

Executive summary

Report

Institutional Quality Enhancement Review

Jam Music Lab Private University for Jazz and Popular Music (Vienna, Austria)

Site-visit: 23-25 June, 2025

Introduction

Situated in the Music City Gasometer, an urban landmark from the 19th century in the Viennese district of Simmering, Jam Music Lab (JMLU) is a private university based in Vienna that self-identifies as “Austria’s most modern and first private institution, which is dedicated to all styles of popular music as well as their production and distribution methods in research and training”¹. “Since its founding in 2011², JMLU and its predecessor institution of the same name, a music conservatory with public rights, have established themselves as an integral and indispensable part of the Austrian landscape for music education”³. The offer of a wide range of courses in Jazz and Popular music, songwriting, music education, film music and music production makes the educational offer of JMLU unique in the Austrian higher music education landscape.

¹ SER pg.4

² While founded in 2011, the institution was first accredited as a private university in 2017.

³ SER pg.4



After six years of operational outreach, and a demanding accreditation process, JMLU was granted official status as a private university, re-imagining the traditional fields of study beyond classical music.

JMLU offers five different programmes: Bachelor of Arts in Music, Bachelor of Arts in Music Education, Master of Arts in Music, Master of Arts in Music Education, and Bachelor of Arts in Arts Management. Of the five programmes, the Bachelor of Arts in Arts Management is newly introduced and JMLU plans to launch it in the academic year 2025/2026⁴. The review team learnt during the site visit that the number of registered students is rather low insofar, so it was not yet certain that indeed, the programme would take off as early as the end of summer 2025⁵. The diplomas in jazz and popular music are officially recognised at national level. Students may apply and receive financial support via the Austrian Student Support Act. Just after the visit of the review team, on June 25, JMLU received confirmation from the AQ Austria Board, agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation, that the artistic doctoral programme has been successfully accredited, which means that JMLU can offer it from the academic year 2025 – 2026 onwards.

Besides these programmes, JMLU has been offering since 2024 “Music in the Woods”: a series of media music workshops organised in cooperation with AKM *austromechana* (an Austrian organisation for music creators and publishers) and the *Veranstalterverband Österreich* (an event organisers’ association)⁶. In addition, JMLU is reaching out to the general public with its “Arts for Health” four-month program. It is Austria’s first research institute for music medicine with a focus on “Arts for Health”⁷. These courses are not only for students, but for anyone interested to apply.

Context and scope of the review

JMLU is a young university led by a team of very driven people, determined to create a highly qualified university for non-classical music. An ambitious development plan 2023-2029 has been produced in order to set up clear goals for the future of the institute. In January 2023 JMLU’s official accreditation was renewed, and based on the outcomes of this process, the University asked MusiQuE for an institutional quality enhancement evaluation. As a fairly new institute, the school is highly motivated to further develop and improve, especially regarding research, administrative matters, and teaching and learning strategies.

Steps of the procedure

1) In December 2024 an institutional Self-Evaluation Report (SER) was delivered to the review team, written by a team of authors and guided by the Vice-Rector for research and Quality Assurance, as Project Leader. The report was written based on the guidelines published by MusiQuE – Music Quality Enhancement. All areas and topics were reviewed in reflection on the respective standards. All answers on related questions were documented to support the written representations. The documents were made accessible to the review team through an electronic platform.

⁴ <https://www.jammusiclab.com/academics/bachelor-arts/arts-management>

⁵ Meeting 9 with senior administrators during site-visit

⁶ <https://www.jammusiclab.com/academics/courses/music-in-the-woods>

⁷ <https://www.jammusiclab.com/events/arts-health-international-online-seminar>



2) A site visit was carried out at the institution between 23 and 25 June 2025. Being an exam period, most of the regular teaching activity had already been concluded, so the review team was able to observe only a limited number of lessons. The site visit consisted of 9 meetings with institutional representatives and stakeholders, both internal and external, as follows:

Meeting 1 with the Management Team of the Institution

Meeting 2 with the Media Music Institute

Meeting 3 with Leaders of the different Institutes

Meeting 4 with Teachers

Meeting 5 with the Financial Administration

Meeting 6 with Students

Meeting 7 with the Board and Senate

Meeting 8 with Alumni and representatives of the music industry

Meeting 9 with Senior Administrators

The site visit schedule was tightly packed, especially with 7 intense meetings on the first day of the visit. Nevertheless, the review team was able to observe the available classes and student examinations conducted during the time of their visit. A tour of the building to see the classrooms and facilities was also part of the site visit. At the end of the visit, the review team presented a summary of findings, followed by a short but fruitful discussion with members of the management team and other stakeholders who took part in the site visit.

3) The review team described their comments and recommendations in this report, structured around the MusiQuE standards for Institutional Review. After checking the draft report on accuracy by the university the report will formally be finalised and approved by the MusiQuE Board. Concluding the process, MusiQuE will publish the report on their website.

Composition of the Review Team

Maarten Weyler - Royal Conservatory Ghent, Belgium (Chair)

Hannie van Veldhoven - HKU University of the Arts Jazz & Pop Utrecht, the Netherlands (Secretary)

Astrid Elbek - Rhythmic Music Conservatory Copenhagen, Denmark (Peer Reviewer)

Rens Machielse - HKU University of the Arts Utrecht, Music & Technology, the Netherlands (Peer Reviewer)

Lina Gronemeyer - Codarts World Music Rotterdam, the Netherlands (Peer Reviewer and student representative)



Summary of the compliance with the Standards and recommendations

The review team concludes that JAM MUSIC LAB Private University for Jazz and Popular Music comply with the *MusiQuE Standards for Institutional Review* as follows:

1. Institutional policies and governance	
<p>Standard 1.1 The institutional mission, vision, values, and goals are clearly stated and relevant to the national and legal context in which the institution operates. They are effectively implemented through coherent institutional strategies and policies.</p>	<p>substantially compliant</p>
<p>Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider expanding JMLU’s goal and definition of interdisciplinarity and develop more structured interdisciplinarity in practice and research and - especially in the media music programme - with other art forms; ● Develop structural collaboration with other art institutes connected to today’s media music field: visual arts, gaming, script writing etc, so students can get practical experience working in interdisciplinary teams; ● Complete setting up a Commission for Diversity, Equality and the Advancement of Women as such as soon as financially possible; ● Provide a clear description of the connection between the two schools. <p>Suggestions for enhancement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maintain and develop programmes that focus not only on contemporary music practice but also on structural connections with society and their needs and trends (e.g. diversity and new musical genres); ● Proceed on the steps already taken regarding setting up a Commission for Diversity, Equality and the Advancement of Women as soon as financial possible. 	
<p>Standard 1.2 The educational goals of the institution are clearly stated and achieved through the structure and content of its education policy and the study programmes.</p>	<p>partially compliant</p>
<p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop further knowledge regarding research of popular music (CAR); ● Develop openness towards all styles of popular and media music beyond jazz and increase the possibilities in the curricula of creating original music and one’s own music in a structured way; ● Define ensemble roles in the curriculum more specifically : what are the learning objectives for the ensembles within the context of the studies and the vision of JMLU in this? A clear description of learning goals towards a variety of genres and 	

<p>styles, and towards music in society can be tools to raise the quality of the ensembles within the study programmes;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further develop the curriculum of media music, especially regarding collaboration with other art forms; • Validate the educational goals towards new approaches of music more clearly in the study programmes. Developing an entrepreneurial mindset for students is a most relevant qualification needed by musicians of the future; <p>Suggestions for enhancement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how to integrate improvisation in the curriculum of all instruments, in creative ways that would not trigger the need to go through a whole new accreditation process. 	
<p>Standard 1.3 The decision-making processes are clear, transparent and effective. The institution has an appropriate organisational structure, including a relevant representation of institutional stakeholders (students, teaching staff, support staff, representatives of the music profession and related artistic domains). There are effective mechanisms in place to involve institutional stakeholders in policy and programme design, and decision making processes.</p>	<p>Substantially compliant</p>
<p>Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidate student’s role and influence in different bodies of the institute more strongly; • Establish the Senate with more than two student members as a place for critical thinking and constructive discussion; • Ensure clarity between formal and informal procedures to prevent these processes from becoming intermingled. 	
<p>2. Students’ perspectives</p>	
<p>Standard 2.1 The institution has a clear, coherent, and inclusive admission policy in place to establish artistic/academic suitability of incoming students. The institution ensures that its programmes are delivered in a way that enable students to take an active role in creating the learning process and to engage in critical-reflection throughout their studies. The achievement of intended learning outcomes is facilitated through an appropriate and effective blend of teaching and learning styles and pedagogies. The programmes and their methods of delivery are adequately catered by staff and support services.</p>	<p>Partially compliant</p>
<p>Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage students to take an active role in the selection of repertoire, balancing the study of (classical) standards with the creation of their original work, • Consider the level of students of JMLU and the FGSM taking part in the same classes thoroughly. It needs excellent didactic skills of the teachers to make sure that all students can make good progress on their own levels; 	

- Encourage students' entrepreneurial attitude by offering possibilities and internship where students can get experienced in it themselves;
- Develop further practice-based research where students can relate a researching attitude to their artistic practice;
- Promote the diversification and continuous development of teaching and learning strategies by providing teachers with training in innovative, student-centered methods. This includes adapting approaches to online education to ensure virtual classes are engaging and effective, and moving beyond the traditional master-apprentice model that currently dominates, in order to foster critical reflection and active learning among students;

Standard 2.2 The institution has effective processes in place to formally monitor and act on information on student progression. Assessment policies are clearly communicated and consistently implemented across all programmes. There is a coherent policy and a functional complaints and appeals system in place.

Partially compliant

Recommendations:

- Monitor teachers' administration of the students' progress in Jamonline structurally, and make sure all students can find this progress at all courses with all teachers;
- Secure that the Jamonline environment is providing correct and updated information for all courses such as content of course descriptions, learning outcomes, and assessment criteria;
- Standardise the assessment process by reducing reliance on individual teacher criteria and ensuring consistency;
- Enhance transparency, validity and equity in assessment procedures, and organise clear communication and assessment structures, based on formal evaluation standards, described in the examination manual, for teachers and committees;
- Emphasize the importance of providing constructive feedback by teachers, as this supportive guidance is essential for students' long-term success in the competitive music industry;
- Organise external jury members at high stake exams, in order to be able to calibrate intersubjective assessments with external expertise from the working field.

Standard 2.3 The institution 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 related artistic domains. The institution has processes 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 programmes and institutional policies.

Partially compliant

Recommendations

- Foster entrepreneurship and career readiness within the curriculum by developing students' entrepreneurial mindset, practical skills, and professional networks,

<p>empowering them to take initiative in their own careers. take initiative in their own careers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Integrate substantial courses focused on practical entrepreneurial skill along all programmes ➤ Encourage students to develop an entrepreneurial mindset, fostering creativity, initiative, and self-directed career planning ➤ Support students in expanding and leveraging professional networks during their studies • Develop an active alumni association, realising a structural alumni policy in practice. • Set up a strong database where alumni as well as students from start to the end of studies can be tracked, and structurally track employability data and gather feedback for curriculum improvement; <p>Suggestions for enhancement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise structural entrepreneurial support for alumni, even after their studies. 	
3. Teachers' perspectives	
<p>Standard 3.1 The institution has processes in place to ensure that 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 study programmes. There are policies in place for continuing professional development of teaching staff.</p>	<p>Substantially compliant</p>
<p>Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a clear strategy regarding the type of teachers required: theoretical, practical, with experience in practice-based research, diverse fields of experience, gender, age, and all combinations of these; • Support continuous and structured training in educational, didactical, pedagogical, and technological skills regarding innovative approaches in teaching and research which can be of help for the teacher's team; • Support collaboration of teachers in series of lessons to minimise teachers functioning in relative isolation and use supervision as a way of teachers training. 	
4. External perspectives	
<p>Standard 4.1 The institution offers a range of opportunities for students and staff to gain international perspectives and experiences.</p>	<p>Fully compliant</p>
<p>Suggestions for enhancement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage more study abroad participation, by selecting more diverse international partners and collaborations: artistic, educational, entrepreneurial, interdisciplinary. This will reflect the vision of JMLU better and can be more attractive for students; 	

- Enrich the Erasmus exchange possibilities for students by starting collaborations with schools having specific Pop and Media Music programmes;
- Encourage teachers and staff to go on Erasmus exchange to institutions that reflect the vision of JMLU and can be of help in developing curricula and teaching strategies;
- Communicate a clear statement about the language of courses, and improve and ensure the qualification of teachers regarding English as well as German language;
- Invest in further efforts to create awareness about the existence, the usability, and the advantages of the buddy programme which represents a very creative tool for successfully implementing internationalisation@home.

Standard 4.2 Institutional policies and strategies are in place for an active social engagement. The institution promotes continued development and maintenance of links with the music profession and the wider artistic, cultural, educational, and other relevant sectors within society.

Partially compliant

Recommendations:

- Set up a strong alumni association, providing via this association opportunities for students and alumni to engage with relevant sectors within society;
- Further develop strategic partnership with media, culture and business outside JMLU. Specifically for the Media Music programme, partnerships could be further developed and more systematically made available to students, while pedagogical studies would benefit from the social sector networks that other music universities have developed over time;
- Further develop social engagement and entrepreneurship in curriculum and projects by increasing the amount of mandatory classes and study load concerning these issues, thus making these issues a vital part of the studies.

Suggestions for enhancement

- Organise structural entrepreneurial support for alumni, even after their studies.

5. Resources

Standard 5.1 The institution has means and resources to enable a successful delivery of the study programmes, to support its institutional missions and policies, and to secure its sustainable development.

Partially compliant

Recommendations

- Search for long-term sustainability in the sourcing of the company by further expansion of public sources, and governmental support;
- Raise the number of incoming students by advertising innovative programmes with relevant and attracting content, and developing specific recruitment ideas aiming at the international but certainly also towards the national market;
- Upgrade facilities: classrooms and instruments, towards professional education standards;

- Ensure media music students to be able to have lessons and practice with upgraded professional technology equipment, soft- and hardware;
- Ensure the presence of computers in school for students to work and study on. Their financial possibilities should not be decisive whether they can or cannot have professional software on their laptops;
- Redesign the back-office administration. Expansion of administrative support is vital in this organisation, where among others updating of Jamonline and Moodle is most urgent.

Suggestions for enhancement

- Clarify the position of JMLU and the FGSM: in theory the FGSM being independent from JMLU, in practice not.

Standard 5.2 The institution provides effective support for all students and staff to preserve and improve their mental and physical wellbeing, and ensures a safe learning and working environment.

Substantially compliant

Recommendations

- Create safe rooms with windows, especially when it concerns one-on-one lessons, and make sure proper air quality can be guaranteed;
- Install systematic abuse reporting mechanisms by implementing anonymous documentation systems to monitor teacher conduct, and independent (external) oversight which is crucial given JMLU's close-knit "family culture" environment

Suggestions for enhancement

- Instruct teachers and students with clear health and safety guidelines;
- Consider a robust student panel featuring its own Ombuds person to serve as a link to the Ombuds systems of other universities
- Consider an external ombudsman, free of relations connected with colleagues, so students can ask for a neutral ombudsperson, not directly connected to school.

6. Communication processes

Standard 6.1 Effective mechanisms are in place for internal communication within the institution. Information provided to the public about the institution is clear, consistent, regular and accurate.

Partially compliant

Recommendations

- Complete in possibly short term Jamonline with all necessary information for the students;
- Improve internal communication by setting up a proper working Learning Management System;
- Inform and invite alumni on a regular basis;
- Develop comprehensive student/alumni tracking databases;

- Intensify marketing efforts on social media to achieve higher International visibility.

7. Quality Culture

Standard 7.1 The institution 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 of institutional strategies and policies. The institution is thus enabled to ensure the quality of its educational programmes and to work towards an all-embracing quality culture.

Partially compliant

Recommendations

- Increase the rate of student feedback and course evaluations, and implement concrete, clearly visible actions on it. A more solid student involvement in the institute can be of help in this. Quality management as an act of guidance and not just an observation of output;
- Enhance the quality culture through informal feedback platforms like the Town Hall;
- Reinforce the administrative team structurally in order to ensure an all-embracing quality culture.

Suggestions for enhancement

- Consider how to implement a sustainable quality assurance framework suitable for small institutions.

Conclusion

In June 2025, the review team visited Jam Music Lab University (JMLU) in Vienna with great pleasure and interest, to prepare the hereby presented report. JMLU, as a relatively young institute, aims to develop towards an outstanding university for exclusively jazz, pop and media music, a niche in the Austrian market, dominated by universities mostly strongly based on classical music. At the time of the site visit, it is the first music university in Austria to offer highly specialised teaching and research in the fields of musical performance, production and music education in the fields of jazz, pop and media music. Right after the visit, it was informed to JMLU that the artistic doctoral programme was approved and authorised to start in 2025. This may strengthen the mission of JMLU as a bridge between education, research and society, and the review team congratulates JMLU with this new programme.

The review team, when preparing the visit, initially experienced very good and even flashy marketing (website, social media, etc), looking attractive and promising for young people searching for an international environment of jazz and pop related music. The huge amount of documentation needed to prepare the review gave a kind of impenetrable image, yet this was in contrast with the experience the review team had during the visit. Here they met a well-intended organization with an enthusiastic group of dedicated and driven people, with a strong sense of belonging, highly motivated to develop and improve the institute towards a leading position in the Austrian music education field. Multiple times they heard that, separate from how things are formally organised, informally everything can be solved together. The institution has an appropriate organizational structure, but informal and formal procedures intermingle. The formal structure, necessary when the informal approach doesn't work, needs improvement in the actions. Students' roles and influence within institutional bodies should be consistently secured through well-coordinated formal and informal procedures.

To remain aligned with their strategic objectives and stay relevant in a steadily changing national and international context, JMLU must maintain and develop its commitment to implementing the ambitious and comprehensive vision outlined in its foundational documents with programmes that focus not only on contemporary music practice but also on structural connections with society and their necessary diversity. The foundation for this has been laid, yet practical implementation reveals several areas for improvement. The most important recommendations to the institution concern administrative matters, curriculum development and teaching and learning strategies which need structural improvement. At the moment of the site visit, the institution did not fully enable student-centred learning and critical reflection. The master-apprentice relationship seemed to the review team still too dominant in the teacher-centered education. The current blend of teaching methods failed to adequately support the achievement of stated learning outcomes, while programme delivery suffered from insufficient staffing and support services. Developing an entrepreneurial mindset for students is a most relevant qualification needed by musicians of the future. And fostering openness to diversity and inclusion needed focussing on non-classical musicians of all kind of different styles and genres, as well as on the students' own work and music.

Course descriptions, learning outcomes, and assessment criteria required significant improvement. Assessment procedures must be substantially reformed to meet academic standards. Additionally, the institution must emphasize the critical importance of providing constructive feedback from teachers, as this supportive guidance is essential for students' long-term success in the competitive music industry.

Further investment in teachers' diversity and development, and in students' participation in and contribution to the institute are crucial. The Centre of Artistic Research, already strongly based in the institute, can be of help in this development.

The willingness to develop, and the commitment of all towards the institute was strongly felt by the review team. The institute is young, and careful and strategic development can be of help to create a reality that reflects the ambitious intentions on paper.

JMLU seemed ready for a new phase which they explained in their development plan as "Your music. Your future. Our mission" with the emphasis on digitization, employability, interdisciplinarity, diversity. The review team hoped that this review might help the institute in their further development as a true lifelong learning institute. It wished JMLU to grow into a sustainable mature and highly qualified inspirational place for young international musicians.