

External Review Report

prepared for

MusiQuE- Music Quality Enhancement:
The Foundation for Quality Enhancement
and Accreditation in Higher Music
Education

by the

Review Panel

which conducted an

External Review

February 10-11, 2020

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
INTRODUCTION	7
BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW AND OUTLINE OF THE REVIEW PROCESS	7
BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW	7
MAIN FINDINGS OF THE 2015 REVIEW	7
REVIEW PROCESS	8
HIGHER MUSIC EDUCATION IN EUROPE.....	10
QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER MUSIC EDUCATION	11
A EUROPEAN SUBJECT-SPECIFIC APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION	11
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MUSIQUÉ.....	12
STRUCTURES.....	14
THE PEER-REVIEWERS REGISTER.....	14
ACTIVITIES	14
MUSIQUÉ’S FUNDING	16
FINDINGS: COMPLIANCE OF MUSIQUE WITH THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA (ESG).....	17
ESG PART 2: EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE	17
ESG 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE	17
ESG 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE	21
ESG 2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES	23
ESG 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS	25
ESG 2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES	27
ESG 2.6 REPORTING	29
ESG 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS	31
ESG PART 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES	34
ESG 3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY, AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE	34
ESG 3.2 OFFICIAL STATUS	37
ESG 3.3 INDEPENDENCE	38
ESG 3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS	40
ESG 3.5 RESOURCES	41
ESG 3.6 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT	44
ESG 3.7 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL REVIEW OF AGENCIES	46
CONCLUSION	47
SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS	47
OVERVIEW OF JUDGEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	47

ANNEXES	49
ANNEX 1: PROGRAMME OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW	49
ANNEX 2: TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE REVIEW	51
ANNEX 3: GLOSSARY.....	56
ANNEX 4. DOCUMENTS TO SUPPORT THE REVIEW.....	57
DOCUMENTS PROVIDED BY MUSIQUÉ BEFORE THE EXTERNAL REVIEW	57

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report analyses the compliance of MusiQuE - Music Quality Enhancement, The Foundation for Quality Enhancement and Accreditation in Higher Music Education, with the 2015 edition of the European Standards and Guidelines for Higher Education (ESG). The External Review is based on a review coordinated by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) – the Review Coordinator. Based on this External Review Report MusiQuE will apply for renewal of its registration on the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR). The External Review by the peer Review Panel in charge of the evaluation of compliance with the ESG took place on February 10th and 11th, 2020.

MusiQuE is a subject-specific international quality assurance agency, which offers a wide range of external quality assurance activities for programmes and institutions providing music education. Since its establishment in 2014, it has gained international recognition for its work. MusiQuE has developed a set of 17 standards which are in line with Part 1 of the ESG. In addition to traditional topics, the agency also focuses specifically on the international perspective and the engagement with the wider cultural, artistic, and educational contexts.

The 17 standards have been adapted to different contexts: institutional reviews, programme reviews, and specifically to the context of classroom music teacher education. Furthermore, MusiQuE has developed common evaluation frameworks in collaboration with national agencies, in order to comply with national requirements. The Review Panel commends the recent development of the ‘critical friend’ approach. This approach has been developed in addition to the regular review model, which typically consists of a review visit by an external panel every 5-6 years, and which is used by most quality assurance agencies. In this new approach, annual visits by ‘critical friends’ are combined with a modified version of MusiQuE’s normal review visits. The Critical Friend Review can be effective with regards to creating a stronger involvement of teachers in quality assurance processes. The first experiences with the approach show, as an important advantage, that the presence of the ‘critical friend’ provides ample opportunities for meaningful exchanges with teachers: while visiting classes, performances, and examinations, the ‘critical friend’ will observe and meet teachers in their professional context - not just during the usual one-hour meeting as part of the traditional review visit. As a result, not only can a better impression of the actual quality of teaching be gained, but teachers are also offered a quality assurance method based on personal contact and on content-based dialogue with a peer.

Next to the innovation in review approaches, another major strength of the agency is the development of a register of qualified peer reviewers. MusiQuE has gathered over eighty experts, each of whom has attended regular hand-on training sessions. Their expertise in music and quality assurance and their ability to create a context for an open exchange between peers were often cited during the review visit as distinctive features of the agency.

Stakeholders clearly indicate that the way MusiQuE operates its review procedures creates an atmosphere of confidence in which peer reviewers are willing to share their expertise, and institutions and their staff are willing to learn from external feedback. This atmosphere is crucial for external quality assurance to go beyond accountability and to contribute to the development of a real quality culture.

In the past five years, MusiQuE has developed from a starting agency with ambitious plans into an agency with a proven track record which is well on its way to a position of financial break-even. The Board and the staff should be commended for the great progress which the agency has made. The financial and operational support offered by the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC) have been crucial in providing the necessary conditions for this progress, but the agency has worked hard to increase its independence from AEC

and to become a fully independent agency in the ensuing years. Three out of five Board members continue to be nominated by AEC, but the decision-making power has been transferred to the MusiQuE Board itself, and while AEC paid the full staff cost in the beginning, the contribution by AEC has fallen to 20% in 2019.

The agency was created within AEC and therefore has been organically in constant interaction with its main stakeholder group: higher music education institutions. The agency has also involved from its start the European Music Schools Union (EMU) and Pearle*-Live Performance Europe (the Performing Arts Employers Associations League Europe) as stakeholders and members of its Board. In collaboration with those organizations, the agency works to extend its number of reviewers from the professional world, but there is still room for progress in this area. Discussions with the European Association of Music in Schools (EAS) have started about the involvement of EAS as a partner organisation. Since the previous External Review, a student member has been elected to the Board of the agency and in all review panels the student voice is represented. However, the Review Panel encourages the agency to ensure that there is an exchange of ideas and understandings among student representatives in order to avoid the possibility of students representing only their own points of view, rather than those of the broader student community. Stakeholders from within the music (education) world are well represented and the Review Panel felt a strong sense of belonging by all the involved stakeholders. Nevertheless, the Review Panel encourages the agency to broaden its stakeholder concept and to search for ways to involve broader society in its governance and work.

External views may help to avoid the sense that certain things are taken for granted and thus strengthen the robustness of the work of the agency. MusiQuE has built on the enthusiasm of a group of early adopters who were involved in the development of the agency and has been able to expand the number of institutions with which it works. The agency has now made a projection of its growth for the upcoming years and has an extensive overview of institutions and countries in Europe and Asia where it may potentially perform reviews. Although opening the field of external quality assurance has been an important policy objective within Europe for quite some time, MusiQuE still faces barriers as it performs reviews on its own in many countries, even since it has entered the EQAR Register. The Review Panel understands that the Board and staff consider strategically which institutions or countries to approach, and it encourages the agency to go further in this direction. Now is the perfect time to move from a demand-led to a more strategic-oriented approach based on a thoughtfully designed plan with clear priorities focusing on the countries where MusiQuE wants to perform reviews, the type of reviews it wants to conduct, and the areas of study it wants to serve. Based on those choices, a more detailed and forward-looking business plan should be developed with measurable objectives, as well as specific action plans which outline how to achieve those objectives. In the opinion of the Review Panel, the financial ambition of the agency should proceed now beyond that of a break-even position, to one of financial sustainability supported by a pool of growing reserves, not only to be able to pay for the cyclical external review of the agency, but also to cope with potential set-backs, to manage the agency's cash-flow independently, and to invest in innovation.

The Review Panel has received overall positive feedback from institutions and other stakeholders on the commitment and quality of the staff. Further growth will, however, also require the further professionalization of some of the internal processes. The agency itself confirmed that the way institutions are briefed in the preparation of reviews may be better structured by developing group sessions, rather than through only individual contacts. The Review Panel also suggests that the agency's appeals and complaints procedure requires some fine-tuning at this time.

Overall, the Review Panel concludes that MusiQuE has become a well-established agency which has gained the trust of the higher music education sector and its stakeholders, and that it has the potential to become fully financially independent in the upcoming years. The Review Panel confirms

the compliance of the agency with the 2015 ESG. In the opinion of the Review Panel, the agency fully complies with ESG 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, and 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.6 and 3.7 and substantially complies with ESG 3.1, 3.5, 2.3 and 2.7.

INTRODUCTION

This External Review Report analyses the compliance of MusiQuE - Music Quality Enhancement: The Foundation for Quality Enhancement and Accreditation in Higher Music Education with the 2015 edition of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). It is based on an external review conducted during the period of December 2019 through April 2020.

BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW AND OUTLINE OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

As MusiQuE is a subject-specific quality assurance and accreditation provider, and advocates for the benefits of such provision as an adjunct and alternative to nationally-based scrutiny, it was felt essential that a Review Coordinator familiar with this approach – and, more specifically, expert in the field of accreditation in music, would be chosen. The National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), a not-for-profit organization operating under United States law and providing a broad range of accreditation, statistical, professional development, and policy analysis services for institutions engaged in professional and pre-professional education and training in music took on the role of Review Coordinator. The participation on the Review Panel of members with expertise in quality assurance and accreditation in the music field ensures that, along with a considered judgement about its compliance with the ESGs, MusiQuE receives subject-specific advice which is focused on its further development. In addition, securing the same Review Coordinator engaged for 2015 review to conduct the current procedure was the best guarantee to ensure that progress since 2015 could be accurately calibrated.

MAIN FINDINGS OF THE 2015 REVIEW

In 2015, the Review Panel found that the agency generally complies with the ESG. The agency fully complied with ESG 2.2, 2.4, 2.5, 2.7, 3.2, 3.3, 3.6 and 3.7. It substantially complied with ESG 2.1, 2.3, 2.6, 3.1 and 3.4 and partially complied with ESG 3.5.

Furthermore, the previous Review Panel formulated some suggestions, in order to help MusiQuE while it embarked on its journey to refine its strategies in line with its intent to offer a service that is consistently of significant value to its constituents:

- In order to build on connections and collaborations with its various stakeholders, the review panel suggests that MusiQuE:
 - Organise joint meetings of the AEC Executive Committee and the MusiQuE Board on a regular basis, to discuss areas of mutual interest, concern, and opportunity.
 - Ensure that Pearle* and EMU provide updates of their work on the MusiQuE Board at regular meetings of their respective organizations.
 - Add a student member to its Board, to ensure that there are the strongest possible ties with, and robust input from this vitally important consumer sector.
 - Involve EMU and Pearle* in the provision of reviewers for the reviewers register in order to also attract those with specific expertise within the current job market for musicians.
 - As it moves forward, continue to consider involving other stakeholders, such as alumni, national and professional arts organisations and other representatives of the broader society as it continues to refine and update the design and continuous improvement of its procedures.

All of the above will help the MusiQuE Board to monitor trends in the music profession, improve communication among all sectors, and ensure that programmatic changes are implemented by broad consensus, whenever necessary and deemed appropriate.

- As the board has learned from its own internal evaluation process, MusiQuE can assist institutions by ensuring that the quality of self-evaluation reports is consistent. To that end,

- MusiQuE could implement more complete and thorough training and guidance for all institutional representatives serving as self-evaluation report primary authors and compilers.
- MusiQuE should make a concerted effort to broaden the number of students included on its register of qualified reviewers, and ensure that all student-members successfully complete a training session before they participate in a peer review.
 - MusiQuE is urged to formulate a process that ensures even greater consistency with regard to follow-up. This could be achieved by establishing specific guidelines and timetables for institutional responses to reviewers' reports, whether these are quality enhancement reviews, or accreditation reviews.
 - MusiQuE should consider options that would make reports more accessible to a broader public. One such option discussed at the site visit was to publish a shorter executive summary of the report in English and perhaps in the national language as well.
 - MusiQuE is encouraged to implement its plans to publish bi-annual reports on the state of higher music education, best practices, and common challenges.
 - With the goal of helping MusiQuE achieve greater financial stability and sustainability, the review panel recommends that the board consider taking the following steps:
 - Work out a method of continuing financial support or a guarantee of such support from AEC or other stakeholders, so that MusiQuE can be assured of continuing its work through 2016, and perhaps 2017 as well, should any of the currently scheduled reviews be delayed, cancelled or not materialise for whatever reason.
 - Develop a financial and contractual arrangement with AEC for the compensation (and benefits) of support staff that is transparent and clear, that more clearly reflects the time devoted to MusiQuE activities, and that will, therefore, appropriately reflect the autonomy of MusiQuE.
 - As its workload increases over time, MusiQuE might wish to develop alternative strategies for appointing and deploying staff that can fully meet its operations and continue its autonomy with respect to its relationship with AEC.
 - Apply for a ruling with the Belgian tax administration to determine whether it needs to include VAT in its pricing structure.

In general, and to ensure that it has an overview of its financial needs and expectations, MusiQuE is urged to develop a comprehensive business plan that accounts for whatever the organisation will require for building a contingency fund, which can be necessary due to a lean year for procedures, whether due to delays, tabled procedures, and etc. In this budget, MusiQuE should also pay explicit attention to the necessary resources that would enable MusiQuE to improve, to reflect on its practice and to inform the public about its activities.

- MusiQuE could make its added value even more explicit by considering additional marketing strategies that can assist them in convincing the broadest possible segment of its target audience of the added value of MusiQuE's services.
- MusiQuE might consider further expanding its current Code of Conduct, in order to cover additional contingencies that all accreditation agencies can potentially encounter.

The agency provided Chapter 3 of its Self-evaluation report information on how it has worked on these recommendations.

REVIEW PROCESS

EQAR requires all listed agencies to undergo an external cyclical review, at least once every five years, in order to verify that they carry out their work as an agency in substantial compliance with the ESG as adopted at the Yerevan ministerial conference of the Bologna Process in 2015. The External Review of MusiQuE was conducted in line with the guidelines provided by EQAR in the document 'Use and Interpretation of the ESG, for the European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies' (November 2017) and in accordance with the timeline set out in the *Terms of Reference* developed by NASM. NASM is serving as the Review Coordinator and in this role facilitated the External Review process, focusing on its coordination and oversight.

As this is MusiQuE's second review, the Review Panel is expected to provide clear evidence of results in all areas and to acknowledge progress made since the previous review. The Review Panel has adopted a developmental approach in line with MusiQuE's focus on constant enhancement of the agency.

The Review Panel for the External Review of MusiQuE was assembled by the Review Coordinator and composed of the following members:

- Dr. Mark Wait (Chair – United States higher music education institution), Dean of the Blair School of Music, Vanderbilt University
- Professor Rico Gubler (European higher music education institution), President of the Musikhochschule Lübeck
- Dr. Norma Ryan (Quality assurance agency), Higher Education Consultant
- Dr. Oliver Vettori (Quality assurance expert from general higher education institution), Dean for Accreditation and Quality Management, WU Vienna University of Economics and Business
- Mirela Matei (Student), PhD student at the National University of Music, Bucharest, Romania.

Pieter-Jan van de Velde, member of the ENQA Pool of Experts for Agency Reviews and Fund Manager at Trividend, acted as secretary.

The MusiQuE Board produced a well-written and complete self-evaluation report with an extensive, very well-structured set of annexes providing thorough detail on the different areas of work of the agency. These documents provided a substantial portion of evidence the Review Panel reviewed from which it drew its conclusions.

The Review Panel conducted an External Review to validate fully the self-evaluation report and clarify any points at issue. The Review Panel spent two days in Brussels (February 10th and 11th, 2020). During the visit, the Review Panel had the opportunity to meet with a wide range of stakeholders on the premises of MusiQuE. As suggested by the Review Coordinator, the External Review was designed in close cooperation between the MusiQuE staff and the Review Panel. The visit was well planned and organized. The programme included interview sessions with members of the Governing Board, the director of the agency and all staff members, representatives of the higher education institutions which interact with the agency, stakeholders from professional bodies, members of review panels, the external reviewer of the agency, and national agencies with whom joint procedures have been implemented. The schedule of the meetings is available in Annex 1 of this External Review Report.

Finally, the Review Panel produced this final External Review Report based on the self-assessment report, External Review, and its findings. In doing so, it provided an opportunity for MusiQuE to comment on the factual accuracy of the draft External Review Report. The Review Panel confirms that it was given access to all documents and people it wished to consult throughout the review.

At the end of the External Review, the Review Panel held an internal meeting where it agreed on the preliminary conclusions relating to the level of compliance of MusiQuE on each of the standards in part 2 and 3 of the ESG. The Chair of the Review Panel with the support of the Secretary then drafted the External Review Report in cooperation with the rest of the Review Panel. The draft External Review Report was submitted to MusiQuE for factual verification in April 2020; MusiQuE was offered an appropriate period of time in line with the *Terms of Reference* to provide factual corrections to the External Review Report.

Scope of the review

EQAR has confirmed that the following activities of MusiQuE are within the scope of the ESG, and therefore have been addressed in the External Review:

- Quality enhancement reviews of institutions
- Quality enhancement reviews of programmes
- Quality enhancement reviews of joint programmes
- Institutional accreditations
- Programme accreditation
- Accreditation of joint programmes

EQAR has confirmed that the following activities MusiQuE performs are not within the scope of the ESG, and have not been addressed in the External Review:

- Quality enhancement review of pre-college institutions and programs
- Evaluation of research activities undertaken by higher music education institutions
- Consultative visits

HIGHER MUSIC EDUCATION IN EUROPE

Higher music education is characterised as musical study undertaken in the context of Higher Education that has a primary focus upon students' practical and creative development leading to professional activity in the field of music. This study is mainly offered by specialist institutions of the kind referred to as Conservatoires, Musikhochschulen, Music Academies, and Music Universities. Across Europe, institutions of higher music education in different countries operate under a variety of titles and exhibit a corresponding diversity in their characters. The three main names for such establishments are 'conservatoire' (used in this form more widely than just in France, but also expressed as conservatorio, conservatorium, or conservatory), 'academy of music' (also appearing as académie de musique or musikakademie), and 'Musikhochschule' (with variants in other countries such as musikhøgskole or hogeschool voor muziek). In addition, the same or similar term can mean very different things in the usage of one country from another. For example, in some European countries, the term 'conservatoire' on its own would describe an institution operating only at pre-higher education level and therefore not at all on a par with a 'music university' or Musikhochschule; for others, it can be applied to the highest and most advanced institution in a country's professional education system for music.

This diversity within the higher music education sector is not merely a matter of labels; across Europe, the sector is treated in very different ways by its national governments. In some countries, institutions report to the ministry of education; in others, they are organised under the ministry of culture. Similarly, in some countries, institutions deal only with the higher education level; in others, they are responsible for the entire continuum of musical learning beginning with early years; and yet other institutions are higher education-only from Monday to Friday but run a special pre-college music department on Saturdays.

Despite these variations, higher music education as a whole is characterised by a number of features which unite it and distinguish it from other disciplines. These are manifested in a variety of ways:

- The highly individual nature of musical talent – some musicians show prodigious accomplishment before they attain the typical age to enter higher education; others mature more slowly. Training in higher music education depends fundamentally upon students having already completed a substantial period of study prior to entry;

- Teachers: teachers in higher music education institutions are mostly expert practitioners who divide their working time between the institution and the profession, and many are inside its walls for only half a day per week or less;
- Entrance examinations: conservatoires generally assess their applicants through specially designed entrance examinations, which may consist of live auditions with juries of teachers;
- Curricula including one-to-one lessons, ensembles, courses, and final projects such as recitals and compositions: the learning process in higher music education centres on the personal and artistic development of the student. For most conservatoire students, one-to-one learning and teaching is of paramount importance for this development; and
- Duration of study: obtaining a high artistic level is dependent upon mastering extensive technical and intellectual challenges along with acquiring artistic maturity. Many first cycle conservatoire graduates will go on to further study at the master's level.

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER MUSIC EDUCATION

In the context of higher music education, quality most usually and instinctively means musical quality. The prominence of musical quality as a daily aspiration in the lives of those working in higher music education means that any system of quality assurance which ignores, or seems alien to the quality that is so deeply embedded in the discipline will be perceived not only to be irrelevant but even potentially harmful.

Qualitative standards in music are developed within musical traditions; the artistic experiences and expectations embedded in those traditions form the basis by which musical quality can be assessed. Within the expert community of the discipline, there is a wide and reliable consensus around how to recognise musical quality when and where it arises. At the same time, there is a broad understanding that there is no single method or route for attaining artistic goals. A supportive and, as far as possible, individually tailored environment is needed for the successful development of students. It enables them both to absorb and, indeed, to challenge traditional musical practices and expectations. Furthermore, such an environment demonstrates open mindedness towards diversity in the job market and is helpful in sustaining a continuous dialogue with a wide variety of professional communities. Finally, it sets the stage for exploring the artistic potential in encounters with this diversity of musical cultures and traditions, thus preparing students for international mobility.

The Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC) is the main network of European higher music education institutions with around 300 member institutions offering professional music education in 57 countries. These higher music education institutions have a broad spectrum of special orientations – for example, toward jazz, pop, early music, world music, and opera - and a similarly broad range of missions. It is expected that institutions should implement quality arrangements that are congruent with their missions. Within the sector, there is a strong conviction that only those individuals who have a good internal working knowledge of higher music education can fully appreciate, when working as quality evaluators, the nuances of mission-setting and fulfilment that apply in all these different circumstances.

The sector often feels itself to be ill-served by generic quality assurance procedures, especially those that concentrate upon systems and committee structures, and focus less on what is actually going on in pursuit of musical excellence in the teaching studios and performance spaces.

A EUROPEAN SUBJECT-SPECIFIC APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION

Almost all European countries have set up quality assurance or accreditation agencies responsible for evaluating higher education institutions within their national frameworks. As a first step, it has been logical for such agencies to be organised on a national basis and linked to the particular governmental and legal systems under which the institutions function. The paradigm around which

such national agencies base their procedures is generally that of the multi-disciplinary university, combining scientific subjects with those in the arts and humanities and often exercising quality assurance systems at the level of the institution – and therefore above that of its individual constituent disciplines.

Most higher music education institutions are exceptions to such a paradigm in two ways: first, they deal exclusively with a highly specialised subject, which might require discipline-specific reviewers; second, because they focus on just one subject, the distinction that is made between institutional level and programme level quality assurance processes is not always relevant. In effect, evaluating a music programme often means evaluating also the institution responsible for it. Even when conservatoires merged with other arts-based institutions into universities of the arts, the shared focus on the arts in such institutions still makes them distinctive in the higher education sector. Due to their specificities, higher music education institutions perceive the national procedures for evaluation or accreditation not always as entirely fit for purpose in their definition of quality. In some cases, the procedures do not take into account the specificities of the sector (e.g. their educational processes such as the prominence of one-to-one teaching by skilled practitioners, who often spend but a small portion of their time within the institution); in others, their panels do not involve a sufficient number of music specialists. This is sometimes due to the difficulty of finding impartial expert reviewers within a small, specialist national sector in which institutions may be in competition with one another even as they serve a common educational and artistic cause. Some national procedures also focus on the national context when considering the outward-facing aspects of an institution's operation but do not address aspects linked to internationalisation, which has always been an important aspect of quality for higher music education institutions.

A strong belief exists within MusiQuE that a dedicated quality assurance and accreditation agency for music may address many of these issues. In the eyes of the stakeholders the Review Panel encountered, MusiQuE has managed to develop its own discipline-specific approach which provides clear added value compared to the more generic approach of national agencies. MusiQuE panels have been able to create a real peer-review setting which allows for open exchange between peers, as well as an in-depth analysis and evaluation.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MUSIQUÉ

The establishment of MusiQuE had been extensively prepared by AEC. Since 2002, AEC has been developing its involvement in quality assurance. It implemented several projects, developed a Framework Document for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Music Education, and tested those criteria and procedures in test visits across Europe. From 2007 onwards, two types of reviews have been offered to higher education institutions: quality enhancement processes and joint review procedures in collaboration with national quality assurance and accreditation agencies.

In 2013 AEC started the preparation of the establishment of an independent evaluation body, which led to the creation of MusiQuE - Music Quality Enhancement: The Foundation for Quality Enhancement and Accreditation in Higher Music Education by AEC, the European Music Schools Union (EMU) and Pearle*-Live Performance Europe (the Performing Arts Employers Associations League Europe) in October 2014.

MusiQuE is legally established as a foundation and its seat of operation is in Brussels, Belgium. Initially established in the Netherlands on 7th October 2014, the daily operations of MusiQuE were moved to Belgium in March 2019, in order to facilitate its VAT registration in Belgium. MusiQuE has functioned since that time under the regulations that apply in that country.

Since 2014, MusiQuE took over all the review activities previously coordinated by AEC; it also assumed responsibility for the maintenance of its register of peer reviewers and continued to develop its review procedures and extend its activities. Table 1 shows the number and types of procedures which MusiQuE has performed since 2014.

Table 1. Number and types of procedures per year (2014-2019)

Type of review	Overall	2014-2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of reviews	44	5	6	6	11	16
Within the scope of the ESG	35	5	5	5	9	11
Quality Enhancement reviews	17	5	1	2	5	4
- critical friends reviews	1				1	
- in collaboration with other agencies	6	4	1			1
Institutional level / Programme level	10 / 7	5 / 0	0 / 1	2 / 0	1 / 4	2 / 2
Number of programmes reviewed	23		1		14	8
Accreditation procedures	18		4	3	4	7
- in collaboration with other agencies	10		3	2	3	2
Institutional level / Programme level	2 / 16		0 / 4	0 / 3	1 / 3	1 / 6
'Number of programmes reviewed	83		37	38	4	4
- follow-up on conditional accreditation procedures						2
Outside the scope of the ESG	9	0	1	1	2	5
-evaluations of research activities	1			1		
-reviews of pre-college institutions and programmes	2		1		1	
-consultative visits	3				1	2
-benchmarking projects	3					3

Vision and mission statement

In entering upon the process of self-evaluation after five years of operation, it was felt appropriate that MusiQuE should review its mission, ensuring that this evolves in a manner that matches how the foundation itself has developed. The revised mission of MusiQuE is as follows: **MusiQuE works internationally to uphold and advance the quality of music education.**

MusiQuE delivers this mission on the basis of five principles which, collectively, define what MusiQuE stands for:

1. MusiQuE is, fundamentally, an organisation set up by and for the music education sector, dedicated to promoting and supporting quality enhancement and, thereby, strengthening the sector.
2. MusiQuE is committed to working in partnership with its founding organisations (AEC, EMU and Pearle*), with institutions, with other stakeholders in music education and with national quality assurance agencies.
3. Operating throughout Europe and beyond, MusiQuE believes in the strength and added value of involving international perspectives in quality enhancement.
4. MusiQuE encourages institutions at all stages of music education to reflect on their own practices and potential in adapting to ongoing challenges in society.
5. MusiQuE pursues quality enhancement in a way that respects the values and ethos of each individual institution and strives to make quality enhancement issues more meaningful to staff and students.

STRUCTURES

The MusiQuE Board is responsible for all decision-making and for the commissioning of actions in relation to the operations of MusiQuE. The MusiQuE Board is composed of a statutory minimum of five members appointed by the MusiQuE Board itself on the basis of proposals by the three organisations involved in MusiQuE: AEC, EMU and Pearle*. A majority is guaranteed for Board members representing higher music education institutions. Therefore, with the Board's minimum composition of five members, three will have been appointed from the higher music education sector (based on proposals by AEC) and two representing the profession and other levels of education (based on a proposal by EMU and a proposal by Pearle*). A balance in terms of geographical origin, musical background, and in terms of gender is sought wherever possible. Since 2018, a permanent seat for a student or recent alumnus has been created on the Board. The MusiQuE Board depends on the MusiQuE staff (3 FTE) for its effective functioning and support provided between its meetings and during its reviews. The size of the office has grown substantially in line with the increasing demand for MusiQuE's services. Different functions have been established in order to clarify the roles and responsibilities of MusiQuE staff members internally and externally and to improve the effectiveness of the office. The current team brings together individuals with expertise in music education and performance, in quality assurance in music and higher music education, in student representation at the national and European level, in generic quality assurance at the European level, and in communication.

MusiQuE has established an Appeals Committee with one standing member who is appointed by the MusiQuE Board for a fixed term of three years (renewable once), based on a proposal by AEC, which is in charge of identifying a suitably qualified individual for MusiQuE.

THE PEER-REVIEWERS REGISTER

MusiQuE works with a pool of international specialists in the relevant musical fields, chosen for their ability to understand the specificities of the various institutions, programmes, and disciplines, and for their involvement in quality assurance processes at the programme or institutional level. This pool is called the Peer-Reviewers Register.

ACTIVITIES

MusiQuE provides the following services within the scope of the ESG:

- Quality enhancement reviews for institutions, programmes and joint programmes
- Accreditation processes for institutions, programmes and joint programmes
- Bilateral collaborations with national quality assurance and accreditation agencies (not mentioned separately in the terms of reference)

MusiQuE provides the following services outside the scope of the ESG:

- Quality assurance desk for institutions (not mentioned in the terms of reference)
- Evaluations of research activities
- Reviews of pre-college institutions and programmes
- Consultative visits
- Coordination of benchmarking projects (not mentioned in the terms of reference)

Quality Enhancement Reviews for Institutions, Programmes and Joint Programmes

Higher music education institutions have the opportunity to engage in a Quality Enhancement Review, including a peer-review visit, either for the whole institution or focused on one or more programmes, which results in an advisory report. Separate sets of standards have been developed for Institutional Reviews, Programme Reviews, Joint Programme Reviews, and for reviews of

Classroom Music Teacher Education Programmes. MusiQuE conducted five Quality Enhancement reviews in 2018 and four in 2019.

Recently, MusiQuE has been developing a new and complementary approach to Quality Enhancement reviews, in the form of Critical Friend Reviews. Those reviews include annual visits by 'critical friends' to various departments or programmes and are combined with a modified version of MusiQuE's regular review visit.

Accreditation Procedures for Institutions, Programmes and Joint Programmes

It is central to the rationale of MusiQuE that higher music education institutions should also have the opportunity to engage in formal accreditation procedures coordinated by it. This means that in countries where evaluation and accreditation bodies other than the national agency are authorized to operate, institutions can turn to MusiQuE as an alternative to the national process or combine a MusiQuE quality enhancement review with the national accreditation procedure required by law. Separate sets of standards have been developed for Institutional Reviews, Programme Reviews, Joint Programme Reviews, and for reviews of Classroom Music Teacher Education Programmes. Any such process will continue to be subject to the national legislative framework where the institution is located, and to other factors of suitability.

Bilateral collaborations with other quality assurance and accreditation agencies

An alternative to an accreditation process conducted solely by MusiQuE is for MusiQuE to operate in collaboration with a national quality assurance and accreditation agency through a merged set of standards and procedures. This option, which already has been implemented with six national agencies and one other international agency, is especially attractive for institutions wishing to engage in a subject-specific and internationally-based quality enhancement review but are obliged to conform to national requirements that do not allow MusiQuE to conduct these processes on its own. The basis of such collaborative quality assurance processes is that of a participation of equals. Both MusiQuE and the national quality assurance agencies have their own strengths, expertise, and history. As part of the preparations for a collaborative process, a comparison is made between the agencies' standards. Arising out of this exercise, a merged set of standards is produced ensuring that no aspect found in either of the separate standards is omitted. Generally, the level of correspondence between standards is found to be high and the comparison process results in enhanced mutual trust and, from time to time, a productive sharing of practice.

Quality Assurance Desk for institutions

As a complement to the procedures operated by MusiQuE, its staff and experts also provide targeted advice on quality assurance procedures to higher music education institutions. The main 'portal' to this advice is the MusiQuE Quality Assurance Support Desk. The MusiQuE Office can offer specific guidance in relation to MusiQuE tools/guidelines (including the MusiQuE Standards) and, where appropriate, will provide references to sources on internal and external quality assurance. The MusiQuE office can also organise, on request, a preparatory visit to explain how an institution can apply for a review undertaken by reviewers from the MusiQuE Peer-Reviewers Register.

For most of the year, the Desk exists in 'virtual' form as a space on the MusiQuE website to respond to specific email queries. The MusiQuE Quality Assurance Desk is also available at the AEC's Annual Congress and, by request, at the annual meetings of EMU and Pearle*. Delegates can bring their inquiries directly to the MusiQuE Board and staff in a face-to-face interaction, which can then be followed up by email if necessary.

Evaluations of research activities

These evaluations aim to provide an analysis of research objectives and results within the higher music education context. They are based on a specific evaluation framework developed by MusiQuE,

the MusiQuE Framework for the Evaluation of Research Activities in Higher Music Education Institutions, derived from the MusiQuE Standards for Institutional Review. These evaluation procedures are structured in four domains of investigation: 1) the profile of the research activities or research institute/unit, 2) their organization, 3) the quality of the research activities' results, and 4) the impact of these results. So far, MusiQuE has conducted one evaluation procedure of this kind, in 2017.

Reviews of pre-college institutions and programmes

Under this process, pre-college (pre-higher education level) institutions and programmes have the opportunity to engage in a Quality Enhancement Review, i.e. a peer-review visit that results in an advisory report. These quality enhancement reviews of pre-college institutions and programmes are based on a specific set of standards, the Standards for Pre-College Music Education, which aim to guide pre-college music education providers in evaluating their activities and enhancing quality. So far, MusiQuE has conducted two reviews of pre-college institutions.

Consultative visits

A consultative visit consists of a site-visit by a MusiQuE peer reviewer to advise the institution in relation to matters concerning governance or quality assurance, as an example. The process includes the provision of material by the institution to the reviewer, a site-visit by the reviewer, and the production of an advisory report – which will not be published but will be disseminated to a limited amount of key stakeholders. The MusiQuE Standards are used as an internal check list by the reviewer during the site-visit. The reporting format is free and based on the needs of the institution. So far, MusiQuE has conducted three consultative visits in 2018-2019.

Coordination of benchmarking projects

MusiQuE can be commissioned by an institution to conduct a benchmarking exercise on its behalf. The method of benchmarking is proposed as a tool for quality enhancement and for internationalisation. It involves choosing appropriate partners at international levels, evaluating and comparing the practices and/or performance of the institution with those of its partners, and sharing best practice. The benchmarking questions (or points of reference) are derived from the MusiQuE Standards. So far, MusiQuE has coordinated one large-scale benchmarking project, in 2019.

MUSIQUÉ'S FUNDING

MusiQuE's operational income consists exclusively of fees generated by the review procedures and advisory services it conducts. In addition, MusiQuE benefits from AEC's financial support through the coverage of a proportion of its staff costs. With work expanding and budget lines increasing, MusiQuE is on its way to its goal of becoming financially independent from AEC. In 2016, AEC covered 67% of the total staff costs of MusiQuE; in 2017 and 2018, 50% of these costs; and in 2019, 20%. In its latest business plan, MusiQuE shows the projections for its financial sustainability for the coming years. As anticipated in 2015, there has been a growing interest in MusiQuE's activities and therefore a growing number of reviews conducted. At the same time, MusiQuE has developed a new pricing cost model, reflecting the diversity of services offered: there are different prices for institutional quality enhancement reviews and accreditations (based on the Gross National Income of the country where the institution is situated), for programme reviews and accreditation (inflected according to the number of constituent programmes reviewed), as well as for the other types of services (review of pre-college institutions, review of research activities, and consultative visits). For institutions opting for a 'Critical Friend' Review, a yearly fee is calculated that is payable by the institution during the full review cycle (usually six years). For benchmarking services, the price is set on a case-by-case basis, depending on the needs of the institution commissioning the project.

FINDINGS: COMPLIANCE OF MUSIQUE WITH THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA (ESG)

ESG PART 2: EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

ESG 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard:

External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG.

Evidence

MusiQuE's mission speaks of working internationally to uphold and advance the quality of music education. Through its accreditation and quality enhancement services, MusiQuE seeks to assist higher music education institutions in their own enhancement of quality. The review framework has been designed in collaboration with higher music education institutions themselves and has been conceived as a support mechanism to institutions and to those within them who are responsible for quality assurance. Among the five key principles adopted by MusiQuE, the fourth and fifth read as follows:

- MusiQuE encourages institutions at all stages of music education to reflect on their own practices and potential in adapting to ongoing challenges in society.
- MusiQuE pursues quality enhancement in a way that respects the values and ethos of each individual institution and strives to make quality enhancement issues more meaningful to staff and students.

The MusiQuE Board has carried out a mapping exercise of the MusiQuE Standards against Part 1 of the ESGs in order to demonstrate how standards 1.1 to 1.10 are addressed by the MusiQuE standards and procedures. The result of this mapping exercise is summarized in table 2. The MusiQuE Standards includes two elements that are not explicitly addressed by Part 1 of the ESGs, i.e. the focus on internationalisation in standard 2.2 "The institution offers a range of opportunities for students to gain an international perspective" and the explicit reference to the engagement with the wider cultural and artistic context under standard 8.1 "The institution engages within wider cultural, artistic and educational contexts".

As indicated above, MusiQuE regularly collaborates with national and international quality assurance agencies to perform joint reviews. When agencies with which MusiQuE works are registered on EQAR, they should also address the ESG Part 1 standards. In those cases, a common assessment framework is developed that integrates the two assessment frameworks.

When agencies with which MusiQuE works are not registered on EQAR and therefore may not be ESG-compliant (e.g. in the case of EQ-Arts with which MusiQuE cooperates on a regular basis with regards to other artistic disciplines), then MusiQuE ensures in the cooperation agreement that all steps will be undertaken in line with its own practices and the MusiQuE Standards will be used as the main evaluation framework. If needed, they are only slightly rephrased to increase their relevance to other disciplines or contexts.

Table 2: Self-assessment of the compliance with ESG Part 1

	Quality enhancement reviews of institutions	Quality enhancement reviews of programmes	Quality enhancement reviews of joint programmes	Institutional accreditations	Programme accreditation	Accreditation of joint programmes
<i>1.1 Policy for quality assurance</i>	6.2 7	6.2 7	6.2 7	6.2 7	6.2 7	6.2 7
<i>1.2 Design and approval of programmes</i>	2.1 8.1	1 2.1 8.1	1 2.1 8.1	2.1 8.1	1 2.1 8.1	1 2.1 8.1
<i>1.3 Student-centered learning, teaching and assessment</i>	2.1 2.3 4	2.1 2.3 4	2.1 2.3 4	2.1 2.3 4	2.1 2.3 4	2.1 2.3 4
<i>1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification</i>	3 8.1	3 8.1	3 8.1	3 8.1	3 8.1	3 8.1
<i>1.5 Teaching staff</i>	4	4	4	4	4	4
<i>1.6 Learning resources and student support</i>	5 7	5 7	5 7	5 7	5 7	5 7
<i>1.7 Information management</i>	1 2.1 3.2 7	1 2.1 3.2 7	1 2.1 3.2 7	1 2.1 3.2 7	1 2.1 3.2 7	1 2.1 3.2 7
<i>1.8 Public information</i>	6.1 8.3 3.2	6.1 8.3 3.2	6.1 8.3 3.2	6.1 8.3 3.2	6.1 8.3 3.2	6.1 8.3 3.25
<i>1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes</i>	7 5.1 5.3	7 5.1 5.3	7 5.1 5.3	7 5.1 5.3	7 5.1 5.3	7 5.1 5.3
<i>1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance</i>	7	7	7	7	7	7

*Numbers in the table refer to the relevant MusiQuE standard

Analysis

All evaluation schemes developed by the agency are based on a common structure of 17 standards. Based on this common basis, MusiQuE has designed several sets of standards for the different services it offers. The Review Panel has assessed the consistency of the evaluation procedures with ESG Part 1 based on the detailed tables provided by the agency, as summarised above. The Review Panel refers to the common standards, unless specificities are relevant. In the latter case, the Review Panel refers explicitly to the specific evaluation scheme in which the standards are deviating.

Overall, the analysis of the Review Panel confirms the references as outlined in Table 3. However, in a limited number of cases the Review Panel found that some elements of the ESG are not fully reflected in the evaluation criteria, which are used by the agency. In the following paragraphs the analysis of the compliance with ESG Part 1 is discussed in detail.

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Under standard 7, “The programme has in place effective quality assurance and enhancement procedures”, the agency assesses the institutions’ internal quality assurance policy, how the procedures are communicated to staff, teachers, students and external stakeholders, and how internal and external stakeholders are involved. Also, under standard 6.2, “The programme is supported by an appropriate organisational structure and decision-making processes”, the agency assesses the appropriateness of the internal structures and the involvement of internal and external stakeholders.

1.2 Design and approval of programmes

In programme level reviews standard 1, “The programme goals are clearly stated and reflect the institutional mission”, specific attention is paid to the design and approval of programmes. This standard is less specific at the institutional level. Standard 2.1, “The goals of the institution are achieved through the content and structure of the study programmes and their methods of delivery” refers to processes in place for the design and approval of programmes, the relation between the programme design, and its objectives and intended learning outcomes. It refers furthermore to the learning outcomes’ compatibility with the Polifonia Dublin Descriptors’/AEC learning outcomes and with the national qualifications framework.

1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

The most significant change in Part 1 of the 2015 ESG is the focus on student-centered learning, teaching, and assessment. This standard focuses on how students are encouraged to take an active role in creating their learning process. The assessment of students should reflect this.

While the MusiQuE frameworks indeed tackle most separate elements of student-centred learning, teaching, and assessment, such as learning outcomes, flexible learning paths, using different pedagogical methods and to encourage critical reflection, the overarching concept of student-centred learning is not mentioned in the assessment frameworks. It would be helpful to refer explicitly to the European standard “Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.” This might help to focus even more on how institutions and programmes make sure students take an active role in the creation of their learning process and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

Student admission, progression, recognition, and certification are extensively reviewed under the standard “Student profiles”. The standard “Cultural, artistic and education contexts” takes into account the professional recognition of graduates.

1.5 Teaching staff

MusiQuE applies in each of its evaluation schemes a separate standard focussing on teaching staff, with two sub-standards “Members of the teaching staff are qualified for their role and are active as artists/pedagogues/researchers” and “There are sufficient qualified teaching staff to effectively deliver the programmes.” All elements of ESG 1.5 are covered by the supportive questions developed to assess the standard on the quality assurance of the teaching staff.

1.6 Learning resources and student support

The agency evaluates the learning resources and student support in its evaluation schemes with the same standards. The quality of learning resources is mainly considered under standard 5.1, “The institution has appropriate resources to support student learning and delivery of the programmes.” The quality of student support is considered under standard 5.3, “The institution has sufficient qualified support staff.” The necessary funding for those and other activities is considered explicitly

under standard 5.2, “The institution’s financial resources enable successful delivery of the study programmes”, and the quality assurance is considered under standard 7, “Internal quality culture”.

1.7 Information management

All aspects related to the information management on student progression, success, and the career paths of graduates are considered under standard 3.2, “The programme has mechanisms to formally monitor and review the progression, achievement and subsequent employability of its students.” Under standard 7 “Internal quality culture” stakeholder satisfaction and internal quality assurance procedures are considered.

1.8 Public information

Standard 8.3, “Information provided to the public about the institution is clear, consistent and accurate”, refers explicitly to public information. Under standards 2.1 and 2.3, the institution/programme under review is invited to provide supportive material about the course contents, learning outcomes, assessment methods, and appeals procedures. Additionally, standard 6.1 refers to internal communication, which includes communication with staff and students. This standard includes some elements which relate to public information, but also to internal quality assurance.

1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

This standard is mainly covered by standard 7 “The institution has a strong internal quality culture, supported by clear and effective quality assurance and enhancement procedures.” Some other questions under other standards complement the questions under standard 7.

1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance

As a provider of voluntary external quality assurance services, MusiQuE invites institutions to participate cyclical procedures – necessary for accredited institutions/programmes to remain accredited with MusiQuE – but cannot compel institutions/programmes to engage in these procedures, beside the external quality assurance activities required by national law. Under standard 7, some references are made to the links between internal and external quality assurance processes, but no formal evaluation is made of the fact that the programmes or institutions under review undergo external processes on a cyclical basis. The Critical Friend Reviews the agency is developing, are a valuable way to build a longer-term relationship with the institutions under review and to make external quality assurance processes more continuous rather than one off.

Summary

Based on the analysis above, the Review Panel is confident that MusiQuE’s external quality assurance activities take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes in the universities under review as described in Part 1 of the ESG. The only standard under Part 1 of the ESG for which compliance is not guaranteed by MusiQuE’s processes is standard 10, which requires external quality assurance. Although the agency cannot require from institutions that they involve MusiQuE structurally to guarantee a cyclical approach to external quality assurance, it might ascertain during its reviews whether programmes or institutions have in place cyclical external quality assurance processes and conduct their own reviews.

Based on its meetings with stakeholders, it is clear to the Review Panel that the agency’s work has contributed to the development of internal quality assurance procedures and cultures in higher music institutions it has worked with. Different stakeholders confirmed that MusiQuE has managed to design and implement its processes in a way that contributes to real peer-review processes in which external review panels are not merely seen as part of bureaucratic procedures to guarantee accountability, but are seen as experts in their field and peers who fully understand the context of

the programme or institution under review and who provide valuable feedback which may contribute to quality improvement.

Several representatives of music departments which are part of multi-disciplinary institutions have indicated that MusiQuE's processes and reports have contributed to their internal recognition and the understanding of the higher education institution of the quality of education in the area of music.

Review Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE

Standard:

External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.

Evidence

MusiQuE is an organisation set up by the music education sector. MusiQuE's main aim is to assist higher music education institutions to improve by providing them with music-specific and European evaluation procedures to allow them to demonstrate where and how they have made improvements and to create the stimulus for further improvement set against the mission as described by the institution.

MusiQuE's procedures and its three initial sets of standards (Standards for Institutional Review, Standards for Programme Review, and Standards for Joint Programme Review) have been designed between 2007 and 2014 by representatives from higher music education institutions from across Europe brought together in working groups set up within specific projects. Those procedures and standards have been tested and refined. In the case of the Standards for Classroom Music Teacher Education Programmes, the standards were developed under the auspices of AEC by a working group composed of representatives of AEC, EMU and the European Association for Music in Schools (EAS). These standards were officially handed over to MusiQuE once developed and tested.

Every four years the MusiQuE Standards are reviewed for possible revision, and the procedure for this review has recently been modified in order to strengthen the effective engagement of stakeholders: a working group is created to undertake this review task. It consists of a Board member (chairing the working group), a member of the MusiQuE Office, two experienced peer-reviewers (including a student), a representative of Pearle*, and a representative of EMU. The working group will study all the documentation (current sets of standards and detailed list of suggestions for the revision of the standards collected through the feedback questionnaires mentioned above and through input from Board members when considering review reports). Following approval by the Board, the Proposal for Changes to the standards will be sent for comments to all MusiQuE peer reviewers on its register, representatives of all reviewed institutions, and to the institutions and organisations members of AEC, EMU and Pearle*. Based on their comments the working group produces final versions of the Standards, which are proposed to the MusiQuE Board for final approval.

In between major reviews of the standards, the Board can also adopt changes based on the feedback from staff or other stakeholders. One of the sources of information results from reviewers and institutions who are invited at the end of each review procedure to offer feedback on their experience of reviewing or being reviewed. As indicated above, in joint procedures with other quality assurance agencies, a comparison is made between the agencies' standards as part of the

preparations for a collaborative process. This comparison leads to a merged set of standards ensuring that no aspect found in either of the separate standards is omitted. This process guarantees the adaptation of the MusiQuE procedures to the requirements of the national legislation.

Analysis

MusiQuE's evaluation frameworks all have a common core structure which guarantees its consistency with ESG Part 1. From this core evaluation framework, it has developed slightly different versions which are applied for its different procedures, such as accreditation processes and quality enhancement reviews for institutions, programmes, and joint programmes, including a specific framework for Classroom Music Teacher Education Programmes. The Review Panel has reviewed the evaluation frameworks and discussed those frameworks with different stakeholders. Overall, it is clear that MusiQuE's procedures are fit for purpose to assess the quality of higher music education programmes and institutions. The Review Panel considers that the main specificity of MusiQuE is the domain-specific expertise and training its reviewers.

The Review Panel specifically commends the agency for its innovative Critical Friend Review. In order to make its procedures even more fit for purpose this approach encourages institutions to build a strong internal quality enhancement system based on regular visits by 'critical friends'. In this approach the cyclical external review conducted by MusiQuE will be slightly modified in terms of the documentation institutions will need to prepare for the visit of the review panel. This site visit will then take into consideration the outcomes of the Critical Friend Review, which will be an integrated part of the institution's self-evaluation process.

The Review Panel has also reviewed the Standards for Joint Programmes Review. The agency has mapped its standards against the Standards for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes in the EHEA. This mapping correctly indicates that all topics raised in the latter framework may be approached within the MusiQuE evaluation frameworks. Nevertheless, the Review Panel noticed that the MusiQuE Standards for Joint Programmes Review and the 'questions to be considered when addressing the standard' are only slightly adapted to the context of joint programmes. Some important elements such as the requirements of the cooperation agreement are only mentioned under 'supportive material/evidences'.

Based on some pilots with neighboring fields of study (drama, visual arts), it is clear that the developed evaluation frameworks may be easily adapted to the context of other areas within the arts. The Review Panel recommends that the agency consider whether it might broaden its scope systematically. This might help to increase its number of reviews and improve its financial sustainability (see ESG 3.5). In order to sustain its domain-specific strength, such an extension of its area of work would require also the broadening of its pool of reviewers.

As an international quality assurance agency, MusiQuE works in different jurisdictions. In cases when institutions wish to see the outcomes of the quality enhancement reviews or accreditations recognized by their national quality assurance agency or ministry, MusiQuE ensures that its procedures are compatible with relevant national regulations. This is done either through a joint procedure with the national agency, through an agreement with the national agency or the Ministry, or alternatively, MusiQuE searches for information regarding the regulations to be respected through its own means and through the reviewed institution. Those efforts allow the review to take into account the specific national contexts and requirements.

Institutions value the flexible way MusiQuE operates in order to meet institutions' needs: within the constraints of the MusiQuE framework and of the ESG, adjustments can be agreed on in relation to the number of peer-reviewers on the team, the length of the site-visit, the presence of peers from

the country where the visit takes place, etc. While the Review Panel acknowledges the value of this flexibility, it encourages the agency to search for a sustainable balance between flexibility and consistency in order to keep the diversity manageable.

Finally, the Review Panel values positively the fact that the agency reviews its procedures every four years. The staff gathers all input which is received through different channels in a structured way. This overview of inputs provides a good starting point for the review of all procedures. During the review process institutions and reviewers are actively involved. As also referred to under standard 3.1, the review panel considers that the stakeholder concept of MusiQuE is strongly oriented toward all actors actively involved in the music sector, and less towards the involvement of the broader society. Opening up the process to stakeholders which are less involved in the music sector might help to bring other perspectives on the table.

Review Panel commendations

- The Review Panel commends the agency for its ‘critical friend’ approach to promote and integrate internal and external quality assurance procedures.

Review Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES

Standard:

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent
- an external assessment normally including a site visit
- a report resulting from the external assessment
- a consistent follow-up

Evidence

For each quality enhancement review (for institutions, programmes, and joint programmes) and accreditation process (for institutions, programmes, and joint programmes), MusiQuE conducts reviews that employ pre-defined processes, which are published on the agency’s website. Full details of all aspects of MusiQuE’s procedures may be found in MusiQuE’s “Internal regulations”, “Guidelines for Institutions” and “Guidelines for peer-reviewers”.

All procedures are based upon a self-assessment exercise carried out by the institution which results in a self-evaluation report for which a tailor-made template is provided by MusiQuE. This is followed by an external assessment made by an expert panel, generally based on a site visit. After the site visit, a report is produced by the panel. A follow-up procedure is designed to cope with routine procedures and, where necessary, with complaints or appeals. The final reports of MusiQuE reviews are published on its website.

For higher education institutions which want to take a next step in the integration of their internal and external quality assurance processes in order to ensure a better preparation or follow-up of the external processes, MusiQuE has recently developed the Critical Friend Review which is also described above. In this approach a MusiQuE review visit is preceded and prepared by annual visits by ‘critical friends’ to various departments or programmes, some components are added to the processes referred to above (also described in the MusiQuE Handbook for Critical Friend Review):

- each programme or department to be reviewed sends relevant material to the ‘critical friend’;

- the latter conducts a review including formal and informal elements;
- the 'critical friend' then produces a report with recommendations, structured in line with guidelines which MusiQuE has developed on the basis of the MusiQuE Standards;
- the department or programme prepares an action plan in response to the 'critical friend report' and implements the action plan.

For each programme or department, these steps are similar. After some years, each programme or department will have been reviewed by a 'critical friend' once or twice, and therefore produced an improvement plan and worked on these improvements. The regular review procedure undertaken by a review team will then take place.

Analysis

Based on the evidence provided by the agency and its meetings with stakeholders, the Review Panel is convinced that the external quality assurance processes implemented by MusiQuE are reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently, and published. Representatives from higher education institutions clearly indicate that they experience MusiQuE reviews as useful. MusiQuE involves international experts who manage to create a real peer-review atmosphere which leads to valuable exchange during the site visit, but also contributes to the ownership of staff in relation to the development of a quality culture within their institution. Procedures are developed in close collaboration with the music education sector, regularly updated based on feedback, and published on the agency's website.

In order to guarantee consistency in the definition of procedures, the MusiQuE Board has the competence to define all procedures. In the implementation phase, the Board scrutinizes each assessment report before it is finalized. Based on reports of Board meetings and feedback from stakeholders, the panel confirms that the Board gives detailed feedback, but the panel is autonomous in processing the feedback by the Board.

The Review Panel confirms that all of MusiQuE's procedures are based on a self-assessment, an external assessment including a site visit, and a report resulting from the external assessment. The follow-up should, however, be embedded more structurally in the work of the agency.

The Review Panel recognizes that higher education institutions invite MusiQuE on a voluntary basis for their external quality assurance processes. This indeed reduces MusiQuE's leverage to guarantee follow-up procedures. Nevertheless, the ESG do not differentiate between voluntary and compulsory processes as far as they require consistent follow-up processes for considering the action taken by institutions. Based on MusiQuE's mission to focus on continuous enhancement, clear and consistent follow-up of external quality assurance is an important element to close the quality assurance cycle as well.

In order to assist reviewed institutions in the post-site-visit process and to enable MusiQuE to assess its impact, a template has been developed. This template is sent to the institution together with the letter informing the institution of the MusiQuE Board's endorsement of the review report or of the accreditation decision and the institution is given a deadline of one year to send back the completed template to the MusiQuE staff. The Review Panel considers it to be positive that since October 2017 all offers for accreditation processes and quality enhancement reviews include a follow-up which is automatically included in the review costs. The effect of this policy has been recently noticed, with some institutions making use of the follow-up procedure. In order to keep the burden of the follow-up small, this includes only a review "sur dossier". In the meetings with representatives of higher education institutions, the added value of this approach did not seem to be obvious to all institutions. Overall, based on its meetings with the staff and the Board, the Review Panel noticed that the agency still considers follow-up more as a responsibility of the higher education institutions

than as a full responsibility of the agency, and therefore, the agency does not pay as much attention to this phase as the Review Panel assumes to be appropriate.

The Review Panel considers the development of Critical Friend Reviews as an approach which may very well fit to guarantee a more continuous follow-up and to strengthen the interaction between internal and external quality assurance. The Review Panel encourages the agency to search for ways to build on this approach to develop a follow-up procedure which is recognised by the involved higher education institutions as providing added value to the external quality assurance procedures, in line with the recognised added value of the other steps in MusiQuE’s procedures. An additional way forward may be to publish any follow-up reports together with the review report on the agency’s website and thus allow the institution to show its progress. In some cases, given the subject-specific nature of MusiQuE’s reviews, institutions come back to MusiQuE for other services. Furthermore, the Review Panel encourages the agency to develop clear and measurable ambitions related to the consistent implementation of follow-up processes.

Review Panel recommendations:

- The Review Panel suggests that the agency further develop its approach to follow-up further in order to guarantee a consistent follow-up in each of its external quality assurance processes.

Review Panel conclusion: substantially compliant

ESG 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS

Standard: External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).

Evidence

All of MusiQuE’s external quality assurance procedures are carried out by external experts. For quality enhancement reviews (for institutions, programmes, and joint programmes) and accreditation processes (for institutions, programmes, and joint programmes), MusiQuE composes peer review panels, which always include a student member. In the case of Critical Friend Reviews, student-members are only included in the final external review and not in the critical friend visits. As indicated above, MusiQuE has created a Peer-Reviewers Register with experts with an appropriate qualification (degree or professionally-oriented diploma) and recognized expertise in areas relevant to higher music education, a broad knowledge of the teaching and learning models and methods relevant to higher music education, international experience that provides a basis for making international comparison, and having been trained through a training for peer-reviewers delivered by MusiQuE.

Interested individuals who meet these requirements and are willing to act as peer-reviewers are asked to fill in specific templates (one for peers and one for students). All profiles are then considered by the MusiQuE Board. The Board evaluates the suitability of the applicant’s profile based on the criteria referred to above as well as on the needs of maintaining a balanced register (in terms of gender, geographical spread, languages spoken, etc.). Following this evaluation, the Board decides on the inclusion of each individual applicant to the register. The entire register is updated every three years (last update in 2019) and reviewed periodically by the MusiQuE Board.

The MusiQuE Board advertises every year across the AEC, EMU, and Pearle* memberships for new individuals to come forward to be considered for inclusion on the register. The criteria for acceptance onto the MusiQuE Peer-Reviewers Register were revised in 2017 in order to facilitate the applications of representatives of the profession, professional practitioners, and representatives of pre-college education. MusiQuE is currently working, together with its partner organisations Pearle* and EMU, on expanding its Peer-Reviewers Register with more profiles representing the professional practitioners and the employers.

One of the criteria to become a peer reviewer is to attend the annual training. Since 2017, based on participants' feedback, the length of the training has been extended to an intensive lunch-to-lunch session including a working dinner during which participants are gathered in review teams and prepare for role-playing sessions taking place the next morning.

In addition, MusiQuE provides an online training format, which is addressed to peer-reviewers who have not yet been listed in the Peer-Reviewers Register, but who have been selected to act as panel members in certain review procedures where a specific type of expertise is deemed necessary to cover the particular needs of the applicant institution. Aside from the themes covered in the annual training, the online format is adapted to fit the particular features of the procedure for which the peers have been selected – e.g. the national context in which the review unfolds, the mapped standards that constitute the framework of assessment in certain joint accreditation or quality enhancement reviews, and the applicable code of conduct if different from that of MusiQuE.

Furthermore, the participants have the opportunity to ask for clarifications regarding materials directly linked to the procedure for which they have been selected as members of the review team. The review team composition for each quality enhancement process and accreditation takes place as follows:

- Suggestions for review team members are first compiled by the MusiQuE staff, based on the needs of the institution (e.g. for expertise in a specific music area, artistic research, joint programmes, interdisciplinarity, etc.) and on the competence and coherence of the team as a whole. The proposals include different potential experts for each position on the team (Chair, Peer 1, Peer 2, Student, and Secretary). As mentioned above, given the international nature of MusiQuE, geographical balance is an important aspect of its reviews and the relevant language skills of experts also forms an important part of the considerations leading to their selection.
- All proposals for review team compositions are approved by the Board.
- The institution is asked to comment on the proposal for review team composition and specially to highlight any conflicts of interest.
- Reviewers invited are requested to fill in and sign a questionnaire aiming at pointing out any conflict of interest. In cases where no conflict of interest is revealed, the invitation is confirmed.

There are cases where institutions wish to suggest peers themselves and where this is allowed according to national regulations (e.g. in the case of the Netherlands or in the case of Kazakhstan, where this is even required) and cases where expertise not represented in the MusiQuE register is sought (for example in fields such as music technology and music journalism). In these cases, some steps are added to the selection process explained above to ensure that the suggested individuals have the right skills and competences: firstly, the MusiQuE Board must approve the new profile(s) after a strict scrutiny of their CV, as well as the full team composition; secondly, any expert suggested by the institution is briefed by the MusiQuE office during a dedicated online session, based on an online training format developed for this purpose. The Board will ensure that the majority of the review team members come from its register.

In the case of a joint procedure with another quality assurance agency, MusiQuE and the agency first agree on how the review team will be composed: fully by MusiQuE or jointly by both agencies. In the first case, all reviewers are drawn from the MusiQuE Peer-Reviewers Register. In the latter case, the Board of each agency will consider the review team composition for approval and a joint training will usually be organised.

Following the reviews, both the reviewers and reviewed institutions are asked for feedback on the (other) review team members to ensure that reviewers have indeed performed their task in the best possible manner. In case of any serious issue in relation to a reviewer's performance, the office will alert the Board.

Analysis

One of the great strengths of MusiQuE is that the agency is able to assemble review panels that combine relevant expertise, including in specialist areas, with the impartiality that comes from having a wide geographical base from which to draw suitable individuals. All procedures under review are carried out by panels composed of external experts including a student member. Within the Critical Friend Reviews, the critical friend visits are done by individual experts, while the general review is done by a review panel including a student.

The Review Panel commends the agency for the quality and the true international nature of the peer reviewers, thanks to the development of the MusiQuE Peer-Reviewers Register and the training offered to the reviewers. During its meeting with a selection of reviewers, the Review Panel learned that they are very well aware of the MusiQuE standards and the concepts underlying the European Standards and Guidelines and in particular the concept of student-centred learning, teaching, and assessment. The Review Panel encourages the agency to further work to extend its register with more professional experts and student-reviewers. If the agency would consider to further develop its offer to other areas of study in the arts, it will be crucial to extend the register with specific expertise.

Review Panel commendations

- The Review Panel commends the agency for the selection and training of its reviewers allowing the agency to compose well prepared and internationally diverse review panels.

Review Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES

Standard:

Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

Evidence

For all MusiQuE's activities within the scope of the ESG, the relevant MusiQuE Standards constitute the explicit and published criteria against which the outcomes and judgement of all MusiQuE reviews are made:

- The MusiQuE Standards for Institutional Review (used for both quality enhancement reviews of institutions and institutional accreditations)

- The MusiQuE Standards for Programme Review (used for both quality enhancement reviews of programmes and programme accreditations)
- The MusiQuE Standards for Joint Programme Review (to be used for both quality enhancement reviews of joint programmes and joint programme accreditations)
- The MusiQuE Standards for Classroom Music Teacher Education Programmes (to be used for both quality enhancement reviews of classroom music teacher education programmes and classroom music teacher education programme accreditations)

Each set of standards is published on the MusiQuE website.

In the case of joint procedures, a comparison is made of the agency's standards with those of MusiQuE and a merged set of standards is produced, which is shared with the involved institutions before the start of the review.

The outcomes of MusiQuE review procedures can be the following:

- In the case of a Quality Enhancement Review, the result of the procedure is the final report itself, which includes the list of standards met, substantially met, partially met, and not met; highlights the institution's/programme's strong points; and provides advice and suggestions/recommendations for change.
- In the case of an accreditation procedure, a similar report is produced, which includes the list of standards met, substantially met, partially met, and not met; highlights the institution's/programme's strong points; and provides advice and suggestions/recommendations for change. In addition, the result includes a decision on the accreditation of the institution/programme/joint programme, with the following possibilities:
 - o Accreditation (in which case only recommendations are expressed in the report)
 - o Conditional accreditation (in which case one or more conditions and a timeframe to meet them are included in the report)
 - o Not accredited

In all these cases, additional recommendations may be developed by the review team in order to assist the institution with its further improvement.

In joint procedures, each agency is responsible for their own formal outcomes. MusiQuE publishes its own decision, generally independent from the decision of the other agency it collaborates with. For all quality enhancement reviews (for institutions, programmes, and joint programmes) and accreditation processes (for institutions, programmes, and joint programmes), MusiQuE implements the following measures to guarantee that quality assurance processes are reliable and implemented consistently:

- Templates have been developed to assist those preparing the documentation: templates for the self-evaluation report (one for institutional review, one for programme review, and several ad hoc templates when several programmes are reviewed or when standards are merged with those of a national quality assurance agency) and one for the review panel's report.
- Review Teams are provided with short guidelines to assess compliance levels in order to enhance the level of consistency of the assessment process across all reviews and facilitate the work of the teams.
- The MusiQuE staff help to ensure that the reviewers' report is analytical and well-referenced, that supporting evidence is provided for the observations and judgements made, and that a list of points for further development is included, based on a checklist for secretaries and one for the MusiQuE staff.

- In addition, the MusiQuE Board, when considering review reports, pays particular attention to ensuring that the MusiQuE Standards are applied consistently, and that outcomes or judgments are justified appropriately with reference to evidence gathered by the Review Team.

The guidelines to assess compliance levels have recently been reformulated by the Board, as it had become clear from feedback from reviewers, staff members, and from the Board itself that Review Teams were experiencing some uncertainties and difficulties in the process of assessing the compliance of institutions and programmes with each MusiQuE Standard. Based on comparative research conducted by MusiQuE staff in relation to compliance levels used by various agencies and their corresponding compliance statements, and after considering a possible move to three compliance levels, the Board has decided to keep four levels in order to enable teams to better nuance their findings and reformulated all compliance statements to make them clearer and easier to use. The informal feedback received so far from review teams is positive.

Analysis

During the External Review, the Review Panel was able to confirm that the MusiQuE standards are public and easily accessible to all stakeholders. The staff of the agency is accessible for higher education institutions in order to offer additional information and guidance in order to help them prepare reviews in the best way possible.

The agency considers the development of regular training sessions for higher education institutions to inform them in a more structured and less time-consuming way. The Review Panel encourages the agency to implement this plan in the near future.

Furthermore, as indicated above, the MusiQuE's Board plays an important role to guarantee the consistent application of the evaluation criteria through its scrutiny of each report before it is published.

Finally, the Board is responsible for the regular updates of the review procedures. The agency lists all suggestions received as input for the revision of each procedure. Additionally, the comparison of assessment frameworks done in the framework of joint procedures provides valuable input for this revision process.

Review Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 2.6 REPORTING

Standard:

Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

Evidence

All of MusiQuE reports concerning quality enhancement reviews and accreditation processes for institutions, programmes, and joint programmes, are published in full on the MusiQuE website. Since 2018, a summary of the report is also published.

Accreditation decisions are published by the Board. In the case of an accreditation with conditions, the report of the follow-up procedure (either on file or after a site-visit) is published, together with the accreditation decision by the Board and with a reference to the first accreditation report.

Concerning bilateral collaborations with national and international quality assurance agencies, all review reports, once finally approved by the Board (and in some cases by the national quality assurance agency or other relevant national bodies), are published in full on the MusiQuE website, together with the accreditation decision by the MusiQuE Board when relevant.

The Review Panel was informed during the site-visit in Brussels that by that time (February 2020), MusiQuE had uploaded all review reports of completed procedures undertaken within the scope of the ESGs to DEQAR.

All review reports concerning quality enhancement reviews and accreditation processes are based on the same reporting template, in order to ensure consistency. The reports cover:

- A context description (to help locate the higher education institution in its specific context)
- A description of the individual procedure, including experts involved
- Evidence, analysis, and findings
- Conclusions
- Features of good practice, demonstrated by the institution
- Recommendations for follow-up action

Since 2019, all MusiQuE reports include a conclusion at the end of the report consisting of:

- An introductory paragraph (general statement about the state of affairs in the institution or programmes studied by the review team)
- The strong points of the institutions and the most important commendations made to the institution
- The most important recommendations to the institution
- A conclusion with the general statement of the team

In the case of joint procedures with national quality assurance agencies, the report may be structured according to the rules provided by the national agency. In all cases, the checking process of the report by the staff and by the Board will ensure the quality of the reports and their consistency. Once the report has been scrutinized by the MusiQuE Board (which may require adjustments to be made by the review team), the institution is given the opportunity to comment on the factual accuracy of a report and, where appropriate, further adjustments are made. The reports are normally in English, but MusiQuE can also conduct reviews in French, German and, more recently, Spanish and Russian.

Since MusiQuE publishes a summary of the report, institutions are encouraged to translate it in the national language and send it back to MusiQuE. However, this has not happened yet. Only one institution has shared with MusiQuE a link to a press release mentioning the review and a link to the report.

Analysis

As indicated above, all expert reports are published on the agency's website. The Review Panel has analysed a selection of those reports and has found that in general, these were competently written and in line with the above described structure. Conclusions are well substantiated. The way in which the reports are written clearly reflects the agency's ambition to write constructive reports which provide the higher music education institutions with suggestions for improvement. Recently, the agency published also a summary of the report for the wider public. As the formal reports are often quite detailed and mainly oriented toward the institution or programme under review, MusiQuE may wish to consider continuing the summary report for dissemination to the wider public.

In each review process, the agency gets the opportunity to react and correct factual errors before the final report is published.

In its meetings with representatives of higher music education institutions, the relatively long period of time between the site visit and the final report was mentioned several times as an area for improvement for the agency. Although institutions understand that this may be a challenge in joint procedures, they would like to receive the final report sooner after the site visit. The agency has already changed its procedure in order to have the Board’s feedback before the institution is asked to correct factual errors. This should reduce the time to finalise the report after this feedback round. A challenge for the agency is the fact that it works in different languages. Sometimes translations are made of the reports into the local language, or into English. The Review Panel recommends the agency clearly define which language version of the report is the primary report, in order to avoid any discussion in case of discrepancies between various languages.

Finally, the agency notices that review reports are not published often on institutional websites. MusiQuE may wish to be more pro-active in collecting information published by institutions following reviews.

Review Panel recommendations:

- The Review Panel recommends the agency further optimise the process of report writing, in order to reduce the time between the site visit and the publication of the final report.
- The Review Panel recommends the agency clearly define which language version constitutes the primary report, in order to avoid any discussion in case of discrepancies between the different languages.

Review Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Standard:
Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

Evidence

Institutions may submit a formal complaint when they consider that the service provided by MusiQuE has not been delivered in line with the MusiQuE Guidelines applicable for the procedure, and with the MusiQuE Code of Conduct for Peer-Reviewers.

An institution may submit a formal complaint when it considers that the service provided by MusiQuE has not been delivered in line with the MusiQuE Guidelines applicable for the procedure, and/or with the MusiQuE Code of Conduct for Peer Reviewers. A complaint may therefore concern a procedural failure, or may relate to the conduct of one or more individuals involved in the process. Complaints submitted to challenge the outcome of a review are considered invalid. The Appeals process, described below, should be used for this purpose.

Institutions are encouraged to offer feedback with regard to the quality of the services provided by MusiQuE in several phases of an ongoing procedure. Once a procedure has been closed – upon publication of the review report, or upon formal receipt of the outcomes of a specific consultancy service – an institution may file a formal complaint where it can provide relevant evidence that grounds for such a complaint exist. In this regard, when submitting a complaint to MusiQuE, an institution should: (a) clearly indicate the object of complaint by referring to the specific provisions in

the applicable framework (MusiQuE guidelines, regulations, code of conduct), (b) explain in a credible and substantiated way the manner and extent of the deviation from the specific framework of reference (MusiQuE guidelines, regulations or code of conduct), and (c) indicate in which ways the perceived failings can be corrected. MusiQuE will only consider complaints that include these elements, supported by appropriate evidence, references, examples, etc.

The complaint will normally be considered by the MusiQuE Board. The only exception to this is in the case of a complaint relating to the Board itself. The Board will decide if and what action to take, as appropriate and in line with MusiQuE's procedures and regulations. The Board will inform the complainant of its decision and any action taken after the complaint has been considered.

In the event that the complaint should relate directly to the Board or any of its members, the matter will be referred in the first instance to the standing member of the Appeals Committee. This person will decide whether he/she can act upon the matter unaided or whether he/she require the assistance of other individuals. If the latter, they will make their own selection of up to two further persons. These may be contacted directly or, if preferred, contact can be made via the MusiQuE staff. Having considered the matter, the standing member of the Appeals Committee will report his/her conclusions to the MusiQuE Board. As well as undertaking any action that may be called for, the Board will communicate to the complainant the outcome of the complaint.

An institution may submit an appeal when it considers that the statements in the review report constitute a flagrant misjudgement and all other means of obtaining what is considered a just outcome have been exhausted. Since, according to MusiQuE guidelines, institutions are given the opportunity to correct factual errors in review reports before these reports are deemed final, issues pertaining to factual accuracy will not be considered as valid grounds for appeal. The appeal represents an action of last resort for revising the judgements expressed in the review report. As such, the procedure should be undertaken only in the following circumstances: failure to explore relevant facts, disregard for, or misinterpretation of the evidence provided, or judgements contrary to the weight of evidence provided.

The appeals procedure only applies in accreditation procedures, and is further limited to cases where the institution believes that it has been incorrectly given the outcome: "Accredited with conditions" or "Not accredited". In either case, the Review team will have decided that a significant proportion of the standards have been only partially met, or not met at all. It is towards these judgements on standards, and any conditions arising from them, that the appeal could be directed. The appeal has to be constructed on the basis of solid argumentation, and needs to identify the specific sections in the final report where the institution believes the Review Team to have been in error in forming its judgement. Appeals made without substantiating evidence will not be accepted.

The appeal must be sent to the MusiQuE Board by the institution. However, since the MusiQuE Board endorses the judgement of the Review Team, as well as the final report, the appeal is handled by the independent Appeals Committee, formed of one standing member and one individual appointed in response to each specific appeal, chosen for their specialist knowledge in relation to the issues raised. The latter member is chosen by the MusiQuE Board based upon any specialist knowledge required. He or she must not be connected with the institution that has submitted the appeal but may be an active member of the MusiQuE Register of Peer Reviewers.

The MusiQuE Board will normally implement the recommendation of the Appeals Committee and, where this calls for an alteration in the judgement delivered by the review, it will confirm this alteration. Similarly, if a further visit is called for, the Board will normally endorse this. In exceptional circumstances, the MusiQuE Board may implement an alternative course of action to that recommended by the Appeals Committee in order to implement the outcome of the appeal.

Since its establishment, MusiQuE has received two complaints (currently under analysis) and no appeals. The two complaints refer to joint procedures. One of the complaints addresses the Board itself. The other complaint refers to the misconduct of one of the panel members in a procedure where the panel composition was the responsibility of the national agency. The Board, therefore, decided to refer the investigation of this complaint to an External Complaints Advisor.

Analysis

MusiQuE has developed procedures for appeals and complaints. The Review Panel has discussed the implementation of the appeals and complaint procedures extensively with different stakeholders, based on the recent experiences with the first complaints received by the agency. The Review Panel is convinced that the Board is committed to processing complaints in a manner that meets the highest ethical standards. Nevertheless, the Review Panel noticed that it is not yet always clear to all stakeholders involved how a complaint will be approached and how responsibilities are exactly defined. This lack of clarity may result from the recent changes in the procedures. The fact that the Self-Evaluation report was based on a previous version of the procedures, while the annex reflected the current version, was a source of confusion to the Review Panel, but also in the meetings with stakeholders, the procedure was explained in different ways.

The Review Panel, therefore, recommends the agency to better communicate the newly established procedures and that the procedures could benefit from further streamlining and enhancement in order to further guarantee to avoid any potential conflict of interest, to mitigate the potential risk of prolonged conflicts, and to safeguard the rights of the institutions. An element which could clearly be improved is the fact that in appeals procedures a second member is appointed by the Board in response to each specific appeal, chosen for their specialist knowledge in relation to the issues raised. It may be relevant to extend the mandate and the composition of the Appeals Committee and allocate the competence to assess complaints and/or appeals fully to this body in order to avoid any active role of the Board in this kind of procedures. The Committee may then present its conclusions to the Board, which may use those conclusions as input for further improvement and, where needed, to changes in procedures or processes. However, the margin for interpretation on the conclusions of the Appeals Committee as provided by the wording that the Board 'normally' implements the recommendation of the Appeals Committee' and 'normally' endorses its conclusions, may require a clarification in order to avoid discussion and lack of clarity on the role of the Board.

Finally, the Review Panel encourages the agency to clearly communicate on its website, not only the procedures, but also the composition of its Appeals Committee.

Review Panel recommendation:

- The Review Panel recommends the agency to further enhance its appeals and complaints procedures, and to communicate them clearly to all stakeholders in order to avoid any lack of clarity.

Review Panel conclusion: substantially compliant

ESG PART 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

ESG 3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY, AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard:

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.

EQAR request

The Register Committee concluded through the 2015 review that MusiQuE only partially complies with the standard because students, alumni, and the broader society were not involved in the governance of MusiQuE. The Register Committee also underlined that a student Board member should not be considered a representative of their organisation but should serve in an individual capacity.

Evidence

MusiQuE's mission is to 'work internationally to uphold and advance the quality of music education'. The following four goals have been defined by MusiQuE to achieve by 2025:

1. MusiQuE is the leading provider of external quality enhancement services to (higher) music education institutions.
2. MusiQuE is a recognised and well-respected contributor to quality assurance in higher education.
3. MusiQuE's procedures continue to promote, embed and disseminate a broadly -supported quality culture with respect to the specific contexts and individual characteristics of (higher) music education and its institutions.
4. MusiQuE is a well-established organisation relying on high personnel expertise and on a sound financial basis.

The agency has developed an action plan based on these goals. Each goal is further developed in a set of sub-goals, with actions, a responsible body, and deadlines. This action plan is complemented by a business plan, a communication plan, and a risk register.

One of MusiQuE's key principles is "MusiQuE is committed to working in partnership with its founding organisations (AEC, EMU and Pearle*), with institutions, with other stakeholders in music education and with national quality assurance agencies." Stakeholder involvement is guaranteed as follows:

- MusiQuE's governing body consists of individuals proposed by AEC, EMU, and Pearle* and who bring their international experience in higher music education institutions, in music schools (which employ higher education graduates, train students at pre-college level before they enter professional education, and reach out to society at large, from children to adults), and in national associations of orchestras, ensembles, theatres, festivals, and other music organisations and venues.
- An annual meeting takes place between MusiQuE's leadership and the leadership of each of the partner organisations to discuss cooperation, and MusiQuE delivers regularly information session at AEC, EMU, and Pearle* conferences to inform its partners and collect input from them.
- In addition to the three organisations that came together as founding members of its Board, MusiQuE's statutes provide the possibility for other organisations to join the Board as the work of MusiQuE grows in future. This situation is currently relevant, as the MusiQuE Board

has approached the European Association of Music in Schools (EAS), representing music teachers in general education all over Europe, to explore if EAS could become a new partner organisation of MusiQuE. The area of music education in general education is an area that was identified as being lacking in the stakeholders' model of MusiQuE. EAS was also involved as an association in designing the MusiQuE Standards for Classroom Music Teacher Training Programmes).

- MusiQuE has created a permanent student seat on its Board and benefits since November 2017 from the input of the student representative.
- MusiQuE's peer-reviewers, mainly coming from higher music education institutions at this moment, are progressively recruited within EMU and Pearle* indirect membership. All MusiQuE Review Teams are international and include a student.

In addition to its ESG-compliant activities, the agency also carries out services outside the scope of the ESG due to the specific and/or limited nature of the service or due to a focus of the service on levels of education other than higher education. In order to guarantee a clear distinction between external quality assurance and the other fields of work, two major measures are in place:

- For all activities outside the scope of the ESG, a disclaimer is inserted in the report (whether it is published or not) with the aim to clarify that the procedure was outside the scope of the ESG. This is also communicated on MusiQuE's website and in its other documentation. The EQAR label is not used in relation to activities undertaken outside the scope of ESG.
- When an institution to which MusiQuE has provided any of its services in the previous years, requests another service from MusiQuE, the following principles apply:
 - When the service initially provided is a consultative visit, MusiQuE will not carry out any external quality assurance (within the scope of the ESG) of the same unit (e.g. institution, faculty, department or study programme) to which it has provided the consultative visit, and this for a period of six years. In addition, the reviewers who have conducted a consultative visit will not be selected for any external quality assurance activity requested by the institution where the consultative visit has taken place.
 - When the service initially provided was not a consultative visit, the MusiQuE Board first considers whether any conflict of interest would arise, that might compromise the result and quality of the service to be provided. If no potential conflict of interest is found, the MusiQuE Board approves the request for this new procedure. A fresh review team will normally be composed.

Analysis

As indicated under the separate sections of this External Review Report, MusiQuE carries out a wide range of services at the request of individual institutions. The number of activities therefore varies from year to year. Nevertheless, beneath the annual fluctuations there can be seen to be a continuum of activity that is both sustained and growing. All ESG-compliant activities are implemented in line with Part 2 of the ESG.

MusiQuE has a clear mission and vision, which reflect how the agency is structured and how it works. MusiQuE has also defined some strategic areas of work for the coming years and a projection of the number of reviews it wants to perform each year. The Review Panel recognises the steady progress which has been made towards an activity level which comes close to a break-even point, and projections show that the agency may reach this point in a near future.

The Review Panel challenges the agency to go a step beyond the trajectory focused on further development that it has successfully followed during the past years. For an agency which is fully dependent on incomes from institutions, it is important to move beyond a demand-driven growth

model, where the agency develops and broadens its offerings to respond to specific requests by higher education institutions, to a more streamlined, planned, and strategic-growth model.

The Review Panel values the extensive analysis of a broad range of institutions and countries where the agency may provide its services. The Review Panel also recognises that not all countries have opened up their quality assurance system to international agencies at this time. And even in countries where MusiQuE may operate, a cooperation with a national agency is often required to be able to award accreditation decisions which are fully recognised. The specific adaptations to a national context require time investment which may only deliver financial return if it results in a number of review procedures performed in the same jurisdiction. It may be relevant to exchange with other domain-specific agencies to find out which national agencies or institutions are interested to perform joint procedures, and maybe even develop a strategy to approach those agencies or institutions together with fellow domain-specific agencies.

The Review Panel understood from its discussions with the Board and the staff that they reflect strategically on which institutions or countries to approach, and it encourages the agency to go further in this direction and to develop a detailed and forward-looking business plan, which takes into account supportive contextual factors and opportunities and which may guide the agency when making choices. Such a proactive approach may be helpful in order to invest the agency's limited resources with the highest impact.

A more strategic approach to the development of the agency may also relate to the evaluation services which are put forward to institutions. The Review Panel has the impression that Critical Friend Reviews have the potential to become the central type of review which is offered to higher music education institutions. The innovative approach and the positive impact of the first pilots on the internal quality culture within institutions make it an attractive model for institutions, while the continuous nature of those reviews may offer potential for continuous and plannable activity for the agency. Furthermore, as indicated above, the Review Panel sees also potential to develop activities in neighbouring areas of study (such as drama, visual arts). To conclude, the Review Panel sees many ways forward for the agency, and is convinced that it would benefit from the development of a well-designed strategy, with clear and measurable objectives, and that this may help the agency to make more pro-active choices and may allow it to steer with more defined conviction its own development.

Since 2015, MusiQuE has re-assessed the composition of its Board and the selection process for its members. In order to increase the level of independence, the Board now has a final say on who the members are, even though they are nominated by stakeholder associations. AEC still nominates the majority of the Board members and remains the most active and supportive stakeholder, representing the higher music education institutions.

The Review Panel met with representatives of EMU and Pearle* and notes the value of their contributions to the work of the agency. The Review Panel encourages the agency to further extend the collaboration with these organizations, and to continue to connect with other relevant networks and organizations so that it may further increase the stakeholder involvement from entities across the different jurisdictions where MusiQuE is active.

The Review Panel values positively the fact that the agency now guarantees the participation of a student-member on the Board, as well as in all of its peer review panels. This guarantees that the voice of students is heard both in the governance and work of the agency. Nevertheless, the agency may consider ways to structure student input through the establishment of a student council or a similar body which gathers a group of student representatives who may provide advice on important topics, and may develop a collective student voice within the agency. Such an approach may enrich

the input provided by students, while still allowing student reviewers and Board members to take up their role in individual capacities.

The previous Review Panel and the EQAR Register Committee encouraged the agency to involve the broader society in the governance of MusiQuE. The agency has reached out to the European Association of Music in Schools (EAS) which represents music teachers in general education throughout Europe but did not go further in involving society at large in its structures and work. Although the agency argues convincingly about the value of an agency built on sector expertise and the exchange between peers, the Review Panel also stresses the potential added value of a diversity of perspectives. While MusiQuE rightly points out that one of the specificities of its review frameworks is the focus on interactions with society, this outsiders' view may also be relevant within review procedures and within the governance of the agency. The value of music and high-level music education goes beyond the quality of future performers and teachers, and so, representatives of the broader society may also contribute valuable insights.

Review Panel recommendations

- The Review Panel recommends the agency further refine its strategy for the coming years, which steers the actions and priorities of the agency.
- The Review Panel recommends the agency broaden its stakeholder concept and search for ways to involve more diverse stakeholders representing broader society in its governance and work.

Review Panel conclusion: substantially compliant

ESG 3.2 OFFICIAL STATUS

Standard:

Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognised as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.

Evidence

MusiQuE was initially established as an independent foundation under Dutch law in 2014. However, it became clear in 2016 that a move to Belgium was necessary to complete MusiQuE's registration with VAT services in Belgium, as MusiQuE's seat of operation has been in Brussels since its establishment in 2014. In 2017, MusiQuE started a procedure of International transfer to Belgium. The statutes were revised but the transfer was not successful due to a situation becoming increasingly complex on the Dutch side. A Belgian foundation was eventually established on 1st March 2019 and the Dutch foundation will be liquidated during the first half of 2020 and its assets transferred to the Belgian foundation. MusiQuE's statutes spell out in detail MusiQuE's status and mission as a quality assurance agency.

The review procedures conducted by MusiQuE are recognised by national agencies and ministries:

- MusiQuE has signed contracts to perform officially recognized quality assurance activities:
 - o With EKKA (Estonia) in 2016
 - o With AQ Austria in 2017
 - o With AQU Catalunya in 2018
 - o With NCPA (Russia) in 2018
- MusiQuE is recognised by NVAO as a "quality assessment agency operating in The Netherlands".

- In some countries where MusiQuE operates on its own, the outcomes of evaluations have been utilized as a basis for the nationally competent bodies to provide institutional accreditation (e.g., by A3ES in Portugal).

Analysis

Based on the evidence provided by the agency, it is apparent that MusiQuE has a clear legal basis as an organization.

As an international quality assurance agency, MusiQuE is formally recognized through its EQAR registration. In many countries, however, additional national requirements are in place which require MusiQuE to engage with national agencies to carry out joint reviews in order to be able to provide accreditation decisions which are recognised by the national government. MusiQuE has carried out reviews in Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Germany, Russia, Spain, and The Netherlands in cooperation with national agencies in varying forms of collaboration. The results of those reviews have been officially recognised in every single case.

Review Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 3.3 INDEPENDENCE

Standard:

Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.

Evidence

Organizational independence

MusiQuE is an independent legal entity, as laid out in its statutes. The legal form that was chosen is that of a foundation, as opposed to an association, since the latter has members, and this may have created a conflict of interest between MusiQuE and its partner organisations.

Board members are nominated by AEC, EMU, and Pearle*. In the agency’s statutes it is laid out that Board members nominated by AEC shall always represent a majority in the Board. However, some measures are in place to guarantee organizational independence. The members of the Board are appointed by the Board itself, based on proposals by MusiQuE partner organisations. The MusiQuE Board is free to follow or not the proposal of the partner organizations. In order to take into account the remarks by EQAR in relation to the organizational independence of MusiQuE following its previous peer review, the agency has revised its statutes in 2019. The new wording only refers to “nominations by partner organisations” (while these nominations used to be binding); secondly, the processes through which AEC, EMU, and Pearle* can propose candidates to the MusiQuE Board have been revised and are now clearly defined as consultation processes (both in MusiQuE’s Internal Regulations and in the agreement of cooperation signed between MusiQuE and each partner organization).

In addition to the general criteria for Board membership, two criteria apply for candidates proposed by AEC: 1) they should be listed on the MusiQuE Peer-Reviewers Register and have been involved in MusiQuE review procedures and, 2) they cannot be current members of AEC Council.

Since 2017, Board members are asked to sign a Code of Conduct, declaring that they act in their personal capacity and not as representatives of the partner organization which proposed them. The MusiQuE Office is housed within the AEC Office. All members of the MusiQuE staff are formally employed by AEC and serviced to MusiQuE. Among the four individuals who constitute the MusiQuE

office (excluding the intern), two have been hired externally and work full-time for MusiQuE and two work partly for AEC and partly for MusiQuE (i.e. the Director and the Review Officer). This is done on the basis of secondment arrangements, which include a confidentiality clause stating that the concerned employees will maintain full confidentiality of information concerning the procedures executed by MusiQuE, ensuring there can be no interference in these procedures from the side of any of the three partner organisations.

In relation to recruiting staff, MusiQuE and AEC have revised their convention on staff matters in 2017, which now states that, once MusiQuE and AEC have agreed on the workload of the person to be hired, the MusiQuE Board is fully in control of the recruitment process, either solely if the post is a full-time employment for MusiQuE, or together with AEC if the post is a part-time employment for AEC and for MusiQuE.

Operational independence

The MusiQuE Board has a pivotal role in managing MusiQuE's activities. It has full control of the definition and operation of the agency's procedures and methods, it develops MusiQuE's strategy, oversees all its activities, monitors its financial situation, manages risks, approves applications of new peer-reviewers, approves the composition of each review team, and considers all reports produced by review teams, takes actions to improve its procedures based on collected feedback, and takes responsibility for the revision process of the MusiQuE Standards.

The recruitment of peer-reviewers is carried out autonomously by MusiQuE: peers and students apply to be listed on the MusiQuE Peer-Reviewers Register. The MusiQuE Board considers all applications and makes a decision on each application based on clearly defined and published criteria. For individual procedures, the Board considers the proposals for Review Team compositions which are prepared by the MusiQuE Office and decides on the composition of each Review Team taking into account the needs expressed by the institution in terms of specific expertise and knowledge, languages spoken as well as the coherence and strength of the team to be composed, the balance in terms of gender, geographic origin, expertise, etc.

Independence of formal outcomes

Reports are produced by the review teams. The institution has the opportunity to comment on matters of factual accuracy, but the review team is fully autonomous in terms of what it writes, although it does operate within the context of a template and guidelines so as to ensure consistency. Once the review team has produced its first draft, the MusiQuE Board considers the report by focusing on three areas: 1) the overall quality of the report, 2) the compliance levels and their justification, and 3) the consistency with the other reports. The review team may therefore be asked to amend its report taking into account the comments of the Board. Finally, once the report has been revised in the light of any factual issues raised by the institution, the Board has responsibility for its formal approval. Thus, the final outcomes of quality assurance processes remain the responsibility of MusiQuE itself.

Furthermore, there is no link between AEC, EMU, or Pearle* membership criteria and MusiQuE review procedures.

Analysis

The organisational independence is demonstrated by the aforementioned statutes and internal regulations of the agency. The agency has made progress in the way Board members and members of the Appeals Committee are appointed. While MusiQuE received binding nominations from its stakeholders in the past, it is now up to the Board itself to decide, still upon nomination by the agency's stakeholders, which Board members to appoint. Furthermore, it is now made more explicit that all Board members act in their personal capacity. The Review Panel considers those measure to

be satisfactory. For every agency, it is a challenge to balance its dependencies, however MusiQuE has managed to compose a Board with members with a background in higher music education institutions, other stakeholders from the music field, and a student. As indicated above, the Review Panel encourages the agency to include also stakeholders representing the broader society in its governance and work. This might also help to further increase its independency.

In addition to the nomination of Board members, AEC also remains an important partner as far as finances and staff are concerned. Staff for MusiQuE is formally hired by AEC and then seconded to MusiQuE. When it comes to new staff members who will work exclusively for MusiQuE, the agency takes the lead in the selection process, while staff members are hired administratively by AEC. Clear agreements are in place to guarantee the confidentiality of the information related to MusiQuE processes. From an independence perspective, the Review Panel considers those arrangements sufficient. All staff costs are pre-financed by AEC, and are to be refunded by MusiQuE afterwards, noting that the amount to be repaid is defined annually and takes into account the evolution of MusiQuE's revenues. The agency has managed to gradually increase the percentage of the staff costs covered up to 80% and has the ambition to repay the full staff cost in the future. Even in that case, the agency benefits largely from the pre-financing of staff costs from a cash-flow perspective. The pre-financing of staff costs is agreed for the upcoming two years as part of the Staff convention, while the financial contribution by AEC to the MusiQuE budget is not based on a contractual agreement. Any change in the AEC leadership or strategy might impact both financial arrangements. This remains a risk for the agency and creates a dependency. It may be relevant to include this risk in the agency's risk register. The agency would anyway benefit from further reducing this financial dependency as soon as possible.

The operational independence is clearly guaranteed. The agency's Board has the full competence to define and monitor the agency's procedures and methods, as well as the nomination and appointment of external experts. Only in cases where the national legislation requires so, higher music education institutions are involved in the selection of peer reviewers, but also in those cases the MusiQuE Board is responsible for the appointment of the reviewers who will be involved in a specific procedure. Whenever a review is performed in collaboration with another external quality assurance agency, both partners approve the often adapted procedures as well as the peer reviewers.

Furthermore, the independence of formal outcomes is guaranteed. While the review panels which consist of relevant and competent experts, including a student-member, are competent to draft the reports, the Board scrutinizes every report before it is finalised and offers final approval. The Board also makes all accreditation decisions independently.

Review Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Standard: Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

Evidence

Every two years, MusiQuE publishes a Trend Analysis based on the review procedures undertaken in the past two years. This report reflects a gathering of the elements identified by review teams as strengths in the institutions and programmes reviewed during the two-year period, and highlights recommendations made by review teams, which are relevant for the sector as a whole. A significant sample of review reports published by MusiQuE are considered in the Trend Analysis, regardless of

the type of review that took place (evaluation of research activity, of pre-college institution as well as regular institutional, and programme quality enhancement reviews and accreditations).

The Trend Analyses are shared with all MusiQuE peer-reviewers and reviewed institutions. In addition, based on the agreement between AEC and MusiQuE, the AEC Council is informed about the results of the analysis so that it can choose to take whatever action it deems appropriate in response to the needs identified in the sector.

Analysis

The bi-annual Trend Analysis reports which are published by the agency are, for a small agency like MusiQuE, a good way to implement ESG 3.4 in a feasible way. The Review Panel commends the agency for this approach and encourages it to continue publishing similar reports every two years.

As the agency indicates in its self-evaluation report, it would be useful to ensure a greater impact of its Trend Analysis reports. The Review Panel encourages the agency to search for effective ways to share the content of these reports with all relevant stakeholders. In its meeting with representatives of higher education institutions, the Review Panel learned that these reports are not always well-known.

Review Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 3.5 RESOURCES

Standard: Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.
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EQAR Request

The Register Committee noted that MusiQuE did not have sufficient firm agreements with higher education institutions that would fully assure its ability to achieve financial self-sustainability. The Committee therefore concluded that MusiQuE only partially complied with the standard.

Evidence

MusiQuE’s ambition is to become financially independent and to be able to fully finance its expenses by the fees generated by the review procedures and advisory services it conducts. In order to allow MusiQuE to grow to a scale which is financially sustainable, AEC is financing a diminishing part of the staff costs. In 2016, MusiQuE reimbursed 33% of the total staff costs covered by AEC; in 2017 and 2018, MusiQuE reimbursed 50% of these costs, and in 2019, 80%. In its latest business plan, MusiQuE shows the projections for its financial sustainability for the coming years.

Since 2015, a growing number of reviews has been conducted. At the same time, MusiQuE has developed a new costing model, reflecting the diversity of services offered: there are different prices for institutional quality enhancement reviews and accreditations (based on the Gross National Income (GNI) of the country where the institution is situated), for programme reviews and accreditation (inflected according to the number of constituent programmes reviewed), as well as for the other types of services (review of pre-college institutions, review of research activities and consultative visits). For institutions opting for a Critical Friend Review, a yearly fee is calculated that is payable by the institution during the full review cycle (usually 6 years). For benchmarking services, the price is set on a case-by-case basis, depending on the needs of the institution commissioning the project.

The MusiQuE office is housed in the AEC Office, where both organisations make use of a shared pool of staff members. All members of the MusiQuE staff are formally employed by AEC, but they differentiate between their works for the two organisations. Agreements on independence and confidentiality have been described in the AEC-MusiQuE agreement and the AEC-MusiQuE staff convention. Since 2017, the functions of Director and Policy and Review Officer have been created in order to clarify the roles and responsibilities of MusiQuE staff members internally and externally. In 2018 and 2019, the functions of Review Officer and of Administrative and Review Officer were created, and additional staff members were recruited: two individuals from the AEC Office team were assigned to MusiQuE for a certain workload and two individuals were recruited externally by MusiQuE to work full-time. MusiQuE also hired an intern in July 2019 in order to assist the Office members with the preparation of the external review in conjunction with all regular activities.

Analysis

MusiQuE has managed to expand its activities over the past 5 years, and thus to increase its annual income from its review and other activities substantially. This growth allows coverage of an ever-increasing part of the costs of its work, while increasing the cost structure at the same time by extending its team. As indicated above, MusiQuE benefits from AEC's financial support through the coverage of a proportion of its staff costs. Together with the efficient way resources are managed, this has allowed the work of the agency to be carried out in a way that is satisfying all stakeholders.

The agency has also developed projections for the costs and income for the coming years, based on an updated financial model defining the costs charged to the institutions. Although those projections give some indication of the future development of the financial resources of the agency, the Review Panel considers it crucial that the agency further develops its business plan, as indicated above.

- Taking into account the context of the agency, achieving an operational financial break-even position is a very important threshold. In order to achieve full financial sustainability, the agency will need to go beyond this break-even benchmark, which was also acknowledged by the leadership of the agency during the site visit. In practice, the Review Panel suggests considering the annual entry of a financial provision for the upcoming external review in MusiQuE's budget in order to spread this cost over time and make it visible as an integral part of the agency's cost structure. This membership is considered by the Review Panel to be crucial for the agencies financial sustainability as it is a necessary condition to be able to get full recognition for the results of its external quality assurance activities in some jurisdictions.
- In addition to the provision for upcoming EQAR-reviews, it is advisable to build reserves which amount to the total cost of a full review procedure in order to at least cope with potential set-backs that may be experienced due to the loss incurred as the result of a payment default, situations where the agency is held liable as a sub-contractor from a national agency, and so forth. While these cases may not arise often, the agency should ensure that any such situation will not jeopardize the sustainability of the agency.
- It would be desirable to be able to invest some surplus monies in the future development of the agency, even if it does not immediately provide incomes, such as the implementation of joint procedures with national agencies in countries the agency wants to target, other activities to become more visible in countries or sectors in which the agency wants to become more active, or for pilots of new types of evaluations of which not all costs may be covered by the institutions under review.
- Additionally, to building up reserves from a solvency perspective, the Review Panel notes that given the current agreement with AEC, cash-flow issues have not arisen, yet. If the agency wants to achieve full financial independency, it will need also to build reserves to manage its cash-flow independently.

The agency will need to consider whether full financial sustainability is achievable with the current projected number of reviews, or whether it will need to revise the current projects and aim for more ambitious growth.

The fact that reviews by national agencies are partly or completely financed by some governments is an important challenge for MusiQuE to compete with because of its need to charge the full cost of a review. This is, however, a contextual factor the agency will need to take into account. It may choose to challenge this situation with the help of other domain specific quality assurance agencies because of unfair competition, or it may focus less of its efforts on reviews in those countries. However, the Review Panel is convinced that MusiQuE should take its own strengths as a starting point and focus even more on convincing institutions or departments of the added value it can offer for a relatively moderate price. Only if the agency manages to clearly communicate the value it creates, will it be able to convince new institutions to involve MusiQuE in their external quality assurance processes.

Based on its exchange with all stakeholders, the Review Panel can confirm that the agency can count on a qualified and dedicated team. The team has been substantially expanded since the previous external review and for the two staff members working for AEC and MusiQuE, a clear division between those two activities has been established.

The team is supported by a Board which takes a very active and relatively executive role supporting the team both internally and externally. The chairman of the Board introduces the offer of MusiQuE to many institutions and often makes first contacts to prepare the ground for MusiQuE reviews. This is extremely valuable because the team does not have the capacity to continuously travel to meet with institutional representatives from institutions which might be interested in MusiQuE's services. However, as the agency grows further and key members of the Board change, the Board may move to a more supervisory role. In this scenario, the staff will need the capacity to take over the more operational roles which are now taken up by the Board. This needs to be taken into account when further developing the business plan of MusiQuE.

The Review Panel learned from the institutions it met with that the time between site reviews and publication of the reports may be up to one year. Several institutions mentioned this as the major area for improvement for the agency. The Review Panel encourages the agency to take the need to be able to prepare reports swiftly after reviews into account when planning for and allocating necessary resources. The Review Panel is aware of the difficulties presenting when managing peak workload, but, nevertheless, it signals that the impact of external reviews may be weakened if institutions are required to wait too long for final reports.

The MusiQuE team benefits from the flexibility of AEC to provide additional capacity to MusiQuE whenever necessary. Thanks to this flexibility the agency is able to accept requests for reviews which are received shortly before the time of the review. Although it is tempting to accept these requests because they contribute to the growth and impact of the agency, the Review Panel encourages the MusiQuE staff to assist institutions to request reviews in advance and therefore in a more timely manner. Noting that external quality assurance cycles are generally planned well ahead of time within institutions, requesting such notice should not result in institutional hardship.

Review Panel commendations

- The Review Panel commends the agency for its growth towards financial sustainability.

Review Panel recommendations

- The Review Panel recommends that the agency further develops a detailed strategy and business plan to achieve full financial sustainability in the upcoming years.
- The Review Panel recommends that the agency expand its financial reserves in order to be able to cope with potential setbacks, to manage the agency's cash-flow independently, and to invest in innovation.

Review Panel conclusion: substantially compliant

ESG 3.6 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Standard:

Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.

Evidence

The salient points of MusiQuE's quality policy are published on the agency's website as part of its internal regulations.

Feedback is gathered on a regular basis and is built into the procedures used for each review. Questionnaires are systematically distributed after each review, both to the institution being visited and to the reviewers. The answers are compiled annually (answers related to procedures taking place between January and December are compiled every spring of the following year) and an analysis of the results is produced for the Board. At each autumn meeting, the Board considers these results along with a set of actions proposed by the MusiQuE office to improve its procedures and standards as informed by the results of the questionnaires. Once the Board has approved the changes to be made to the procedures, a document summarizing these changes is disseminated by the MusiQuE office to the peer-reviewers and institutions reviewed, and published on the website.

Furthermore, an external evaluator is appointed by the MusiQuE Board for 2 years (renewable once) to review material documenting MusiQuE's activity, to monitor the compatibility of the system with the ESG, and to produce an annual evaluation report with comments addressed to the Board. Since 2016, at each of its meetings, the MusiQuE Board has reviewed its progress, following up on the recommendations formulated by the external review team in 2015, by the EQAR Committee in 2016, and MusiQuE's external evaluator in his various reports.

In terms of the competence and professionalism of those involved in its activities, there are clear criteria for the qualities needed and the processes of selection to be followed for all of the key players in MusiQuE.

- There are published terms of reference for MusiQuE Board members outlining the experience required.
- There are published criteria for the selection of peer-reviewers. All applications are reviewed by the MusiQuE Board. As well as ensuring a healthy list of competent individuals, the Board also has to ensure the diversity of peers listed in terms of expertise, geographical origin, languages spoken, gender, etc. It therefore reviews regularly the register in order to address any lack of representation.
- The peer-reviewers are carefully selected by the MusiQuE office and by the Board when review teams are being composed, in order to ensure the most relevant combination of expertise and competences for each review.
- Following the recommendation of the external Review Panel that visited MusiQuE in 2015, the code of conduct of peer-reviewers was further expanded in order to include matters related to, for example, ethical behaviour.

- The MusiQuE staff are hired based on their experience with quality assurance in the higher music education sector and/or competences in executing the range of tasks required. In addition, once appointed, they continue to develop their expertise by attending conferences (ENQA, EQAF, INQAAHE, EASPA, NASM, etc) and by keeping themselves informed of the latest developments with regard to the higher music education sector, quality assurance, the Bologna follow-up process, and other European developments.

When working with other quality assurance agencies, the first step is always a feasibility study, the function of which is to investigate that agency's practices and ensure that the practices are in line with the ESG. Confirmation of this is an important prerequisite of ensuring compatibility between an agency's procedures and those of MusiQuE. In the case of EQ-Arts, with which MusiQuE cooperates on a regular basis with regards to other artistic disciplines but which is not registered on EQAR, MusiQuE signs a new agreement for each procedure jointly undertaken. MusiQuE ensures in this agreement that all steps will be undertaken in line with its own practices (composition of Review Team, checking process of the report by the staff and by the Board) and that the MusiQuE Standards will be used as the main evaluation framework, if needed only slightly rephrased to increase their relevance to other disciplines or contexts.

Analysis

The Review Panel experienced a clear quality culture in its meetings with the staff and the Board of the agency, which was confirmed by other stakeholders.

The agency has a policy for internal quality assurance, which is published on its website as part of its internal regulations. The agency might consider publishing its internal quality assurance policy as a separate document on its website in order to make it easier to find.

The internal quality assurance policy is mainly based on stakeholder perceptions. Institutions and reviewers are regularly asked for their feedback. The feedback is systematically registered and used as input for improvements in the work of the agency. A good example is the document "Plan for the 2019 revision of the MusiQuE Standards" which summarises the information gathered through the diverse feedback channels.

Next to stakeholder feedback on the procedures, the agency also appoints an external reviewer who is asked to provide feedback on the practices of the agency.

Input from the previous external peer review, the agency's own external reviewer, and from surveys is all gathered, and improvement measures taken based on those inputs are followed up regularly. Next to the perceptions of the agency's stakeholders, the Board has also made a risk analysis, which is regularly updated and a strategic plan for 2025 has been developed.

Nevertheless, the Review Panel offers that the internal quality assurance policy could be further improved by closing the quality assurance cycle by integrating the different steps into one integrated approach. Such an integrated approach is based on defining a strategy which includes clear, specific objectives and targets as well as measures of success, as means for determining whether the objectives have been met. This strategy should be translated into concise annual action plans. Upon implementation of this strategy, the agency should assess whether those objectives are achieved and make adjustments based on the evaluation of the achievement of the set objectives. In the current practice, the focus lies on surveying stakeholder perception, while it would be good to focus also on performance indicators which assess whether the targets are met. Based on this input, it is crucial to close the loop and to refine or adjust the objectives for the next period of time.

A challenge for every external quality assurance agency is to demonstrate its impact on the quality culture, and eventually the quality of higher education. The agency has some indications that it manages to create an impact on the internal quality culture within the reviewed institutions. The Review Panel encourages the agency to further investigate its impact, and to make it visible to all its stakeholders. This will definitely help to convince institutions to work with MusiQuE.

As indicated above, several policies are in place to support professional conduct within the agency. Roles are clearly defined, and the role of the Board is quite executive at the moment. Due to its conscious choice to be established as a foundation, the oversight role in the agency is also fully attributed to the Board. Although the Review Panel did not find any problems related to this, it encourages the agency to reflect whether the executive and oversight roles of the Board are fully compatible.

Review Panel commendations

- The Review Panel commends the agency for the way in which it gathers feedback from institutions, peer reviewers, and its external reviewer, and how it processes this feedback.

Review Panel conclusion: fully compliant

ESG 3.7 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL REVIEW OF AGENCIES

Standard:

Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.

Evidence

The current evaluation is MusiQuE's second external review in its history. As the first external review took place in 2015 (against the ESG 2015), MusiQuE is fulfilling the requirement to undergo an external review at least once every five years.

Furthermore, MusiQuE has defined in its internal regulations the following: "MusiQuE wants to be accountable to its users and stakeholders. For this purpose, MusiQuE undergoes an external review every five years, in line with the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). This external review will also aim at being listed on the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR). The MusiQuE Board is in charge of preparing for external reviews."

Analysis

MusiQuE does not only define in its internal regulations that it aims to undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate its compliance with the ESG, it also implements this policy through the previous and current review coordinated by an external agency.

Additionally, MusiQuE has invited an external evaluator to perform regular reviews of its activities in order to add an external dimension to MusiQuE's internal quality enhancement processes.

Review Panel commendations

- The Review Panel commends the agency for the involvement of an external evaluator in between the two EQAR-oriented reviews.

Review Panel conclusion: fully compliant

CONCLUSION

SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS

- The Review Panel commends the agency for its ‘critical friend’ approach to promote and integrate internal and external quality assurance procedures. (ESG 2.2)
- The Review Panel commends the agency for the selection and training of its reviewers allowing the agency to compose well prepared and internationally diverse review panels. (ESG 2.4)
- The Review Panel commends the agency for its growth towards financial sustainability. (ESG 3.5)
- The Review Panel commends the agency for the way in which it gathers feedback from institutions, peer reviewers, and its external reviewer, and how it processes this feedback. (ESG 3.6)
- The Review Panel commends the agency for the involvement of an external evaluator in between the two EQAR-oriented reviews. (ESG 3.7)

OVERVIEW OF JUDGEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the documentary and oral evidence considered by it, the Review Panel is satisfied that, in the performance of its functions, MusiQuE is in compliance with the ESG.

The ESGs where full compliance has been achieved are:

- Part 3 – 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.6 and 3.7.
- Part 2 – 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6.

The ESGs where substantial compliance has been achieved are:

- Part 3 – 3.1 and 3.5.
- Part 2 – 2.3 and 2.7.

and the agency is recommended to take appropriate action, so far as it is empowered to do so, to achieve full compliance with these standards at the earliest opportunity.

In order for MusiQuE to work towards full compliance with the ESG, the Review Panel provides the following recommendations, which have already been signalled in the previous sections:

- The Review Panel suggests that the agency develops its approach to follow-up further in order to guarantee a consistent follow-up in each of its external quality assurance processes. (ESG 2.3)
- The Review Panel recommends the agency further optimise the process of report writing, in order to reduce the time between the site visit and the publication of the final report. (ESG 2.6)
- The Review Panel recommends the agency clearly define which language version of the report is the primary report, in order to avoid any discussion in case of discrepancies between the different languages. (ESG 2.6)
- The Review Panel recommends the agency to further enhance its appeals and complaints procedures, and to communicate them clearly to all stakeholders in order to avoid any lack of clarity. (ESG 2.7)
- The Review Panel recommends the agency further refine its strategy for the coming years, which steers the actions and priorities of the agency. (ESG 3.1)
- The Review Panel recommends the agency broaden its stakeholder concept and search for ways to involve more diverse stakeholders representing broader society in its governance and work. (ESG 3.1)

- The Review Panel recommends that the agency further develops a detailed strategy and business plan to achieve full financial sustainability in the upcoming years. (ESG 3.5)
- The Review Panel recommends that the agency expand its financial reserves in order to be able to cope with potential setbacks, to manage the agency's cash-flow independently, and to invest in innovation. (ESG 3.5)

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: PROGRAMME OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

DAY 1: FEBRUARY 10TH 2020		
Time	Meeting	List of participants
09.00-11:00	Preparatory meeting	
11:00-12:00	MusiQuE Staff Clarification questions	1. Linda Messas, Director 2. Crina Moşneagu, Policy and Review Officer
12:00-12:45	Lunch	
12:45-14:15	Meeting with MusiQuE Board	1. Martin Prchal, Chair of the MusiQuE Board 2. Gordon Munro, Secretary and Treasurer of the MusiQuE Board 3. Rosa Welker, MusiQuE Board member (Student representative) 4. Bernd Clausen, MusiQuE Board member 5. Momchil Georgiev, MusiQuE Board member 6. Helena Maffli, former MusiQuE Board member (2014-2018)
14:15-14:30	Break	
14.30-15:30	Meeting with AEC, EMU and Pearle*-Live Performance Europe representatives	1. Eirik Birkeland, AEC President 2. Stefan Gies, AEC Chief Executive 3. Anita Debaere, Director of Pearle* - Live Performance Europe 4. Philippe Dalarun, EMU President
15:30-16:00	Break	
16:00-16:15 by Skype + 16:15-17:30	Meeting with representatives of reviewed institutions/programmes	By Skype from 16:00 to 16:15 1. Joseph Bowman - College of Music, Mahidol University [Accreditation (outside EHEA)] In person from 16:15 to 17:30 2. Margus Pärtlas, Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre [Joint procedure with national agency; follow-up process] 3. Ivana Perkovic, University of Arts in Belgrade [Quality enhancement review] 4. Inge Simoens, Royal Conservatoire Antwerp [Quality enhancement review] 5. Hans Hellsten, Malmö Academy of Music [Critical Friend Review] 6. Melissa Mercadal, Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya (Esmuc) [Joint procedure with national agency] 7. Janneke Ravenhorst, Royal Conservatoire The Hague [Accreditation]
17:30-18:00	Meeting with Pearle*-Live Performance Europe representative	1. Anita Debaere, Director of Pearle* - Live Performance Europe
18:00-19:00	Private Review Panel meeting / materials review	
19:00	Private Review Panel dinner	

DAY 2: FEBRUARY 11 TH 2020		
09:00-10:15	Meeting with MusiQuE Staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Linda Messas, Director 2. Crina Moşneagu, Policy and Review Officer 3. Paulina Gut, Review Officer 4. Blazhe Todorovski, Review and Administrative Officer 5. Chiara Conciatori, Review and Administrative Assistant
10:15-10:30	Break	
10:30-11:45	Meeting with Reviewers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Orla McDonagh 2. Peter Tornquist 3. Celia Duffy 4. Mist Thorkesdottir 5. Ankna Arockiam 6. Federico Forla
11:45-12:00	Break	
12:00-13:00	Meeting with partner quality assurance agencies	<p>12:00 – 12:30 [by Skype]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nuria Comet, Project Manager, Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency (AQU Catalunya) <p>12:30 – 13:00 [by Skype]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Heli Mattisen, Director, Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA)
13:00-14:00	Lunch	
14:00-14:30	Meeting with External Evaluator	Stefan Delplace, MusiQuE's External Evaluator
14:30-15:00	Private Review Panel meeting / materials review	
15:00-15:30	Optional meeting with MusiQuE Board and/or Staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Linda Messas, Director 2. Martin Prchal, Chair of the MusiQuE Board
15:30-17:00	Private Review Panel meeting / materials review	
17:00-18:00 [May take place earlier, at the convenience of the Review Panel]	Feedback preliminary findings to MusiQuE Board and Staff	MusiQuE Board and Staff
18.00	End of the MusiQuE review	

ANNEX 2: TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE REVIEW

External Review of MusiQuE – Music Quality Enhancement: Foundation for Quality Enhancement and Accreditation in Higher Education, December 18, 2018

Agreement

It is agreed that NASM, utilizing its expertise, will serve as the **Review Coordinator** and will organize an **External Review** of MusiQuE following the guidelines and protocols of EQAR. This will include 1) assemblage of an independent **Review Panel**, 2) the offering of instructions and guidance to the **Review Panel**, 3) the conducting of a site-visit by the **Review Panel** to MusiQuE, and 4) the oversight of completion of an **External Review Report** finalized by the **Review Panel** which will address MusiQuE's attention to and apparent and substantial compliance with the ESGs. The **Review Panel** will assess MusiQuE's level of compliance with ESGs. The **External Review Report** will be used to support MusiQuE's application for renewal of registration in EQAR.

The **Review Coordinator** will provide to MusiQuE a *Declaration of Honour* confirming that, after due diligence to ascertain if any conflicts of interests exist, to its knowledge, there are none. Copies of **Review Panel** members' curricula vitae will be provided with the *Declaration of Honour*.

MusiQuE shall hold harmless NASM and the **Review Panel** members and secretary regardless of the findings outlined and included in the **External Review Report**, and the actions and final decision of EQAR.

Scope of the External Review

In order for MusiQuE to apply for renewal of its registration in EQAR, the **External Review** will cover all activities of MusiQuE that are within the scope of the ESGs. The activities of MusiQuE that are within the scope of the ESGs are "reviews, audits, evaluations, or accreditations of higher education institutions or programmes that relate to learning and teaching in higher education, including the learning environment and relevant links to research and innovation; regardless of whether these activities are carried out within and outside the EHEA, and whether they are obligatory or voluntary" (see *EQAR Guide for Applicants and Registered Agencies (September 2015)*, 9.6.C). The scope of the review will include MusiQuE's activities, obligatory and voluntary in nature, carried out within or outside the EHEA (see *EQAR Procedures for Applications (November 2015)*, 1.3) provided that the conditions and understandings outlined above in the Section entitled Autonomy/Independence are maintained.

The following activities of MusiQuE will be included in the external review:

- Institutional accreditation
- Accreditation of joint programmes
- Programme accreditation
- Quality enhancement reviews of institutions¹
- Quality enhancement reviews of joint programmes
- Quality enhancement reviews of programmes

Self-Evaluation Report

MusiQuE shall produce a **Self-Evaluation Report** which will address all activities listed above under Scope of the External Review, and in doing so shall demonstrate its attention to and apparent and substantial compliance with each of the ESGs in Section II., Parts 2. and 3. of the *Standards and*

¹ This activity includes an approach to external review recently developed by MusiQuE titled, the 'Critical Friend Approach', in which annual visits by 'critical friends' are combined with an abbreviated version of MusiQuE's typical onsite review. This 'Critical Friend Approach' seeks to bring a more content-driven focus to external quality assurance processes which is intended to result in the development of a greater awareness of these processes for students and educators.

Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (May 2015). The **Self-Evaluation Report** shall be a critical reflection on MusiQuE's activities, strengths, and areas in need of improvement, and discuss how MusiQuE's activities enhance and support quality improvement in higher education institutions (see *EQAR Procedures for Applications (November 2015)*, 1.14).

All materials provided by MusiQuE in support of its application with EQAR with regard to the **External Review** shall be provided by MusiQuE in both hard and electronic copy directly to the **Review Coordinator**, and to each member of the **Review Panel**, including the secretary, as early as possible and no later than four weeks prior to the visit. Any delay in the timely provision of information by MusiQuE may result in delay or cancellation of the review process.

Review Panel

The **Review Panel** shall consist of five individuals:

- A representative of a higher music education institution in the United States with experience in the United States system of higher education and accreditation and familiar with the European higher education system and the work of AEC in the field of quality assurance;
- A representative of a European higher music education institution with knowledge of the higher music education sector and experience with quality assurance at the national level;
- A representative of a quality assurance agency with expertise in quality assurance and experience in the external review of agencies;
- A representative of a general higher education institution with expertise in quality assurance; and
- A student of at least twenty-one years of age currently enrolled in a second cycle program offered by a European higher education music institution.

One member of the team will serve as the chair of the **Review Panel**.

The team will be joined by a secretary. The secretary will record the notes and discussions of the **Review Panel** and, following instruction from the team chairman, and members as appropriate, construct drafts of the **External Review Report** as necessary, and the final **External Review Report**. All members of the **Review Panel** shall possess a range of expertise and hold differing perspectives reflective of entity stakeholders, and will possess the knowledge, experience, and expertise required to understand, analyse, and adjudge MusiQuE's attention to and apparent and substantial compliance with the ESGs. The **Review Panel** shall operate without prejudice and with objectivity and shall be free from any conflicts of interest or perception thereof.

Review Panel members shall be provided and become conversant with EQAR documents which govern the **External Review** (see eqar.eu). This includes:

- *EQAR Procedures for Applications (November 2015)*
- *EQAR Guide for Applications and Registered Agencies (September 2015)*
- *EQAR ESG 2015: Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (May 2015)*
- *EQAR Use and Interpretation of the ESG (November 2017)*

The **Review Coordinator** shall review and consider potential **Review Panel** members, shall construct a **Review Panel**, and shall confirm its composition to MusiQuE. The curriculum vitae of each **Review Panel** member shall be provided to MusiQuE. MusiQuE shall have the opportunity to review and decline any individual it deems may pose a conflict of interest or perception thereof.

Once the **Review Panel** is finalized, the **Review Coordinator** will forward invitations directly to each team member. Should an invited team member be unable to serve, the **Review Coordinator** will

invite an individual on the list of alternates, after having offered MusiQuE the opportunity to review and refuse the replacement.

At this time, the **Review Coordinator** will also secure a secretary.

Review Panel Instructions

The **Review Coordinator** shall provide specific instructions describing the **Review Panel's** roles and responsibilities; the visit schedule and logistics; and the EQAR process and its expectations as outlined in the *EQAR Procedures for Applications (November 2015)*, *Guide for Applicants and Registered Agencies (September 2015)*, and the *ESG 2015: Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (May 2015)* to each member of the **Review Panel**, including the secretary, in advance of the visit.

The **Review Panel** shall also be provided with the *EQAR Policy on the Use and Interpretation of the ESG (November 2017)* and shall take it into account the guidance provided therein when preparing the **External Review Report** so as to ensure that the **External Review Report** contains information sufficient to enable the EQAR Committee review.

External Review Schedule and Focus

The visit which will encompass two full working days shall take place in February of 2020. The **Review Panel** shall review MusiQuE's apparent and substantial compliance with ESGs Section II., Parts 2.1 through 2.7 and 3.1 through 3.7 located within the *EQAR ESG 2015: Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (May 2015)* (pages 17-20, 21-24).

The **Review Panel** shall speak with:

- staff;
- peer reviewers;
- Board members;
- institutional representatives whose institutions have been reviewed by MusiQuE;
- representatives of agencies which have cooperated with MusiQuE; and
- representatives from partner organizations.

The **Review Panel** will provide a summary of its findings at the conclusion of the visit, and prior to its departure from Brussels. This information shall be offered verbally during an exit interview which shall take place no sooner than the end of the second day of the visit or the following morning. As well, written confirmation shall be provided in the **External Review Report**.

External Review Report

The **External Review Report** shall address MusiQuE's apparent and substantial compliance with ESGs, specifically Section 2., Parts 2: 2.1 through 2.7 and 3: 3.1 through 3.7 located within the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (September 2015)* (pages 17-20, 21-24).

The **External Review Report** shall cover all activities of MusiQuE that are within the scope of the ESGs (see the activities listed above under Scope of the External Review) and shall speak to MusiQuE's activities, strengths, areas in need of improvement, and the opportunities MusiQuE provides to enhance and improve higher education institutions in Europe. Discussions within Section II., Parts 2 and 3 (see *EQAR ESG 2015: Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (May 2015)*) must be addressed comprehensively and include:

- An analysis of MusiQuE's attention to each item;

- Documentary evidence supporting the **Review Panel’s** analysis of each item, and activities of MusiQuE; and
- A summary conclusion responding to each item.

The **External Review Report** shall reflect the collective and unified position of the **Review Panel**. Any noted dissention of a team member shall be included and amended as an annex to the **External Review Report**.

Upon completion of the **External Review Report**, and not later than eight weeks after the visit, the **External Review Report** shall be sent to the **Review Coordinator** by the chairman of the **Review Panel**. After review by the **Review Coordinator**, a copy shall be provided to MusiQuE for review and comment. At that time, MusiQuE may correct any errors of fact in the **External Review Report**. These comments shall be returned to the **Review Coordinator** who will work with the **Review Panel** to finalize the **External Review Report**. Any comments must be submitted within two weeks of MusiQuE’s receipt of the **External Review Report**. Should comments be submitted by MusiQuE, they will be reviewed and considered as appropriate. A final copy of the **External Review Report** will be prepared and provided to MusiQuE within 12 weeks of the visit.

Should questions arise with regard to the process and/or the **External Review Report**, representatives of MusiQuE should contact the **Review Coordinator**. The **Review Coordinator**, and **Review Panel** members as appropriate, will remain available to answer any questions posed by EQAR staff members which may arise throughout the EQAR review process.

Anticipated Schedule for the Renewal of Registration Process and Timeline

December 2018	<i>Terms of Reference</i> to be signed by representatives of MusiQuE and NASM
January 2019	MusiQuE submits application to EQAR; Eligibility to proceed provided by EQAR
February 2019	Formalize/finalize Review Panel
December 2019	Self-Evaluation Report submitted to Review Coordinator and members of the Review Panel by MusiQuE; Register Committee’s previous decision to approve sent to Review Panel members by MusiQuE
February 2020	Conduct the External Review (Two full days)
No later than 8 weeks after	External Review Report submitted by External Review Review Panel chair to Review Coordinator ; MusiQuE provided an opportunity to correct errors of fact
No later than 12 weeks after	Copy of External Review Report sent the External Review to MusiQuE
September 2020	Review Coordinator submits to EQAR <i>Declaration of Honour</i> , final copy of <i>Terms of Reference</i> , Review Panel curriculum vitae; MusiQuE to submit External Review Report to EQAR
November 30, 2020	MusiQuE’s EQAR Registration expires

Financial Arrangements

MusiQuE shall assume responsibility for all expenses associated with the **External Review** and the **Review Panel**. This shall include but not be limited to:

- **Review Panel** travel including airfare in economy-plus class or its equivalent, travel insurance, individual accommodations in a hotel of recognized standing, daily meals, and reasonable and customary incidental expenses;

- An honorarium for each member of the **Review Panel** in the amount of \$2700.00 for the chairman, and \$1350.00 for each member of the **Review Panel**;
- The cost of any secretarial assistance incurred by the **Review Panel**; and
- The administrative expenses incurred by the **Review Coordinator**.

MusiQuE is required to place on deposit with the **Review Coordinator** an amount equal to \$30,000.00 (US) in two payments – the first no later than one week after the signing of the *Terms of Reference* by both parties, the second no later than June 30, 2019. Monies will be held in a separate account in the U.S. in U.S. dollars.

Review Panel members will be required to submit expense claims directly to the **Review Coordinator** in the currency used. The **Review Coordinator** will reimburse **Review Panel** member expenses in U.S. dollars. The exchange rate will be either 1) the rate prescribed by any external funding body whose grants are being used to finance the review, or 2) the prevailing exchange rate on the day of reimbursement. All honoraria will be paid in U.S. dollars.

Payments shall be deducted from the deposit. Upon receipt of all visitor and secretary expenses, and secretary fees, and upon completion of the process, any unused balance shall be returned to MusiQuE in U.S. dollars. Should expenses exceed \$30,000.00, the **Review Coordinator** shall invoice MusiQuE for the remaining balance in U.S. dollars, which shall be due and payable in U.S. dollars to the **Review Coordinator** upon receipt of the invoice. The **Review Coordinator** shall supply to MusiQuE documentation of all costs no later than sixty days after the visit.

ANNEX 3: GLOSSARY

AEC	Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen
AEQES	Agence pour l'Evaluation de la Qualité de l'Enseignement Supérieur de la Communauté française de Belgique
AQ Austria	Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung Austria (Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation)
AQU Catalunya	Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya (Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency)
DEQAR	Database of External Quality Assurance Reports
EASPA	European Alliance for Subject-Specific and Professional Accreditation & Quality Assurance
EAS	European Association of Music in Schools
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EKKA	Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education
EMU	European Music Schools Union
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAF	European Quality Assurance Forum
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education.
EQ-Arts	Enhancing Quality in the Arts
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
GNI	Gross National Income
INQAHE	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies
MusiQuE	Music Quality Enhancement, The Foundation for Quality Enhancement and Accreditation in Higher Music Education
NASM	National Association of Schools of Music
NCPA	National Centre for Public Accreditation
NVAO	Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatie Organisatie (Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation)
Pearle*	Pearle*-Live Performance Europe (the Performing Arts Employers Associations League Europe)

ANNEX 4. DOCUMENTS TO SUPPORT THE REVIEW

DOCUMENTS PROVIDED BY MUSIQUÉ BEFORE THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

1. Context

- 1.1 Statutes 2019 (English-Dutch)
- 1.2 Internal Regulations
- 1.3 Strategy Paper 2020-2025
- 1.4 Business Plan
- 1.5 Annual report 2018

Link to other annual reports published: <http://www.musique-qe.eu/documents/annual-reports>

2. Relationship with partner organisations

- 2.1 Agreement of Cooperation MusiQuE and AEC
- 2.2 Staff convention AEC-MusiQuE
- 2.3 AEC-MusiQuE Cooperation Paper
- 2.4 Agreement of Cooperation MusiQuE and EMU
- 2.5 Agreement of Cooperation MusiQuE and Pearle

3. Standards and procedures

- 3.1 MusiQuE Standards for Institutional Review
- 3.2 MusiQuE Standards for Programme Review
- 3.3 MusiQuE Standards for Joint Programme Review
- 3.4 MusiQuE Standards for Classroom Music Teacher Education Programmes
- 3.5 MusiQuE Framework for the Evaluation of Research Activities Undertaken by Higher Music Education Institutions (outside ESG)
- 3.6 MusiQuE Standards for Pre-College Music Education (outside ESG)
- 3.7 Mapping of the MusiQuE Standards against ESG Part 1
- 3.8 Mapping against Standards for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes in the EHEA
- 3.9 Plan for 2020 Revision of the Standards
- 3.10 Handbook for reviewers
- 3.11 MusiQuE Handbook for Critical Friend Review
- 3.12 Handbook for institutions
- 3.13 Complaints and Appeals Procedures

4. Board and Staff

- 4.1 CVs of the MusiQuE Board and staff members
- 4.2 Reports of two last Board meetings and June-October 2019 Board Skype meetings [All MusiQuE Board meeting reports are available upon request]
- 4.3 Guidelines and Code of conduct for MusiQuE Board members incl. Statement of Independence

5. Review procedures

- 5.1 List of completed activities 2015-2019
- 5.2 Review reports published: <http://www.musique-qe.eu/completed-reviews>
- 5.3 MusiQuE Template for self-evaluation report (Institutional Review)
- 5.4 Template for SER analysis by MusiQuE peer-reviewers
- 5.5 Template for institutional review visit schedule (starting in the morning)
- 5.6 MusiQuE Template for review report (Institutional Review)
- 5.7 Template for MusiQuE follow up procedures

6. Peer-reviewers

- 6.1 Template for peer-reviewers profile – for peer

- 6.2 Template for peer-reviewers profile – for student
- 6.3 Statistical overview of MusiQuE Peer-Reviewers Register - November 2018
- 6.4 Questionnaire for peers meant to identify a potential conflict of interest
- 6.5 Guidelines and Code of Conduct for Peer-Reviewers
- 6.6 Programme of the 2019 Peer-Reviewers Training
- 6.7 Power-point slides of the 2019 Peer-reviewers Training

7. Internal quality assurance

- 7.1 Analysis of Feedback questionnaires 2017
- 7.2 Analysis of Feedback questionnaires 2018
- 7.3 Changes implemented following 2018 questionnaire results analysis
- 7.4 Report of External Evaluator - 2017-2018 (issued in March 2018)
- 7.5 Report of External Evaluator - 2018 (issued in May 2019)
- 7.6 Report of External Evaluator - 2019 (issued in December 2019)

8. Trend Analysis

- 8.1 MusiQuE Trend Analysis 2017
- 8.2 MusiQuE Trend Analysis 2019

9. Communication

- 9.1 Draft Communication plan
- 9.2 Country overview of quality assurance developments in the European Higher Education Area and MusiQuE promotional activities
- 9.3 List of presentation and information sessions delivered by MusiQuE (2018-2019)
- 9.4 Article 'How to make quality assurance processes more meaningful to teaching staff – a proposal from the field of music' published in the Journal of the European Higher Education Area (JEHEA), issue 02/2017.
- 9.5 Article 'How to make quality assurance processes more meaningful to teaching staff – a proposal from the field of music' presented at the 11th European Quality Assurance Forum, Ljubljana, SI, November 2016.
- 9.6 Article 'How to support Quality through International Activities - Case studies from the field of higher music education' presented at the 10th European Quality Assurance Forum, London, UK, November 2015.

10. Cooperation agreements with other agencies

- 10.1 Cooperation agreement MusiQuE - AEQES-AEC_2014
- 10.2 Cooperation agreement MusiQuE- AQ Austria_2015
- 10.3 Cooperation agreement MusiQuE- EKKA_2016
- 10.4 Cooperation agreement MusiQuE - AQU Catalunya_2018
- 10.5 Cooperation agreement MusiQuE - NCPA_2018
- 10.6 Cooperation agreement MusiQuE - EQ-Arts_2018
- 10.7 Cooperation agreement MusiQuE- ZeVA_2015

11. Sets of merged standards and corresponding report templates

- 11.1 Merged set of Standards MusiQuE-NVAO_2016
 - 11.1a Report Template_MusiQuE-NVAO_2019
- 11.2 Merged set of Standards_MusiquE-AQU_2018
 - 11.2a Report Template_MusiQuE-AQU_2018
- 11.3 Merged set of Standards MusiQuE - EQ-Arts_2016
 - 11.3a Report Template _MusiQuE - EQ-Arts_2019
- 11.4 Merged set of Standards_MusiQuE-ZEvA_2016

11.4a Report Template_MusiQuE-ZevA_2016
11.5 Merged set of Standards_MusiQuE-HES-SO_2019
11.5a Report Template_MusiQuE-HES-SO_2019