

Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts' Theatre Faculty

Name of the institution: Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts' Theatre Faculty

Date of the follow-up site visit (if appropriate): n/a

Name of the reviewer(s) in charge of the Follow-up Procedure: Laura Witt, Deputy Registrar (Quality Assurance and Enhancement) at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, UK

Introduction:

In March 2019, Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts (JAMU) commissioned MusiQuE to organise an institutional quality enhancement review of its two faculties (Music and Theatre), aimed at assessing their 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 and constituted the framework of assessment for this procedure. Two review teams worked in parallel in each faculty, with MusiQuE undertaking the overall coordination of the review process and two review reports were produced – one for each faculty. The final review reports were published on the MusiQuE website and are available for consultation here: <https://musique-qe.eu/reports/review-reports/>.

The MusiQuE follow-up procedure is paper based. In terms of methodology, the following template was designed to assist JAMU's Theatre Faculty in the post-site visit process. In the first paragraph of each numbered section under each standard below, the initial recommendations of the Review Team are listed. In the second paragraph, representatives of the institution detailed the action plan drawn up based on each recommendation received, and the state of the art concerning its implementation. In the third paragraph, the peer reviewer appointed by MusiQuE among the former Review Team members, offers further comments and recommendations based exclusively on the information provided by the Faculty in the second paragraph.

As an additional observation, both Review Teams noted at the time of the initial evaluation the need for enhanced cooperation between the two faculties, and they encouraged JAMU during the site visit to create opportunities for their involvement in joint projects. In this regard, both reviewers appointed in the follow-up procedure agree that despite existing challenges – of architectural nature or otherwise, creative solutions can be found to encourage students' and teachers' cooperation across departments in a more formalised way, beyond the natural informal collaborations that already exist.

Recommendations were produced by the MusiQuE Review Team of Reviewers following the site-visit on 01-04 March 2020.

Description of the actions undertaken refer to actions carried out by the reviewed institutions.

Standard 1: The institutional mission and vision are clearly stated.

Recommendation (I):

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.

Description of the actions undertaken and progress achieved (I):

For the next strategic period, the faculty's management has developed a strategic plan for the period 2021 - 2025. In relation to the program targets of the Ministry of Education and the entire Janáček Academy, the faculty's priorities have been specified and elaborated into objectives and measures, including SMART parameters. For the monitoring of milestones, the set of objectives has been translated into a traceable output.

Reviewer's conclusions (I):

The introduction of SMART objects into the Faculty's new strategic plan is a welcome development and the continued monitoring of actions arising from these objectives is encouraged.

Standard 2.1: The goals of the institution are achieved through the content and structure of the study programmes and their methods of delivery.

Recommendation (I):

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.

Description of the actions undertaken and progress achieved (I):

The priorities and measures include the definition of approaches to artistic outputs for individual specialisations, including their qualitative processing (methods of evaluation related to the course of artistic work, methods of evaluation related to the result of artistic work) over the next two years. The resulting adjustments will be implemented and incorporated into future accreditation. The responsibility for this activity lies with the guarantors of the study programmes.

Reviewer's conclusions (I):

It is encouraging that the programme guarantor roles are continuing to develop. These individuals are well placed to embed the Faculty's aspirations to deliver innovative and experimental approaches within the curriculum, and to ensure that these values are accommodated within assessment strategies.

Standard 2.2: The institution offers a range of opportunities for students to gain an international perspective.

Recommendation (I): None

Description of the actions undertaken and progress achieved (I):

Although no recommendations were made by the external panel, in response to the current situation, the faculty is analyzing the possibility of blended or online mobility for students and faculty.

Reviewer's conclusions (I):

The development of online opportunities for international collaboration is exciting and has the potential to provide a more international experience for those who are reluctant to undertake an exchange.

Standard 2.3: The assessment methods are clearly defined and demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes.

Recommendation (I):

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.

Description of the actions undertaken and progress achieved (I):

This task was already proving to be the most difficult during the panel visit. We are following the recommendation to go down the route of elements that link the different programmes, however, in the context of testing the guidelines for final qualification theses (dissertations), for example, it is becoming clear how complicated this task is.

Reviewer's conclusions (I):

The recommendation in relation to assessment criteria was a particular concern of the Review Team during the site visit. While it is doubtless a complex task, it is encouraging that the Faculty is beginning to consider how it can develop workable assessment criteria. In doing so, it is recommended that programme teams consider how learning outcomes are demonstrated through assessment activities, and how these are aligned with the learning and teaching methods employed. Research and scholarship related to constructive alignment might aid guarantors in this task.

Recommendation (II):

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.

Description of the actions undertaken and progress achieved (II):

We consider the recommendations of Standard 2.1, or the related measures, to be a necessary pre-requisite for moving forward with Standard 2.3.

Reviewer's conclusions (II):

In relation to the second recommendation, the work being undertaken by programme guarantors to establish expectations for artistic outputs and their assessment is a step in the right direction. The Faculty is encouraged to consider how it might include students' engagement with the creative process and practice as research within its developing approach to assessment.

Standard 3.1: Clear admissions criteria exist, which establish artistic/academic suitability of students.

Recommendation (I): None

Description of the actions undertaken and progress achieved (I):

Although the panel did not make recommendations under this standard, we are addressing the issue of the relationship between admission criteria (talent requirements) and the needs or changing profile of graduates at the secondary level. Last but not least, inclusion is a challenge for many curricula.

Reviewer's conclusions (I):

The creation of inclusive and accessible curricula is of major concern to arts institutions across Europe and it is good to hear that the Theatre Faculty is considering how it can adapt its provision to shifting student profiles and accommodate specific needs.

Standard 3.2: The institution has mechanisms to formally monitor and review the progression, achievement and subsequent employability of its students.

Recommendation (I):

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.

Description of the actions undertaken and progress achieved (I):

Measures related to the detailed and timely monitoring of study throughput are likely to be adopted for the entire Janáček Academy in 2021, which is a commitment of the JAMU Quality Council. The second point will be a procedural solution on how to use this data in connection with the approval of study plans and staff development plans.

Reviewer's conclusions (I):

Some good progress appears to have been made in this area and the adoption of more detailed data analysis will enable the institution to more easily track progress in relation to its objectives, particularly as they relate to employability. The Faculty is encouraged to prioritise the development of effective procedures in relation to the analysis of student data and the implementation of any resultant actions.

Recommendation (II):

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.

Description of the actions undertaken and progress achieved (II):

In order to ensure equitable treatment of all students (and other members of the academic community), we decided to develop a manual for academic and operational staff that would include essential procedural approaches to recurring situations as part of the strategic plan priorities. A pilot version of this is expected to be produced in 2021 and will be further edited and added to.

Equity treatment, or rather the recommended principle, we are trying to put into practice in the preparation of a new accreditation of a doctoral study programme where graduates of different specialisations meet.

Reviewer's conclusions (II):

The creation of guidance and clear procedures for making adaptations to study programmes for students with particular needs or circumstances is an excellent

development. It is good to hear that such issues will be considered in the initial stages of programme accreditation going forwards.

Standard 4.1: Members of the teaching staff are qualified for their role and are active as artists/pedagogues/ researchers.

Recommendation (I):

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.

Description of the actions undertaken and progress achieved (I):

The Faculty continues to implement career plans in relation to individual staff as well as staff development plans in relation to individual studios or departments. Their relevance and implementation are always reviewed (in April and May) in relation to the discussion of the curricula for the next academic year.

Reviewer's conclusions (I):

The continued use of career plans for teaching staff is welcomed and it is reassuring to hear that the balance between external practice and teaching responsibilities are discussed within this context.

Recommendation (II):

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.

Description of the actions undertaken and progress achieved (II):

The balance between teaching and external artistic activities is one of the criteria discussed and evaluated.

Reviewer's conclusions (II):

The continued use of career plans for teaching staff is welcomed and it is reassuring to hear that the balance between external practice and teaching responsibilities are discussed within this context.

Standard 4.2: There are sufficient qualified teaching staff to effectively deliver the programmes.

Recommendation (I): None

Description of the actions undertaken and progress achieved (I):

Although the panel did not make a recommendation under this standard, given the current circumstances (covid pandemic) we were forced to take action and implement activities including training related to perhaps temporary online teaching, which of course cannot replace regular teaching with the physical presence of students and teachers. On the other hand, for some theoretical subjects, it appears that this on-line form of teaching can provide the faculty with new possibilities in relation to the teachers (e.g. the involvement of some experts working abroad, etc.).

Reviewer's conclusions (I):

The Faculty is to be congratulated on adapting to the difficult restrictions arising from the pandemic, which were yet to have an impact at the time of the site visit. It is good to hear that there is potential for students to benefit from exposure to a broader range of learning and teaching experiences through online platforms.

Standard 5.1: The institution has appropriate resources to support student learning and deliver of the programme.

Recommendation (I):

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.

Description of the actions undertaken and progress achieved (I):

We agree with the recommendation, however, we encounter issues related to programme funding (external funds) and the limits of the Ministry of Education's contribution. First and foremost, we need to resolve the underfunding of academic staff salaries or seek better conditions in this area. In fact, it can be said that in the current situation, salary funds constitute a major part of the budget. Nevertheless, as part of the strategic plan, we have proposed measures that could very partially ensure replacement. We therefore have one last opportunity within the framework of the programme funding (ESF) to up-date the technical equipment, and we are now awaiting a more detailed specification of the conditions for the calls.

Reviewer's conclusions (I):

The challenges in this area are significant and it is understandable that the institution is prioritising remuneration for its staff. The institution's efforts to secure funding through all available means was apparent at the time of the site visit and the Review Team acknowledges the efforts made to ensure that the level of technical resource available within the Theatre Faculty is maintained. However, the Review Team would also stress the importance of ensuring that an appropriate balance is maintained between the learning outcomes set for students and the envelope of resources available to them in meeting them.

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

Recommendation (I):

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.

Description of the actions undertaken and progress achieved (I):

In the current context (with regard to the targeting of external financial programs, which very often require either co-financing or are focused on incremental innovations), it is not quite possible to formulate a strategy for external financing of teaching and study programs. However, this year (2021) we started preparations for the establishment of an

endowment fund to support art projects of students or future graduates, which would enable or facilitate the transition to practice, especially for those who have the prospect of implementing a profession in the field of NGOs or freelance. We also plan to use this endowment fund as a tool for building relationships with graduates of the Theatre Faculty. The fund should be launched (an independent legal entity) in 2022 and we have invested a new position of employee in its creation.

Reviewer's conclusions (I):

The introduction of an endowment fund is a positive development and it is reassuring to hear that an additional post has been created to manage this.

Standard 5.3: The institution has sufficient qualified support staff.

Recommendation (I):

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.

Description of the actions undertaken and progress achieved (I):

In this respect, we have no choice but to fulfil with great care the personnel plans and career plans with such consequences that can lead to personnel changes in those positions where the performance is not sufficiently fulfilled by the employee (therefore the competencies and tasks of such an employee are synergistically taken over by another colleague, which is then overloaded).

Reviewer's conclusions (I):

At the time of the site visit, the Review Team's impression was not that individual members staff were overloaded because of underperformance in some areas, but rather because the expectations placed on support staff to support large numbers of additional projects, arising either from the expectations of students and artistic staff, or requirements related to externally funded projects, were unsustainable. If there are instances of underperformance, it is reassuring to know that these are being managed. The Faculty management is encouraged to fully consider whether there is capacity for existing staff to support any additional projects that it approves (be they external bids or student-led artistic projects) and to factor the cost of additional staff resources into such projects where appropriate.

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

Recommendation (I):

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.

Description of the actions undertaken and progress achieved (I):

We plan to introduce program manuals in connection with the establishment of a new website (in its mutual correlation with the internal information system). The creation of program manuals will be on the agenda at the moment when we manage to implement the position and tasks of program guarantors more.

Reviewer's conclusions (I):

The plans in relation to this recommendation are encouraging and it is hoped that they can be implemented in the near future.

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

Recommendation (I): None

Description of the actions undertaken and progress achieved (I):

Despite this positive evaluation, we are aware of the need to better integrate the grant positions of the programs, as stated in Standard 6.1.

Reviewer's conclusions (I):

The Review Team would endorse this assessment and the importance of the programme guarantor role in relation to a number of its recommendations.

Standard 7: The institution has a strong internal quality culture, supported by clear and effective quality assurance and enhancement procedures.

Recommendation (I):

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.

Description of the actions undertaken and progress achieved (I):

We are very well aware of the findings and recommendations of the evaluation panel. In the past year, we were able to confirm this knowledge in connection with the implementation of the Dean's Decree on Diploma Theses. We created this precisely with regard to the search for connecting elements and the needs of individual programs and specializations with the involvement of all stakeholders. However, the resulting state of the decree provoked a critical discussion, which in turn evokes the feeling that the internal culture is in some cases based on differences and their development. However, we are still in the process of further amending the decree within the philosophy of searching for what unites us. An equally problematic debate accompanies us in connection with setting up the process of documentation and preserving the documentation of artistic performances.

Reviewer's conclusions (I):

The challenges of establishing new systems and creating cultural change in an organisation are significant, however it is encouraging that the Faculty is engaging in critical debate in relation to its common threshold requirements for each programme, and the documentation of these. The creation of a new post to address the documentation of programmes and their curricula is an important development and it is hoped that the new professional member of staff can provide the required leadership and direction to progress the development of the Faculty's QA system.

Recommendation (II):

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.

Description of the actions undertaken and progress achieved (II):

In the above discussions, we confirm that we are unable to process a complete picture of the content and efforts of our programs into official documentation. This is often perceived as an administrative barrier and often as if the processes exist in two different realities. In order to have a truly consistent QA system, we must achieve the interconnection of two different realities. Our process, which we started this year, is related to the engagement of a professional who is responsible for this connection. We start from a simple one (the real correction of the content of the description of individual subjects in the information system) and gradually our goal is to complete this connection in the next accreditation period.

Reviewer's conclusions (II):

The Faculty is strongly encouraged to move towards providing structured opportunities for anonymous student feedback, which has the potential to result in more complete insights into the student experience, and to fully embed the student voice within its QA processes.

Recommendation (III):

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.

Description of the actions undertaken and progress achieved (III):

Given the above, the introduction of anonymous feedback from students is a big task for us.

Reviewer's conclusions (III):

The Faculty is strongly encouraged to move towards providing structured opportunities for anonymous student feedback, which has the potential to result in more complete insights into the student experience, and to fully embed the student voice within its QA processes.

Recommendation (IV):

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.

Description of the actions undertaken and progress achieved (IV):

Firm basis for the identification and sharing of best practice across the Faculty is associated with better use of the existing procedural base (extended Dean's Board, meetings of guarantors). Unfortunately, during the pandemic, we are unable to use this space (participants respond rather ex-post to the topics discussed than to actively bring them into the space).

Reviewer's conclusions (IV):

The pandemic period has presented a number of challenges in relation to student and staff engagement, however the Faculty might wish to consider how it could use its digital platforms and resources to enable staff to share examples of their practice more easily.

Final 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:

Recommendation (I):

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;

Description of the actions undertaken and progress achieved (I):

Both faculties are currently in the middle of intensive preparation of a systemic tool for communicating with graduates and monitoring their success at the faculty level. After its introduction, all students and graduates of the school will be part of the feedback. The basis for increasing the level of work with graduates will be, in agreement with the faculties, the extension of the School Information System by a graduate module, which will complete not only the overall records of graduates including all available data about them, but also the planning and implementation of necessary communication steps with them.

Reviewer's conclusions (I):

The plans to extend the student information system to house and process all graduate data are welcome. JAMU's work in this area has the potential to result in a well-informed and responsive approach to the development and quality assurance of its provision.

Recommendation (II):

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;

Description of the actions undertaken and progress achieved (II):

The new strategic goals will be based on the evaluation of the current development and program development of the school. The results of the external evaluation of both faculties will be used for further formulations of the strategy and the national Strategy for the Czech Republic's Educational Policy by 2030+ will be taken into account.

Reviewer's conclusions (II):

In relation to the formulation of measurable strategic goals, the Theatre Faculty has taken steps to introduce SMART objectives into its planning and a similar approach is encouraged at the institutional level.

Recommendation (III):

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;

Description of the actions undertaken and progress achieved (III):

The vast majority of school premises are adapted to the approach of disabled citizens, and any further systematic adjustment of teaching and work spaces takes into account European standards. Partial modifications are planned in Studio Marta and will be the subject of another planning period of investment projects.

Reviewer's conclusions (III):

The Review Team observed parts of the JAMU estate that did not appear to be fully accessible to those with additional mobility requirements. Plans to adapt parts of the estate such as Studio Marta to make them more fully accessible are acknowledged and it is hoped that further planned investments in this area come to fruition in order to remove any potential barriers for disabled students.

Recommendation (IV):

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;

Description of the actions undertaken and progress achieved (IV):

The role of research, and especially the increase of the reputation of artistic research at universities with an artistic focus, is also discussed at the national level and the representatives of JAMU in the Council of Higher Education Institutions participate very actively in it. However, even at the school level, we learn to deal better and more clearly with the principles of artistic research in the processes and professional activities of faculties. JAMU has long been one of the most active negotiators in the search for a confident position of art colleges and faculties on the map of Czech university education and EHEA, their adequate funding and seeks to introduce direct institutional support for the arts as part of state-supported creative development, science, research and innovation.

JAMU, together with other art colleges, is constantly striving to promote contributions to the activities of the Ministry. Current efforts, for example, are shifting and strengthening the resources of these schools to compensate for the difficult access to government funding for science and research. At the same time, efforts to emancipate Artistic research within the assessment and financing of science and research in the Czech Republic are continuing and intensifying.

Reviewer's conclusions (IV):

As indicated in the report, the Review Team appreciated the leadership demonstrated by key members of Faculty staff engaged in national debate about the status of and funding position for artistic research. JAMU's continuing efforts in this area are acknowledged.

Recommendation (V):

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.

Description of the actions undertaken and progress achieved (V):

To improve the information strategy, a permanently supplemented, active and dynamically evolving school-wide information system is used. In the last academic year, new school websites were launched, which are connected to the news sharing system, which is also distributed through personal communication channels (school email), as part of a completely new PR strategy. For further work with the public, there are the websites jamuj.cz (HF) and studujdf.jamu.cz (DF) focused also on those interested in studying, and JAMU actively participates in the preparation of a nationwide project of the Study Art in Czech Republic portal focused on mediating news from artistic operations on Czech art colleges.

Reviewer's conclusions (V):

The launch of new school websites is acknowledged and appreciated. JAMU's senior management are encouraged to maintain dialogue with the faculties about the development of central IT provision to ensure the implementation of developments necessary for the effective administration of their programmes.