

Executive summary

Report

Programme accreditation procedure

**Kurmangazy Kazakh National
Conservatory**

**Instrumental performance, Vocal Art,
Conducting, Composition, Traditional
Music Art, Art Management, Musicology
(Almaty, Kazakhstan)**

Site-visit: 17-19 May, 2023



Introduction

Kurmangazy Kazakh National Conservatory (KNC) was established in 1944 and has the status of a national university. All programmes offered today, except the Art Management programme, were part of the programme portfolio from the start. The Art Management programme was established in 1991 and received its current name in 2007 (*SER*, p. 8). In 2009 KNC joined the Bologna system and offers 4-year bachelor programmes, 2-year master programmes and 3-year doctoral programmes since then (*SER*, p. 8). Only the bachelor programmes are the focus of this accreditation review.

For many years, KNC was the only higher music education institution in Kazakhstan. Consequently, a large proportion of professionals active in the Kazakh music industry and music education institutions are KNC graduates (*SER*, p. 4). KNC was founded on the traditions of Tchaikovsky Moscow State University because many of the first generations of teachers at KNC were members of the Russian musical elite who fled Russia during the Second World War (*SER*, p. 8). In later years KNC has been influenced by the Bologna process and a competency-based educational system represented by the AEC Learning Outcomes, which KNC has implemented. KNC has now established its educational model blending the European and Russian educational traditions with the Kazakh national system of training musicians (*SER*, p. 5). KNC had consistently been at the top of the rankings of art universities, as well as in general university rankings in Kazakhstan (*SER*, p. 5). In 2019 it passed international accreditation by the International Independents Agency for Accreditation and Rating (IAAR), valid until 2026, and also received a “Gold Star of Quality” in the IAAR Eurasian Ranking 2022 among the art universities (*SER*, p. 6).

Music education in the Republic of Kazakhstan is built on the Soviet model of primary music education, secondary specialised music education and higher, professional music education. Admission to higher music education is contingent on applicants having completed primary and secondary music education. The only exception is applicants to the Art Management programme, who can apply with a diploma from a music school (*SER*, p. 8).

The national creative universities, including KNC, are under the Ministry of Culture and Sports, which also provides funding. The educational processes, however, are governed by rather detailed regulations from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, which are identical for all higher education institutions. Consequently, some of the regulations are experienced as less relevant for a creative university such as KNC. There is an ongoing dialogue with both ministries to resolve these issues (*SER*, p. 9).



Context of the review procedure

Kurmangazy Kazakh National Conservatory (KNC) commissioned MusiQuE to organise an accreditation procedure for seven programmes at bachelor level.

The object of the review procedure is the accreditation of seven programmes, namely: Vocal Art, Instrumental Performance, Conducting, Composition, Traditional Musical Art, Musicology and Art Management, as well as supporting its further enhancement. The review report covers these seven programmes as a whole, highlighting the programmes' strong points and including specific recommendations for each of the programmes, when appropriate, for their further enhancement.

The MusiQuE review team assessed the above-mentioned programmes' compliance with the *MusiQuE Standards for Programme Review* in the report. The MusiQuE Board has taken a decision on the accreditation of the programmes based on the proposal for accreditation as expressed by the review team in the report. The decision on the accreditation and the report will be made publicly available on the MusiQuE website.

The review team would like to express its sincere gratitude to the staff of Kurmangazy Kazakh National Conservatory for the production and timely delivery of the self-evaluation report and all supporting documents, and for the excellent organisation of the site-visit. The review team had the opportunity to meet various external and internal stakeholders, all of whom were open and collegial. The review team hopes that the present report will be helpful for the future development of KNC and that the content of the report will be made available to those who participated in the review process.



Summary of the compliance with the Standards and recommendations

The review team concludes that Bachelor programmes of Instrumental Performance, Vocal Art, Conducting, Composition, Traditional Music Art, Art Management and Musicology comply with the *MusiQuE Standards for Programme Review* as follows:

| 1. Programme's goals and context | |
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| Standard 1. The programme goals are clearly stated and reflect the institutional mission. | Fully compliant |
| Suggestion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Include more contemporary music in the programmes. | |
| 2. Educational processes | |
| Standard 2.1. The goals of the programme are achieved through the content and structure of the curriculum and its methods of delivery. | Fully compliant |
| Suggestions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involve students in curriculum development. - Explore ways to encourage students' independence and critical thinking. - Extend students' choice of study profile. - Enhance integration between the composition programme and other programmes. - Strengthen students' opportunities for presenting their work and engaging in professional practice. | |
| Standard 2.2. The programme offers a range of opportunities for students to gain an international perspective. | Substantially compliant |
| Recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on foreign language acquisition, in particular English. - Provide more funding for international exchange in the region for students and teachers in the Traditional Musical Art programme. - Provide more funding for teachers' international activities. - Alert the relevant authorities to the negative impact of national regulations hindering the employment of international teachers. | |

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| Suggestion: | |
| - Include as a learning outcome the knowledge of foreign music in all programmes. | |
| Standard 2.3. Assessment methods are clearly defined and demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes. | Fully compliant |
| 3. Student profiles | |
| Standard 3.1. There are clear criteria for student admission, based on an assessment of their artistic/academic suitability for the programme. | Fully compliant |
| Suggestion: | |
| - Strengthen the dialogue with music colleges and offer more support. | |
| Standard 3.2. The programme has mechanisms to formally monitor and review the progression, achievement and subsequent employability of its students. | Fully compliant |
| Suggestions: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider how to prepare students for portfolio careers including developing entrepreneurial skills. - Consider a greater emphasis on leadership skills in the Art Management programme. | |
| 4. Teaching staff | |
| Standard 4.1. Members of the teaching staff are qualified for their role and are active as artists/pedagogues/ researchers. | Fully compliant |
| Suggestion: | |
| - Explore ways to enhance the development of students' critical and independent thinking as part of the learning and teaching process. | |
| Standard 4.2. There are sufficient qualified teaching staff to effectively deliver the programme. | Fully compliant |
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| 5. Facilities, resources and support | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Standard 5.1. The institution has appropriate resources to support student learning and delivery of the programme. | Fully compliant |
| Standard 5.2. The institution's financial resources enable successful delivery of the programme. | |
| Substantially compliant | |
| Recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Secure more funding for key support staff, instruments, research, and international activities. | |
| Standard 5.3. The programme has sufficient qualified support staff. | Fully compliant |
| Suggestion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide financially attractive positions for accompanists. | |
| 6. Communication, organisation and decision-making | |
| Standard 6.1. Effective mechanisms are in place for internal communication within the programme. | Fully compliant |
| Standard 6.2 The programme is supported by an appropriate organisational structure and decision-making processes. | |
| Fully compliant | |
| Suggestion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider strengthening student democracy by including an independent student body as part of the organisational structure and letting students elect their own representatives. | |
| 7. Internal quality culture | |
| Standard 7. The programme has in place effective quality assurance and enhancement procedures. | Fully compliant |

Suggestion:

- Explore different quality enhancement measures in order to develop a quality culture.

8. Public interaction

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

Fully compliant

Suggestion:

- Explore how the programmes could serve as centres of expertise for music colleges.

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

Fully compliant

Suggestions:

- Further develop the use of internships and dual education.
- Consider possible consequences for the study programmes of a more portfolio-based labour market.
- Consider providing more lifelong learning opportunities for members of the profession.

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

Fully compliant

Suggestion:

- Further develop the KNC English website.



Conclusion

Since the MusiQuE review of 2016 and after becoming a full AEC member in 2019, KNC has conducted a major operation in implementing the AEC Learning Outcomes across all Bachelor programmes. Through our study of the SER and our site-visit, which included sessions with management, teachers, students and representatives of the profession, we have been able to verify the comprehensive nature of this operation. We are impressed with the great amount of work that has been done, and equally impressed with the awareness across the organisation about the process that has brought KNC to this point. We have concluded that KNC is an excellent institution offering excellent education resulting in excellent alumni. Furthermore, KNC is an institution with comprehensive connections to the professional field and society as a whole. Our observations, analyses and qualification of the standards speak for themselves.

The recent developments that have been so successfully implemented can be seen as an exciting path towards a sustainable and inspiring future. We have allowed ourselves some thoughts and suggestions that might be considered for the longer term. Some of these suggestions would not only involve policy choices and commitment, but also considerable financial resources. We hope that the relationship between the KNC and the relevant ministries will be characterised by the notion that KNC has a unique position as a valuable asset and promotor of Kazakh culture. Consequently, KNC deserves the appropriate support to fulfil its potential, educationally, artistically and internationally. It is of course up to KNC and the relevant state institutions to determine the choices that will shape its future.

Educational Culture

The KNC leadership has made a clear decision to adopt the AEC Learning Outcomes and develop the international orientation of the KNC. This is a sign of visionary leadership under which this operation has been initiated and conducted right from the top down into the other layers of the organisation. However, if we look at the spirit of the Dublin Descriptors and the AEC Learning Outcomes, they also speak of the personal and individual ownership of the students and teachers within the frame of admission requirements, subject descriptions, the curriculum, tests, exams and learning outcomes. This implies responsibility and ownership by students and teachers who shape the teaching and learning on a day-to-day basis. Developments initiated and shaped by them could be seen as 'bottom up'. We anticipate that the top down implementation as well as bottom up initiatives and contributions to KNC's exciting developments will result in an ongoing process of enhancement and of a trustful culture with ownership by all that continues to grow. Such a culture has, of course, a formal, administrative framework, but also an



indispensable informal and personal nature in which feedback and growth are as natural as the air we breathe, not just the tasks we commit ourselves to.

General Music Education

The importance of KNC within Kazakhstan musical life and musical cultural is pivotal. KNC is not just a conservatory but also a centre of expertise which influences and shapes musical practice across Kazakhstan. Part of a musical ecology is general music education in which all children learn the understanding and practice of music as a language. Professional music practice depends on the appreciation and the understanding of an audience. We have come to appreciate the audience as a co-creator and co-partner in the practice of professional music making. Therefore, we hope KNC can keep playing an important role in the practice of general music education, even though the academic programme of music education will be placed elsewhere.

Strategic positioning and possible consequences

The active membership of the AEC and the adoption of the AEC Learning Outcomes can be seen as a forceful choice towards internationalisation. This brings about questions on strategic positioning of the KNC, with national and international dimensions. Historically, KNC was founded by Russian musicians escaping the Second World War, resulting in a high level and flourishing practice of European Classical Music in Kazakhstan today. The other, and unique, pillar of KNC is its traditional musical art department which constitutes a unique asset, not only to KNC as an institution but to Kazakhstan as a nation. Then there is the geographical position in Central Asia, between major powers such as Russia and China. In the recognition and understanding of this geographical (and cultural as well as political) position of Kazakhstan lies its potential greater success. The process described above could be seen as a choice to become an active part within the realm of European Higher Music Education. This positive development should not overshadow the national importance, and the important connections within the region as well as eastward towards Southeast Asia. Perhaps the membership of AEC could be complemented with one of SEADOM. Kazakhstan and KNC in particular have the potential to play a unique and leading role in connecting Central Asian culture and music practices with those in Europe, the Americas as well as with those in Asia. In building bridges between these practices and the traditional music of Kazakhstan will serve as a unique asset. Exchanges and bridge building will only succeed if they take place in a reciprocal way. For a true international practice of KNC, it might consider developing from a bilingual practice (Kazakh and Russian) into a trilingual one (Kazakh, Russian and English). If all management, students and teachers and all administration communication would be trilingual, KNC can become

a key player in global development in music and music education. At the same time, KNC can safeguard and develop the nation's own distinctive musical heritage and make its national music treasure a source of inspiration to others. We realise it would take a great deal of effort to develop and implement English language fluency across the KNC, but its reward would be massive.

A sustainable music practice requires a knowledge and flourishing practice of our musical heritage, be it classical or traditional music. However, its future depends on the development and the renewal of those practices and the making of new music in which the existing practices feed into. Current compositional practice in Kazakhstan and those within the KNC seem relatively unconnected to musical developments in Europe, the Americas and Asia that have taken place over the past decades. Kazakh music might benefit from further knowledge of these compositional developments and from entering into the international discourse of contemporary music. Kazakhstan's own traditional music would be a contributing and inspiring force in such an international exchange and discourse. The same goes for the ongoing cross fertilisation between pop(ular) music and art music currently happening globally. In short, KNC would benefit from international reciprocal exchanges on a much larger scale than it has been able to realise up to now. We hope the means can be found to make this happen.

Based on the compliance with MusiQuE standards, it is proposed that the programmes be accredited.

