



Programme Review

REPORT

**Master of Music
Master of Sonology**

Royal Conservatoire The Hague

University of The Arts The Hague

The Netherlands

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Introduction

About this report

The Master of Music and Master of Sonology programmes offered by the Royal Conservatoire, the faculty for music and dance of the University of the Arts The Hague in The Netherlands, were visited by an independent review team of international peer-reviewers in the context of a quality enhancement review coordinated by MusiQuE - Music Quality Enhancement. In this report the review team presents its findings in relation 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 self-critical insights about the two master's programmes under review;
- an international review team studied the self-evaluation report and materials, and carried out an online site visit;
- the review team produced the present report.

The review team consisted of the following members:

- Dame Janet Ritterman (Chair), Chancellor of Middlesex University London and Vice President, Royal College of Music, London;
- Mist Thorkelsdottir, Head of International Programs in the Performing Arts at the University of Southern California, Thornton School of Music;
- Jeffrey Sharkey, Principal of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Glasgow;
- Michael Harenberg, Head of Sound Arts studies at the Bern University of the Arts (Switzerland), lecturer, composer and researcher;
- Neil Wallace, Former programme director of De Doelen Concert Hall in Rotterdam, co-founder and director of the Big Idea Foundation, and founder and artistic director of the bi-annual international festival for innovation in choral music International Choral Biennale;
- Isabel González Delgado, Master student in music research at Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya, Barcelona;
- Jef Cox, Secretary.

Context of the review procedure

The review team assessed both the Master of Music and Master of Sonology programmes 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 programmes, 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 based

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 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.



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 report.

However, because of its international profile, the Royal Conservatoire expressed the wish not only to have the Master of Music and Master of Sonology programmes assessed on the basis of the relevant national frameworks, but also to receive feedback on the programmes 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 assessed the programmes also against the MusiQuE standards for programme review. The panel’s findings in relation to the MusiQuE standards are presented in this report.

Structure and scope of this report

In order to bring the national and international frameworks together, the relevant NVAO standards and the MusiQuE standards for programme review were mapped against each other. The institution made use of the mapping to structure its self-evaluation report. As a result, and in line with the mapping, the self-evaluation report was divided into several main thematic chapters addressing the topics indicated in relevant NVAO standards. In turn, these main chapters consisted of sub-chapters addressing the corresponding MusiQuE standards. The review team has adopted this structure with thematic chapters and corresponding MusiQuE standards to give shape to the present report. In this way all the MusiQuE standards can be covered whilst at the same time retaining consistency with the structure of the institution’s self-evaluation report.

The full set of the MusiQuE standards for programme review is 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*.

Context of change and innovation

The review procedure takes place in a unique and innovative context, by combining national and international frameworks and through participation in the ‘Experiment Institutional Accreditation with a Lighter Programme Accreditation’. The ambitious and experimental character of the procedure reflects the ambition of the Royal Conservatoire not only to improve its quality culture still further, but also to strive continually for the enhancement of its programmes in terms of international comparisons.

The review procedure is taking place during the pandemic caused by the Corona virus. In response to the lockdown and the restrictive measures taken, the institution was urged to intensify forms of e-learning and to develop online assessment methods.⁴ In its self-evaluation report, the institution provided the review team with detailed information on how it has responded to the crisis situation and included reflections on how elements of digital teaching and learning are expected to remain embedded in the master’s programmes and to be developed in a way that will

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/>).

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.

⁴ The institution gathered an overview of the information regarding the impact of the pandemic on the education for students, applicants and other stakeholders on a bilingual website (www.koncon.nl/corona).



make them sustainable in the future. Elements relating to these recent changes in the teaching and learning environment and assessment methods will be discussed in the present report under the relevant MusiQuE standards.

The review team was most grateful to the Royal Conservatoire and all staff and students who contributed to the development of the self-evaluation report for preparing such clear and high-quality documentation, for the willingness to welcome the review team in a digital setting, and for engaging in sincere and open discussions with the review team, all amidst the uncertain times occasioned by the pandemic. The review team would like to encourage the institution to make the present 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.



0. Quality culture, critical friends and accreditation

MusiQuE standard 7

Standard: the programme has in place effective quality assurance and enhancement procedures.

The Royal Conservatoire has recently refined its approach to the assessment of the quality of its programmes. The institution has adopted a concept of quality culture which addresses both artistic standards (linked to a particular artistic discipline) as well as educational quality (including generic issues such as the organisation and management of the curriculum, governance, internal and external communication, and student involvement). In its self-evaluation report, the Royal Conservatoire indicates that the most important principles in the 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, designed to facilitate a discussion of the quality of the curriculum and its continuous improvement and intended to increase teachers' and students' engagement with quality assurance. (SER, p. 8)

In the paper *Quality Culture at the Royal Conservatoire: 2020 and beyond*, the institution offers a detailed description of this new approach and gives insights in its most recent experiences with the implementation of the concept of quality culture as well as possibilities for further optimisation of the system. The institution's 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 continual process of evolution. The visual presentation in the form of the lemniscate expresses the intentional transition from the institution's earlier system of quality assurance towards a strong internal quality culture in the programmes and the institution as a whole. (Appendix C - Quality Culture at the Royal Conservatoire: 2020 and beyond)

To put the concept of quality culture into practice, the institution makes use of a wide range of instruments. Internal stakeholders of the study programmes are consulted through, for example, student satisfaction surveys and student panels, subject and project evaluations, and staff satisfaction surveys. External stakeholders are involved through participation in professional stakeholders meetings, alumni surveys, and so on. (SER, p. 9; Appendix C - Quality Culture at the Royal Conservatoire: 2020 and beyond, pp. 6-7) An important recently developed tool to strengthen the external dimension of the quality culture approach is the so-called 'critical friend'.

The institution has designed the critical friend approach in order to provide the departments in the programmes with input for further quality enhancement from an external perspective. Critical friends are respected professional peers who are selected based on their authoritative standing within the discipline of the department in question and their knowledge of higher education. Each department is visited by a critical friend every three years. The critical friend is offered the opportunity to attend lessons, exams and final presentations, to talk to students and teachers, and so on. After the visit, the critical friend produces a report with reflections from an international perspective. In contrast to a regular accreditation visit by a review team in the context of the Dutch accreditation system, the visit by a critical friend is focused on a specific department and not on the programme, thus allowing for more in-depth comments and recommendations. (SER, p. 9; Appendix P - Critical Friends Analysis, 2016-2020; Meeting 1 - management) The individual departments consider the feedback and recommendations from the critical friends and, after discussing these with teachers and students, they incorporate them in their improvement plans. The critical friend is invited again three years later to learn how the recommendations have been implemented. All the steps in the process are described in a comprehensive handbook to support the critical friends in carrying out their task. (Appendix D - Handbook for a Critical Friend Review, 2019)

The heads of the department spoke very positively about the critical friend system. They stressed how valuable the feedback is which they received in the critical friend reports. The input from critical friends is perceived as 'gold' for the departments, not only thanks to its specific character but also because the departments feel that



they can trust the critical friend. The recommendations from critical friends provide the departments with leverage to implement changes and to raise issues at the institutional level with greater confidence. Some heads of department indicated that the critical friends could even be more critical and underlined the importance of bringing in new critical friends after some years to gain different perspectives. When asked how the system could be further developed in the future, an idea was mentioned to select critical friends with experience in connecting the curriculum to the profession, including non-traditional professional career paths of students. (Meeting 3 - heads of department)

The review team also had the opportunity to meet three experts who had visited departments in the Master of Music and Master of Sonology programmes as critical friends. These critical friends expressed the view that they had been well briefed and felt supported throughout the process. They spoke with enthusiasm about the follow-up visit, which allowed them to learn how recommendations had been implemented and to evaluate the impact of the entire exchange. (Meeting 6 - critical friends)

Reflection by the review team

The review team would like to commend the Royal Conservatoire for its self-critical approach. Throughout the meetings during the site visit, the review team noted an enormous desire to move forward and continuously search for ways to strengthen the programmes still further. The quest for enhancement was not only apparent in the various meetings but also in the materials studied by the review team, in which the programmes show a high capacity for self-evaluation. It is clear to the review team that the teams responsible for these programmes are not only self-critical, but also willing to share these self-critical observations with others.

The review team noted that the institution has developed a clear and well-elaborated vision of quality culture, and that the institution has translated this vision in sound quality assurance and enhancement procedures and tools. These are also well implemented and used in the Master of Music and Master of Sonology programmes. The vision of quality culture reflects a thorough awareness of sector-leading initiatives on quality. The review team also noted that the institution actively continues to further refine its approach.

The review team was impressed by the critical friend system and by the deeply committed way in which the departments are engaged in this process. The review team noted that all the steps in the process seem well developed and admired the thoroughness of the exchange between the critical friends and the departments. The review team was particularly impressed by the in-depth view which critical friends can offer in their reports, by the way in which the departments consider their suggestions together with staff and students, and by the follow-up process. The review team welcomes the fact that the critical friends are selected internationally instead of locally. The review team noted strong support for the critical friend approach across both programmes, and in particular with heads of department.

The review team would like to suggest to the Royal Conservatoire that it considers organising an exchange of views between critical friends. Although one might argue that organising such an exchange creates an additional layer of complexity, the review team makes this suggestion in order to ensure the optimal operation of the system. At the moment, the programmes are missing out on relevant information and insights from critical friends, as the observations they share in their reports are almost exclusively focused on the specific departments, while all critical friends to whom the review team spoke had relevant comments to share about the programmes as a whole and their organisational structures. Organising an exchange between different critical friends might offer them a platform to share these insights and discuss them with representatives of the programmes.



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

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



1. Intended learning outcomes

MusiQuE standard 1

Standard: the programme goals are clearly stated and reflect the institutional mission.

- ✓ Please note that parts of the information and analysis included under this standard can also be found in the *Assessment report* under NVAO standard 1 (and the introduction). More information about the purpose and scope of the *Assessment report* can be found in the introduction.

The conservatoire 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. Founded in 1826, the Royal Conservatoire is the oldest music academy in The Netherlands. The Royal Conservatoire and the Royal Academy of Art are each a separate faculty. Together they form the University of the Arts The Hague. (SER, p. 4) The mission of the University of Arts The Hague is formulated as follows: *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.* (SER, p. 16)

In line with this mission, the Royal Conservatoire's principal objective is to train musicians with instrumental/vocal, theoretical and educational, compositional and musical skills of the highest possible artistic standard, each of whom can establish a unique artistic profile, able to function in a variety of artistic and professional contexts, and progressively achieves personal growth. The Royal Conservatoire puts this mission into practice based on three pillars, the 'trinity' of education - research - production:

- Education, because the institution strives to provide music and dance education at the highest level, but also because learning is a lifelong process for both students and teachers, and in fact for anyone who takes the arts and themselves seriously.
- Research, in an academic sense at Leiden University's Academy of Creative and Performing Arts (ACPA), but above all as a permanent attitude that underpins everything that is being done at the institution as a tool for continual reflection.
- Production, because all the expertise, craftsmanship and research lead to the production and presentation of music and dance performances, with the aim of sharing these with as many people as possible. (SER, p. 16)

In the self-evaluation report, the institution explains how this 'trinity' manifests itself in the Master of Music and Master of Sonology programmes. Through the steady development of the research component and the integration of the relevant research results in the domain of the student's main subject, this component has become an integral element of the curriculum of the programmes. By recently adding the professional integration component into the curricula and through various structural cooperation arrangements with several cultural organisations in the professional world, the production dimension has been given more prominence. (SER, p. 16)

The two master's programmes of the Royal Conservatoire under review contain 120 ECTS, equivalent to two years of study.⁵ In these two years, the programmes aim to offer an environment in which students can further develop their personal musical visions and ambitions.

The purpose of the Master of Music programme is not simply to provide a continuation of the bachelor's programme with two more years of individual lessons, but to offer a study programme based on a holistic educational philosophy that will help students to develop their own identity as reflective and entrepreneurial practitioners at a high artistic

⁵ The third master's programme offered by the Royal Conservatoire, the Master of Opera at the Dutch National Opera Academy, is accredited in a separate procedure and is therefore not discussed in this report.



level in the music profession. In the master's programme, research and professional practice occupy a more pronounced position than in the bachelor's programme. While in the bachelor's programme students are prepared for professional practice, the master's programme aims to facilitate the students' immersion and integration in professional practice. This integration is achieved through intensive cooperation with professional partners. To guide the students' development, the curriculum of the Master of Music programme is divided into three domains: artistic development, research and professional integration. Each student carries out a 'Master Project' in which these three domains are combined, thus helping students to identify their place in future professional practice. (Appendix G - Master of Music Handbook, 2020-21 ; SER, p. 16)

The Master of Sonology programme gives students the opportunity to immerse themselves deeply in an area related to their previous studies, making use of their own musical abilities, knowledge and insights. Most students enrolling in the Master of Sonology programme have a bachelor's degree from elsewhere, in areas such as composition of electronic and/or acoustic music, computer science, musicology, music perception, film studies, engineering or as a performing musician. In the master's programme, each student carries out an individual research project. The research projects are highly specific and specialized, but the new knowledge brought into being while realising the project is always linked to the broader context of the field of electroacoustic music. The traditional areas covered in sonology, such as studio composition, computer programming, sound research, digital signal processing, algorithmic composition and the theory of electronic music are still strongly represented in the syllabus, but subjects such as live electronics, improvisation, field recording, and the spatial aspects of sound have become at least as important. (SER, pp. 21-22)

In line with the ambition of the Royal Conservatoire to reflect the variety of artistic and professional contexts in its programmes, the Master of Music and Master of Sonology programmes offer different graduate profiles.⁶ An overview of the graduate profiles which students can choose from to develop their own area of expertise is available in the overview below (Appendix K - Study Guide Royal Conservatoire 2020-21; SER, p. 17):

- Graduate profiles in the Master of Music programme:
 - Classical Music + instrument (Orchestra Master, Ensemble Academy, Ensemble Percussion)
 - European Chamber Music Master (ECMAster)
 - Jazz + instrument / vocals
 - Early Music + instrument
 - European Master of Early Music (EMEM)
 - Organ
 - Vocal Studies: Classical Music, Early Music and Ensemble Singing
 - Conducting: Choral Conducting, Wind Band / Fanfare / Brass Band Conducting and National Master Orchestral Conducting
 - Theory of Music
 - Composition
 - Instrumental and Vocal Learning & Teaching
 - Music Education according to the Kodály Concept
 - ArtScience
 - Art of Sound
 - New Audiences and Innovative Practice (NAIP)

⁶ In the documentation of the institution, graduate profiles are also called 'disciplines'. A 'discipline' is a strand within the programme with its own curriculum and intended learning outcomes. Some disciplines feature additional 'specialisations'. A 'specialisation' is a specific additional component within the curriculum of a discipline.



- Graduate profiles in the Master of Sonology programme:
 - Sonology
 - Instruments & Interfaces
 - Audio Communication & Sonology

In addition to selecting a graduate profile of their choice, students can select electives to gain insights into specific musical subjects or to acquire additional practical skills, with a focus on relevant research literature and the use of different research methodologies. Students can choose from electives offered by the Royal Conservatoire but may also select from a range of courses available at Leiden University. Since 2001, the University of the Arts The Hague and Leiden University have formed a partnership in the field of education and artistic research. The collaboration is embodied in the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts (ACPA), which is part of Leiden University's faculty of humanities. (Appendix N - Master Electives Handbook 2020-21; SER, p. 20)

The self-evaluation report prepared by the institution includes an overview of the most recent developments in both master's programmes (SER, pp. 18-19). These include the following:

- Several new master's specialisations were established in cooperation with professional organisations: the Master specialisation Ensemble Academy with a group of contemporary music ensembles and the Master specialisation Ensemble Percussion with Slagwerk Den Haag (The Hague Percussion Group). The specialisation Orchestra Master with the Residentieorkest (The Hague Philharmonic) was already in existence in 2012.
- A new discipline within the Master of Music was established with the Netherlands Chamber Choir in the area of Ensemble Singing.
- A new discipline within the Master of Music was established by the Art of Sound Department.
- The thematic master's discipline 'aus LICHT' was implemented as a discipline in the years 2017-2019 in cooperation with the Holland Festival and the Dutch National Opera & Ballet, which led to the internationally highly acclaimed performance of sections from Karlheinz Stockhausen's *aus LICHT* during the Holland Festival 2019.⁷
- The master's specialisation Master in Artistic Research (MAR) was successfully transferred to the master's programme at the Royal Academy of Art, as it was more compatible with the learning outcomes and profile of a master's programme in the field of fine arts.
- The master's specialisation T.I.M.E. (This Is Music-theatre Education) was closed down in 2018 due to a lack of compatibility with the Master of Music objectives and insufficient links to other disciplines in the programme.
- Two new Joint European Master Programmes were established as disciplines: the European Chamber Music Master – ECMaster, the European Master for Early Music – EMEM.
- A double degree master's programme Audio Communication & Sonology was established in collaboration with the *Technische Universität Berlin*. The master's discipline Instruments & Interfaces was offered in collaboration with the Studio for Electro-Instrumental Music (STEIM) in Amsterdam since 2011. Unfortunately, STEIM ceased to exist as of 1 January 2021. As a result, the discipline is no longer offered to applicants for 2021–2022.

⁷ *aus LICHT* is a selection of key sections from Karlheinz Stockhausen's *LICHT* cycle. From the whole work's 29 hours of music, the production comprised 15 hours of music performed over three days, capturing the tonal universe of the original cycle.



- As of September 2021, the departments of Classical Music, Early Music and Jazz will offer a specialisation entitled 'Complementary Subject', which will enable students to follow lessons in a second instrument.

The goals of the two master's programmes, including the various disciplines and specialisations mentioned above, are translated in concrete sets of learning outcomes.⁸ The Royal Conservatoire made major efforts to improve the description of the learning outcomes and to clarify how they are embedded in the different disciplines, specialisations and individual courses. In this context, course descriptions have been developed in the standard format of the ECTS Users' Guide across all curricula in order to enhance comparability and transparency. In the course descriptions, the relationship between the learning outcomes of the programmes and the content of the courses is demonstrated with the help of a coding system. This enables students and other stakeholders to identify which learning outcomes are addressed in which courses.

Curriculum handbooks for each programme and discipline have been developed and are made available online and in printed format. (Appendix F - Curriculum Handbooks) The curriculum handbooks provide the following information:

- A short description of and introduction to the programme, the discipline and the organising department.
- The list of learning outcomes relevant to the programme and the discipline.
- Curriculum overviews showing all courses and the corresponding number of ECTS-credits.
- Course descriptions with information on the content, objectives and assessment of the course and other practical information. They also include a reference system demonstrating the relationships between the learning outcomes of the programme and the objectives of the course.
- The assessment criteria and their grading scales.

The intended learning outcomes of the Master of Music and Master of Sonology programmes are described with reference to international frameworks, both in terms of content and level. The Royal Conservatoire is an institute with an explicit international orientation. It aims to place its programmes and their intended learning outcomes into an international context. Because of its international character, the institution made a strategic choice not to use the national framework of competence profiles for the description of the learning outcomes of its programmes, but rather to adhere to the relevant international qualifications frameworks.⁹ In this context, the Royal Conservatoire considers the European-level framework developed specifically for the higher music education sector by the *European Association of Conservatoires* (AEC) as the relevant tool to inform its learning outcomes. (Appendix M - AEC Learning Outcomes 2017, Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC); SER, p. 19)

The AEC Learning Outcomes are designed to support the music sector in implementing the Bologna Process reforms and aim to provide a shared understanding across European music higher education of what graduates will have achieved after completing their bachelor's, master's or doctoral studies. They have been developed through a careful consultation process involving higher music education institutions and other key stakeholders mainly throughout Europe.¹⁰ The AEC Learning Outcomes are structured into three headings: practical (skills-based) outcomes, theoretical (knowledge-based) outcomes and generic outcomes. This threefold structure enables the expression of the three different aspects of the various areas of learning that are relevant to musicians (such as artistic expression, improvisation and verbal and written communication). The AEC Learning Outcomes are consistent with the structure of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Because of its compatibility with the

⁸ In its self-evaluation report, the Royal Conservatoire uses the term 'programme objectives' to refer to learning outcomes. In this report, only the term 'learning outcomes' is being used for reasons of consistency.

⁹ Institutions in The Netherlands are allowed to use international qualifications frameworks which fit their own needs and context, provided they can explain how and why they are being used, and how they are compatible with the Dutch National Qualifications Framework.

¹⁰ The Royal Conservatoire makes use of the 2017 version of the AEC Learning Outcomes, which is the most recently revised version.



EQF, the AEC Learning Outcomes are also fully compatible with the Dutch National Qualifications Framework (NLQF), which is directly linked to the EQF. The AEC Learning Outcomes are related to and defined by the same three levels as the Dublin Descriptors: 1st cycle (bachelor), 2nd cycle (master) and 3rd cycle (doctoral).¹¹

The Royal Conservatoire has adapted the AEC Learning Outcomes to ensure an optimal fit with the content of each discipline in the two master's programmes. This has resulted in a stronger articulation of and an emphasis on certain learning outcomes in each discipline, reflecting the profile of the curriculum in question. The learning outcomes follow the initial structure of the AEC Learning Outcomes and can be found in the curriculum handbooks which are available for all the disciplines.

Representatives of the programmes to whom the review team spoke were well aware of the learning outcomes and stressed the added value of using learning outcomes in a variety of contexts. Depending on the context, the function of the learning outcomes seemed to be understood differently by different groups of programme representatives: some programme representatives referred to the learning outcomes as building blocks for curriculum design, others described them as a reflection tool or as international reference points. In some conversations there seemed to be a degree of confusion between learning outcomes and assessment criteria. (Meeting 2 - students; Meeting 3 - heads of department; Meeting 4 - teaching staff)

Reflection by the review team

The review team commends the Royal Conservatoire for the dynamic and progressive character of the Master of Music and Master of Sonology programmes. The master programmes are organically reworked and continuously improved to offer the students the best possible learning experience.

In the opinion of the review team, the goals of the programmes reflect all the dimensions of the institutional mission. The mission comes to life through the design and the delivery of the two master's programmes in a way that feels genuine and real.

The review team noted that the Royal Conservatoire has taken significant steps to improve the description of the intended learning outcomes of the Master of Music and Master of Sonology programmes and saw clear and well demonstrated progress in this area. The intended learning outcomes for both programmes and their disciplines are clearly stated in the curriculum handbooks. They are set out in ways that make explicit their relationship to the master's level and to the orientation of the disciplines, and they relate well to the overall goals of the programmes.

By explicitly linking the intended learning outcomes of the programmes to the AEC Learning Outcomes, the Royal Conservatoire can ensure that the intended learning outcomes reflect international expectations within the music sector, both in terms of content and level. The review team supports the institution's choice to connect the learning outcomes to the relevant frameworks in support of the international character and orientation of the programmes.

The review team is convinced that the way in which the intended learning outcomes are currently described is fit for purpose and responds to the recommendation made by the panel at the time of the previous assessment procedure in 2012. However, the review team would now like to encourage the Royal Conservatoire to consider presenting the intended learning outcomes in a simpler fashion. The intended learning outcomes can be viewed as over-elaborate, and their highly detailed nature may diminish their effectiveness and 'memorability' for students and staff. Providing concise summaries (in addition to the current descriptions in the curriculum

¹¹ The Dublin Descriptors are a set of internationally recognised descriptors that define the level and the content of the three cycles in higher education in the European Higher Education Area.



handbooks) of the intended learning outcomes which highlight their main goals and overarching ideas might help stakeholders of the programmes to better internalise their content and significance.

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

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

MusiQuE standard 2.2

Standard: the programme offers a range of opportunities for students to gain an international perspective.

The Institutional Plan of the University of the Arts mentions internationalisation as an important institutional priority. The internationalisation policy of the Royal Conservatoire connects to this overarching institutional policy. In a recent status report, the Royal Conservatoire describes the rationale for its internationalisation policy, its concrete objectives and the further steps to be taken for its realisation. It is the institution's ambition not only to become a leading institution in the area of internationalisation in higher education, but also to make the international dimension one of its distinctive features.

It is the institution's conviction that if an institution is serious about its international dimension, it must be able to demonstrate in which ways its objectives and activities are framed within an international context, and how these objectives are reached and assessed on an international level. Therefore, three aspects in relation to the internationalisation policy are distinguished (Appendix L - Institutional Plan + Plan for Quality Agreements 2019-2024, University of the Arts The Hague; Appendix J - Internationalisation at the Royal Conservatoire: Status Report and Policy Objectives 2021-2024; SER, pp. 23-24):

- adherence to and use of international qualification frameworks, such as the AEC Learning Outcomes (as described under MusiQuE standard 1);
- the further development of an international learning environment, through the presence of almost 60% international students, international teachers, joint European programmes and modules, the active participation in international networks and cooperative activities, an international approach to assessment, and continuing development activities for teaching faculty;
- international comparison and review, which is achieved through the use of international examiners, the participation in an international benchmarking initiative, the use of the internationally recognised standards of MusiQuE and the critical friend approach.

Internationalisation is not considered by the institution as an aim in itself, but as a process that serves the needs of the students and teachers, the institution and the stakeholders in its wider context, with the ultimate aim to constantly improve the quality of the education.

The international ambitions of the institution are made tangible in the Master of Music and Master of Sonology programmes through specific developments. The self-evaluation report highlights the following recent developments in this regard (SER, p. 15):

- the establishment of two joint European master's programmes, including the European Chamber Music Master (ECMAster) in cooperation with the European Chamber Music Academy (ECMA), and the European Master of Early Music in cooperation with the Early Music Department of the Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno;



- the creation of the double degree Audio Communication & Sonology with the Technische Universität Berlin;
- the establishment of a joint European module 'From Score to Creation' as an elective in cooperation with the Royal Conservatoire Antwerp and the Guildhall School of Music & Drama;
- the involvement of international examiners, which is now fully embedded in the master research presentation assessments and, on a regular basis, in the final artistic presentation assessments (*cf. infra*);
- the coordination of Innovative Conservatoire (ICON) by the Royal Conservatoire, which brings together teachers from different European institutions to meet and discuss subjects of common interest.

In its meeting with the review team, the institutional management emphasised their conviction that internationalisation goes beyond having international teachers and students, and is more fundamentally about having internationally informed curricula and offering students an international experience. Also the idea of the emergence of a true 'glocal' dimension was mentioned, in the context of the discussion about the move to the new 'Amare' building (*cf. MusiQuE standard 5.1*), where the Royal Conservatoire hopes to have a positive influence through its international profile on the local arts organisations who will reside in the same building. (Meeting 1 - management)

Representatives of the programmes indicated that the recent pandemic and the enforced turn towards working online created additional incentives in the context of internationalisation, for example to reach out online to international audiences and to invite international experts to conferences organised by the institution. It also offered opportunities to make contact with international alumni, and to explore virtual forms of artistic co-creation. (Meeting 3 - heads of department)

Reflection by the review team

It was obvious to the review team that the Royal Conservatoire is internationally oriented. The international policy, its purposes and concrete objectives are well documented and described in a detailed manner.

The review team considers the ambition to offer students a truly international learning environment as highly commendable and agrees with the observation by one of the critical friends that the international orientation of the institution is a kind of 'cantus firmus', permeating the Master of Music and Master of Sonology programmes in nearly all their aspects. The review team saw clear evidence that both programmes are continually building on ways in which students can gain international perspectives. The review team also noted that the Master of Sonology programme is well networked internationally and that, through its long history and eminent position in the sector, it offers a platform for the international sonology scene.

As the review team noted that in the discourse about internationalisation there tends to be a focus on Europe and the Western world, the review team would strongly encourage deeper reflection on the meaning of internationalisation in a global context. What does 'international' mean today? The review team does not presume to offer any one answer to this challenging question but believes that continued discussion on this matter could strengthen the Royal Conservatoire's international policy for the twenty-first century. In this context, the move to the new Amare building will bring opportunities for fresh exploration, together with other arts organisations and societal stakeholders. This could help to re-examine the terms 'international' and 'intercultural', as well as the place of non-Western traditions, in the master's programmes.

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

Standard 2.2	Master of Music	Master of Sonology
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The programme offers a range of opportunities for students to gain an international perspective.	Fully compliant	Fully compliant
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MusiQuE standard 8.1

Standard: the programme engages within wider cultural, artistic and educational contexts.

- ✓ Please note that parts of the information and analysis included under this standard can also be found in the *Assessment report* under NVAO standard 1. More information about the purpose and scope of the *Assessment report* can be found in the introduction.

The curricula of the Master of Music and Master of Sonology programmes contain a variety of institutionalized forms of engagement with wider artistic and societal contexts. The self-evaluation report mentions, for example, several courses in the programmes, including the elective 'Music around the corner' and electives in the area of health such as 'Music and dementia' and 'ProMiMic - Meaningful Music in Healthcare', which offer students opportunities to engage with societal partners. (Appendix N - Master Electives Handbook 2020-21; SER, p. 25)

Several disciplines and specialisations in the Master of Music curriculum include formalised collaborations with societal partners or professional ensembles. This is the case in, for example, the *New Audiences and Innovative Practice* (NAIP) discipline. Students in the disciplines *Instrumental and Vocal Learning & Teaching* and *Music Education according to the Kodály Concept* are offered the opportunity to do internships in diverse educational settings, such as Dutch and international primary schools, music schools and local communities.

Students in the Master of Sonology programme can contribute to the technical and logistic preparation of several concerts organised by the Institute of Sonology under the supervision of a professional sound engineer. Recently, preparations have started for 'Sounding the Spui', a large-scale project involving school children and citizens in the context of the opening of the new 'Amare' building. Preparations for the project are integrated in some courses and workshops in the Sonology programme. (SER, pp. 25-26)

The curricula of the two master's programmes also feature a professional integration domain in which students are assigned a professional integration coach (*cf.* MusiQuE standard 2.1). In addition to these formalised components of the curricula, the Royal Conservatoire engages with various professional ensembles for short intensive projects. Furthermore students can receive recognition for activities outside the Conservatoire (such as working for a festival or multimedia production or realising their own projects or productions) through a Career Development Office (CDO) procedure. (SER, p. 25)

The Royal Conservatoire is currently exploring the development of new disciplines and specialisations in the master's programmes. The self-evaluation report mentions that some of these will be developed in an interdisciplinary context, connecting the field of music with other arts forms (SER, p. 30):

- based on the institution's positive experience with the thematic master's discipline 'aus LICHT', another thematic master's discipline around John Cage's *Européras* is being explored, linking music performance with interdisciplinary practice, science and societal themes;
- plans are being made to design a master's discipline which will bring together creation and performance in an interdisciplinary setting, in cooperation with international partners from the European METRIC Network for improvisation;
- in the area of Early Music, the institution is exploring the possibility to create specialisations in the fields of basso continuo and historically informed performing arts in cooperation with theatre.

In its meeting with the review team, the institutional management mentioned that the institution is actively reflecting on further opening its educational offer to embrace other art forms, including dance and visual arts, and that a



working group on interdisciplinary research has been established. The institutional management informed the review team that students are also increasingly carrying out research projects with an interdisciplinary focus. Students to whom the review team spoke confirmed this. Some students spoke slightly critically about boundaries which they perceived between art forms in the institution and indicated that they were looking forward to moving to the new 'Amare' building, as this will bring students in closer contact with other art disciplines and local arts organisations who will reside in the same building. (Meeting 1 - management; Meeting 2 - students)

Reflection by the review team

It was clear to the review team that various forms of engagement with wider societal and artistic contexts are integrated in the curricula of the Master of Music and Master of Sonology programmes, as described in the paragraphs above.

The review team took note of the ongoing reflections about interdisciplinarity and would like to encourage the programmes that they explore further, and increasingly promote, opportunities for interdisciplinary exchange. In this context, the review team would like to encourage the institution to make full use of the opportunities offered by the move to Amare to reach out to other art disciplines, and jointly (with the co-residents of the building) to reflect even further on new possibilities for collaboration across disciplines. Such joint reflections could enrich student experience, and also inform future discussions within the institution on how (classical) music can reach out and strengthen its role in today's world.

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

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

MusiQuE standard 8.2

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

- ✓ Please note that parts of the information and analysis included under this standard can also be found in the *Assessment report* under NVAO standard 1. More information about the purpose and scope of the *Assessment report* can be found in the introduction.

Professional stakeholders are consulted in order to check whether the intended learning outcomes of the two master's programmes meet the expectations of the sector. The Royal Conservatoire adopts a pro-active approach towards discussions with the music profession. The continual dialogue with the profession takes place through so-called 'professional stakeholder meetings' and through intensive projects which are organised in collaboration with ensembles and arts organisations as part of the curriculum. Representatives of the profession and institutional stakeholders to whom the review team spoke, indicated that the collaborations between the profession and the institution are mutually beneficial, allowing professional arts organisations to identify talented students and to offer them a platform to develop their skills further. (SER, p. 27; Meeting 3 - heads of department; Meeting 5 - representatives of the profession)



Meetings with representatives of the professional community are regularly organised.¹² In these professional stakeholder meetings, the latest trends and ongoing needs in professional practice are discussed, as well as the relevance of the intended learning outcomes and the curricula. The departments responsible for the delivery of the various disciplines in the programmes coordinate these meetings. In previous years, the departments of Classical and Early Music, Art of Sound, Jazz, Vocal, and Music Education have been the main organisers of these stakeholder meetings for the Master of Music. A stakeholder meeting for the Master of Sonology programme took place in February 2021. Each of the professional stakeholder meetings results in a report, providing input for the enhancement of the programmes. The heads of department indicated that the meetings have proven to be highly interesting and relevant for the further development of the two master's programmes. (Meeting 3 - heads of department; Meeting 5 - representatives of the profession; Appendix Q - Professional Stakeholders Meeting Sonology, 2021)

In addition to this, the teachers themselves are active as professionals in the world of music, thus creating a natural and permanent dialogue with the requirements of the profession. Almost all teachers have part-time contracts and, in addition to being teachers in the programmes, are active as performers, composers, sound artists and researchers.

Reflection by the review team

The review team welcomes the pro-active approach adopted by the Royal Conservatoire to reach out to members of the profession and noted an open and positive attitude towards the integration in the curricula of activities organised in collaboration with the profession. The review team noted that links with the profession are being strengthened in a variety of ways within both master's programmes. Regular meetings with professional stakeholders allow for discussion of the needs and recent developments in the sector and for adjustment of the intended learning outcomes and content of the programmes to reflect these expectations. Active partnerships with many professional ensembles, festivals, orchestras and similar organisations offer students the possibility of gaining valuable and stimulating experiences, facilitating their entry into the world of work.

The review team was impressed by the large number of high quality professional relationships in which the programmes are involved. At the same time, the review team had the impression that opportunities for collaboration are sometimes seized in an *ad hoc* manner, rather than selected strategically. The review team would therefore like to suggest to the institution that a more strategic approach to the prioritisation of partnerships for the programmes is adopted. Those partners identified as key partners of the programmes could be brought together in an overarching meeting or forum such as an Artistic Council. Such a forum might offer opportunities to reflect jointly on institutional priorities and on the strategic relevance of relationships beyond the intrinsic value of individual projects.

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

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

¹² In an additional meeting arranged on the final morning of the visit in order to clarify a number of points for the review team, a staff member of the Quality Culture Office drew attention to a table in appendix C displaying a multiannual planning of the professional stakeholder meetings, and indicated that each of these meeting is thoroughly prepared in collaboration with key stakeholders in the programmes. (Optional meeting for clarifications; Appendix C - Quality Culture at the Royal Conservatoire: 2020 and beyond)



MusiQuE standard 8.3

Standard: information provided to the public about the programme is clear, consistent and accurate.

The self-evaluation report lists a variety of tools which the Royal Conservatoire uses to inform students and other stakeholders about the Master of Music and Master of Sonology programmes:

- the institution hosts an extensive bilingual website, which provides detailed information about the institution, its programmes, departments, concert activities and teaching faculty. The website is accessible at www.koncon.nl;
- the Institute of Sonology has its own website that contains information and material such as an events calendar, news posts, instruction videos, a history timeline, bachelor's and master's theses, links to personal websites of alumni, current and previous research project descriptions, links to connected institutions, archives, databases, journals, composers, and a download section with historically important publications;
- for the course descriptions, the standard format of the ECTS Users Guide has been used across all curricula in order to enhance comparability and transparency. They are published in the curriculum handbooks (Appendices F - Curriculum Handbooks);
- a bilingual Study Guide for all programmes of the Royal Conservatoire is published on an annual basis. It contains information on practical matters, the content of the programmes and the Education and Examination Regulations (Appendix K - Study Guide Royal Conservatoire 2020-21);
- for masters students, all relevant information about electives (including information on deadlines, course descriptions, examination rules and information on how to apply) can be found on a dedicated webpage.

The institution prepared a summary of information about the impact of the pandemic on students' education. This has been made available for students, applicants and other stakeholders on a dedicated webpage (www.koncon.nl/corona). The webpage includes an educational protocol which provides information about the use of the buildings and spaces, applicable hygiene measures and what to do in the event of illness or contamination. (SER, pp. 28-29)

Reflection by the review team

The review team found that the information about the programmes provided to the public is clear, reflecting the reality of the situation. The institution's website is user-friendly and easy to navigate, and the curriculum handbooks provide detailed, transparent and accurate information about the content of the programmes.

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

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



2. Teaching and learning environment

MusiQuE standard 2.1

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

Over the past few years the Royal Conservatoire has extensively reviewed the curriculum of the Master of Music programme based on feedback from students, teaching staff, critical friends and professional stakeholders. As a result, the curriculum of the programme now features three central domains - artistic development, research and professional integration. As part of the new curriculum, each student carries out a master project in which these three domains are combined, helping students to identify their place in future professional practice. (SER, p. 13)

The Royal Conservatoire makes extensive information about the curricula available to applicants, students and staff of the programme. This information, which includes the recently updated structure and content, can be found in the curriculum handbooks (*cf.* MusiQuE standard 1), in the dedicated 'Master of Music Handbook' for students and the 'Master Project Guidelines' for staff of the programme. (Appendix F - Curriculum Handbooks; Appendix G - Master of Music Handbook; Appendix H - Master Project Guidelines 2020-21; SER, p. 31)

By emphasizing, in its self-evaluation report, the personal responsibility of students in shaping their education, the Royal Conservatoire indicates that it attaches great importance to student-centred learning. This is considered essential in their development as future artists who can survive and thrive in the constantly evolving music profession. Masters students are encouraged to develop their own artistic profile and identity through the formulation and implementation of the individual master project, in which artistic development, research and professional integration are integrated. Students are free to choose their own overarching theme for their master project. Important components of the master project are a personal research trajectory, as well as an individual professional integration activity in which all students invited to design and implement their own artistic activities outside the walls of the institution. For all of these elements, students receive individual coaching and supervision. (SER, p. 35)

The revised curriculum of the Master of Music programme features a wide variety of teaching formats, including individual coaching in weekly instrumental/vocal lessons from a main subject teacher, monthly supervision sessions for research activities, and monthly sessions with a professional integration coach. The main subject teacher, the research supervisor and the professional integration coach of each student form a team, which has the responsibility to assist and monitor the student and to review progression and achievements, together with a 'master circle' leader. Master circles bring together students from different disciplines who are carrying out research on similar topics and are facilitated by a master circle leader who encourages mutual feedback between the students. (SER, pp. 36-37; Appendix H - Master Project Guidelines 2020-21) In the Master of Sonology programme, students work together with a personal mentor with whom they have regular meetings and work on the development of their written and artistic output and take part in group sessions and research seminars. (SER, p. 37)

Research occupies an increasingly prominent position in the master's programmes and has been strengthened in a variety of ways over the past years. Students carry out research in an area of their own interest and choose an appropriate research method after close consultation with their research supervisors, the leader of the master circle and the teacher of their main subject. All students present the results of their research during an annual symposium. These are then published in the Research Catalogue (an online multimedia database which was developed to disclose research papers and articles together with visual and audio fragments). Two research groups or 'lectorates' with a focus on 'Music, Education & Society' and 'Research in the Arts' have been established with the dual purpose of creating a lively research culture within the Royal Conservatoire and promoting an enquiring attitude among students and teachers. A renewed admission procedure (*cf.* MusiQuE standard 3.1) has been implemented from academic year 2020-2021, putting greater emphasis on the integration of the three domains (including research) in the individual study plan which all students are required to write as part of the admission procedure. An international review panel evaluated the quality of the research activities at the Royal Conservatoire in 2017, resulting in



recommendations for further improvements in relation to the research activities. The Royal Conservatoire is also planning to establish a Research School together with the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts (ACPA) at Leiden University and the Royal Academy of Art in order to expand the collaboration between and within these institutes, and to create one central platform for all research activities. (SER, pp. 13, 32-33, 47; Appendix S - 2017.10.26 Final Report MusiQuE Review KC Research Unit; Appendix T - Sonology Masters Guidelines 2020-21) Students met by the review team felt overall well supported in carrying out their research and spoke positively about their experiences in the master circles, which are perceived as enriching and broadening up horizons. Students appreciate the peer-to-peer feedback, which is offered on their research, and enjoy explaining their specialist research in specific fields of music (e.g. swing music) to non-specialists in that particular field (e.g. baroque viola students), while also indicating that they find it challenging to read and peer-review each other's writings. (Meeting 2 - students)

In the new professional integration domain of the curriculum, each student is assigned a professional integration coach. This is typically an external expert from the professional field with substantial expertise and experience with the production of concerts, tours and other musical events, and/or setting up and running an ensemble or orchestra. The coach guides the student by providing specific advice in cultivating contacts in the world of venues and concert impresarios, and in assisting with elements relating to educational and creative entrepreneurship, including raising funds. (SER, p. 24)

Students are encouraged to take personal responsibility for giving shape to their own professional integration trajectory. They meet about nine times with their professional integration coach, both in group sessions and individually. Students to whom the review team spoke indicated that the professional integration coaches actively reach out to the students. The heads of department met by the review team indicated that they perceive in both students and main instrument/vocal teachers an increasing interest in the professional integration domain of the curriculum, and an increasing understanding of the importance of professional integration activities for students' development as future professionals. Representatives of the profession met by the review team stressed that it is a big step for students to move from the classroom to the real world of work, and that preparing students for this step through the professional integration activities as part of the curriculum is mutually beneficial for both the students and the artistic organisations. The institutional management underlined that the move to the new 'Amare' building will create additional opportunities for students to gain first-hand experience in the profession. Some students to whom the review team spoke indicated that they felt that the entrepreneurial guidance in the curriculum can still be further developed, in particular to assist future graduates aiming for less traditional career paths. (Meeting 1 - management; Meeting 2 - students; Meeting 3 - heads of department; Meeting 5 - representatives of the profession)

Reflection by the review team

The review team was impressed by the substantial curricular innovations in the Master of Music programme, including the introduction of the concept of the three pillars (artistic development, research and professional integration), the master projects and the master circles. The review team is convinced that the new structure allows students to give shape to their own educational trajectories, and effectively assists them to develop themselves as arts professionals.

Members of the review team encountered great enthusiasm about and wholehearted support for the new curriculum among the representatives of the programmes to whom they spoke and noted that the institution is committed to further monitor and improve the implementation of the new curriculum in the coming years. The review team noted that the new curriculum has been well implemented throughout the Master of Music programme but suggests that further work is done to align the curricular structure of the ArtScience discipline with the curricula of the other disciplines to ensure greater consistency.

The review team admires the institution's commitment to student-centred learning and how it is realised through the structure of the master's programmes and the variety of approaches to learning and teaching. The individual



mentoring of students and the combination of artistic coaching, research supervision and professional integration coaching which come together in the master circles offer an effective structure for student support and mutual exchange. The review team particularly applauds the institution for maintaining its student-centred approach and for the implementation of the new curriculum during the difficult circumstances occasioned by the pandemic.

The review team welcomes the way in which the institution is embracing artistic research and noted strong support for the prominent position of research in the programme among the programme representatives met by the review team.

It was obvious to the review team that the institution is truly committed to preparing students for their professional life through the professional integration domain of the curriculum.

The review team noted that diversity is a theme that is currently being discussed in the master's programmes under review. In the opinion of the review team, however, diversity has curricular consequences, which seem as yet to have been relatively unexplored in these programmes so far. The review team would like to encourage the institution to reflect on the concept of diversity in contemporary society, and its implications for the content of these master's programmes.

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

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

MusiQuE standard 4.1

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

The self-evaluation report prepared by the institution indicates that the Master of Music and Master of Sonology programmes are delivered by teaching staff who are (or have been) internationally active in the profession as performers, composers and researchers. Many teachers in the programmes are internationally recognised experts in their disciplines. Several teachers in the Sonology programmes hold a PhD or are in the process of obtaining one. (SER, pp. 40-42)

The teaching staff met by the review team explained that because of the individual study trajectories of students, regular consultation between main instrument/vocal teachers, research supervisors and professional integration coaches is required in order to monitor and discuss students' progress. For this reason, teaching staff make time in their schedules to meet frequently. Teachers also gather to discuss elements related to the management of the programme, especially in the context of the recent changes to the curricula. Before the pandemic, these meetings took place physically; during the pandemic, they were continued online. The review team was also informed that all master circle leaders meet as a separate group in order to discuss the organisation and further development of the master circles. Meetings between teachers mainly take place in an informal context, rather than in fixed representational bodies. (Meeting 4 - teaching staff)

Teaching staff also indicated they are offered opportunities to voice what is going well in the programmes and what can be improved, and that they feel their advice is welcomed by the institutional management. (Meeting 4 - teaching staff)

Reflection by the review team



It was evident to the review team on the basis of the information provided on the professional profiles of members of teaching staff responsible for the Master of Music and Master of Sonology programmes, that these programmes are delivered by highly experienced and internationally recognised staff who are well qualified for their individual roles.

The review team welcomes the fact that the Royal Conservatoire encourages teaching staff to meet regularly and to operate as educational teams of teachers rather than as individual tutors. Close lines of internal communication between main instrument/vocal teachers, research supervisors, professional integration coaches and master circle leaders contribute to a strong environment for student support. This approach is helping to create a culture in which teachers explicitly relate each student's progress to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and agree the key points to be emphasised in the feedback provided to the student. The review team is convinced that the benefits of this type of approach will be felt in the years to come.

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

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

MusiQuE standard 4.2

Standard: there are sufficient qualified teaching staff to effectively deliver the programmes.

The Royal Conservatoire has a policy in place for the continuing professional development of its teaching staff. According to the self-evaluation report, this policy is based on the institution's view that it is vital for the further development of a higher education institution to continuously invest in the expertise of its staff. The self-evaluation report contains a list with specific examples of continuing professional development opportunities. (SER, pp. 40-41)

In this context, the new development programme 'The Artist as Teacher' which the Royal Conservatoire recently initiated is particularly worthy of mention. This staff development programme aims at helping teaching faculty with their needs in relation to continuing professional development, in particular regarding pedagogical skills. Various issues such as one-to-one teaching, group teaching, assessment and entrepreneurship are discussed in eight seminars during one academic year. (Appendix U - The Artist as Teacher flyer 2020-2021; SER, p. 40)

Furthermore, teachers are offered the opportunity to participate in the activities of the Innovative Conservatoire (ICON), an international group of conservatoires which is coordinated by the Royal Conservatoire and which organises intensive training sessions for teaching staff around certain themes, including one-to-one teaching, assessment, improvisation and group teaching. The review team also learnt that the Royal Conservatoire actively encourages members of teaching staff to develop their own research expertise, and to upgrade their qualifications to a master's degree by carrying out a research project. (Optional meeting for clarifications; SER, p. 40)

Reflection by the review team

It was clear to the review team that in both the Master of Music and the Master of Sonology programmes there are sufficient qualified teaching staff to deliver the programmes effectively.

The review team considers it a strength that the Royal Conservatoire invests significantly in the continuing professional development of its staff. The 'Artist as Teacher' programme and the possibility for teachers to obtain a master's degree are convincing examples of the institution's ambition in this area.



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

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

MusiQuE standard 5.1

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

At the time of the site visit, the Royal Conservatoire was still based in the building which was designed and constructed to house the institution in the 1970s. As mentioned above, however, the Royal Conservatoire will be moving to Amare, a brand-new building, located closer to the city centre which opens in September 2021. The Royal Conservatoire will share the new building with other arts organisations, including the former Zuiderstrandtheater organisation, Nederlands Dans Theater and Residentieorkest (The Hague Philharmonic). In its self-evaluation report, the institution indicates that Amare will provide the Royal Conservatoire with substantial new opportunities: not only will the building boast state-of-the-art teaching and performance facilities, it also embodies an educational concept in which education and profession intertwine and inspire each other through the presence of professional music and dance partners. At the start of the site visit the review team was shown a short video presentation about the new building. (SER, p. 43; Meeting 1 - management)

Students indicated that they were excited but at the same time somewhat anxious about the move to the new building. They are much looking forward to integrating more with the city and to connecting with organisations for other art forms. Students hope to be inspired by these new connections and particularly look forward to having increased opportunities for interdisciplinary exchange. At the same time, they expressed a certain nervousness about sharing space with other organisations. The current building is very crowded, and so this means that students need to plan well ahead to book rehearsal spaces. Students hope that sharing spaces will not create similar planning issues to those which they have frequently experienced in the past. (Meeting 2 - students) The heads of department met by the review team spoke, spoke very positively of the potential added value of the new building and, like the students, share a desire for increasing interconnections between disciplines and art forms in the new building. (Meeting 3 - heads of department)

Teaching staff spoke critically about the current practice rooms and about the fact that there is no room where teachers can meet and look forward to the announced improvements in this regard which the new building will offer. Teachers indicated that they did not, as yet, feel fully informed about the use of space in Amare, but representatives of the Sonology programme spoke with enthusiasm about the new and much larger lecture hall which will contain state of the art equipment for education, experimentation and public presentations of spatial electronic music and multimedia art. (Meeting 4 - teaching staff; Optional meeting for clarifications)

Teaching staff underlined that, even though Amare will be located only about one kilometre away from the current building, in terms of atmosphere the new location will feel very different: the institution is literally moving into the city, to become part of a larger meeting place for citizens, artists and audiences. Teaching staff spoke positively about the possibilities the new building offers to open doors to society as a whole and to lower the perceived threshold for entering the institution. Teachers also anticipate that the new building will give an impulse to the idea of the 'portfolio musician'. (Meeting 4 - teaching staff)

Representatives of the profession spoke very positively about the institution's proactive role in the development of 'Amare' as an inclusive meeting place and indicated that the Royal Conservatoire is one of the main drivers behind the idea to conceive 'Amare' as a community resource. They also spoke enthusiastically about the 'Sounding the Spui' project (cf. MusiQuE standard 8.1) and the collaboration in this regard with the Sonology programme. (Meeting 5 - representatives of the profession)



The institution found that it needed to make strong efforts to develop its technological support to facilitate forms of digital learning needed during the pandemic. In March and April 2020, all lessons were delivered online, and an online learning management system was introduced to offer students and teachers a way to communicate. From May 2020, the institution was allowed to re-introduce limited self-study within the building, after which individual and group lessons on a limited scale followed. Interim and final presentations took place online (*cf. infra*). After the summer of 2020, a major part of the individual lessons and group lessons could take place on campus, with ventilation breaks and distancing between students and teachers. Some ensemble and orchestra projects took place with strict hygiene measures and were presented to internal and external audiences via online live streams. Things continued in the same way during academic year 2020—2021, during which the Conservatoire was allowed, despite various lockdown and curfew measures, to offer limited live education combined with online lessons for academic courses. Additional equipment (laptops, microphones, headsets and digital pianos) was purchased and put at the disposal of students and teachers through a loan system, and targeted training sessions were organised for specific groups of teachers to familiarize them with online teaching and the use of e-resources. (SER, pp. 38-39, 41)

The self-evaluation report mentions that the use of digital tools will continue to play an important role in the master's programmes. It is to be expected that many courses will continue to use forms of e-learning, which will require a review of pedagogical approaches. This will be coordinated by an e-Learning Working Group, in close consultation with the departments. The departments have been invited to prepare plans on how to continue e-learning in the future. (Optional meeting for clarifications; SER, pp. 43-44, 47)

Students met by the review team indicated that studying during the pandemic has been challenging, but also stressed that the institution managed the situation well and that teachers showed flexibility in supporting students in the best way possible. The institutional management informed the review team that reflections on lessons learnt from the first months of the pandemic are ongoing, but that the effects of it - on the delivery of the master's programmes, but also on the music sector in general - are still to be fully understood. (Meeting 2 - students; Meeting 1 - management)

Reflection by the review team

Like the institution itself, the review team considers Amare a game-changer, not only for the institution but also for the students of the master's programmes who will be offered new possibilities to engage with professional art organisations and other art disciplines. The move to the new building should facilitate the realisation of the institution's ambition to reach out even more to society as a whole.

The move to Amare brings opportunities for the Royal Conservatoire, but also places on the institution, as a leading resident of the building, a responsibility to put into practice the rhetoric and expectations about Amare - with inclusiveness and the integration of arts in society at the heart of it. In this context, the review team would like to repeat its suggestion to reflect, together with other residents of the building, on three themes: the implications of the terms 'international' and 'intercultural' as well as the place of non-Western traditions in the master's programmes (*cf. MusiQuE standard 2.2*), the meaning of 'diversity' in contemporary society and its implications for the content of the programmes (*cf. MusiQuE standard 2.1*), and the opportunities this brings for interdisciplinary exchanges and collaborations with other arts organisations (*cf. MusiQuE standard 8.1*).

The review team would like to recommend to the Royal Conservatoire that the planning and organisation of the use of space in the new 'Amare' building (for rehearsals, concerts, classes and so on) is undertaken on a co-ordinated institutional basis and not viewed simply as a matter for individual departments to arrange for themselves. Coordinated planning for, and transparent information and communication about, the use of the rooms and facilities will be important for all stakeholders of the programmes to ensure smooth operations once the institution has moved to the new location.

The review team realises that the situation caused by the pandemic has meant that for many people the past months have been a difficult, dispiriting and challenging time. The review team admires the institution for



focussing wherever possible on the positive aspects and commends the institution for its determination to continue to exploit the possibilities of e-learning and to reflect on lessons learnt.

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

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

MusiQuE standard 5.3

Standard: the programme has sufficient qualified support staff.

The self-evaluation report contains a list of units which support the programmes in the organisation of the learning and teaching activities:

- Education Service Centre (including Team International, Planning Team and Student Administration)
- Electronics Workshop
- Facility Service (including Reception, Ticket shop, Reprography and photocopying, In-house emergency service and first aid, Safety regulations and Hearing protection)
- Financial Administration
- IT Department
- E-Learning
- Marketing & Communication / Fundraising & Partnerships
- Production Office
- Quality Culture

The review team was able to find more information about each of the support units in the Study Guide. (SER, p. 43; Appendix K - Study Guide Royal Conservatoire 2020-21)

The review team was informed that students can receive support from the Career Development Office (CDO) (*cf.* MusiQuE standard 8.1) to find internships, jobs, concert venues and other facilities outside the institution. The review team also learnt that the institution has appointed a diversity officer to facilitate the discussion about diversity and gender balance in the programmes. (SER, p. 36; Optional meeting for clarifications)

Reflection by the review team

On the basis of discussions with students, staff and institutional managers about the adequacy of support provided for teaching and learning activities, the review team was reassured there are sufficient qualified support staff to support the teaching and learning activities of the programme. The review team would like to express their admiration for the commitment of the support staff, as they play a crucial role in the delivery of the programmes. They provide a strong backbone for the organisation, especially in the challenging situation occasioned by the pandemic.

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

Standard 5.3	Master of Music	Master of Sonology
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The programme has sufficient qualified support staff.	Fully compliant	Fully compliant
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MusiQuE standard 6.1

Standard: effective mechanisms are in place for internal communication within the programme.

The self-evaluation report lists a variety of tools which the Royal Conservatoire uses for both internal and external communication purposes. As mentioned before (cf. MusiQuE standard 8.3), the institution hosts an extensive bilingual website (www.koncon.nl) which provides detailed information about the institution, its programmes, departments, concert activities and teaching faculty. The Institute of Sonology has an additional website. Course descriptions are available in standard ECTS file format, which are published in the curriculum handbooks (cf. MusiQuE standard 1). (Appendices F - Curriculum Handbooks) The institution also publishes on an annual basis a bilingual Study Guide for all programmes of the Royal Conservatoire with information on practical matters, the content of the programmes and the Education and Examination Regulations. (Appendix K - Study Guide Royal Conservatoire 2020-21)

Teaching staff meet frequently in order to monitor and discuss students' progress, as discussed under standard 4.1. Students met by the review team mentioned the fact that the institution strives to ensure that changes made based on the feedback collected in the student panels (cf. MusiQuE standard 7) are widely publicised, even being displayed in communal areas, such as the lavatories. (Meeting 2 - students; Meeting 4 - teaching staff)

Reflection by the review team

The review team found that effective mechanisms are in place for internal communication within the programmes. The review team suggests however that the institution should consider further strengthening communication between the various departments. This would encourage more frequent exchange of educational expertise between the various departments and the sharing across the programmes of some of the inspirational practices and examples which already exist. This would bring benefits to both students and members of staff of the programmes.

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

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

MusiQuE standard 6.2

Standard: the programme is supported by an appropriate organisational structure and clear decision-making processes.

The self-evaluation report mentions that most of the departments are run by a head of department and a coordinator. Each head of department and coordinator meet annually in November with the vice-principal for education and the education policy officer to review the programme objectives, the curriculum and course descriptions, and consider possible changes on the basis of feedback collected by the various quality culture tools and on the basis of departmental Annual Plans. In the meeting with the institutional managers, the review team learnt there is no overarching programme committee or programme leader for either of the programmes as a whole. The institutional managers stressed that the Master of Music programme is one coherent programme, with a high level of compatibility and common elements across all the disciplines (which all lead to the same degree), rather



than different programmes nested under one overall title. The same is the case for the Master of Sonology programme. Strategic considerations with relevance across the departments take place mainly in the annual meetings mentioned above, and in bodies which are anchored in the institutional structure such as the Exam Committee. (SER, p. 45; Meeting 1 - management)

During the site visit, the review team was able to learn more about the strategy and decision-making processes concerning the opening and closing of various disciplines in the master's programmes. The review team was informed that additional disciplines in the programmes are created to ensure that each student can be offered an equally valuable learning experience, thanks to cooperation with different professional partner organisations in each discipline. In some cases, new disciplines are developed as a result of the dialogue with professional partners who aim to start a project which promises to be mutually beneficial for the institution and the partner organisation (e.g. the 'aus LICHT' discipline) (cf. MusiQuE standard 1). Sometimes, disciplines are created for pragmatic reasons (e.g. for students who were previously enrolled in the 'Instruments & Interfaces' discipline which was offered in collaboration with the Studio for Electro-Instrumental Music (STEIM) and which can no longer be offered since STEIM has ceased to exist) (cf. MusiQuE standard 1). (Meeting 1 - management; Optional meeting for clarifications)

Some of the students met by the review team expressed the view that they perceive, to some extent, what they described as 'island mentalities' between the different departments and disciplines. Students emphasised their conviction that there would be benefit in greater cross-departmental interaction and exchange. This seemed to echo comments by several critical friends invited by the institution, who observed that there was scope for much greater collaboration and regular interchange between departments. (Meeting 2 - students; SER, p. 32; Appendix P - Critical Friends Analysis, 2016-2020, p. 6)

Reflection by the review team

The review team recognises that higher music education institutions have traditionally been structured 'vertically' (around individual instruments, disciplines or departments) and that there is certainly not only one right way to organise a programme. The review team noted, and welcomes, that major efforts have been made to increase comparability and compatibility across the disciplines in the Master of Music and Master of Sonology programmes. However the review team recommends further reflection on whether the current organisational structure for the programmes facilitates an appropriate degree of 'horizontal alignment' and beneficial 'cross-fertilisation' across and within the master's programmes. Do the organisational structures encourage departments to collaborate, or do they tend to inhibit this? Although the review team does not presume to answer these questions, the team would observe that more traditional structures may have the effect of reinforcing traditional ways of thinking.

In discussion, the review team was unable to discern whether decisions to open (or close) disciplines in the master's programmes were taken on a clearly strategic basis. While admiring the flexibility shown by the institution in creating new disciplines within the master's programmes when appropriate, the review team gained the impression that such decisions may at times have been taken in a somewhat *ad hoc* manner.

The review team recommends to the Royal Conservatoire that it should strive to preserve a judicious balance between the flexibility, freedom and informality which characterises the internal management on the one hand, and the need for structure and strategy on the other. The review team endorses the institution's efforts to maintain flexibility, freedom and informality in its operations. These qualities are precious, and vital, to allow further innovation throughout the programmes. But strategic connections between departments and structures for dialogue across disciplines are equally important to ensure horizontal alignment and to avoid internal contradictions.

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



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



3. Student assessment

MusiQuE standard 3.1

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

Students who want to enrol in the Master of Music programme have to be in possession of a bachelor's degree, must have sufficient command of written and spoken English, and have to take an entrance exam. Students are also required to prepare a master project plan (or a 'master study plan' for those disciplines which do not include a master project as part of the curriculum). In this plan, students are asked to indicate how they intend to integrate the three domains (artistic development, research and professional integration) and to reflect on how the project will contribute to their development as a professional artist. In the entrance exam, both the artistic level of the student and the quality of the master project plan are assessed. The entry requirements for each discipline within the programme can be found on the institutional website. (Appendix V - Master Project (Study) Plan Guidelines; SER, pp. 50-51) As a consequence of the pandemic, all entrance exams in 2020 and 2021 were organised online. In its self-evaluation report, the institution indicates this was perceived as a successful way of operation which will most likely be continued in future. (SER, p. 51)

In the Master of Sonology programme, students are selected on the basis of a portfolio comprising previous compositions, sound installations, recordings of live performances or research results in the form of computer programmes, articles or a thesis. Candidates should have a bachelor's degree relevant for the field of Sonology and are required to submit a study plan. The plan should include a short introduction to the proposed project, a time plan, a detailed project description including a research question and information about the form in which the research results will be presented, (e.g. a sound installation, composition, ...) as well as an overview of the subjects to be discussed in the thesis for the final presentation. There is no live admission exam.

Institutional managers stressed that students are not admitted if the project plan (or study plan) is not approved. However, recognising that some applicants will have had less experience of this kind during their bachelor's studies, the institution provides support to applicants in order to help them to succeed. Feedback is generally offered to applicants if their plans need to be improved (e.g. in terms of language or content) in order to meet the required standard for admission. Once admitted, students receive intensive individual coaching and supervision for all aspects of the project plan, depending on the needs of each student (*cf.* MusiQuE standard 2.1). (Meeting 1 - management)

Students indicated that they felt well supported throughout the entire admission process and spoke positively about the guidance they receive in the three domains. Students mentioned in particular that, once admitted, much support is provided on methodological aspects in relation to the research domain of the project plan (e.g. guidance on how to formulate a good research question), and that the language coaching which the institution provides is helpful. Students also shared their positive experiences with the European online application system 'EASY', the tool for mobility among higher music education institutions supported by the AEC. (Meeting 2 - students)

The teaching staff to whom the review team spoke confirmed that the project plan is an integral part of the admission process. The teaching staff mentioned that they notice that students are excited about the research domain, and that this eagerness to carry out research also positively influences the teachers. Teachers mentioned that, when discussing the project plans, it is signalled early if there are doubts that students are able to meet the required level of English. When asked if the institution might be missing out on talented students because of the requirements concerning the research domain, some teachers indicated that they were unsure how this might affect intake of Asian students in the long term. (Meeting 4 - teaching staff)



Reflection by the review team

The review team confirmed that the criteria for admission to the programmes address all key elements of the programmes. Applicants' suitability for admission to the programmes is assessed against both artistic and academic criteria. The expectations for those who apply are made clear from the outset.

The review team commends the institution for the real support, encouragement and care given to students in elaborating their master project plan.

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

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

MusiQuE standard 2.3

Standard: the assessment methods are clearly defined and demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes.

The overall assessment rules of the Royal Conservatoire are laid down in the Education and Examination Regulations (EER) (in Dutch: 'Onderwijs- en Examenregeling', or 'OER'). An Exam Committee monitors the overall quality of all assessment processes, and publishes an annual report with findings and recommendations for improvement. The meetings of the Exam Committee are open to students and are generally held once a month. The self-evaluation report mentions that the Exam Committee has recently reviewed the curriculum handbooks of all disciplines in the master's programmes to ensure consistency in assessment criteria. (SER, p. 50; Appendix K - Study Guide Royal Conservatoire 2020-21)

The way in which assessments take place differs across the programmes and various disciplines, as the institution tailors the assessment methods to the courses and the content of the programmes. The assessment criteria and grading scales for all courses are available to students and other stakeholders of the programmes in the curriculum handbooks. (Appendix F - Curriculum Handbooks; SER, p. 52)

Much work has been done over the past few years to improve the assessment process in the Master of Music and Master of Sonology programmes. In the Master of Music programme, the new curriculum structure facilitates an integrated assessment of the three domains (artistic development, research and professional integration). Main subject teachers, research supervisors and professional integration coaches come together for the assessment of individual students. The assessments are based on specific criteria which have been agreed for each domain and which are set out in an assessment rubric. (SER, pp. 14-15; Appendix H - Master Project Guidelines 2020-21). In the Master of Sonology programme, the research output forms an integral part of the students' final presentations. The research component and the artistic output are thus assessed as a whole.

Recently, the institution developed a new portfolio approach for assessments, featuring elements of self-assessment in order to stimulate self-reflection and to increase students' involvement in the assessment process. In this new approach, students are asked to submit a portfolio with self-assessment forms, a practice log and (for the final presentations) an artistic statement, as well as recordings. The self-assessment forms are compared with forms (in a similar format) filled by teachers, to facilitate a discussion and to provide feedback. The portfolio approach was developed during the lockdown as a result of the restrictive measures taken because of the



pandemic, but the institution is planning to continue to use the portfolio approach in the future, when performance assessments can take place live. (SER, p. 15, 53, 56)

Students to whom the review team spoke indicated that they have the opportunity to discuss with teachers the feedback resulting from assessments. They feel that in these discussions, which take place in an open and constructive manner, they are addressed as mature adults. Students mentioned that they receive feedback on the three domains of the curriculum, but at the same time expressed some disappointment at what they perceived as a lack of connection between the feedback they received on different aspects of their activities. (Meeting 2 - students) The heads of department and teachers confirmed that feedback is provided from different angles in (what might be perceived by some as) an asynchronous manner, but also emphasized that teachers, supervisors and coaches meet together at regular times to discuss individual students' progress and seek to provide feedback in a co-ordinated and complementary way. (Meeting 3 - heads of department; Meeting 4 - teaching staff)

Reflection by the review team

The review team found that the assessment criteria and procedures are easily accessible and clearly defined for students and other stakeholders of the programmes.

The review team welcomes the recent development of self-assessment as part of the portfolio approach, which provides a helpful addition for students in reflecting on their own progression and further challenges facing them. This innovation reflects the willingness of the institution to continue to refine its assessment procedures, as was also apparent from the institution's future plans and self-critical notes in relation to assessment as expressed in the self-evaluation report.

The review team welcomes the constructive and open way in which students are provided with formative feedback that supports their further development. However the review team gained the impression from various meetings during the site visit that the way in which feedback is provided to students could be more simply and efficiently arranged. The review team would therefore suggest that the institution considers whether it might be possible to develop a more clearly coordinated approach to the providing of feedback to students, as this may help them to grasp more readily the interconnections between different aspects of their activities.

The review team suggest that the institution continue to monitor very carefully the consistency in the application of grading scales in order to ensure comparability and compatibility across the disciplines in the master's programmes (cf. MusiQuE standard 6.2).

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

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



4. Achieved learning outcomes

MusiQuE standard 3.2

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

- ✓ Please note that the information and analysis included under this standard can also be found in the *Assessment report* under NVAO standard 4. More information about the purpose and scope of the *Assessment report* can be found in the introduction.

Student achievement is linked to and explicitly monitored in terms of the intended learning outcomes. Students obtain their degree once they have achieved all the intended learning outcomes by passing the required courses and gaining the necessary credits. The Exam Committee, which is responsible for the quality of all student assessment processes, checks whether the intended learning outcomes are achieved before the degree is awarded based on the information available in *Osiris*, the student progress tracking system used by the Royal Conservatoire.

Before graduating, students in the Master of Music and Master of Sonology programmes are required to present two final works. Master of Music students publicly present their research exposition or thesis and demonstrate their artistic development in a final recital or presentation.¹³ Master of Sonology students hand in a thesis one month in advance of the presentation of their artistic work, after which the thesis and the presentations are discussed during a one-hour interview. The review team was provided with a selection of final works of graduates from both the Master of Music and Master of Sonology programmes in advance of the site visit. The review team was able to listen to recordings of a selection of final recitals, as well as additional information concerning the assessment process and the grading of the final works.¹⁴ The review team studied final works of seventeen students from the Master of Music programme who graduated over the past two academic years, and final works of fifteen students from the Master of Sonology programme who graduated over the past five academic years.¹⁵ The selection of final works represented an overall balance in the variety of disciplines offered in both master's programmes. In addition to the final works made available in advance, the review team members were offered the opportunity to observe several additional final recitals and assessment panel discussions immediately following the site visit.¹⁶ The impressions of the review team concerning the final works are described in the paragraph 'Reflection by the review team' further below.

The Royal Conservatoire makes use of both quantitative and qualitative methods to monitor how the alumni of the master's programmes perform in the profession and further studies. The institution uses the information provided by the national 'HBO-Kunstenmonitor' (*Art Monitor*), a tool which surveys all graduates of Dutch higher arts education institutions one and a half years after their graduation. The survey statistics show that with regards to questions about their professional integration, alumni rated the Master of Music programme at the Royal Conservatoire higher than the national benchmark in 2019. The Royal Conservatoire has also recently implemented a dedicated online platform to strengthen the connection to its alumni community. This allows the institution to get

¹³ In the Master of Music, the disciplines 'Theory of Music', 'Instrumental and Vocal Learning & Teaching' and 'Music Education' according to the Kodály Concept' feature only a research presentation and no recital.

¹⁴ The institution chose not to include recordings of the final artistic presentations of Master of Sonology graduates because of the specific nature of the sonology presentations. Instead, it was agreed with the review team in advance that the review team member with expertise in the field of sonology would be invited to attend final presentations during a mini-festival on 23-24 June 2021. The review team member attending the event shared his observations afterwards, in order to support the reflections of the review team presented in this report.

¹⁵ In line with GDPR-related requirements, the details of the final works studied by the review team are not included in this report. The student numbers, the programme and discipline in which the students were enrolled and information on the grading of the final works are known to the Secretary of the review team.

¹⁶ Review team members were able to attend the extra final recitals and assessment panel discussions through livestream. The recitals took place live in the Royal Conservatoire. Observations on the extra final recitals were shared among the review team members in order to complement their reflections presented in this report.



additional insights into the progress, achievements, and subsequent employment of alumni of the programmes. Three major themes have been identified as key issues to be further explored in consultation with alumni of the programmes: lifelong learning, quality recruitment and professional preparation practice.

The institution invites external examiners from outside The Netherlands to the final presentations of students to assess whether the intended learning outcomes are also met at an international level. This contributes not only to the rigour of the assessment process, but also allows the institution to collect feedback on the level of graduating students from an 'outsider's perspective'. Feedback from the external examiners on the level at the moment of graduation is annually collected through a survey. Every two years, a comparison is made between the grades awarded by internal and external examiners at the final presentations.

'Critical friends' invited by the institution are also asked to comment on the level of graduating students. Critical friends have indicated that the level of graduates is very high and in line with the requirements of the discipline and the professional field. They describe the level of graduating students as 'internationally excellent', since the students not only have the required competences, but they are also articulate, self-reflective and have a good understanding of the professional field. Professional stakeholders are also consulted on the performance of alumni in the professional stakeholder meetings, and through daily contacts with partners who co-organise the various projects as part of the curricula of the programmes.

The self-evaluation report prepared by the Royal Conservatoire shows that Master of Music contains an extensive list of alumni from all disciplines and specialisations who have been able to make significant careers in the international music profession, as teaching staff in higher music education institutions or music academies across Europe, as founders of prestigious ensembles, as prize winners and as performing artists. The Royal Conservatoire itself has also been a base for the establishment of several ensembles that gained international reputations, especially in the fields of contemporary and early music. Alumni of the Master of Sonology are active as composers, performers, sound designers, computer programmers and educators. A number of them hold teaching positions at higher music education institutions, mainly in Western Europe. The Master of Sonology programme also serves as a solid preparation for doctoral research. The review team received details of ten alumni of the programme who have completed, or have recently been admitted to, a doctoral programme.

Reflection by the review team

The review team noted that student achievement is explicitly monitored in terms of intended learning outcomes and considers this a strength. The linking of explicit learning outcomes to each course makes it clear which learning outcomes each student has achieved.

The review team saw a sufficient number of final works from graduates of both the Master of Music and the Master of Sonology programme. The review team did not encounter anomalies in the grading. In the Master of Music programme, however, the review team noticed a slight generosity in grading in the initial selection of final works made available by the institution. In order to enable the review team to give a balanced opinion on the satisfactory-unsatisfactory cutting scores, it requested the institution to provide additional final works that received lower than average gradings. After consideration of these extra final works, the review team concluded that the overall grading of the final works in both the Master of Music and Master of Sonology programmes can be considered as fair.¹⁷ The review team noticed a certain disparity in the discourse substantiating the grading of final works across the various disciplines of the master's programmes. Gradings are justified with varying levels of detail. The review team sees room for further improvement in increasing the consistency across the disciplines in this regard. The review team would like to note that the general level of the final works is

¹⁷ The institution made two additional final works from each master's programme available to the review team.



commendably high. Many of the final recitals which the review team was able to hear were performed to a high musical standard and were extremely well prepared.

While the self-evaluation report identifies a range of quantitative and qualitative methods currently used for monitoring the achievement of graduates, most of these methods do not appear to be providing precise information on the professional activities of most students (in particular, non-European students who return to their country of origin after they complete their programme of study). The review team acknowledges the difficulties involved in obtaining such data but would like to encourage the institution to seek ways of collecting more fine-grained information. This may prove helpful to the institution in critically evaluating the achievement of students in the longer term.

It was clear to the review team that the institution is committed to intensifying its efforts to assess whether graduates meet the demands of the sector and whether the master's programmes are educating students who achieve high levels in their chosen professional fields. In this context, the review team welcomes and encourages the plans of the Royal Conservatoire to strengthen the connection to its alumni community in order to keep track of their integration in the profession. Strengthening the ties with the alumni network through the new online platform will not only allow the master's programmes to get greater insight in the needs of young graduates and the changing demands of the music sector but will also facilitate the further optimisation of the educational provision of the master's programmes on a continuing basis. It was clear to the review team that the institution does not intend to rely solely on positive feedback from graduates, but that there is a genuine willingness to investigate their satisfaction levels thoroughly and to respond to what is learnt as a result. The review team also supports the commitment of the programmes expressed in the self-evaluation report to seek ways of increasing the involvement of alumni in the delivery of certain parts of the programmes, in various roles and capacities.

The review team considers the involvement of external examiners from outside The Netherlands as good practice to ensure that the intended learning outcomes are also met at international level and endorses the efforts of the institution to continue comparing grades awarded by internal and external examiners in order to achieve appropriate grading.

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

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



Conclusion

The review team found that the Royal Conservatoire is absolutely committed to preparing students as fully as possible for the realities of the musical profession. Both the Master of Music and the Master of Sonology programmes facilitate the students' full immersion in professional practice. This ambition is not only shown in the rhetoric of the rationale of the programmes but is also translated into sets of detailed intended learning outcomes. Students' achievements in their final work and their successful integration into the music profession further demonstrate the relevance and the coherence of the master's programmes being offered by the Royal Conservatoire.

The review of the Master of Music and the Master of Sonology programmes took place in a unique and dynamic context, shortly after the implementation of the revised curriculum of the Master of Music programme, amidst the uncertain times occasioned by the pandemic, and just months before the institution's move to the new 'Amare' building. During this period of dramatic change for the Royal Conservatoire, the institution has continued to question itself rigorously and has remained strongly self-critical. It is rare - and refreshing - to encounter a world-leading institution so committed to improvement and so determined not simply to rest on its laurels.



Annexes

Annex 1. Overview of the compliance with the standards and strengths and recommendations / suggestions for improvement

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

Quality culture, critical friends and accreditation		
MusiQuE standard 7	Master of Music	Master of Sonology
Compliance level	Fully compliant	Fully compliant
<p>Strengths and recommendations / suggestions for enhancement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The review team would like to commend the Royal Conservatoire for its self-critical approach. Throughout the meetings during the site visit, the review team noted an enormous desire to move forward and continuously search for ways to strengthen the programmes still further. The quest for enhancement was not only apparent in the various meetings but also in the materials studied by the review team, in which the programmes show a high capacity for self-evaluation. It is clear to the review team that the teams responsible for these programmes are not only self-critical, but also willing to share these self-critical observations with others. The review team was impressed by the critical friend system and by the deeply committed way in which the departments are engaged in this process. The review team noted that all the steps in the process seem well developed and admired the thoroughness of the exchange between the critical friends and the departments. The review team was particularly impressed by the in-depth view which critical friends can offer in their reports, by the way in which the departments consider their suggestions together with staff and students, and by the follow-up process. The review team welcomes the fact that the critical friends are selected internationally instead of locally. The review team noted strong support for the critical friend approach across both programmes, and in particular with heads of department. The review team would like to recommend to the Royal Conservatoire that it considers organising an exchange of views between critical friends. Although one might argue that organising such an exchange creates an additional layer of complexity, the review team makes this suggestion in order to ensure the optimal operation of the system. At the moment, the programmes are missing out on relevant information and insights from critical friends, as the observations they share in their reports are almost exclusively focused on the specific departments, while all critical friends to whom the review team spoke had relevant comments to share about the programmes as a whole and their organisational structures. Organising an exchange between different critical friends might offer them a platform to share these insights and discuss them with representatives of the programmes. 		
Intended learning outcomes		
MusiQuE standard 1	Master of Music	Master of Sonology
Compliance level	Fully compliant	Fully compliant
<p>Strengths and recommendations / suggestions for enhancement</p>		



- The review team commends the Royal Conservatoire for the dynamic and progressive character of the Master of Music and Master of Sonology programmes. The master programmes are organically reworked and continuously improved to offer the students the best possible learning experience.
- The review team is convinced that the way in which the intended learning outcomes are currently described is fit for purpose and responds to the recommendation made by the panel at the time of the previous assessment procedure in 2012. However, the review team would now like to encourage the Royal Conservatoire to consider presenting the intended learning outcomes in a simpler fashion. The intended learning outcomes can be viewed as over-elaborate, and their highly detailed nature may diminish their effectiveness and 'memorability' for students and staff. Providing concise summaries (in addition to the current descriptions in the curriculum handbooks) of the intended learning outcomes which highlight their main goals and overarching ideas might help stakeholders of the programmes to better internalise their content and significance.

MusiQuE standard 2.2	Master of Music	Master of Sonology
Compliance level	Fully compliant	Fully compliant

Strengths and recommendations / suggestions for enhancement

- The review team considers the ambition to offer students a truly international learning environment as highly commendable and agrees with the observation by one of the critical friends that the international orientation of the institution is a kind of 'cantus firmus', permeating the Master of Music and Master of Sonology programmes in nearly all their aspects. The review team saw clear evidence that both programmes are continually building on ways in which students can gain international perspectives. The review team also noted that the Master of Sonology programme is well networked internationally and that, through its long history and eminent position in the sector, it offers a platform for the international sonology scene.
- As the review team noted that in the discourse about internationalisation there tends to be a focus on Europe and the Western world, the review team would strongly encourage deeper reflection on the meaning of internationalisation in a global context. What does 'international' mean today? The review team does not presume to offer any one answer to this challenging question but believes that continued discussion on this matter could strengthen the Royal Conservatoire's international policy for the twenty-first century. In this context, the move to the new Amare building will bring opportunities for fresh exploration, together with other arts organisations and societal stakeholders. This could help to re-examine the terms 'international' and 'intercultural', as well as the place of non-Western traditions, in the master's programmes.

MusiQuE standard 8.1	Master of Music	Master of Sonology
Compliance level	Fully compliant	Fully compliant

Strengths and recommendations / suggestions for enhancement

- The review team took note of the ongoing reflections about interdisciplinarity and would like to encourage the programmes that they explore further, and increasingly promote, opportunities for interdisciplinary exchange. In this context, the review team would like to encourage the institution to make full use of the opportunities offered by the move to Amare to reach out to other art disciplines, and jointly (with the co-residents of the building) to reflect even further on new possibilities for collaboration across disciplines. Such joint reflections could enrich student experience, and also inform



future discussions within the institution on how (classical) music can reach out and strengthen its role in today's world.		
MusiQuE standard 8.2	Master of Music	Master of Sonology
Compliance level	Fully compliant	Fully compliant
Strengths and recommendations / suggestions for enhancement		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The review team was impressed by the large number of high quality professional relationships in which the programmes are involved. At the same time, the review team had the impression that opportunities for collaboration are sometimes seized in an <i>ad hoc</i> manner, rather than selected strategically. The review team would therefore like to suggest to the institution that a more strategic approach to the prioritisation of partnerships for the programmes is adopted. Those partners identified as key partners of the programmes could be brought together in an overarching meeting or forum such as an Artistic Council. Such a forum might offer opportunities to reflect jointly on institutional priorities and on the strategic relevance of relationships beyond the intrinsic value of individual projects. 		
MusiQuE standard 8.3	Master of Music	Master of Sonology
Compliance level	Fully compliant	Fully compliant
Strengths and recommendations / suggestions for enhancement		
/		
Teaching and learning environment		
MusiQuE standard 2.1	Master of Music	Master of Sonology
Compliance level	Fully compliant	Fully compliant
Strengths and recommendations / suggestions for enhancement		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The review team was impressed by the substantial curricular innovations in the Master of Music programme, including the introduction of the concept of the three pillars (artistic development, research and professional integration), the master projects and the master circles. The review team is convinced that the new structure allows students to give shape to their own educational trajectories, and effectively assists them to develop themselves as arts professionals. The review team noted that the new curriculum has been well implemented throughout the Master of Music programme but suggests that further work is done to align the curricular structure of the ArtScience discipline with the curricula of the other disciplines to ensure greater consistency. The review team admires the institution's commitment to student-centred learning and how it is realised through the structure of the master's programmes and the variety of approaches to learning and teaching. The individual mentoring of students and the combination of artistic coaching, research supervision and professional integration coaching which come together in the master circles offer an effective structure for student support and mutual exchange. The review team particularly applauds the institution for maintaining its student-centred approach and for the implementation of the new curriculum during the difficult circumstances occasioned by the pandemic. 		



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The review team noted that diversity is a theme that is currently being discussed in the master's programmes under review. In the opinion of the review team, however, diversity has curricular consequences, which seem as yet to have been relatively unexplored in these programmes so far. The review team would like to encourage the institution to reflect on the concept of diversity in contemporary society, and its implications for the content of these master's programmes. 		
MusiQuE standard 4.1	Master of Music	Master of Sonology
Compliance level	Fully compliant	Fully compliant
Strengths and recommendations / suggestions for enhancement		
/		
MusiQuE standard 4.2	Master of Music	Master of Sonology
Compliance level	Fully compliant	Fully compliant
Strengths and recommendations / suggestions for enhancement		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The review team considers it a strength that the Royal Conservatoire invests significantly in the continuing professional development of its staff. The 'Artist as Teacher' programme and the possibility for teachers to obtain a master's degree are convincing examples of the institution's ambition in this area. 		
MusiQuE standard 5.1	Master of Music	Master of Sonology
Compliance level	Fully compliant	Fully compliant
Strengths and recommendations / suggestions for enhancement		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The move to Amare brings opportunities for the Royal Conservatoire, but also places on the institution, as a leading resident of the building, a responsibility to put into practice the rhetoric and expectations about Amare - with inclusiveness and the integration of arts in society at the heart of it. In this context, the review team would like to repeat its suggestion to reflect, together with other residents of the building, on three themes: the implications of the terms 'international' and 'intercultural' as well as the place of non-Western traditions in the master's programmes (<i>cf.</i> MusiQuE standard 2.2), the meaning of 'diversity' in contemporary society and its implications for the content of the programmes (<i>cf.</i> MusiQuE standard 2.1), and the opportunities this brings for interdisciplinary exchanges and collaborations with other arts organisations (<i>cf.</i> MusiQuE standard 8.1). The review team would like to recommend to the Royal Conservatoire that the planning and organisation of the use of space in the new 'Amare' building (for rehearsals, concerts, classes and so on) is undertaken on a co-ordinated institutional basis and not viewed simply as a matter for individual departments to arrange for themselves. Coordinated planning for, and transparent information and communication about, the use of the rooms and facilities will be important for all stakeholders of the programmes to ensure smooth operations once the institution has moved to the new location. The review team realises that the situation caused by the pandemic has meant that for many people the past months have been for many people a difficult, dispiriting and challenging time. The review team admires the institution for focussing wherever possible on the positive aspects and commends the 		



institution for its determination to continue to exploit the possibilities of e-learning and to reflect on lessons learnt.		
MusiQuE standard 5.3	Master of Music	Master of Sonology
Compliance level	Fully compliant	Fully compliant
Strengths and recommendations / suggestions for enhancement /		
MusiQuE standard 6.1	Master of Music	Master of Sonology
Compliance level	Fully compliant	Fully compliant
Strengths and recommendations / suggestions for enhancement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The review team found that effective mechanisms are in place for internal communication within the programmes. The review team suggests however that the institution should consider further strengthening communication between the various departments. This would encourage more frequent exchange of educational expertise between the various departments and the sharing across the programmes of some of the inspirational practices and examples which already exist. This would bring benefits to both students and members of staff of the programmes. 		
MusiQuE standard 6.2	Master of Music	Master of Sonology
Compliance level	Substantially compliant	Substantially compliant
Strengths and recommendations / suggestions for enhancement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The review team recognises that higher music education institutions have traditionally been structured 'vertically' (around individual instruments, disciplines or departments) and that there is certainly not only one right way to organise a programme. The review team noted, and welcomes, that major efforts have been made to increase comparability and compatibility across the disciplines in the Master of Music and Master of Sonology programmes. However the review team recommends further reflection on whether the current organisational structure for the programmes facilitates an appropriate degree of 'horizontal alignment' and beneficial 'cross-fertilisation' across and within the master's programmes. Do the organisational structures encourage departments to collaborate, or do they tend to inhibit this? Although the review team does not presume to answer these questions, the team would observe that more traditional structures may have the effect of reinforcing traditional ways of thinking. In discussion, the review team was unable to discern whether decisions to open (or close) disciplines in the master's programmes were taken on a clearly strategic basis. While admiring the flexibility shown by the institution in creating new disciplines within the master's programmes when appropriate, the review team gained the impression that such decisions may at times have been taken in a somewhat <i>ad hoc</i> manner. The review team recommends to the Royal Conservatoire that it should strive to preserve a judicious balance between the flexibility, freedom and informality which characterises the internal management on the one hand, and the need for structure and strategy on the other. The review team endorses the institution's efforts to maintain flexibility, freedom and informality in its operations. These qualities are precious, and vital, to allow further innovation throughout the programmes. But strategic connections 		



between departments and structures for dialogue across disciplines are equally important to ensure horizontal alignment and to avoid internal contradictions.

Student assessment

MusiQuE standard 3.1	Master of Music	Master of Sonology
Compliance level	Fully compliant	Fully compliant

Strengths and recommendations / suggestions for enhancement

- The review team commends the institution for the real support, encouragement and care given to students in elaborating their master project plan.

MusiQuE standard 2.3	Master of Music	Master of Sonology
Compliance level	Fully compliant	Fully compliant

Strengths and recommendations / suggestions for enhancement

- The review team welcomes the constructive and open way in which students are provided with formative feedback that supports their further development. However the review team gained the impression from various meetings during the site visit that the way in which feedback is provided to students could be more simply and efficiently arranged. The review team would therefore suggest that the institution considers whether it might be possible to develop a more clearly coordinated approach to the providing of feedback to students, as this may help them to grasp more readily the interconnections between different aspects of their activities.
- The review team suggest that the institution continues to monitor very carefully the consistency in the application of grading scales in order to ensure comparability and compatibility across the disciplines in the master's programmes (cf. MusiQuE standard 6.2).

Achieved learning outcomes

MusiQuE standard 3.2	Master of Music	Master of Sonology
Compliance level	Fully compliant	Fully compliant

Strengths and recommendations / suggestions for enhancement

- The review team noted that student achievement is explicitly monitored in terms of intended learning outcomes and considers this a strength. The linking of explicit learning outcomes to each course makes it clear which learning outcomes each student has achieved.
- The review team saw a sufficient number of final works from graduates of both the Master of Music and the Master of Sonology programme. The review team did not encounter anomalies in the grading. In the Master of Music programme, however, the review team noticed a slight generosity in grading in the initial selection of final works made available by the institution. In order to enable the review team to give a balanced opinion on the satisfactory-unsatisfactory cutting scores, it requested the institution to provide additional final works that received lower than average gradings. After consideration of these extra final works, the review team concluded that the overall grading of the final works in both the Master of Music and Master of Sonology programmes can be considered as fair. The review team noticed a



certain disparity in the discourse substantiating the grading of final works across the various disciplines of the master's programmes. Gradings are justified with varying levels of detail. The review team sees room for further improvement in increasing the consistency across the disciplines in this regard. The review team would like to note that the general level of the final works is commendably high. Many of the final recitals which the review team was able to hear were performed to a high musical standard and were extremely well prepared.

While the self-evaluation report identifies a range of quantitative and qualitative methods currently used for monitoring the achievement of graduates, most of these methods do not appear to be providing precise information on the professional activities of most students (in particular, non-European students who return to their country of origin after they complete their programme of study). The review team acknowledges the difficulties involved in obtaining such data but would like to encourage the institution to seek ways of collecting more fine-grained information. This may prove helpful to the institution in critically evaluating the achievement of students in the longer term.

It was clear to the review team that the institution is committed to intensifying its efforts to assess whether graduates meet the demands of the sector and whether the master's programmes are educating students who achieve high levels in their chosen professional fields. In this context, the review team welcomes and encourages the plans of the Royal Conservatoire to strengthen the connection to its alumni community in order to keep track of their integration in the profession. Strengthening the ties with the alumni network through the new online platform will not only allow the master's programmes to get greater insight in the needs of young graduates and the changing demands of the music sector but will also facilitate the further optimisation of the educational provision of the master's programmes on a continuing basis. It was clear to the review team that the institution does not intend to rely solely on positive feedback from graduates, but that there is a genuine willingness to investigate their satisfaction levels thoroughly and to respond to what is learnt as a result. The review team also supports the commitment of the programmes expressed in the self-evaluation report to seek ways of increasing the involvement of alumni in the delivery of certain parts of the programmes, in various roles and capacities.

The review team considers the involvement of external examiners from outside The Netherlands as good practice to ensure that the intended learning outcomes are also met at an international level and endorses the efforts of the institution to continue comparing grades awarded by internal and external examiners in order to achieve appropriate grading.



Annex 2. 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 weaknesses 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 weaknesses 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 condition¹⁸.
- *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 condition¹⁹.

¹⁸ Please note that conditions can only be formulated in accreditation reports and not in quality enhancement review reports.

¹⁹ Please note that conditions can only be formulated in accreditation reports and not in quality enhancement review reports.



Annex 3. 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>NVAO Netherlands, Assessment Framework for the higher education accreditation system of The Netherlands, September 2018</i>
B	<i>Mapping CF guidelines with MusiQuE - NVAO Standards 2021.03.15</i>
C	<i>Quality Culture KC 2020 and beyond</i>
D	<i>Handbook for a Critical Friend Review, 2019</i>
E	<i>Decision on Accreditation for the Master of Music (E1) and Master of Sonology programme 2012 (E2)</i>
F	<i>Curriculum Handbooks</i>
G	<i>Master of Music Handbook, 2020-21</i>
H	<i>Master Project Guidelines 2020-21</i>
I	<i>Faculty Plan Royal Conservatoire, 2019-2021</i>
J	<i>Internationalisation at the Royal Conservatoire: Status Report and Policy Objectives 2021-2024</i>
K	<i>Study Guide Royal Conservatoire 2020-21</i>
L	<i>Institutional Plan + Plan for Quality Agreements 2019-2024, University of the Arts The Hague</i>
M	<i>AEC Learning Outcomes 2017, Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC)</i>
N	<i>Master Electives Handbook 2020-21</i>
O	<i>Employability Statement KC 20-21</i>
P	<i>Critical Friends Analysis, 2016-2020</i>
Q	<i>Professional Stakeholders Meeting Sonology, 2021</i>
R	<i>Critical Friends reports and feedback reports</i>
S	<i>2017.10.26 Final Report MusiQuE Review KC Research Unit</i>
T	<i>Sonology Masters Guidelines 2020-21</i>
U	<i>The Artist as Teacher flyer 2020-2021</i>



V	<i>Master Project (Study) Plan Guidelines</i>
W	<i>Applications and enrolment numbers 2018-2021</i>
X	<i>Report External examiners final presentations 19-20</i>
Y	<i>List of prize winners</i>
Z	<i>Royal Conservatoire – Alumni Community Explained</i>
AA	<i>Report Stockhausen ‘aus Licht’</i>
AB	<i>Concert Season Brochure 2019-2020</i>

In addition to the above-mentioned documents, the review team was provided with a selection of final projects from graduates of both programmes. 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.

The review team made use of the opportunity to request additional documents and information to substantiate its judgements. The additional documentation provided by the programmes is not listed in the overview above.



Annex 4. Site visit schedule

Day 1 – Tuesday 25/05/2021			
Time CEST	Meeting	Participants	
9:30 - 10:30	Review team meeting		
10:30 - 12:00	Meeting 1: Welcome and meeting with the management of the institution & programmes	Welcome by Principal Opening video, including information on facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Principal · Vice-principal, Research Supervisor, Master Circle Leader · Head Institute of Sonology · Head of Master Research, Research Supervisor and Master Circle Leader · Lector 'Music, Education & Society', lecturer ACPA and Master Circle Leader · Head of Master Professional Integration, Head of NAIP programme, Course Leader 'Artist as Teacher' and member Council of Representatives · Head of Quality Culture 	
12:00 - 12:30	Review team meeting		
12:30 - 13:30	Lunch Break		
13:30 - 14:30	Meeting 2: Meeting with students	Group 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Student Vocal Studies · Student Vocal Studies · Student Classical Music · Student Classical Music · Student Jazz · Student Early Music · Student NAIP 	Group 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Student Sonology · Student Sonology · Student Art of Sound · Student Composition · Student Composition · Student Instrumental and Vocal Learning & Teaching
14:30 - 15:00	Review team meeting		
15:00 - 15:15	Break		
15:15 - 16:30	Meeting 3: Meeting with heads of department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Head of Early Music · Head of Classical Music and Master Circle Leader · Head of Jazz · Head of Vocal Studies · Head of Art of Sound and Master Circle Leader · Head Theory of Music, Research Supervisor and Master Circle Leader Master Kodaly · Head of Education · Head of Composition · Head of ArtScience 	
16:30 - 17:00	Break		



17:00 - 18:00	Review team meeting
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Day 2 – Wednesday 26/05/2021		
Time CEST	Meeting	Participants
13:00 - 14:00	Review team meeting	
14:00 - 15:15	Meeting 4: Meeting with teaching staff from the two programmes	<p>Group 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Teacher Sonology · Teacher Sonology, Group Lecturer and Research Supervisor · Teacher Composition, Group Lecturer and Research Supervisor · Teacher ArtScience · Teacher Theory of Music and Master Circle Leader · Master Kodaly · Teacher Vocal Department, Research Supervisor, Course Leader 'Artist as Teacher' and Master Circle Leader <p>Group 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Guitar Teacher Classical Music Department, Research Supervisor and chair Exam Committee · Professional Integration Coach Classical Music · Traverso Teacher and Group Lecturer Early Music Department, Research Supervisor · Trumpet Teacher and Group Lecturer Early Music Department, Research Supervisor, Master Circle Leader · Teacher Vocal Department · Voice Teacher Jazz Department, Research Supervisor, Master Circle Leader and vice-chair Exam Committee · Drums Teacher Jazz Department and member Study Programme Committee
15:15 - 15:45	Review team meeting	
15:45 - 16:00	Break	
16:00 - 17:00	Meeting 5: Meeting with representatives of the profession	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Representative Residentie Orkest · Representative Amare · Representative Nederlands Kamerkoor · Representative Holland Festival · Representative New European Ensemble · Representative Gaudeamus Festival
17:00 - 17:30	Review team meeting	
17:30 - 18:00	Break	



18:00 - 19:00	Meeting 6: Meeting with 3 Critical Friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Critical friend Classical Music in 2016 and 2019 · Critical friend Art of Sound in 2017 and 2020 · Critical friend Vocal Studies in 2019 and 2021
19:00 - 19:15	Break	
19.15 - 20.00	Review team meeting	

Day 3 – Thursday 27/05/2021	
Time CEST	Meeting
10:15 - 11:00	Review team meeting
11:00 - 11:30	Optional meeting for clarifications
11:30 - 12:30	Review team meeting
12:30 - 13:00	Break
13:00 - 14:00	Feedback session: presentation of the initial findings by the Review team
14:00 - 14:30	Review team meeting

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.

All meetings took place online.



Annex 5. 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



Annex 6. Critical Friend reports





Critical Friend REPORT

Vocal Department
by Stephen Robertson

Royal Conservatoire
The Hague, Netherlands

May 2021



Introduction

This was the second visit to the vocal department, intended as a follow-up to the initial visit and report conducted in 2018. The visit was entirely online because of the circumstances arising from the world-wide Covid19 pandemic. The visit took place from April 13th - 15th inc. Since the visit was entirely online it was somewhat more limited in what could be observed than was possible in the earlier in-person visits to the Conservatoire. The possibility of ad-hoc discussions beyond the formal timetable was more limited and for this visit only one formal assessment could be observed (a Masters Research Presentation).

Nevertheless, it was possible to witness a good variety of the departmental activity and gain some insight into the developments which have been taking place, the level of the work undertaken and the processes/mechanisms which the department has in place for monitoring activity and engaging with feedback from students/staff.

Overall, the impression was very much of a healthy department which is well organized and responding to the changing world of the Arts and the challenges which singers now face in carving a career path. The attention paid to student opinion is excellent and very well managed in terms of the various levels and mechanisms for facilitating student input, as well as the practical, appropriate guidance offered arising from such engagement with the student body. In general issues noted were followed up with determined efficiency and realism.

Online visit content/activities

One-to-one meetings were conducted with: Monica Damen (Head of Vocal department); Janneke Ravenhorst (Head of Quality Culture); Ruth Fraser (Vocal department coordinator) and Martin Prchal (Vice Principal). These were very open and honest with a wide range of issues discussed, (not least the difficulties encountered because of the pandemic).

Singing lessons were observed with: Catrin Wyn-Davies (+B4 student); Noa Frenkel (+ Early Music Singing B1 student); Rita Dams (+M2 student); Frans Fiselier (+M1 student), and a group lesson given by Frans Fiselier (both B and M students). Many thanks to these tutors for allowing my silent extra presence online in their sessions!

In addition the following classes were observed: Italian (B2) with Stefano Orlando; Aural Skills and Improvisation (B3) with Tim Braithwaite; Musica Practica with Isaac Alonso; Methods of Acting (B1) with Wilfred vd.Peppel.

(An intended observation of a coaching session was cancelled as Phyllis Ferverda was ill.)

Also attended: a Masters (2) Research Presentation viva and the marking process of this with the exam panel; a discussion about research with a group on the Teachers as Artist course; meeting with Noa Frenkel, Elsina Jansen and Carolien Drewes for general discussion of the work of the department; a Student Panel meeting (with Bachelor course students present).

Again, as previously thanks are due to all for their generous agreement to engaging in this way.

1. Goals, Design and Delivery of the Study Programme

Masters course

It is clear that there has been substantial change, especially the thorough re-design of the Masters programme. The new design for this seems to have been very well thought through and the clear articulation of the three areas of study activity (Artistic Development/Research/ Professional Integration) are easy for students to discern. The emphasis on research is a valuable way of articulating that Masters students are expected to show initiative and independence in their studies. It is impressive that the research activity is designed so as to be a vehicle for the other two main areas. This is generally very clearly laid out in the relevant handbooks and information. A few relatively minor points for consideration:



- In the Master Study Plan Guidelines document an introduction to the Research component is mentioned, but there is a suggestion in the requirement for the initial research proposal (which seems to precede the Research introductory course) that the student must identify 'steps and methods' for the proposed research. This seems perhaps a little previous given that until students undertake the Research introductory course they may not know enough about research methods and methodology to meaningfully identify 'steps and methods'. Perhaps this could be expressed slightly differently. (Psychologists tell us that once someone has made the initial decision to do something in a particular way, they then become somewhat reluctant to revise their approach.)
- In the handbook for the previous Masters course, there was articulated clearly an emphasis on high level performance. In the new handbook, whilst the dedication to research is admirable it seemed to this reader that the continuous sense of the importance of performance has been somewhat lost. The word 'performance' is mentioned under Educational Philosophy but in Master Study Plan Guidelines seems to be only implicit rather than explicit in much of the material. One of the teachers met during the group discussion expressed the view that there was a need for more performance opportunities in general. The amount of discussion and emphasis on research is a little dazzling and perhaps slightly obscures the importance of high level performance.
- Would it be possible to combine the two documents which are Master Project Plan and Main Study Plan? There is some duplication between the two it seems, and it would be less confusing (potentially overwhelming for students) if these two quite lengthy plan guides could be integrated.
- The Masters Student Panel notes which were made available identified some potentially important areas for further reflection which I know are currently being considered. These include: the possibility of having 'catch-up' courses for entrants to the Masters courses who have not previously completed a singing/music Bachelors course (eg. at KC); ways of making the course sufficiently challenging; improving the quality of post project-audition feedback; whether the Introduction to Project Management should come a little later in the course.
- In the Curriculum Handbook for Vocal Masters, under Theory outcomes 2.B.2 states, 'Exhibit comprehensive knowledge of repertoire within the field of vocal music.' This seems extremely ambitious to the point of being unrealistic, as the field of vocal repertoire is so enormously extensive and varied. Perhaps consider replacing 'comprehensive' with 'wide', (or similar).

The Research Presentation viva-voce interview which was seen, showed that even a student from a very different non-European culture and working in a foreign language had found the research activity manageable, inspiring, challenging, rewarding and highly productive in terms of self -development. This was very impressive. The discussion between the examiners was thorough and numeric marks were individually given preceding the discussion. Perhaps not so good was that immediately following the declaration of individual marks by each examiner, one person then stated, 'So that will be a 9 then.' This seemed to pre-empt the discussion intended to arrive at an agreed mark. However, the discussion which ensued did engage with clear criteria for the awarding of the final mark and there was plenty of time for each panel member to contribute their opinions. There did seem to be some question about whether this particular candidate had managed to identify a clear research question in the end, but it was clear that the quality of work done was nonetheless of a high quality.

It seems very encouraging that the feedback and statistics on applications for the Masters courses is strong and that there is engagement and genuine depth of interest in this newly designed course. It was acknowledged that it will need further time to establish the ongoing success of this reaction from applicants. It is impressively justified pedagogically that there is now a clearly identified component of the courses that seeks to ensure that the student is engaged with the necessary knowledge of the professional world which awaits them ('Professional Integration'). The practical mechanisms for achieving this have been well devised



and are already being effectively used. This will also help in answering the constant thirst from students for increased performance opportunities.

A wide variety of ability levels as performers was witnessed from Masters students. One tenor was outstandingly able, but it seemed that some M1 students needed considerable further technical work yet in order to rectify vocal faults and develop more of the Masters level finesse. Perhaps students such as these might benefit from a separate course that requires Masters-style thought, self-analysis/reflection and comprehension of relevant information about vocal technique (could be literature review based) to assist them in making the necessary rapid technical progress and to supplement their work with singing tutors. Musicality and depth of engagement with repertoire seemed generally good but inhibited by some basic technical matters, eg postural alignment. This somewhat extreme mixture of level of technical attainment seems a general feature of vocal departments in conservatoires and reflects the mixed backgrounds which Masters vocal students come from.

Bachelors course

Monica Damen made it clear that the curriculum for the Bachelor courses is now being re-evaluated so as to bring some of the thinking which has reshaped the Masters courses to the Bachelor. The Student Panels (18th Nov 2020, 2nd Dec 202 and the one attended during the recent visit) suggest that broadly the Bachelor courses are working well. The introduction of self assessment forms is clearly positive and it was good to hear students thinking reasonably clearly about issues to do with appropriateness of using formative as opposed to summative assessments and reporting. It seemed that the students now understand more clearly the necessity and desirability of summative assessments in latter years. This was not really the case during the visits made in 2018, so clearly some improvement has been engineered in the intervening time.

There were some minor niggles expressed by students (which one recognises are common to vocal courses in other institutions). The tactful, skilled, realism of responses from the Head of Department in Student Panel meetings was excellent. This meant that the recurrent sense of a level of dissatisfaction with languages tuition was discussed openly and it was made clear that this is a matter of available finite resource as much as quality of design/individual personnel. The language class observed (Italian) showed a high level of sensitively delivered pedagogy, with students required to think and engage with the material in a very productive way.

Questions posed by the Head of Department during the discussions (such as 'Do you learn what you need to learn?', and, 'Do we offer you what you need in theory in order to become a good singer?') were extremely helpful in guiding student thinking when discussing curriculum and dealing with apparent criticisms of courses. There remains a clear student desire for better integration between practice and theory, and sense of dissatisfaction that feedback to Theory and Education departments does not result in change. Impressively however, it seems that the Bachelor students are mature in being pro-active on their own behalf in guiding the detail of their course...working out for themselves what they need to do/learn.

In re-reading the course literature and handbooks just a few thoughts emerged, as noted previously in general this material is clearly expressed and laid-out.

- The Introduction to the course mentions recent graduates, but perhaps this material could be yet stronger and more influential if it was more specific, for example, 'Graduates from the past five years are working in.... etc etc'.
- It is stated that stage experience is essential and that public presentations are an integral part of the course but is not really clear how each/every student can achieve these vital components. As projects tend to be auditioned and cannot cater for everyone, is it clear to applicants and students how **every** student gains stage experience and public presentations?



- Keeping in mind the developing importance of artistic research could some of the Generic Learning Outcomes be re-grouped or re-formulated so as to clearly reflect/include the notion of the world of artistic research?
- The amount of coaching available to students is a conspicuous strength of the course...perhaps could be highlighted as such?

There was some discussion after the report sent in 2018 about whether the detail of course description for the Anatomy/Phonetics course would be updated. This seems to have not happened (it is mentioned as an action in the response to the last report). It still seems illogical to not have clearly identified the acoustics of the singing classical voice and to teach this area specifically, if one is conversely tackling the other two main factual areas which are so important to singing technique (ie Anatomy and Phonetics). It may be that all teachers of singing believe that they adequately deal with this within the context of singing lessons. Whether that is really true is open to question in all conservatoire vocal departments. The course seems to be worth 2 ECTS, whereas the total of ECTS for singing lessons is 93 across the four years. Is that the most educationally desirable balance for ensuring that students understand their vocal apparatus and how to deal with concepts and practical ideas that govern their progress? It can be one of the ways which ensure that not only students, but staff also, continue to develop skills which have a sound basis in knowledge.

2. Teaching and Learning Environment

The staff who teach singing showed in the lessons which I saw that the work is carried out a highly skilled level, which demonstrates technical expertise, professional musicianship and knowledge of the repertoire, artistically creative insights, and appropriate empathy with the students. The standard of vocal tuition compares very well with other conservatoire departments and there was clear evidence that with suitably talented student intake the levels which students can achieve is well up to international standards. Staff are obviously in touch with professional standards and in general it was good to see/hear teaching which went well beyond the sometimes-encountered 'do-it-as-I-do-it' style of singing teaching. Staff were encouraging and thoughtful in lessons, whilst simultaneously retaining professional targets for students. The sense of enthusiasm on behalf of students was palpable.

The appointment of a tenor as a new permanent vocal tutor seems a very positive step and should help in attracting male voices for admission to courses. Future further appointments are apparently looming and this may create further opportunities for balancing voice types and career backgrounds/specialisms/pedagogical methodologies amongst the vocal staff.

Class lessons seemed purposeful and productive. The acting class for Year 1 Bachelor students was outstanding in using a very clear practical approach to explore methods of acting and the students clearly understood and enjoyed the class. It was very well structured and the time available was used maximally without fuss or undue pressure. It was very good to see how thoughtful and useful this class was for the students involved.

Facilities at the conservatoire will certainly be further strengthened by the move to the new building. No doubt, partly because of the steep learning curve as regards the usefulness of IT and online working which has been imposed by the pandemic, there will good availability of high-quality IT/online facilities in the new building. We will all need to go through a thorough process in the near future of rationalising what can be usefully retained and exploited in the IT/online area. It was clear that some students were better equipped than others in both hardware and understanding of IT/online techniques, as is to be expected at this stage. The role and use of recordings and 'distant learning' will need to be carefully considered to exploit them with maximum effectiveness. It may be worth forming a small vocal department sub-group committee of students and staff members to carry out a review of this area.



The teamwork of Head of Department and Vocal Department Coordinator seems to work very well, with clearly defined roles and both members of staff extremely strongly committed and creative in constantly improving the student experience. Systems in place for dealing with timetable and administrative issues seem robust and effective.

3. Quality culture

The engagement of the Conservatoire with MusiQuE as a means of promoting ongoing review leading to enhancement of quality is impressive in and of itself. However, beyond this it is very clear that this process is taken seriously at all levels within the institution. The meetings with the Vice Principal and the Head of Quality Culture, in addition to meetings with the Head of Vocal Department and Vocal Department Coordinator all demonstrated a very high level of serious commitment to the quality culture within the Conservatoire. Meetings showed that all members of staff were knowledgeable, willing and enthusiastic about this aspect of activity.

At student level, the regular meetings with students via the Student Panel meetings showed that there was interest and thoughtful, creative reflectiveness being cultivated which in turn was being effective in engineering improvements. This effectiveness was not simply a matter of dealing with problems and challenges as they occur, but was also generating new thinking about ways of improving the student experience via the curriculum and delivery of teaching. This is impressive. One of the clear examples of the success of this within the vocal department was this year's very good response rate from the vocal department (72%) in responding to the National Student Survey. It was also good to hear the students at a Student Panel meeting agreeing that the difficulties causing a certain amount of chaos which the pandemic had imposed in November of 2020 had been very largely overcome.

It may also be worth mentioning that, for this visiting reviewer, the response and engagement of staff with the review process was very positive and helpful with excellent clear communication. Any problems/requests were very promptly dealt with. A good example of this was the arrangement which made it possible to talk with a Masters course student at short notice to explore their experience. (This was helpful in confirming the strong sense that the new Masters course was proceeding very positively.)

4. Public interaction

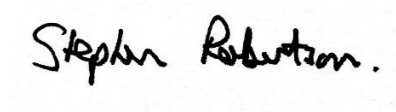
Alas, because of the obvious limitations imposed by the international pandemic and the virtual cessation of public performances, there is not much that can be said about this aspect at this stage.

The only point which might be worth mentioning is the desirability of generating new, (perhaps far-distant), audiences and public connections through the use of IT/online resources, especially live-streaming. This can of course be very demanding on resources because of copy-right and performer-permission issues. At the same time, it could become a very valuable public shop-window which is a powerful potential tool for recruitment. No doubt this is already under consideration for the future. It may be possible to connect this to another element in that some students expressed the view that they would like there to be (more) competitions available within the Conservatoire for them to gain experience in that type of performing. Many of these events could be online, either live or using recordings, which means that competitions need not be as expensive and greedy on physical resources as they sometimes otherwise can be. It seems that there is an obsession with competitions of one kind or another in the media in general in this decade and it may be that this is an area where a strong online presence can make a department or entire Conservatoire more internationally visible.



Postscript

On a personal note, I would like to conclude by saying how positive I have found this entire process and how grateful I am to all who have helped with my involvement with it. Especial thanks go to Blazhe Todorovski, and to the indefatigable Monica Damen and her assistant Ruth Fraser. Their support and clear communications were invaluable and all achieved with a sense of welcoming warmth that I found very encouraging and which has made the process a pleasure.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Robertson." The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

Professor Stephen Robertson MA(Oxon) PhD FRCO LRAM ARCM

Head of Vocal Performance: The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

May 16th 2021



