

## Decision of the Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Education

### INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION

### ESTONIAN ACADEMY OF MUSIC AND THEATRE

25 April 2024

The Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Education decided to accredit the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre for seven years.

On the basis of subsection 38 (3) of the Higher Education Act and pursuant to clause 43.1 of the *Guidelines for Institutional Accreditation*, established on the basis of the authorisation contained in subsection 24 (5) of the Statutes of the Education and Youth Board, the Higher Education Assessment Council (hereinafter the Council) of the Estonian Quality Agency for Education (HAKA) states the following:

1. The Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre (EAMT) submitted an application for institutional accreditation by the Belgian-based agency MusiQuE – Music Quality Enhancement. A letter to this effect was also sent to HAKA by MusiQuE. Chapter 10 of the *Guidelines for Institutional Accreditation* provides for the possibility of involving a competent foreign assessment body. On 20 October 2022, the Council decided that MusiQuE was fit to carry out institutional accreditation.
2. The assessment was carried out in accordance with MusiQuE standards, supplemented by some HAKA standards and sampling curricula.
3. The following curricula were also assessed in the context of institutional accreditation:

Classical Music Performance (Master's studies)

Drama (Bachelor's studies)

Contemporary Physical Performance Making (Master's studies)

Music and Theatre (Doctoral studies)

4. The institutional accreditation of the EAMT was carried out by a committee composed of:

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**Helen McVey (Chair)**

Director of Business Development – Royal Conservatoire of  
Scotland, Glasgow (UK)

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<b>Dužanka Jelenković Vidović (Secretary)</b>	Alliance Administrative Manager, IN.TUNE University Alliance
<b>Guillermo Rodríguez</b>	Student, Royal Flemish Conservatory Brussels (Belgium)
<b>Paula Crabtree</b>	Rector – Stockholm University of the Arts (Sweden)
<b>Christina Guillaumier</b>	Research Fellow & Reader in Music & Cultural Practice – Royal College of Music, London (UK)

5. The assessment visit to the EAMT took place from 30 October through 2 November 2023.
6. MusiQuE submitted the final assessment report to the HAKA office on 23 February 2024. The assessment report is an integral part of the decision and is available on the HAKA website.
7. The Secretary of the Council forwarded the final assessment report and self-reflection report to the members of the Council on 17 April 2024.
8. The Council's assessments were as follows:

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
<b>Institutional Mission, Vision and Context</b>	Fully compliant
<b>Academic Ethics</b>	Fully compliant
<b>Research, development and/or other creative activities</b>	Substantially compliant
<b>The programme and their methods of delivery</b>	Substantially compliant
<b>International Perspectives</b>	Fully compliant
<b>Assessment</b>	Substantially compliant
<b>Admission/Entrance qualifications</b>	Fully compliant
<b>Student progression, achievement and employability</b>	Substantially compliant
<b>Staff qualifications and professional activity</b>	Fully compliant
<b>Size and composition of the teaching staff body</b>	Fully compliant
<b>Facilities</b>	Substantially compliant
<b>Financial resources</b>	Fully compliant
<b>Support staff</b>	Fully compliant
<b>Internal communication process</b>	Fully compliant
<b>Organisational structure and decision-making processes</b>	Fully compliant
<b>Internal quality culture</b>	Substantially compliant
<b>Cultural, artistic and educational contexts</b>	Fully compliant



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Interaction with the artistic professions Fully compliant

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Information provided to the public Fully compliant

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9. At its 25 April 2024 meeting, the Council discussed the documents received with the participation of 13 members and decided to highlight the following strengths of the EAMT in the assessment report,<sup>1</sup> areas for improvement<sup>2</sup>, recommendations, as well as proposals for further developments<sup>3</sup>.

### 9.1 Institutional Mission, Vision, and Context

#### Strengths

- 1) The Academy, as a whole, is characterised by a clear understanding of its identity, which is also expressed in its mission and vision.
- 2) Equal and respectful treatment, a high level of expertise, commitment and a shared sense of quality, were expressed by the EAMT's members in all assessment visit interviews.

### 9.2. Academic Ethics

#### Strengths

- 1) The creation of the position of the Equal Treatment Officer by the EAMT is commendable.

#### Proposals for further developments

- 1) The EAMT is aware of the current problems concerning the use of artificial intelligence in student and research work, and is active in discussions taking place at the national level. Work on regulating the use of AI should continue in line with the ongoing national debate.
- 2) In order to increase the impact, the functions of the Equal Treatment Officer should be clarified and more widely communicated to students.

### 9.3. Research, development and/or other creative activities

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<sup>1</sup> Achievements above the standard level (non-compliance with the standard) are highlighted as strengths.

<sup>2</sup> The areas of improvement and recommendations point to shortcomings in meeting the requirements of the institutional accreditation standard and affect the final decision of the Council.

<sup>3</sup> Proposals for further developments are proposals for improvement, which do not contain a reference to non-compliance with the standard and whether or not they are taken into consideration is at the discretion of the institution of higher education. Proposals for further developments do not affect the final decision of the Council.



### Strengths

- 1) The EAMT has good cooperative ties with other Estonian universities and research institutions in carrying out interdisciplinary projects.
- 2) The EAMT is the centre of research in Estonian musicology, including areas such as music history, theory, analysis, cognitive musicology, and ethno-music.

### Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) In addition to existing individual research projects, international research cooperation should also be supported financially at the institutional level.

### Proposals for further developments

- 1) The EAMT's research is not yet fully aligned with the excellence achieved in other areas of its strategic objectives. It is necessary to further develop and focus the current research culture.
- 2) The results of the EAMT's creative research should continue to be actively promoted at various events, such as the AEC (*Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen*) EPARM (*European Platform for Artistic Research in Music*) conference.
- 3) Efforts should continue to ensure stable and long-term research funding, including international (European Union) grants.

## 9.4. The programme and their methods of delivery

### Strengths

- 1) The way the EAMT implements its goals and the needs of the cultural sector through educational processes, while also taking into account national strategies and the expectations of society, is impressive.
- 2) The innovativeness of the EAMT is commendable. In addition to traditional curricula, they are also open to developments in contemporary performing arts. The opening of the curriculum for contemporary performing arts and the redesign of the Master's programme in Cultural Management and the Bachelor's programme in the Performing Arts are proof of ongoing innovations.
- 3) Particularly commendable is the close communication between all interested parties in creating and reviewing curricula and implementing quick solutions. Representatives of various stakeholders (students, academic staff, alumni, external partners) are actively involved in these processes.
- 4) The EAMT has invested significant resources in supporting the development of digital culture and competences.



- 5) Internal assessment procedures are clear and comprehensive, take into account feedback from various stakeholders, promote communication and effectively lead to the identification of development needs in the learning process and the continuous improvement of learning and teaching.
- 6) The Master's programme in Classical Music Performance is characterised by: a curriculum that is supported by excellent learning resources; regular performance opportunities are available for students and lecturers; the curriculum allows for a successful transition to professional work.
- 7) The Bachelor's programme in Drama is characterised by: the curriculum and the performing arts department have very good links with the field of specialisation; student graduation rates and employability are high.
- 8) The Master's programme in Contemporary Physical Performance Making is characterised by: a curriculum that is attractive and international, and pushes the boundaries of Estonian theatre; a teaching staff with a diverse background, who are actively engaged in self-reflection and are involved in Doctoral studies; the effectiveness of the curriculum is demonstrated by the impressive achievements of alumni.
- 9) Doctoral programme in Music and Theatre is characterised by: good international research cooperation; teaching, research, and practical training are well integrated in the curriculum.

#### Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) Although the learning outcomes are in line with the Standard of Higher Education and international requirements, some lecturers do not inform students about them in a transparent and consistent manner. It must be ensured that the lecturers link the learning outcomes of the modules to the learning outcomes of the curriculum they are teaching.
- 2) Taking into account the students' comments, it is necessary to closely monitor their workload and ensure consistency between working hours and credits.

#### Proposals for further developments

- 1) Coordination and communication with the participants in the joint curricula should be improved in order to raise the efficiency of teaching.
- 2) The Master's programme in Classical Music Performance: the number of local students should be increased; the administrative, technological, and communication skills of academic staff should be strengthened.
- 3) The Bachelor's programme in Drama: consideration should be given to the impact of weekend work on the well-being of students; consistency between workload and credits must be ensured.



- 4) The Master's programme in Contemporary Physical Performance Making: awareness of the Ethics, Learning and Teaching principles of the EAMT among visiting lecturers must be ensured; the lack of space for smaller group work should be addressed.
- 5) Doctoral programme in Music and Theatre: the focus of the research should be clarified; promote partnership and research relations in the Estonian cultural sector; explore the possibility of better structuring doctoral seminars, developing debating skills and improving the teaching of academic English.

## **9.5. International Perspectives**

### Strengths

- 1) The EAMT deals with all aspects of internationalisation and creates an opportunity for its students and lecturers to acquire intercultural competences both in the traditional method of mobility and at home. Internationalisation efforts are carried out through the provision of English-language curricula and special support for foreign students, international partnerships and creative projects, and the consistent involvement of foreign lecturers.

### Proposals for further developments

- 1) Internationalisation has also had a positive impact on curriculum development. Work in this direction should be continued, while the visibility of curricular changes due to internationalisation should be strengthened.

## **9.6. Assessment**

### Strengths

- 1) The EAMT takes into account the feedback of students and lecturers, which has led to changes, as well as the development of guidance material for the assessment of students. The tradition of non-formal feedback (from lecturer to student) is strong, as is the culture of continuous and open dialogue.

### Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) It is strongly recommended that teaching staff share best practices in assessment methods, thereby enabling systematic consistency in assessment across higher education institutions.

## **9.7. Admission/Entrance qualifications**

### Strengths



- 1) New students are regularly asked to provide feedback on the organisation of admissions and the availability of necessary information. The EAMT reacts quickly to the feedback results and implements the necessary changes.

## **9.8. Student progression, achievement and employability**

### Strengths

- 1) The students who met with the Commission were truly committed, self-confident, determined, and eloquent. The EAMT deserves recognition for promoting a culture of caring for students, which also has a positive impact on their later employability.
- 2) The EAMT recognises alumni as an important part of its identity and community, and has close professional as well as informal ties with alumni.

### Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) It is strongly recommended to better identify the reasons why students drop out.

### Proposals for further developments

- 1) While acknowledging new initiatives in collecting graduate data, it is advisable to consider enhancing the formal monitoring and statistical analysis of alumni.
- 2) Although the employability and satisfaction of the EAMT's graduates is high, the Academy would benefit from a better overview of the different opportunities on the labour market.

## **9.9. Staff qualifications and professional activity**

### Strengths

- 1) The EAMT's commitment to human resource development is commendable. The targeted investment in IT and technology training, to support the development of digital competences of employees, deserves particular recognition.

### Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) The opportunities for academic careers are not equally clear to all faculty members. The EAMT needs to find ways to make them better known to employees.

## **9.10. Size and composition of the teaching staff body**

### Strengths



- 1) The efforts of the EAMT in this direction, to continue to be attractive in the recruiting of foreign lecturers, are commendable, especially considering that the choice and competition within Estonia is limited.

#### Proposals for further developments

- 1) Guest lecturers must be made aware of the ethical, learning, and teaching principles of the EAMT.

### **9.11. Facilities**

#### Strengths

- 1) The EAMT's infrastructure is suitable and has recently undergone significant development. Particularly noteworthy is the involvement of top experts, e.g. in creating the acoustics of the concert hall.

#### Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) It is strongly recommended to focus on improving the premises of the Theatre Department.
- 2) The booking system for practice rooms should be made more efficient.

#### Proposals for further developments

- 1) Efforts to digitise library collections and make them available to the public should continue.
- 2) Opportunities should be sought for the greater use of digital tools (e.g. LoLa – Low Latency Audio Visual Streaming) for the benefit of a better learning experience for students.

### **9.12. Financial resources**

#### Proposals for further developments

- 1) Systematic and transparent financial planning is desirable for a better allocation of resources.
- 2) It is desirable to establish a risk register allowing for appropriate mitigation measures where necessary. Having a risk management strategy would facilitate decision-making in unforeseen situations and, if necessary, offer alternative approaches.

### **9.13. Support staff**





### Strengths

- 1) The EAMT's support staff is highly efficient and dedicated, and thus one of the institutional strengths of the EAMT. The support staff's job satisfaction and professional development opportunities are high.

### **9.14. Internal communication process**

#### Strengths

- 1) The internal communication mechanisms of the EAMT are effective, thereby increasing strong community ownership and trust. The EAMT uses a variety of communication channels and strategies to ensure effective communication with students, staff and external partners.
- 2) The effectiveness of the EAMT's communication systems is constantly assessed through surveys and feedback collected from various internal stakeholders. Improvements will be made as soon as certain gaps are revealed by those surveys.

### **9.15. Organisational structure and decision-making processes**

#### Strengths

- 1) Students are strongly represented in the decision-making processes of the EAMT and in various decision-making bodies. Regular meetings are held between the Rector and the Student Council.
- 2) The shared core institutional values of the EAMT's membership form the basis of the development plan.

#### Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) Documents relating to the student body must also be made available in English, to ensure equal opportunities for student representation.

### **9.16. Internal quality culture**

#### Strengths

- 1) In recent years, the EAMT has established a comprehensive system of quality assurance and promotion that involves stakeholders and uses their feedback to continuously improve both at curricular and institutional level.

#### Proposals for further developments



- 1) The assessment visit revealed some inconsistencies in the knowledge of quality assurance processes and responsibilities among all internal stakeholders. The responsibilities within the quality system should be clearly established and the entire membership informed.

### **9.17. Cultural, artistic, and educational contexts**

#### Strengths

- 1) The EAMT is strongly integrated into the wider Estonian cultural, creative and educational context, and makes a multifaceted contribution to it. The Academy is closely involved in public discourse at the local, national, and international level through various cultural and music projects.
- 2) The EAMT's alumni are remarkably well integrated into society.

### **9.18. Interaction with the artistic professions**

#### Strengths

- 1) The EAMT's position in the Estonian professional music and theatre scene is outstanding. The Academy's approach to communicating with creative professions and promoting cooperation is comprehensive and dynamic. The EAMT also offers life-long learning opportunities that meet the changing needs of the sector.

### **9.19. Information provided to the public**

#### Strengths

- 1) The EAMT provides the general public with clear, consistent and accurate information through various channels. The EAMT website and social media play an important role in this and are well organised. The information is available in both Estonian and English, contributing to its international dissemination.

10. In accordance with clause 43.1 of the *Guidelines for Institutional Accreditation*, if all standards are assessed as 'compliant', the Council decides that the management, organisation of work, teaching and research activities, and the teaching and research environment of the HEI, meet the requirements, and accredits the HEI for a period of seven years. MusiQuE uses four rating scales. At the same time, clause 43<sup>1</sup>.4 of the *Guidelines for Institutional Accreditation* states that once all deficiencies have been fully or substantially remedied, the Council will



decide that the secondary condition has been fulfilled (thereby equating full and substantial compliance).

11. Based on the above, the Council

**DECIDED to:**

**Accredit the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre for seven years. The Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre will also be awarded the HAKA quality label.**

The decision was adopted by 13 votes in favour. Against 0.

12. The accreditation is valid until 25 April 2031, or until the decision is revoked. The next institutional accreditation period will be coordinated by the HAKA Secretariat with the EAMT by 25 April 2030 at the latest.

13. The Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre shall submit to the Council an overview of the areas for improvement and the consideration of the recommendations set out in clause 9 of this decision, at the latest, by 25 April 2026.

14. A person who finds that his or her rights have been violated or his or her freedoms have been restricted by a decision may file a challenge with the HAKA Council within 30 days after the person who filed the challenge became or should have become aware of the contested act. The Council shall send the challenge to the HAKA internal review committee, which shall, within five days of receipt of the challenge, provide the Council with an impartial opinion in writing on the merits of the challenge. The Council shall resolve the challenge within 10 days of receipt thereof, taking into account the reasoned position of the internal review committee. If the request for internal review needs to be further examined, the Council may extend the time limit for examining the request for internal review by up to 30 days. Judicial contestation of a decision is possible within 30 days of its delivery by filing an appeal with the Tallinn Courthouse of the Tallinn Administrative Court pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Administrative Court Procedure Act.

**Hillar Bauman**

Secretary of the Higher Education Assessment Council

