

Executive summary



Report Quality Enhancement Review

Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts (JAMU) Theatre Faculty (Brno, Czech Republic)

Site-visit: 01-04 March 2020

Introduction

The Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts Brno (hereafter referred to as JAMU) was founded in 1947, building on the work of its predecessor institutions, the organ school of Leoš Janáček (founded in 1881) and the Brno Conservatoire (established in 1919). JAMU is one of two public higher education institutions in the Czech Republic offering degree programmes in dramatic arts and music (the other one being AMU, the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague). It is comprised of two faculties, the Faculty of Music and the Theatre Faculty, presided over by a central Rectorate appointed by its Academic Senate. The Theatre Faculty offers six distinct study programmes at Bachelor's and Master's level with specialisms across a range of theatre and related professions, in addition to a doctoral study programme in Dramatic Arts.

In 2016 an amendment to the Higher Education Act came into force, bringing with it changes to the requirements for the accreditation of study programmes and higher education institutions, institutional regulation and quality assurance. JAMU was awarded project funding to develop its quality assurance system under the OP RDE (Operational Research Programme, Development and Education) of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic. As part of this project, the institution developed a new set of internal regulations in response to the requirements of the amendment to the Higher Education Act and began work on an internal quality assurance and evaluation system. The external evaluation of JAMU's faculties in 2019/20 also fell within the scope of this project (Source: *Self-evaluation report (SER) pp. 3-4*).

JAMU commissioned MusiQuE to conduct an institutional quality enhancement review of its two faculties (Music and Theatre), aimed at assessing its educational and artistic activities, and the quality systems in place in each faculty. The review of the Theatre Faculty was subcontracted to EQ-Arts and, in preparation for the site-visit, the MusiQuE Standards and Guidelines for Institutional Review were mapped against those of EQ-Arts. The two sets of standards were found to be almost identical and where the guiding questions or supporting materials were more fully elaborated in one than the other, this additional detail was incorporated into the resultant set of merged standards.

Two review teams worked in parallel in each faculty, with MusiQuE undertaking the overall coordination of the review process. The evidence collected by the review teams during their joint site visit, together with the self-evaluation reports and related documentation provided by each of the two faculties, constitute the overall primary data where each panel situated their analysis leading to the outputs of this procedure – the two quality enhancement review reports. Both reports capture the state of the art at faculty level and convey enhancement-led recommendations tailored to the specific context in which each faculty operates. However, as the review teams worked closely together throughout the whole review process, they identified a set of recommendations pertaining to the institutional level which are conveyed separately in the concluding section of each report. The two teams jointly encourage JAMU to consider these recommendations as means to further develop its mechanisms and procedures that would enable stronger support for its constituencies in their individual processes of continuous enhancement.

Summary of the compliance with the standards

| 1. Institutional mission, vision and context | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Standard 1. The institutional mission and vision are clearly stated. | Substantially compliant |
| Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Theatre Faculty is encouraged to set clear, achievable targets within its own strategic plan that will enable the Faculty management to focus its priorities throughout next planning cycle. | |
| 2. Educational processes | |
| Standard 2.1. The goals of the institution are achieved through the content and structure of the study programmes and their methods of delivery | Substantially compliant |
| Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In support of its commitment to experimentation and innovation, the Theatre Faculty should ensure that these approaches to artistic outputs are securely underpinned within its curricula content and teaching expertise. | |
| Standard 2.2. The institution offers a range of opportunities for students to gain an international perspective. | Fully compliant |
| Recommendations <p>None</p> | |
| Standard 2.3. The assessment methods are clearly defined and demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes. | Partially compliant |
| Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Theatre Faculty should develop written assessment criteria as a means of consolidating the shared understanding of academic standards applied through the current assessment processes, for use as a pre-published, objective and transparent tool by students, teachers and assessment panels. The Theatre Faculty should ensure that its approach to the assessment of the creative and artistic outcomes of students promote critical self-reflection on their process as well as its outcome. | |
| 3. Student profiles | |
| Standard 3.1. Clear admission criteria exist, which establish artistic/academic suitability of students. | Fully compliant |

| | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Recommendations | |
| None | |
| Standard 3.2. The institution has mechanisms to formally monitor and review the progression, achievement and subsequent employability of its students. | Partially compliant |
| Recommendations | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Theatre Faculty should utilise the data it collects on the achievement and progression of students to produce a full-cohort analysis of each study programme as a means of identifying potential areas of development and/or enhancement as part of its formal quality assurance processes. • While the individual approach to the progression of students through their programmes is a strength of the Theatre Faculty, it should develop a process which ensures that students in similar circumstances are treated with equity. | |
| 4. Teaching staff | |
| Standard 4.1. Members of the teaching staff are qualified for their role and are active as artists/pedagogues/ researchers. | Substantially compliant |
| Recommendations | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the Review Team appreciates the pedagogic value represented through staff who are active as artists or professional practitioners, it would encourage the Theatre Faculty to ensure that individual staff maintain an appropriate balance between teaching and external practice. • The Faculty is encouraged to continue its efforts in implementing the career plan for all teaching staff and to use this as a mechanism for formalising its approach to continuing professional development. | |
| Standard 4.2. There are sufficient qualified teaching staff to effectively deliver the programmes. | Fully compliant |
| Recommendations | |
| None | |
| 5. Facilities, resources and support | |
| Standard 5.1. The institution has appropriate resources to support student learning and delivery of the programmes. | Substantially compliant |
| Recommendations | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the Theatre Faculty is fully aware of the need to plan for the replacement of technical | |

equipment as it reaches the end of its useful life, the Review Team suggests that the Faculty takes a strategic approach to ensuring that the high standard of resources available to students is sustained.

Standard 5.2. The institution's financial resources enable successful delivery of the study programmes.

Substantially compliant

Recommendations

- The Dean's Advisory Board should take a strategic approach to external funding applications to ensure that the practical requirements associated with successful bids are maintained at an optimal and sustainable level in relation to its human and physical resources.

Standard 5.3. The institution has sufficient qualified support staff.

Substantially compliant

Recommendations

- The Theatre Faculty should give serious consideration to the impact on staff workload when planning artistic outputs, and in making external funding bids where these are dependent on the implementation of additional faculty activities.

6. Communication, organisation and decision-making

Standard 6.1. Effective mechanisms are in place for internal communication within the institution.

Substantially compliant

Recommendations

- All the necessary information that a student needs in order to complete their study programme should be collated into a comprehensive programme handbook that is made readily available in electronic form.

Standard 6.2. The institution has an appropriate organisational structure and clear decision-making processes.

Fully compliant

Recommendations

None

7. Internal quality culture

Standard 7.1. The institution has a strong internal quality culture, supported by clear and effective quality assurance and enhancement procedures.

Partially compliant

Recommendations

- While the Theatre Faculty's quality assurance system is still in a process of development, the Review Team urge the Faculty to ensure that when fully implemented, the QA system is able to

monitor the quality of the process of student learning as well as its outcomes.

- The Review Team encourages the Theatre Faculty to take as the starting point for its approach to quality assurance, the similarities, rather than the differences in learning experiences between students following different study programmes.
- The Theatre Faculty should ensure that all students have the opportunity to provide anonymous feedback on their learning experience. Students should be made aware of this opportunity and feedback received should be evaluated and responded to through the Faculty's formal quality assurance process.
- In developing its quality assurance system, the Theatre Faculty needs to ensure that it provides a firm basis for the identification and sharing of best practice across the Faculty.

8. Public interaction

Standard 8.1. The institution engages within wider cultural, artistic and educational contexts.

Fully compliant

Recommendations

None

Standard 8.2. The institution actively promotes links with various sectors of the music and other artistic professions.

Fully compliant

Recommendations

None

Standard 8.3. Information provided to the public about the institution is clear, consistent and accurate.

Fully compliant

Recommendations

None

Conclusion

In the process of reviewing the Music and Theatre faculties in parallel, both the MusiQuE and EQ-Arts review teams noted a number of common issues emanating from institutional policies or practices, which had a significant impact on operations at the faculty level. The review teams have therefore jointly compiled a set of overarching recommendations for consideration by JAMU's senior management:

- In order to fully realise its mission and vision, as well as its own strategic objectives, it is recommended that JAMU develops an effective methodology for tracking all of its graduates and that it feeds the resulting insights into the career paths of students into its internal quality assurance systems;
- In reflecting on the outcomes of its current Long-term Plan and the formulation of a new Plan, JAMU should articulate its key strategic objectives in ways that enable it to accurately measure its progress against their achievement as the Plan matures;
- In order to support the faculties to improve the accessibility of their provision for students with physical disabilities, it is recommended that reasonable adjustments to JAMU's older buildings are incorporated into the institution's estates strategy for implementation in the medium to long term;
- JAMU is commended for its work, in collaboration with other arts institutions, to secure sufficient public funding for the delivery of its high quality study programmes. However, the institution relies heavily on project funding to maintain the quality of its provision and it is recommended that the senior management continues its efforts to support the faculties by working with the Ministry of Education to equalize the value placed on arts and science education and research in the Czech Republic;
- JAMU should ensure that the IT system supporting Faculty administration meets the needs of support staff. It is further recommended that the website is updated regularly to include content generated by both faculties, in order to ensure that information provided to the public about the institution is clear, consistent and accurate.

The Review Team was impressed by the commitment of staff, students and other stakeholders and is grateful to the Theatre Faculty of JAMU for its thorough and open approach to the review process. Students are clearly talented, dedicated and focused on their artistic and professional development. The tailored support offered to students by teaching and support staff nurtures these strengths and provides a safe environment in which they can explore their emerging creative practice and research interests. Students also benefit from excellent facilities and a range of opportunities for public performance, through which individuals from different study programmes and specialisations have the opportunity to work together in theatre ensembles that mirror professional practice. Further exposure to the profession through workshops, internships and festivals, prepares the Faculty's graduates for successful creative careers.

The Faculty has responded effectively to the amendments to the Higher Education Act introduced in 2016 and has successfully restructured its provision into distinct study programmes and specialisations. This process has resulted in the clear documentation of learning outcomes for all programmes and the development of internal regulations to support the maintenance of academic standards. Research activity is a key strength and the Theatre Faculty is committed to working with other institutions in the Czech Republic to reframe national assumptions about research outputs, thereby raising the profile of practice-based research. PhD students and research-active staff have a significant impact on the broader learning and teaching culture and their research outputs impact directly on the Faculty's curricula.

Despite a challenging environment in which state funding for higher arts education falls below the level required for intensive artistic training, the Theatre Faculty is proactive and successful in its efforts to identify additional sources of funding that have enabled it to develop its facilities and resources to a high standard. In providing a full programme of theatre productions and other outputs, the Theatre Faculty also continually engages the public with its mission and in doing so, works to improve the status of arts education in the Czech Republic. Particular aspects of its programming, most notably the SETKÁNÍ/ENCOUNTER festival, reach far beyond national boundaries and secure JAMU's reputation internationally.

Graduate employment opportunities are closely linked to JAMU's mission and vision and to its strategic objectives. In light of this, the Review Team has strongly recommended that the Theatre Faculty systematically gathers data on the employment destinations of its graduates and that it formalises its links with industry partners in order to better identify enhancements that maximise employability. Information gathering through systematic evaluation, anonymised student feedback and full cohort analysis would also help the Faculty to identify potential enhancements to its study programmes and support services.

The quality of artistic outputs is the Theatre Faculty's key performance indicator and the basis of its approach to quality assurance. Students are given an insight into the standards required for their graduation performance or presentation through their engagement with the process in the early stages of the programme, and through discussion with their teachers. However, there appear to be no explicit assessment criteria that students can use in preparing for assessment, or when engaging with marks and feedback on assessed work. Documentation of such criteria would ensure greater transparency and provide a reference tool for developing a shared understanding of academic standards. Use of a more diverse evidence base for programme evaluation, such as student surveys, progression data and peer observation would also assist the faculty in identifying specific elements of good practice in learning and teaching, as well as areas for improvement.

JAMU's quality assurance system is still developing and it is hoped that the recommendations emerging from this review will assist the Faculty in the creation of a robust set of processes that lead to the maintenance of high academic standards and the enhancement of its provision. The Theatre Faculty has an opportunity to use new methods of evaluation to secure its excellent provision and to develop new and innovative approaches to arts education and the Review Team hopes that it will grasp this opportunity as it moves forward with its new strategic plan.