classical Music and Early Music • Conducting: Choral Conducting, Wind Band / Fanfare / Brass Band • Theory of Music • Composition • Sonology • Art of Sound: Producing, Recording, Sound Reinforcement
Location(s)	Royal Conservatoire The Hague
Mode(s) of study	Full-time
Language	English
CROHO registration number	34739

Administrative data regarding the institution	
Name of the institution	Hogeschool der Kunsten Den Haag (University of the Arts The Hague), Faculteit Muziek en Dans – Koninklijk Conservatorium (Royal Conservatoire)
Status of the institution	Publicly funded institution providing higher education
Outcome of the Institutional Audit	Positive (2020)

The bachelor programmes and the home institution are set up according to the rules stipulated in the Dutch law for higher education and scientific research (WHW – Wet op het Hoger Onderwijs en Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek). These rules regulate the funding, structure, admission and governance of Dutch higher education. The University of the Arts The Hague is one of the institutions that have been specifically mentioned as specialised institutions for higher education in an annex of the law. The formal recognition of the institution and its programmes is based on

the accreditation system as currently in place in The Netherlands. In 1990, the Royal Conservatoire merged with the Royal Academy of Art to form the University of the Arts The Hague. The two faculties jointly offer the ArtScience Interfaculty and the Interfaculty School for Young Talent.

Annex 2. Overview of the compliance with the standards and strengths and recommendations / suggestions for improvement

The review team concludes that the programme complies with the *MusiQuE Standards for Programme Review* as follows:

Quality culture, critical friends and accreditation	
MusiQuE standard 7	Bachelor of Music
Compliance level	Fully compliant
<p>Strengths and commendations The Royal Conservatoire has developed a clear and well-elaborated vision of quality culture and has translated this vision in sound quality assurance and enhancement procedures and tools. These efforts have led to an exemplary quality culture that is shared at all levels (conservatoire, programmes, and departments) and by all stakeholders (management, lecturers, support staff, and students) in the institution.</p> <p>The review team was impressed by both the student panels and the Critical Friends as relevant instruments of internal and external quality assurance through their contributions to gathering discipline-specific information that helps departments and the programme improve educational quality. The reports of the Critical Friends are used on an ongoing basis, in parallel with the Dutch accreditation process, to monitor the ongoing quality of the programmes and the teaching-learning environment and assessment.</p> <p>The review team commends the Royal Conservatoire for the way it has designed the quality assurance and enhancement system and extends this appreciation to the departments involved in the Bachelor of Music programme for their implementation of the system and for the ways in which they embrace the quality culture paradigm.</p> <p>Recommendations / suggestions for enhancement The review team suggests that the institution may wish to align Critical Friends visits with the final presentation cycle to add further value to their programme-level observations. In addition, it is recommended that the institution find a way for Critical Friends to share findings with each other post-visit.</p>	
Intended learning outcomes	
MusiQuE standard 1	Bachelor of Music
Compliance level	Fully compliant

Strengths and commendations The review team noted the clear alignment of the mission of the university, the ambitions of the conservatoire, and the objectives of the Bachelor of Music programme.

The choice of the conservatoire to adopt the international framework of AEC learning outcomes is not only valuable as such, but also confirms the international ambitions of the institution, its departments, and the bachelor programme. The programme allows students to take ownership of their personalized learning experiences and gives them space to not only display a high level of instrumental/vocal skill but also to demonstrate individual artistic personality, be reflective and inquisitive, and function in a diverse artistic environment.

The review team commends the university, the conservatoire, and the programme for the way its mission, vision, ambitions, and objectives are aligned not only on paper, but also in the day-to-day reality of the Bachelor of Music programme, thus enabling the conservatoire to prepare artist-musicians for the current and constantly developing professional world.

Recommendations / suggestions for enhancement The review team sees two opportunities for further enhancement in the future. The integration of the conservatoire into the university and the move to the new Amare building that houses several artistic organisations provides an opportune moment for the conservatoire to reaffirm its position nationally and internationally, and to reformulate a vision and mission that encompasses the new internal and external situation.

The programme may also want to seek ways to consider simplifying its learning outcomes while still adhering to the relevant international framework (noting also that the AEC learning outcomes are currently being revised).

MusiQuE standard 2.2

Bachelor of Music

Compliance level

Fully compliant

Strengths and commendations The review team found internationalisation to be an integral component of the University of the Arts' strategy and focused on improving the quality of teaching and research, and on enriching the educational community. The conservatoire has a strong international orientation that goes beyond the terms of this standard. The programme uses the international AEC learning outcomes; the language of instruction and of curriculum documentation is English; students, teachers, and support staff take advantage of international mobility opportunities; the programme employs international peers as Critical Friends and external examiners; and the current parallel review process employs both Dutch NVAO accreditation and MusiQuE quality enhancement standards.

The review team commends the conservatoire for its outstanding level of internationalisation. Affecting all stakeholders, internationalisation has become part of the quality culture for the institution and the programme.

Recommendations / suggestions for enhancement None

MusiQuE standard 8.1

Bachelor of Music

Compliance level	Fully compliant
<p>Strengths and commendations Creating dynamic and active partnerships with organisations in the music profession and society at large is a distinguishing feature of the conservatoire's profile which the Bachelor of Music programme managed to mirror successfully. The conservatoire and the programme are becoming increasingly connected to the social, cultural, and artistic context of the city and surroundings of The Hague. The recent move to the Amare building has opened additional opportunities to reach out to other arts disciplines, and to devise new ventures for collaboration.</p> <p>The review team commends the different curricular opportunities for Bachelor of Music students to practice as musicians in society as an integral — credited — part of their study. The review team considers 'curricular projects' such as entrepreneurial bootcamp, neighbourhood musicians, external educational activities, and career development projects as examples of good practice.</p> <p>Recommendations / suggestions for enhancement None</p>	
MusiQuE standard 8.2	Bachelor of Music
Compliance level	Fully compliant
<p>Strengths and commendations The conservatoire takes a proactive approach in reaching out to members of the profession. Regular meetings with a wide variety of professional stakeholders constitute a platform for discussing the expectations and needs of the sector, which are then accommodated into the learning outcomes and programme content. The review team commends the conservatoire, and the Bachelor of Music in particular, for the breadth and depth with which the professional field is involved in the ongoing monitoring and development of the programme.</p> <p>Recommendations / suggestions for enhancement None</p>	
MusiQuE standard 8.3	Bachelor of Music
Compliance level	Fully compliant
<p>Strengths and commendations The review team was very satisfied with the way the conservatoire provides information about the Bachelor of Music programme that is comprehensive, clear and reflective of the reality of the programme. The bilingual website is user-friendly, easy to navigate, and written in good-quality English. The curriculum handbooks provide detailed content on the programme disciplines. The review team commends the programme and the conservatoire for the attention and care invested in the design and development of these information tools and encourages the faculty and staff to maintain the high level of service going forward.</p> <p>Recommendations / suggestions for enhancement None</p>	
Teaching and learning environment	
MusiQuE standard 2.1	Bachelor of Music

Compliance level	Fully compliant
<p>Strengths and commendations The review team commends the conservatoire for the way it changed the structure of the Bachelor of Music programme since the last accreditation. The new structure allows for more alignment, comparability, and convergence between the curricula, and offers a wide range of electives. The review team was very pleased to note the widespread support for greater opportunities in cross-departmental cooperation.</p> <p>Student-centred learning is a defining element throughout the programme, and research, alongside education and production, is a key pillar for the conservatoire.</p> <p>The bachelor level focuses on four academic skills which are addressed throughout the curriculum and prepare students for more advanced degrees.</p> <p>The checks and balances within the programme structure as well as the systemic support from staff and tutors helps ensure student success.</p> <p>The conservatoire is to be commended for its recent development and implementation of a social safety policy.</p> <p>Recommendations / suggestions for enhancement The review team encourages the programme to continue to monitor and adjust its structure in line with recent efforts and in ongoing discussion with stakeholder groups.</p>	
MusiQuE standard 4.1	Bachelor of Music
Compliance level	Fully compliant
<p>Strengths and commendations The members of the teaching staff responsible for the Bachelor of Music programme have the appropriate qualifications and international reputations, along with the requisite expertise (both artistic and academic as well as didactic). They are evidently enthusiastic and supportive of their students, programmes, and colleagues.</p> <p>The review team commends the conservatoire for its staff professionalisation policy and activities, which has allowed many teachers to enhance their pedagogical and assessment skills and, in many cases, to top-up their second cycle credentials with a master's degree. In this regard, the review team finds the Artist as Teacher programme a noteworthy example of good practice.</p> <p>Recommendations / suggestions for enhancement None</p>	
MusiQuE standard 4.2	Bachelor of Music
Compliance level	Fully compliant
<p>Strengths and commendations The review team noted that many staff hold composite appointments that add various administrative duties or teaching assignments to their main roles. Overall, the review team considers that there is sufficient teaching staff to deliver the Bachelor of Music programme effectively.</p>	

The review team commends the conservatoire for its efforts to integrate the range of teaching staff in ways that show their commitment to the students and ownership of the programme.

Recommendations / suggestions for enhancement None

MusiQuE standard 5.1	Bachelor of Music
Compliance level	Fully compliant

Strengths and commendations The review team was impressed by the quality of artistic and educational spaces that the Royal Conservatoire now offers, since its move to Amare in September 2021. The move to a new building had a boosting effect on the profile of the conservatoire: students are offered more opportunities for engagement with professional organisations and the community; the design of the new building facilitates interaction among staff and across departments; the physical and online resources of the library are impressive.

The review team commends the conservatoire for its substantial investment in new musical instruments and recording equipment which brought a significant improvement, especially for students and staff in the Sonology and Art of Sound department.

Recommendations / suggestions for enhancement In discussions with students, the review team noted—beyond their understandable satisfaction with the excellent performance and teaching facilities of Amare—the desire for more dedicated informal student spaces that would foster a community feeling. The wish to have places to post notices and the concern for the commercial-level costs of available food services were also cited. The review team drew these concerns to the attention of the conservatoire management and hopes that appropriate solutions, comparable to those that are so well serving teaching and support staff, can be found.

MusiQuE standard 5.3	Bachelor of Music
Compliance level	Fully compliant

Strengths and commendations The review team thinks highly of the breadth, depth, and quality of the support services and the demonstrated commitment, professionalism, and determination of the support staff.

The review team commends the conservatoire's policy to have a dedicated budget for the continuous professional development of support staff, including mobility and training schemes, comparable to that available to teaching staff.

Recommendations / suggestions for enhancement None

MusiQuE standard 6.1	Bachelor of Music
Compliance level	Fully compliant

Strengths and commendations The review team was pleased to note how the communication challenges highlighted in the previous accreditation visit were addressed. Both the content of communications and the multiple modes of transmission are appropriate. In particular, the review team commends the conservatoire for the way in which the voice of students is taken on board in the internal communications process.

Recommendations / suggestions for enhancement None

MusiQuE standard 6.2

Bachelor of Music

Compliance level

Fully compliant

Strengths and commendations The review team commends the Royal Conservatoire for its initiative to adjust the traditional 'vertical' organizational structure of individual instruments and disciplines with the aim to enhance cooperation among departments, as well as the comparability and compatibility across disciplines in the Bachelor of Music programme. The recent move to Amare has also facilitated a more organic collaborative environment.

Recommendations / suggestions for enhancement In terms of policy, the review team finds that the alignment of plans at the university, conservatoire, and department levels is currently adequate, yet presents strategic opportunities for further consideration. As noted above in standard 1, the new internal and external structures present an opportune moment for the conservatoire to use its evolving internal collaborative and communications successes to reaffirm its position nationally and internationally, and to reformulate its vision and mission towards that end.

Student assessment

MusiQuE standard 3.1

Bachelor of Music

Compliance level

Fully compliant

Strengths and commendations The review team found the admissions criteria to be clear, and the requirements and application process comprehensive, transparent, and based on an assessment of artistic/academic suitability for the specific discipline of the programme. The review team concluded that the admissions process is well-organized and contributes to the success of the programme.

Recommendations / suggestions for enhancement The review team suggests that the selection process used during the auditions be made as transparent as the admission requirements and procedures. Further, the conservatoire may wish to consider ways in which the complete spectrum of admissions data be collected and aggregated at the institutional level so that it can be used as an additional instrument for quality enhancement and performance monitoring.

MusiQuE standard 2.3

Bachelor of Music

Compliance level

Fully compliant

Strengths and commendations Assessment methods, examination content, and evaluation criteria are clearly stipulated in course descriptions and curriculum handbooks. Although department/discipline-level assessment processes differ, there is sufficient awareness of the overall assessment framework to ensure demonstrated learning outcomes at the programme level. The review team discussed at length with various stakeholder the different components of the evolving Assessment & Feedback project and commends the conservatoire on its significant progress to date, including the revised examination forms (with their improved alignment of assessment criteria with specific learning outcomes).

Recommendations / suggestions for enhancement As part of its parallel external review according to NVAO requirements, the review team identified a number of gaps and inconsistencies in the evaluation reports and accompanying documentation. The review team made several suggestions to the conservatoire management to address these issues, many of which are already being addressed through the internal Assessment & Feedback project. The conservatoire should continue to follow through on that project to complete and implement its key elements: alignment of course description objectives and assessment, building teaching assessment expertise, formulating criteria for assessment of artistic development, and strengthening the role of the Exam Committee.

Achieved learning outcomes

MusiQuE standard 3.2	Bachelor of Music
Compliance level	Fully compliant

Strengths and commendations The review team was pleased to note the recent positive efforts made by the programme and the conservatoire to detail the alignment of course contents, programme objectives, and achieved learning outcomes.

Student progress is tracked in the Osiris system, which is fully operational and accessible for students, teachers, tutors, heads of departments, and management.

The review team commends the conservatoire for the number and variety of methods it uses to monitor the level of progress and achievement of its students. All learning outcomes of the AEC framework are addressed and assessed in the lead-up to the final presentation.

Recommendations / suggestions for enhancement The review team encourages the conservatoire to further explore possible avenues to stimulate students to strengthen the individual artistic dimension of their final presentations and better demonstrate their personal vision and creativity.

Students reported that disparity of feedback may lead to some uncertainty about their state of progress, an issue being partially addressed through the tightening up of evaluation criteria and learning outcomes in the current Assessment & Feedback project.

The review team recommends that, while department-level anecdotal reporting on graduates is impressive, more quantitative information be gathered and made available by aggregating the data for professional/educational tracks that students

follow post-graduation, and by surveying them at various intervals several years out. The recent development of the alumni portal is impressive and should contribute to improving such monitoring.

Annex 3. Definitions of compliance levels

According to MusiQuE's internal regulations, review teams are asked to make use of the following definitions when defining the compliance level in relation to the MusiQuE standards:

- *Fully compliant.* A standard is fully compliant when the approaches, structures or mechanisms relevant to that standard are fully implemented in a coherent and consistent way.
- *Substantially compliant.* A standard is substantially compliant when the standard is in place, while minor gaps have been observed but the manner of implementation is mostly effective. In such cases review teams are asked to include a recommendation as to how full compliance can be achieved.
- *Partially compliant.* A standard is partially compliant when the standard is in place, while significant gaps have been observed or the manner of implementation is not sufficiently effective. In such cases review teams are asked to include a recommendation as to how full compliance can be achieved or a condition⁶⁷.
- *Not compliant.* A standard is not compliant when the approaches, structures or mechanisms relevant to that standard are lacking or implemented inadequately. In such cases review teams are asked to include a strong recommendation or a condition⁶⁸.

⁶⁷ Conditions can only be formulated in accreditation reports and not in quality enhancement review reports.

⁶⁸ Conditions can only be formulated in accreditation reports and not in quality enhancement review reports.

Annex 4. Overview of appendices studied by the review team

The following documents were provided to the review team as appendices to the self-evaluation report in advance of the site visit:

Appendices to the self-evaluation report	
A	<i>Quality Culture at the Royal Conservatoire 2020 and beyond</i>
B	<i>Mapping Critical Friends guidelines with MusiQuE-NVAO Standards</i>
C	<i>MusiQuE Handbook for Critical Friends Review 2022</i>
D	<i>University of the Arts, The Hague Institutional Plan 2019-2024</i>
E	<i>Faculty Plan Royal Conservatoire 2022-2024</i>
F	<i>Internationalisation at the Royal Conservatoire Status Report and Policy Objectives 2021-2024</i>
G	<i>Social Safety Action Plan KC</i>
H	<i>Decision on Accreditation for the Bachelor of Music programme 2016 – NVAO</i> <i>Decision on Accreditation for the Bachelor of Music programme 2016 - MusiQuE</i>
I	<i>Overall analysis of Critical Friends Reports 2016-2022</i>
J	<i>Study Guide Royal Conservatoire 2022-2023</i>
K	<i>AEC learning outcomes 2017</i>
L	<i>Curriculum Handbooks</i>
M	<i>Bachelor Electives and Minors Handbook 2022-2023</i>
N	<i>'The Artist as Teacher' flyer 2022-2023</i>
O	<i>Royal Conservatoire – Alumni Community Explained</i>

Prior to the site visit, the Review Team asked the programme for additional information to substantiate its judgement on both NVAO and MusiQuE standards. During the visit, moreover, the programme provided materials on specific issues that had been discussed during the sessions. Additional information related to:

- teaching staff deployment of teaching staff
- staff recruitment policy
- external partners of the programme and its disciplines
- artistic projects
- manual for external examiners
- procedure and assessment of final presentations

- curriculum handbooks 2023-2024
- number of applicants and admissions
- career skills assessment
- alumni portal

As part of its review of NVAO Standard on Achieved Learning Outcomes, the review team selected a representative sample of 20 final works and their evaluation forms from Bachelor of Music students who graduated in 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. In line with GDPR-related requirements, information about the final projects (including the names of the graduates, their student numbers and other contextual information) has not been included in this report.

Annex 5. Site visit schedule

Venue: Royal Conservatoire, AMARE building, The Hague.

Tuesday 6 June 2023

08.45 Arrival Review Team
09.30 Tour through Amare building
10.30 Meeting with KC Management
11.45 Meeting with Heads of Department
12.45 Lunch break and internal meeting
13.45 Meeting with Students – session 1
14.35 Meeting with Students – session 2
15.10 Internal meeting Review Team
16.20 Final presentation Vocal Classical Music
18.00 Dinner
20.30 Final presentation Jazz Drums

Wednesday 7 June 2023

08.45 Internal meeting Review Team
09.15 Meeting with teaching staff
10.30 Meeting with support staff
11.30 Meeting with Exam Committee
12.15 Meeting on artistic projects, professional integration and alumni portal
13.00 Lunch and internal meeting
13.15 Final presentation Art of Sound Producing
14.30 Final presentation Vocal Classical Music
15.45 Visit to the Library
17.00 Meeting with representatives of the profession
18.00 Meeting with Critical Friends (online)
18.45 Internal meeting
19.30 End of day 2

Thursday 8 June 2023

08.45 Internal meeting
09.15 Meeting with Management KC
10.15 Internal deliberations meeting
12.00 Presentation of initial findings
12.30 End of site visit

In line with GDPR-related requirements, the names of individual participants to the meetings with the review team have been omitted in the site visit schedule. Their role in the institution or programmes or their affiliation with external organisations, however, has been retained.



Annex 6. List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full description
AEC	Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen
CROHO	Central Register of Higher Education Programmes
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
MusiQuE	Music Quality Enhancement
NVAO	Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie
SER	Self-evaluation report

