

Executive summary

Report

Programme QE review

Conservatorio della Svizzera Italiana

Bachelor of Arts in Music

Bachelor of Arts in Music and Movement

Master of Arts in Music Pedagogy

Master of Arts in Music Performance

Master of Arts in Specialized Music Performance

Master of Arts in Music Composition and Theory

(Lugano, Switzerland)

Site-visit: 19-21 November, 2025



Introduction

The *Conservatorio della Svizzera italiana* (CSI) is a private-law foundation of public interest located in Lugano, Switzerland, operating —for its University of Music— under a public mandate from the Canton of Ticino, one of 26 cantons forming the Swiss Confederation, and the only one where Italian is the exclusive official language. Founded in 1985 by private initiative, CSI was recognised by the Conference of Swiss Universities of Music in 1988 and formally acknowledged by the Canton of Ticino as a music education institution through agreements signed in 1994 and 1998. In 2000, the Canton granted CSI a formal mandate to transform the Conservatoire programmes into degree-level study courses, which were subsequently developed in line with the Bologna process, leading to the introduction of bachelor's degrees in 2005 and master's degrees in 2008, the last of which were accredited in 2010. Since 2006, the *Scuola Universitaria di Musica* (SUM) — CSI's higher education department — has been an affiliated school of the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland (SUPSI), a status that enables access to public funding and grants the right to award recognised university degrees.

CSI operates three interconnected but formally distinct educational departments: the *Scuola di Musica* (SMUS), a preparatory and amateur music school with over 1,000 pupils; the Pre-College (PRE), a pre-professional talent school for approximately 55 high-school aged students; and SUM, with 264 students in 2025-2026. SUM's mandate encompasses four key areas: degree programmes, continuing education programmes, research and development, and provision of services. The higher education sector in Switzerland is governed by the Federal Act on Funding and Coordination of the Swiss Higher Education Sector (Higher Education Act, HEdA), which establishes institutional accreditation as a prerequisite for the right to award university titles and to receive federal contributions. The SUPSI was accredited in 2021 and is preparing for a second round of accreditation in 2027–2028; this accreditation encompasses all affiliated schools, including SUM.

The six programmes reviewed are:

- Bachelor of Arts in Music (majors in Performance and in Composition)
- Bachelor of Arts in Music and Movement
- Master of Arts in Music Pedagogy
- Master of Arts in Music Performance
- Master of Arts in Specialized Music Performance
- Master of Arts in Music Composition and Theory

The programme quality enhancement review follows a previous MusiQuE review of the same programmes, which took place in October 2018. This review is voluntary and was initiated by CSI within the framework of its quality assurance system as part of the degree programme portfolio assessment process.

The review procedure consisted of three stages. In the first stage, CSI prepared a self-evaluation report (SER), produced through a participative process that involved a steering committee comprising the quality management (QM) delegate, the Head of Studies, and the SUM Director. A first draft was developed by the QM delegate, drawing on the 2018 SER and updated to reflect current realities. This draft was then shared with the conference



of field representatives, representatives from the Student union, and SUM Directorate, all of whom provided feedback before the final version. In the second stage, an international review team conducted a site-visit to CSI in Lugano from 19 to 21 November 2025, during which it met with representatives of all stakeholder groups. In the third and final stage, the review team produced the present report, setting out its findings, analysis, suggestions for enhancement, recommendations, and compliance with each of the MusiQuE standards for programme review.

The review team was composed of the following members:

- **Lamberto Coccioli** (chair and secretary after completion of the site-visit), Professor of Music Technology at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and Director of CreaTech Frontiers at Birmingham City University, United Kingdom.
- **Gal Faganel**, Professor of Cello and Quality Assurance Committee Chair, University of Ljubljana Academy of Music, Slovenia.
- **Paolo Girol**, Lecturer of Audiovisual Composition and Head of the Department of Composition and Improvisational Music, Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, Tallinn, Estonia.
- **Muireann O’Keeffe** (secretary until completion of the site-visit), Faculty Head of Teaching and Learning, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Technological University Dublin, Ireland
- **Mar Pino Charlez** (student member), student of the Master of Classical Voice, Conservatorium Maastricht, The Netherlands.



Main strengths

The most distinctive strength of the programmes reviewed is SUM's clearly articulated institutional identity at the heart of the regional cultural landscape. This identity permeates all six programmes and is reinforced by deep and longstanding partnerships with the *Orchestra della Svizzera italiana* (OSI), the *Radiotelevisione Svizzera* (RSI), the *Lugano Arte e Cultura* (LAC) arts centre, and the early music ensemble *I Barocchisti*, among others. Together with SUM's commitment to contemporary music, these relationships create a rich and professionally oriented performance environment — encompassing orchestral productions, the *900presente* contemporary music series, electro-acoustic projects, and chamber music — that is rare among comparable European conservatoires and represents a unique asset for student development.

Significant progress has been achieved in programme documentation since the 2018 review. The completion and publication of comprehensive programme handbooks for all six programmes, effective from the 2025–26 academic year, provides a structured and transparent mapping of goals, learning outcomes, assessment methods, and evaluation criteria. This achievement, together with the formalisation of the quality enhancement framework through a Quality Manual based on the Plan-Do-Check-Act approach, demonstrates the institution's capacity to translate external recommendations into concrete improvements.

Further strengths are the internationally distinguished teaching body, whose artistic standing raises the quality of instruction and drives student recruitment, and the coherent design of the Master of Arts in Music Pedagogy and the Master of Arts in Music Composition and Theory.

Main points of development

The most pressing area for development concerns the Master of Arts in Specialized Music Performance, which has not evolved substantially in many years and lacks essential components in entrepreneurship, career development, and portfolio building. The proposed revision, including the introduction of two new majors, should be finalised and implemented without further delay. More broadly, the review team suggests that SUM develops a structured, compulsory module addressing professional readiness and entrepreneurial skills, designed to be shared across programmes and taken before the last year of the master's programme.

Several areas relating to student access, progression and support require attention. The provision of all official programme documentation exclusively in Italian creates accessibility barriers for the significant proportion of international students enrolled on the master programmes who do not have Italian as their first language, and a systematic approach to multilingual access is needed. The communication of available mental health and support services to students — both those offered internally and through SUPSI — should be strengthened by giving clear information, beginning at induction. Scheduling practices should also be reviewed with explicit reference to student wellbeing. The Amadeus student management system is acknowledged by the institution itself as obsolete and prevents students from accessing their own academic records independently; its upgrade or replacement should be treated as a priority. Outgoing student mobility is near-absent and unlikely to improve without an internationalisation strategy that sets measurable targets and identifies priority partnerships.



The future opening of the *Città della Musica* represents a transformative strategic opportunity. In the meantime, the review team encourages SUM to implement concrete interim measures to address current infrastructure limitations — particularly the absence of dedicated recording facilities and the inadequate acoustic treatment of practice rooms — so that current students are not left without support before the new campus opens.



Summary of the compliance with the Standards and recommendations

The review team concludes that the Bachelor of Arts in Music, Bachelor of Arts in Music and Movement, Master of Arts in Music Pedagogy, Master of Arts in Music Performance, Master of Arts in Specialized Music Performance and Master of Arts in Music Composition and Theory comply with the *MusiQuE Standards for Programme Review* as follows:

1. Governance and decision making at programme level	
<p>Standard 1.1 The programme’s goals are clearly stated and relevant to the national legal context. They reflect the institutional mission and vision, and they are aligned with the overarching institutional policies and strategy. They are effectively achieved through the content and structure of the curriculum, and its methods of delivery.</p>	<p>Substantially compliant</p>
<p>Suggestions for enhancement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue embedding research capabilities at all levels, including bachelor, in anticipation of doctoral-level provision through university partnership <p>Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconsider pedagogical rationale and delivery of compulsory early/contemporary music subjects; ensure practical approach and accessibility for all students • Address gaps in entrepreneurship, career development, and portfolio building in the revised MA Specialized Performance curriculum • Consider a blend of on-site and remote study offer for the revised MA Specialized Performance, to better support the developing international careers of young musicians 	
<p>Standard 1.2 The delivery of the programme is supported by an appropriate organisational structure, and clear, transparent and effective decision-making processes that include a balanced representation of the programme’s stakeholders (students, teaching staff, support staff, representatives of the music profession and related artistic domains).</p>	<p>Substantially compliant</p>
<p>Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure teaching staff are systematically informed of and able to engage with programme-level decision-making, e.g. through formalised Didactic Council with documented decisions and written communication to teaching body • Support students to take an active and informed role in governance, e.g. through induction to representation roles and regular, documented opportunities to contribute to programme review 	

- Introduce a formal mechanism for periodic professional consultation on curriculum content and learning outcomes, distinct from the advisory board's strategic function

2. Students' perspectives

Standard 2.1 Clear, coherent, and inclusive admission criteria exist, to establish artistic/academic suitability of incoming students at programme level. Admitted students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the learning process and to engage in critical reflection. They are supported to achieve the intended learning outcomes through an appropriate and effective blend of teaching and learning styles and pedagogies. The programme and its methods of delivery are adequately catered by staff and support services.

Substantially compliant

Recommendations

- Review workload distribution systematically across all programmes; Didactic Council to lead with implementation timeline
- Communicate clear elective credit entitlement policy and adjudication criteria to students at the start of studies; consider recognition of prior learning
- Establish unambiguous attendance policy distinguishing threshold condition for exam eligibility from graded assessment component
- Establish transparent mechanism for allocation of ensemble production places and paid engagements, e.g. open, clearly announced auditions
- Explore practical measures to increase accessibility of documentation for non-Italian-speaking students, e.g. machine-translation reviewed by staff

Standard 2.2 The programme has effective procedures in place to formally monitor and review the progression of its students. Assessment methods are clearly defined and effectively demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes. There is an effective complaints and appeals system in place at programme level.

Substantially compliant

Suggestions for enhancement

- Develop assessment feedback framework (e.g. descriptors or rubrics) to complement verbal feedback; provide written feedback for negative outcomes
- Work with OSI to allow greater repertoire flexibility for final concert, or develop complementary assessment opportunities

Recommendations

- Address limited accessibility of assessment documentation in terms of language and online visibility; translate key assessment criteria into English
- Incorporate evaluations of the four mandatory recitals and OSI concert into official diploma documentation for MA Specialized Performance



<p>Standard 2.3 The programme has effective mechanisms in place to ensure that students acquire the necessary skills that facilitate their transition towards a professional life in the music and/or related artistic domain. Procedures are in place to formally and effectively monitor students' subsequent employability and professional achievement. The information thus collected is efficiently used to maintain an active link with the music/artistic profession and to further develop the curriculum.</p>	<p>Substantially compliant</p>
<p>Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and introduce a compulsory shared module on professional skills across all programmes (entrepreneurship, self-promotion, career management, music market) • Take active measures to increase graduation survey participation, e.g. embed in graduation process, simplify instrument, add incentives • Establish an alumni network, even modest (e.g. online platform with one annual event), to improve employability data, maintain graduate links, and enable professional input into curriculum 	
<p>3. Teachers' perspectives</p>	
<p>Standard 3.1 Members of the teaching staff are qualified for their role and are active as artists/pedagogues/researchers. The size and composition of the teaching body are sufficient and appropriate to effectively deliver the curriculum. There are adequate opportunities for teaching staff for continued professional development.</p>	<p>Substantially compliant</p>
<p>Suggestions for enhancement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore mechanisms (e.g. dedicated thematic sessions once or twice a year) to channel international staff expertise into programme development • Consider an onboarding process with pedagogical component for newly appointed teachers • Seek scheduling approach that better supports student wellbeing and continuity of learning <p>Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement a continuing professional development framework for all teaching staff – potentially including part-time staff – with clear expectations, pathways, and monitoring mechanisms 	
<p>4. External perspectives</p>	
<p>Standard 4.1 The programme offers a range of opportunities for students and staff to gain international perspectives and experiences.</p>	<p>Substantially compliant</p>

Suggestions for enhancement

- Explore whether an optional mobility window could be introduced within the MA Performance and MA Specialized Performance
- Encourage teachers to actively promote outgoing mobility as a complement to study in Lugano

Recommendations

- Develop a formal internationalisation strategy with measurable targets for outgoing mobility, priority partner institutions, and adequate resourcing of the international relations function

Standard 4.2 The programme's educational processes reflect the institutional policies and strategies in place for an active social engagement. The continued development and maintenance of links with the music profession and the wider artistic, cultural, educational and/or other relevant sectors within society is an integrated part of the programme.

Fully compliant

Suggestions for enhancement

- Engage students more actively in concert curation and programme design (e.g. audience engagement, programme notes, event planning)
- Develop a clear, resourced action plan for how *Città della Musica* will translate into enhanced social engagement at programme level

5. Resources

Standard 5.1 The programme has means and resources to ensure its successful delivery and to secure its sustainable development.

Partially compliant

Suggestions for enhancement

- Continue to advocate through SUPSI for increased cantonal contributions commensurate with the scale of the educational offer

Recommendations

- Identify and designate at least one dedicated recording space; consider low-cost acoustic treatment of existing rooms
- Maintain BA Music and Movement teaching/movement space to a standard consistent with safe use
- Develop and implement concrete interim measures to address infrastructure limitations before the move to *Città della Musica*
- Upgrade or replace the Amadeus student management system without delay
- Establish a formal policy for the continuing professional development of administrative and support staff

<p>Standard 5.2 The programme ensures a safe learning and working environment. The programme provides effective support for all students and staff to preserve and improve their mental and physical wellbeing.</p>	<p>Substantially compliant</p>
<p>Suggestions for enhancement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide comprehensive health and wellbeing information at induction and key points during the academic year and explore integrating Musicians' health module core content across all programmes for broader access • Present complaints procedure in an accessible summary, communicated to all students and staff annually <p>Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review scheduling of classes with student wellbeing in mind: reduce weekend teaching and ensure adequate holiday periods • Develop and implement a staff wellbeing framework for both teaching and non-teaching staff 	
<p>6. Communication processes</p>	
<p>Standard 6.1 Effective mechanisms are in place for internal communication within the programme. Information provided to the public about the programme is clear, consistent, regular, and accurate.</p>	<p>Substantially compliant</p>
<p>Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address Amadeus/student records system limitations as a priority; establish a timeline and roadmap for implementation • Develop a systematic approach to making core documentation accessible in English alongside Italian, e.g. professionally reviewed summaries or guidance documents • Re-engage students in the final stages of the renewed website development; resolve accessibility limitations in the new site 	
<p>7. Quality Culture</p>	
<p>Standard 7.1 The programme builds an environment where internal and external feedback is sought and connected, and where staff and students are actively involved in an ongoing dialogue about the quality of education and the programme activities. The programme is thus enabled to ensure the quality of its curriculum and educational processes, and to work towards an all-encompassing quality culture.</p>	<p>Substantially compliant</p>
<p>Suggestions for enhancement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the experience of students across the full spectrum of engagement levels in quality monitoring 	

Recommendations

- Increase QA function allocation from 25% to at least 50% of a staff member's time
- Develop a “closing the loop” mechanism to inform students, staff, and external stakeholders of actions taken in response to feedback
- Capture quality enhancement activity in writing, proportional to available administrative capacity

Conclusion

The six programmes offered by the *Scuola universitaria di Musica* of the *Conservatorio della Svizzera italiana* benefit from a distinctive institutional identity rooted in the cultural life of the Canton of Ticino, and operate within a mature but complex regulatory environment. The review team found an institution that has made considerable progress since the 2018 MusiQuE review, demonstrating its capacity to translate external recommendations into structural improvements. This is an ongoing process that reflects the changing landscape for higher music education and the music profession, and it comes as no surprise if a number of areas still require development if the programmes are to realise their full potential.

The review team commends SUM's deep and well-established partnerships with regional cultural organisations, giving the programmes a unique profile and providing the students with professional performance opportunities. The completion and publication of comprehensive programme handbooks for all six programmes, together with the formalisation of the QA framework through the Quality Manual, represent substantial achievements. The internationally distinguished teaching body is a defining strength. The review team further commends the coherent design of the MA in Music Pedagogy and the MA in Music Composition and Theory, the inclusive admissions ethos, the Musicians' health module, and the quality and honesty of the self-evaluation report.

Among the most important recommendations, the review team urges SUM to finalise the revision of the MA Specialized Music Performance without further delay, addressing the identified gaps in entrepreneurship, career development, and portfolio building, and to develop a shared module on professional skills across all programmes. The upgrade or replacement of the Amadeus student management system should be treated as a priority, as should the development of a systematic approach to making core documentation accessible in English alongside Italian. An internationalisation strategy to improve outgoing mobility is also needed. Concrete interim measures should be implemented with a degree of urgency to address current infrastructure limitations — particularly the absence of dedicated recording facilities — to improve the student experience for the remaining years before the move to *Città della Musica*. The review team also recommends strengthening the involvement of teaching staff and students in programme-level governance, establishing a formal mechanism for professional consultation on curriculum content, and implementing a continuing professional development framework for all staff.

The review team is confident that, with the bold strategic vision already in place, the commitment demonstrated by its leadership and teaching community, and the transformative opportunity presented by the *Città della Musica*, SUM is well positioned to address these recommendations and to strengthen further the quality and international standing of its programmes.

