

Executive summary

Report

Programmes Quality Enhancement Review Bachelor and Master of Arts in Music Programmes Royal Conservatoire Antwerp (Antwerp, Belgium)

Site-visit: 13 – 15 May 2018

Introduction

The Royal Flemish Music Conservatoire Antwerp was founded in 1898 by the Flemish composer and music pedagogue, Peter Benoit. In 1968, the institution moved its premises to the then brand-new deSingel campus, where it is situated to this day. In 1993, the classical music training programme was expanded to encompass jazz and popular music. In 1995, fifteen university colleges in the province of Antwerp were merged, creating the Antwerp University College. The Royal Flemish Music Conservatoire Antwerp (now the Royal Conservatoire, Antwerp or RCA) was included within one department for the dramatic arts, music and dance, together with the Higher Education Institute for Dance and the Herman Teirlinck Institute. After the Structural Decree of 2003, the music programme of RCA was re-formed into a three-year academic bachelor's degree, consisting of 180 study points, and a two-year academic master's degree consisting of 120 study points (Source: *Self-evaluation Report (SER)*, p. 17).

Between 2008 and 2013, RCA also worked under the auspices of RCA Department within the Artesis University College, Antwerp. The arts campus was extended in 2010 with a new



building, allowing the drama, dance, music and associated Teaching Qualification programmes to be drawn together in the one location. In 2013, the Artesis University College fused with the Plantijn University College, forming the Artesis Plantijn University College, or “AP”. RCA and the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp (KA) became two Schools of Arts within the new AP University College (Source: *SER*, p. 17).

Since 2003, Flanders has developed an (external) quality assurance system of programme evaluations for its University Colleges. Each programme was monitored by an external independent panel. Since 2005, an accreditation was added to the external quality assurance system of programme evaluation. Until 2015, all study programmes of Flemish higher education institutions were evaluated each eight years.

Due to the decree of June 10, 2015, institutions undergo a so called ‘extensive institutional review’ which is an institutional review extended with an additional assessment that focuses on the conduct exercised on programme evaluation by the institution rather than assessing the actual quality of the programmes.

Since the changes to the quality assurance and accreditation scheme within the Flemish higher education system in 2015, AP University College has been responsible for ensuring the quality of its own study programmes. The College has seized this opportunity to develop a methodology to evaluate the quality of its education, which is in line with its vision and strategy, and is also customised to its programmes (Source: *SER*, p. 17). In consultation with the Quality, Planning and Organisation Service (KPO) and the Board of Education and Research, RCA chose a specific approach in terms of evaluating their study programmes. For the evaluation of these (multi-lingual) artistic courses, the decision was taken to call on external assessors who have international experience of reviewing comparable artistic education programmes (Source: *SER*, p. 17).

RCA took the decision to commission MusiQuE – Music Quality Enhancement (MusiQuE) to organise a procedure for a Quality Enhancement Review of its Bachelor and Master of Arts in Music. In Flemish higher education it is customary for students with an academic Bachelor's degree to follow a subsequent Master's programme. MusiQuE coordinated the organisation of the quality enhancement review and carried out the review of the music programmes.

The procedure for the review of the music programmes followed a three-stage process:

- RCA prepared a *Self-evaluation Report (SER)* and supporting documents, based on the *MusiQuE Standards for Programme Review*,



- an international review team composed by MusiQuE studied the *SER* and carried out a site-visit at RCA on 13-14 May 2018. The site-visit comprised of meetings with representatives of RCA management team, teaching and support staff, students, alumni, employers and external stakeholders; and visits to classes and performances. The review team used the *MusiQuE Standards for Programme Review* as the basis of its investigations;
- the review team produced the review report that follows, structured along the *Standards* mentioned above.

The review team consisted of:

- Georg Schulz (Chair), Associate professor at, and former rector of, the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz, Austria
- Jacques Moreau, Director of the Cefedem Auvergne Rhône-Alpes, Centre de formation des enseignants de la musique, Lyon, France
- Hannie Van Veldhoven, Head of jazz and pop at HKU University of the Arts Utrecht, The Netherlands
- Ankna Arockiam (Student member), Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom
- Patrick Van den Bosch (Secretary), Advisor quality assurance at VLUHR KZ, Brussels, Belgium

Summary of the compliance with the Standards and recommendations

The review team concludes that the RCA programmes with the *Standards for Programme Review* as follows:

1. Programme's goals and context	
Standard 1. The programme goals are clearly stated and reflect the institutional mission.	Fully compliant
Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Make clear what 'attracting top talent' means for the programmes. · Adjust the name of the 'Jazz and popular music' pathway. Currently, the name does not match with the content.¹ Consider for the future whether to focus solely on jazz 	

¹ In its response to the draft report, RCA indicated that this can only be changed on a political level.

<p>(as a specific genre), or on a more broad perspective of improvised, non-classical-composed music (as a way of teaching and learning).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Establish collaboration with other conservatoires in Belgium. · Increase awareness on diversity. 	
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.	Substantially compliant
Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Make more consistent use of the learning outcomes. Discuss these regularly with all teaching staff. · Share good practices of teaching and learning methods. · Enhance creativity of students in the BA. · Enhance interdisciplinarity in the whole BA and MA programme. · Enhance the research attitude of all teaching staff and students. 	
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"> · Provide structural support for developing language skills. · Increase the mobility of students (and teaching staff). 	
Standard 2.3. Assessment methods are clearly defined and demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes.	Partially compliant
Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Use the learning outcomes in all assessments. · Make students partners in the assessments. · Communicate better about using learning outcomes in the assessments. · Increase the external perspective in all assessments. · Assure that all teachers give feedback to students. 	
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
Recommendations · /	
Standard 3.2. The programme has mechanisms to formally monitor and review the progression, achievement and subsequent employability of its students.	Fully compliant
Recommendations · Establish an explicit career guidance policy for alumni. · Reflect on broader job opportunities.	
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 · Share good practices amongst the teaching staff on research, learning methods, assessment etc. Raise awareness about these topics.	
Standard 4.2. There are sufficient qualified teaching staff to effectively deliver the programme.	Fully compliant
Recommendations · /	
5. Facilities, resources and support	
Standard 5.1. The institution has appropriate resources to support student learning and delivery of the programme.	Fully compliant
Recommendations · Solve the lack of practicing rooms.	

Standard 5.2. The institution's financial resources enable successful delivery of the programme.	Substantially compliant
Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The lack of finances is a threat for the programmes. Keep on addressing this issue. · Enhance RCA's competitiveness in seeking the best teaching staff by offering the best possible conditions. 	
Standard 5.3. The programme has sufficient qualified support staff.	Fully compliant
Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · / 	
6. Communication, organisation and decision-making	
Standard 6.1. Effective mechanisms are in place for internal communication within the programme.	Partially compliant
Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Enhance the internal communication. · Stimulate communication between teachers. 	
Standard 6.2 The programme is supported by an appropriate organisational structure and decision-making processes.	Fully compliant
Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Support the student body council professionally. 	
7. Internal quality culture	
Standard 7. The programme has in place effective quality assurance and enhancement procedures.	Fully compliant
Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · / 	

8. Public interaction	
Standard 8.1. The programme engages within wider cultural, artistic and educational contexts.	Substantially compliant
Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Prepare students better for the societal role of the musician. · Make use of the diversity of the city of Antwerp. 	
Standard 8.2. The programme actively promotes links with various sectors of the music and other artistic professions.	Substantially compliant
Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Promote links with various sectors of the music and other artistic professions more actively. 	
Standard 8.3. Information provided to the public about the programme is clear, consistent and accurate.	Fully compliant
Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · / 	

Conclusion

The RCA music programmes succeed in delivering students that become good musicians. The review team witnessed that RCA graduated musicians are of a very good quality. The artistic practice that is pursued, deserves respect and trust. Preparing students better for their societal role as musicians would enhance their education even more.

The programme leaders are doing a lot of effort to establish an exemplary quality culture and are eager to achieve their ambitious goals. Among other things, they want to attract top talented students and provide them with a present-day programme and highly customized coaching. They want to have an international focus, standards and network and a strong connection with the artistic profession. The quality of the BA and MA programmes has shown significant growth in different areas over the past few years. The review team is confident that they will be able to achieve their intended goals within a few years. In addition the review team advises raising awareness of diversity as a quality factor and using the excellent possibilities for interdisciplinary artistic projects in RCA more structural.

A recurring issue is the interaction and awareness of all teachers in the programme to fully contribute to the BA and MA goals. The review team recommends the programme



management to encourage the teaching staff to talk more with each other and to professionalise their courses when it comes to the achievement of learning outcomes, the embedding of research and entrepreneurial skills in all courses and to the providing of profession feedback.

The programme leaders have evidently taken highly commendable efforts towards embedding research in the curriculum. A next step is to make all teachers and students involved in this. The review team wants to recommend that research becomes an inherent part of each course of the master programme.

