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ADMISSION AND ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER MUSIC EDUCATION

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HANDBOOK

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FOREWORD:
THE IMPORTANCE OF INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER MUSIC EDUCATION

Summary:
- Individual assessment is crucial because of the unique and individual nature of musical achievement
- It requires assessors with a combination of acute artistic sensitivity, consistency of judgement and awareness of benchmark levels of student achievement in Higher Education
- It is needed at every stage from admissions to final awards
- It is needed at each progression point from one cycle to the next (see also the Tuning Template)
- This handbook therefore covers assessment in all these stages

This handbook is primarily about the issue of assessment in Higher Music Education. It attempts to set assessment within the context of contemporary developments in higher education, especially those relating to the Bologna Process. However, it also addresses the question of admissions insofar as making an *assessment* of an applicant's musical achievement prior to entering higher education, and of their potential to progress still further in a higher education environment, lies at the heart of admissions processes.

Whether at the point of admission or during a programme of Higher Music Education study, the unique and highly individual nature of musical endeavour and achievement means that assessment procedures and attitudes must be correspondingly individualised and flexible. Those of us working this field share certain ideas of musical excellence in principle, but we must always remain open to the possibility of encountering individual manifestations of excellence that challenge or re-define those notions. Assessors, whether in entry auditions or in examinations which form part of the programme, must possess acute artistic sensitivity so as to recognise excellence in unfamiliar, as well as familiar, guises.

At the same time, Higher Music Education, like any other discipline, requires its assessors to be consistent in their judgements and to benchmark these against widely acknowledged standards. Consistency is important because it underpins the principle of fairness in how applicants and students are treated. Fairness is a laudable principle in itself, but a fairness that can be clearly demonstrated in practice, and which is therefore based upon clearly-accountable procedures, is also becoming increasingly important. As students' expectations of receiving satisfactory information about the reasons behind assessment judgements grow stronger – and, to some extent, become hardened into legal rights through access to information legislation – so the pressure increases to be able to show that no one student has been either penalised or specially favoured in comparison with others. Consistency may be applied laterally (across one year-group of applicants or students) and longitudinally (from one year-group to the next) as will be discussed in Chapter 7 of Section One of this handbook.

Benchmarking, whether of threshold or 'mean' standards, is also important because, even if an individual may perform spectacularly better than the threshold benchmark or an institution believe itself to be operating at a higher level than others in the sector, referencing assessment verdicts against widely-recognised standards promotes a broad understanding of achievement levels. From this flows the readability of awards and the reduced barriers to mobility that are cornerstone principles of the Bologna Declaration.

Assessment forms a constant accompaniment to each student's developmental trajectory: it is the gateway to study; it provides a series of reference points along the study journey; and it enables the final judgement to be passed upon the achievements of that journey and the precise nature of the destination finally reached. It is not therefore detached from learning but, on the contrary, forms its complementary counterpart and has a role to play at every stage of learning. However, carrying out an assessment does interrupt the learning process, and therefore the balance between learning and assessment must be carefully maintained. Equally, the nature of each assessment event must be matched to what it is trying to measure - whether it is determining entry, progress or terminal achievement. Chapters 2-4 of Section One will explore the relationship between assessment and learning in greater detail, while Chapters 5-8 will examine the ways in which a student's progress and final outcome are assessed in what are broadly referred to as the formative and summative aspects of assessment.

Of course, a terminal assessment in one phase or cycle of study may be used as part - or all - of the admissions assessment procedure for the next cycle. This is another reason why benchmarking is important; one institution's summative assessment may play a role in another's admissions scrutiny. In some countries, the Bologna Process has been interpreted as meaning that success in one cycle of higher education actually *entitles* a student to enter the next cycle. More usually, it is seen as meaning that the student is *eligible* to enter the next cycle and likely to be able to meet its challenges, but still subject to a decision process as to whether he or she should be accepted. This is important if institutions are to retain control of student numbers. In Higher Music Education, issues of balance between instrumental numbers and a whole host of other factors make it doubly important that institutions can select from among the eligible students applying to them.

Tools such as the ***Dublin Descriptors***, and cycle-based Learning Outcomes derived from these, are deliberately constructed in the manner of a ladder, where each rung marks both a successful completion of one step and a platform from which to advance to the next. They are therefore useful in constructing assessments that serve this dual function. As well as the material in this handbook, it may therefore be helpful to consult the document ***Summary of Tuning Findings - Higher Music Education***[1] which deals with the relationship between the Dublin Descriptors and more discipline-specific measurement scales.

Section One of this handbook deals mainly with the *principles* of assessment; in Section Two a set of ten case-studies is presented, each of them relating in some way to an issue discussed in the first section. These case-studies are deliberately drawn from a range of current practice as it is found in institutions across Europe. Some represent more traditional approaches, others newer innovations. The intention is not to present any of them necessarily as 'best practice' but, rather, to use them collectively as a means of pointing up the relationship between principles and practice. I am very

1 'Polifonia' 'Bologna' Working Group; Messas, L. & Prchal, M. (eds.) (2009): Reference points for the Design and Delivery of Degree Programmes in Music. Tuning Educational Structures in Europe. Deusto.

grateful to my colleagues in the 'Polifonia' Bologna Working Group for providing examples from their own institutions to build up this portfolio of case-studies, and for their invaluable editorial assistance during the preparation of the document.

Hopefully, each individual reader of this handbook will find some resonances between both the ideas and the examples given here and his or her own experience. Ideally, the handbook will serve as a spur to further thought about why we assess the way we do and how we might constantly strive to make our assessments fitter for purpose – more relevant, more consistent and less intrusive into the all-important process of learning. Those thought processes, as many of us are aware, are not ones that can ever be regarded as finished once-and-for-all; like the quest for learning itself, the search for the optimum way to assess learning is one of the goals that drive us forward constantly as we try to make our institutions the best possible environments for the professional preparation and personal development of our young musicians.

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SECTION ONE

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1:

ASSESSMENT: WHAT IT IS; WHY WE NEED IT; WHAT IT CAN AND CAN'T DO

Summary:

- Assessment measures and validates student achievement (as well as giving pointers as to future potential)
- It provides the basis for allowing entry to a course, progression through it and for the conferring of a final award
- It gives students credentials with which they can enter the profession or be admitted to higher-level courses

But:

- It can encourage a focus on what can most easily be measured, rather than what may be the most important elements
- It depends on precise formulations of the assessment task – difficult to achieve in theory and difficult to ensure that all assessors are then using these in the same way
- It may simply reflect a student's performance on a given day, unless the overall pattern of assessment balances continuous and terminal elements – an especial risk in admissions examinations where the student is otherwise unknown
- It can interrupt the learning process, rather than contributing to it
- In artistic disciplines especially, it involves a vital subjective element which must nevertheless be counterbalanced by one means or another

1.1 Assessment is a word very commonly used in education (although dictionary definitions suggest that its origin was in the more mercenary area of putting a value upon something for the purposes of calculating the tax payable upon it!). The idea of making a ***valuation*** is core to all assessment, whether that value is expressed in monetary terms for taxation or in more abstract ways such as the 'value' of a piece of work or of an action, event or achievement. Assessment is frequently associated with other terms such as 'estimation', 'evaluation' and 'judgement' - words which one might think of as representing a rising sequence of formality and finality. And, indeed, assessment can occur in a whole range of situations, from the informal to the intimidatingly formal, from the verbal to the written, from self- or peer-assessment through to assessment by expert judges who have had no prior association with the person being assessed.

1.2 The types of assessment found in Higher Music Education vary according to geographical location and historical tradition but all of them share a concern to determine how good a student is in the core area of their musical endeavour, whether that be playing an instrument, singing, conducting, composing, teaching or some combination of these. In the past, this core judgement was carried out almost exclusively by experts whose credentials were based upon their own track-record in the relevant area. Such experts remain essential to the assessment process, especially at its end-point in a student's course of study, but they are increasingly part of a wider pool of assessors, including those whose primary expertise may be in assessment methodologies and even, in the special case of self-assessment, embracing those who are themselves being assessed.

1.3 This greater variety of assessors also reflects the broader range of assessment events that is now commonplace in institutions of Higher Music Education. The range has grown in two ways: there are now generally more intermediate assessments, rather than a concentration upon one final performance before a jury; and there is frequently a fuller curriculum for students, partly reflecting the embedding of conservatoire-style education within the three cycles of the Bologna Declaration. Whereas, in the past, a music student might easily spend up to five years working with their main teacher with little or no punctuation by assessments, the three-to-four year first cycle, and the expectation of some kind of demonstration of employability by its conclusion, has made for a more compressed and a more congested pattern of study and evaluation. Compounding this is the fact that there has been an increasing recognition of the need to match every element of the curriculum with a corresponding assessment.

1.4 Most recently, with the growth in the use of learning outcomes and, in particular, competence-based learning methodologies, assessments have been designed which seek to measure student achievement in a variety of areas simultaneously. In such competence-oriented assessment, the fact that the student shows he or she can wield all of the skills under consideration in a fluid, integrated way is as important as how far each skill has been developed individually. In some ways, of course, the traditional final recital for conservatoire students is itself an evaluation of the complex competence known as 'giving a recital', into which all kinds of musical, presentational, knowledge-based and organisational skills must be blended for complete success to be achieved.

1.5 As already seen, assessment is an important complement to learning. Learning without assessment lacks reference points; assessment tells the student and teacher whether the learning processes are proceeding according to plan because of the way it holds up an objective mirror (or supposedly objective – on which topic more later) to these processes. It can measure what it may be difficult for the student and teacher themselves to quantify, immersed as they are in the learning process. It validates learning achievement by referencing it against standards. Feedback from an assessment can also offer valuable pointers to future learning strategies.

1.6 Assessment in its more formal guises is a valuable tool for controlling students' entry to a programme and their progress through it, as well as providing the basis for conferring or withholding the final award associated with the programme. Institutions need such controls, but they are also in the student's own interest since every student wants to know that admission to a programme means that they have been evaluated as likely to succeed on it; once admitted, they want timely warning if they turn out not to be progressing as hoped; and they ultimately want a document that certifies their achievement, coupled with a qualification that confers eligibility for a further stage of study or a range of professional appointments.

1.7 In all of these respects, learning and assessment may be seen as working in a harmonious, as well as complementary, relationship. However, the fact must be faced that learning and assessment can just as easily generate tension and friction between their respective goals.

1.8 Perhaps the most fundamental way in which this tension can arise relates to that fact that learning can, and should, take place in a variety of ways, some of them consciously articulated but others mysterious and subliminal. Learning is complex and multi-faceted; a breakthrough in learning may sometimes be pre-figured by an apparent impasse or regression; individual skills are rarely learned in isolation but assimilated concurrently and with interaction between them. Assessment, by contrast, inherently favours simplification, categorisation and a systematic and progression-based view of students' development (although competence-based assessments, referred to above, at least attempt to acknowledge the way that skills occur in interactive complexes, rather than discretely). The result is that assessment methodologies tend to focus upon those elements which are most easily measured and categorised; but they can therefore sometimes feel as though, in the process, they miss the most important parts of the learning they supposedly measure.

1.9 In formulating an assessment task, the hope is that everyone – student, student's teacher, examiners, outside world/profession – will share the same understanding of what is being assessed, how it is being assessed and against which benchmarks. This depends both upon the quality of the words used to describe the assessment and the capacities of the individuals involved to read, understand and enact them. The texts have to be sufficiently detailed to minimise loopholes but not so unwieldy as to alienate those required to read them. All-in-all, it is asking a great deal to balance this array of requirements within verbal formulations - added to which, in music one is dealing with an art-form part of whose fundamental value is its capacity to convey things which words cannot encompass.

1.10 Even assuming that everyone enters the assessment event with a good shared understanding, there is still the question of whether the way a student performs on a given day is truly representative of his or her wider abilities. In this context, the fact that much assessment in Higher Music Education addresses not just a student's 'performance' in the generic sense, but

specifically his or her achievement as a musical performer, only serves to heighten the danger that the performance that is assessed may be an unrepresentative one. It could be argued that consistency is one of the many desirable attributes of a musician and that a performance in an assessment that departs radically from the student's normal standard is symptomatic of a weakness in his or her armoury as a performer for which it is right that they should be penalised. This view is rarely of much consolation either to the student who has fared uncharacteristically badly, or to their teacher.

1.11 In recital-style practical assessments, another problem is that such events are neither purely artistic events nor out-and-out assessments within an educational framework. As hybrids, they sit somewhat uncomfortably between the two. This is especially true if there is only a small audience other than the jury – or, worse still, none at all. The normal dynamic that operates between performer and audience is distorted in a myriad of subtle ways that may be more disconcerting to the highly-attuned performer than to his or her more thick-skinned, technically-oriented counterpart. An assessment regime that favours technically secure, predictable performances over inspiring ones is distorting the very nature of the event which it claims to be measuring - and in a direction that most musicians would probably regard as unfortunate.

1.12 For assessments undertaken during a programme of study, the dangers of the uncharacteristically bad performance can be lessened by an overall assessment regime that ranges over a number of events. This may still place greatest emphasis upon a final recital but with other events contributing to the student's overall profile of achievement according to some pattern of weightings. Even so, if all the events are of the hybrid recital-examination type, the more subtle problems discussed above still remain. The lure of 'playing the assessment game' can discourage the very risk-taking from which musical creativity draws its vitality.

1.13 Of all the assessment types so far discussed, the entrance audition is the most prone to the danger of an uncharacteristic performance leading to an anomalous result. There is often little or no prior knowledge of the applicant among the panel (and any such knowledge, insofar as it may represent a vested interest, should be declared by the panel member concerned). Just as the applicant is unfamiliar to the panel, the panel, the audition room, indeed, almost everything about the occasion is unfamiliar to the applicant. The task facing audition panels is therefore one of the most complex and subtle of all assessments, requiring them to reach beneath the surface of the occasion and try to divine the real qualities – including potential for further growth – possessed by the applicant. Despite this, admissions can be one of the areas of Higher Music Education practice least subject to quality assurance scrutiny.

1.14 Once a student has successfully negotiated the audition hurdle and starts on the programme of study, student and teacher will map out the areas to be worked at and the goals to be set. In musical development, there is broad consensus that it is not usually helpful to set these areas and goals

to periods of less than one year. Where a technical issue, such as a faulty embouchure, needs addressing, an even longer timescale may be needed. Assessments of a greater-than-annual frequency can easily feel like inconvenient interruptions - and may even be counterproductive if they fall in the midst of crucial technical reconstruction work. Music institutions which operate as faculties within multi-disciplinary universities often encounter this problem when forced to conform to a university-wide, semesterised timetable. As well as being planned so as not to be unreasonably onerous for students in general, assessment regimes must therefore have some degree of flexibility so as to accommodate the special learning circumstances of individual students.

1.15 As has already been discussed, music is an art-form whose strengths lie where those of words do not, and vice versa. In addition, music touches us all in highly individual ways, such that it is very difficult to say with certainty that any two individuals hear a piece of music in precisely the same way. This subjective aspect of how music is apprehended poses a particular problem for assessment, with its requirement for objectivity, consistency and repeatability. In practice, experienced musicians trained in the same broad traditions – classical, jazz, etc – show high degrees of consensus about most performances. Where they do disagree widely, it is often over an idiosyncratic interpretation which may actually contain more ingredients that are musically stimulating, whether positively or negatively, than any number of more routinely proficient performances. Once again, the musical 'risk-taker' may fall foul of assessment processes that work best when dealing with the predictable.

1.16 Most forms of musical assessment seek to balance out individual subjectivity, usually by having at least three individuals involved and by promoting modes of operation that neutralise extremes, whether by a literal averaging of panel members' marks or through a more discursive journey towards a mark that finds consensus among the panel as a whole. What is being sought is an 'inter-subjectivity' which, although it has some of the characteristics of objectivity, is not the same thing and should not be confused with it. Inter-subjectivity is discussed further in Chapter 8.

1.17 Whilst it has been important to highlight the limitations of assessment, and the problems associated with these limitations, near the outset, the remainder of this section of the handbook will seek to describe processes that have evolved - some over a century and more, some in recent years - to make assessment as useful, reliable and fair a tool as possible and one that supports and complements the learning whose outcomes it seeks to measure.

ASSESSMENT AND LEARNING

CHAPTER 2:
ASSESSMENT AS A GATEWAY TO LEARNING – ADMISSIONS PROCESSES

Summary:

- In Higher Music Education, it is important to know that a student is suitable for the long and costly process of training involved
- Students must be evaluated on an individual basis and carrying out the core activity of their particular musical ambition – performing, presenting compositional scores, conducting, etc
- Admission assessment must address potential as well as achievement; it should look beyond differences in applicants' pre-college experiences and opportunities but must also make realistic judgements about whether a less well taught student will be able to make up ground
- Admissions assessment should consciously match the selection process to the learning outcomes of the programme
- There are 'two thresholds' of admissions assessment – is the applicant good enough to enter the programme?; are they good enough in relation to other applicants to be accepted, where numbers are limited?
- It is desirable to evaluate other skills that students will require during their studies, although this may be done through checking of prior qualifications
- Providing useful feedback to applicants on their admissions assessment is not easy but is becoming increasingly expected
- See also Section Two, Case-Studies 1 & 2

2.1 Higher Music Education is a discipline where the process of evaluating applicants for entry is both crucial and complex. In many other higher education disciplines, and in countries where there is a universally-recognised national system of pre-HE examinations providing a benchmark for comparing achievement, admissions decisions are often taken on an applicant's previous examination record alone. In Higher Music Education, this is generally regarded as insufficient for some or all of the following reasons:

- Musical ability is a highly individual matter; two applicants with equivalent examination results may be very different in terms of their suitability for the particular ethos of the Higher Music Education institution to which they are applying

- Musical development in many instruments - and, especially, for the voice and for the skills of composing and conducting – is still at a relatively early stage at a student's typical age of entry to higher education; an applicant's *potential* is therefore at least as important as his or her standard of achievement as recorded in the bald result of an examination

- Most institutions of Higher Music Education are small and many are over-subscribed, at least in certain instruments; this means that difficult choices have to be made between applicants who might both have sufficiently good examination results to be accepted

- Conversely, most institutions have to take some admissions decisions based on the numbers of different instrumental specialisms needed to operate a full range of ensembles; with some instruments, applicants whose standards are only marginally sufficient may need to be taken in these cases, and particular care is needed when taking such decisions

- The training process of Higher Music Education is costly and lengthy, and much of it is carried out on a 1-to-1 basis or in small groups; inappropriate admissions decisions are therefore proportionately more wasteful than in other disciplines, and correspondingly demoralising to the student, their teacher(s) and, ultimately, to the institution as a whole.

2.2 As a result of these factors, most Higher Music Education institutions employ some kind of individual, face-to-face admissions assessment for the vast majority of their applicants, if not all of them. Of course, this in itself adds a significant element of time and cost into the annual calendar of activities of the institution, but it is generally regarded as being a worthwhile investment insofar as it prevents some of the mistakes and subsequent costs referred to above. In order to accommodate admissions assessment into the calendar, institutions generally opt for one of two approaches: concentration or dispersal. In the former, most or all other activity is suspended for a set period of the year – often as much as 2-3 weeks – and applicants are assessed in intensive sessions, usually with many assessment panels operating in parallel; in the latter, smaller numbers of applicants may be evaluated each week over a period of months in a way that allows these assessments to be fitted around the other activities of the institution.

2.3 The core of admissions assessment is the opportunity given to the applicant to demonstrate his or her ability in their chosen specialism(s). For performers, this will take the form of an audition on their main (and, where relevant, secondary) instrument/voice, while for composers, the most usual format is a discussion of scores, submitted in advance. For conductors, assessment in their specialism requires the participation of others and is correspondingly more complex to organise; applicants will often have been pre-screened on the basis of DVD or similar recordings so that only the few most promising are assessed in person, often in front of a specially-assembled ensemble. Such pre-screening can also take place with performers, where they submit recordings, and with composers on the basis of their scores alone. However, recordings, depending on their own quality, can flatter some performances and do less than justice to others, so where a straightforward 1-to-1 assessment is appropriate it is common for institutions to evaluate all applicants in person.

2.4 Just as assessment in the applicant's core specialism is the most important aspect of the admissions process, the expertise of teachers of that specialism is crucial to making an

appropriate evaluation. These individuals have intimate specialist knowledge and are involved on a daily basis in exercising discrimination within their field, whether in their own professional activity or through the feedback they give to existing students. As a result, they are accustomed to making judgements quickly and decisively – an especially useful skill when assessing large numbers of applicants one after the other in a crowded schedule. Specialists are aware of what may be superficially impressive but, in reality, relatively easy on an instrument or, conversely, what may be harder to execute well on that instrument compared with another; they can detect where clever teaching, or astute choice of repertoire, might have been used to disguise weaknesses; equally, they can recognise the symptoms of poor teaching and often make subtle judgments as to whether an applicant is under-performing in relation to their potential and might flourish dramatically if given the appropriate guidance; finally, if some remedial technical work may be required, specialists are the most likely not only to diagnose this but also to be able to estimate how long it might take - and therefore to judge whether it would interfere with an applicant's ability to progress through a course in the normal way.

2.5 Although a specialist assessor's closeness to the specialism is a huge asset, it can also have some less positive aspects: one individual may favour a particular sound or playing style over others; they may bring fixed expectations which make it harder for them to recognise potential that lies outside those parameters; and, since applicants who are accepted will then need to be allocated to teachers within the institution, it is hard to expect specialists to remain entirely altruistic about decisions which might affect their future teaching load – and in some cases, therefore, their livelihood. For all these reasons, where possible it is desirable to have at least two specialists involved. Such an arrangement can also enable one specialist to check immediately any more speculative idea he or she may have about an applicant with a similarly expert colleague. From an institutional perspective, paired assessing can also be a way to match recently appointed specialists with more established colleagues, thereby assisting the transfer of knowledge and experience.

2.6 In the case of performers, the typical format of the assessment is that of audition-plus-interview. In the audition section, the assessors will hear the applicant perform prepared pieces and, usually, ask them to carry out some exercise for which there will have been only limited preparation time – sometimes just a few moments in the audition itself. Many institutions publish set works for their auditions, which may or may not change from year to year. These introduce an element of consistency into each audition and help comparisons between applicants. Some institutions have different set works for different levels of admission – harder for 2nd-Cycle than for 1st, for example; others simply look for different levels of mastery and sophistication in the same works according to the level being considered. Most institutions ask for more than one work to be prepared and for there to be good contrast between the pieces presented, so as to gain some idea of an applicant's range and versatility.

2.7 A fully-prescribed list of audition works does not allow for unusual talent or a candidate's particular repertoire interest to show itself. A common pattern is therefore to combine prescribed and free elements. Where the applicant is free to choose a second or third work, the onus will be on him or her to ensure that they demonstrate contrast amongst the works presented. With a free choice, there is no control over the level of difficulty but, as seen above, experienced specialists will be able to adjust for this. Harder to allow for is the length of time that an applicant might have spent preparing a work of their own choice – in some case, they may have been refining it over years. Assessors must be especially vigilant to detect limitations which may underlie an apparent talent. The applicant who has clung to a piece first learnt several years previously may have little potential for further development and/or may need too much time when acquiring new repertoire to compete successfully at a professional level.

2.8 This is where the applicant's performance in a situation where they have limited preparation can be especially revealing. A sight-reading exercise, for example, may produce results of only limited finished musical quality, but can show a great deal about an applicant's learning strategies and capabilities. At the same time, the skill of sight-reading *per se* is more relevant to some specialisms than to others, and an applicant can be coached to sight-read efficiently without necessarily having greater learning potential than another who has not received the same level of focussed support. For this reason, some institutions either use the sight-reading test as a vehicle for seeing how an applicant may respond, on a second attempt, to suggestions given after the first play-through, or they provide the applicant with material shortly before the audition itself – the 'quick-study' approach - to see how far he or she can take their preparation of it in a short time and under pressure.

2.9 The interview component of the assessment usually takes place after the audition elements are completed and often takes as its starting point issues that may have arisen during the playing. The interview generally has at least the following three purposes:

- To determine something of the applicant's character outside their playing, and to explore their ability to understand what is going on in their music-making and their capacity for expressing this to others;

- To clarify aspects of the applicant's training up until this point so as to better understand the relationship of this to the performances given;

- To evaluate the applicant's level of motivation, both in terms of their readiness to cope with the demands of a career in music and, more specifically, from the point of view of how much they know about the institution, what it offers, who teaches there and, by implication, how serious they are about this being the place where they wish to study.

2.10 To summarise, the following are the typical components of an admissions assessment, together with their respective main purposes:

Element		Main purpose(s)
Audition		- To evaluate the applicant's level of practical and musical ability in his or her main specialism
1	Performance of piece from a set list	- To benchmark the applicant's performance against the standards of others and against a notional expected standard
2	Contrasted piece – set or free	- To demonstrate the applicant's breadth and versatility - In the case of a free choice, to give the applicant an opportunity to show imagination, musical curiosity or a particular repertoire interest
3	Limited preparation test – e.g. sight-reading/quick study	- To test the applicant's abilities when unaided by their teacher - To evaluate their capacity to learn, respond and evolve
Interview		- To explore the applicant's self-understanding and communicative ability - To verify their prior learning - To test their motivation

Case-Study 1 in Section Two of this handbook describes an admissions process which displays many of the characteristics listed here. The benchmarking element is given particular emphasis in the case-study through an explicit mapping of institutional procedures onto Europe-wide standards.

2.11 Admissions assessments for composers generally follow the same principles as those outlined above, but the event is not so clearly divided into audition and interview; instead, since the equivalent of the performed works is the submitted portfolio of compositions and the assessors will usually have seen these beforehand, almost all the assessment consists of discussion. Composition applicants may also be given a limited-preparation test of their own – most commonly some starting material for a brief compositional exercise undertaken under closed conditions (sometimes with access to a piano for checking the sounds, sometimes without) and within a limited timescale.

2.12 Assessments for conducting applicants generally follow the same audition/interview divide as for performers and may also combine audition tasks published well in advance with others for which the applicants have only limited preparation. Since rehearsal of an ensemble is often a feature of these auditions, the applicant's versatility and capacity to work unaided will be fully-exposed, even in well-prepared repertoire. Time-management becomes an important factor in such rehearsals, since they are relatively short and the applicant is usually expected to deliver a quasi-finished play-through at their conclusion. As well as being used to screen out weaker

candidates at an early stage, DVD recording may used by the institution itself at this stage to help assessors review and compare the performances of different applicants when making their final admissions decisions.

2.13 Especially where they are working under time pressure, specialists should not have to bear the responsibility for taking such final admissions decisions 'on the spot'. Their task is to filter out those applicants who are not credible candidates and to put those who are credible into a rank order. How many of those in the list of suitable candidates are ultimately offered places is a decision which requires a broader range of information and is ideally taken when most or all of the admissions recommendations for every specialism are available and factors such as overall numbers that the institution has room (or government authorisation) to admit can be taken into account. At this point in the process, individuals with broad institutional responsibility – academic leaders, faculty heads, deans, etc – are usually involved (although, where admissions assessments are dispersed over many weeks, these individuals may also be involved in the assessments themselves on a week-by-week basis). Case-Study 2 describes an admissions process for students specialising in music pedagogy where the mixture of specialists and those with broader institutional responsibility is carefully constructed and balanced – even down to the development of voting protocols.

2.14 As well as considerations such as overall numbers, the preferred balance of specialisms amongst these and the matching of potential students to teachers, final admissions decisions need to take account of an applicant's wider musical abilities and prior learning outside those of his or her main specialism. In this area, the structure of the institution's curriculum and the overall range of learning outcomes expected to be mastered by successful students, whether formally expressed or simply understood implicitly, are of particular importance. All institutions will be expecting to produce students who are highly competent in their main specialism, but there may be more variation from one institution to another as to which other competences this should be combined with. This is where the national or regional picture of professional musical employment opportunities and factors such as particular institutional strengths come into play. These same elements should, of course, have informed any learning outcomes developed by the institution.

2.15 Some institutions feel the need to test the full range of applicants' competences through their own in-house assessment procedures; others focus solely on the main specialism and rely on the results of recognised national examinations systems to provide evidence of the broader competences. In the latter case, offers of places may often be issued before the results of the national examinations are known and have to be made conditional upon these examinations being passed. This system is also dependent upon applicants' actually taking the relevant national examinations or accepted equivalents. Where this has not happened, but the institution is interested in the applicant, special in-house testing arrangements will need to be made.

2.16 Institutions operating their own in-house assessment of applicants' broader competences will be able to tailor these to their own curriculum and to knowledge of what this demands of students. At the same time, it is important that any course claiming to fit within the Bologna scheme of higher education cycles has an overall curriculum structure and learning outcomes broadly consistent with European standards, and therefore entry requirements which also relate to these. Hopefully, this will already have been addressed as part of the ongoing process of curriculum review and development, but any institution still undertaking this work may find it helpful, when framing entry requirements for the first cycle, to consult the set of competences for pre-college education drawn up by the AEC Polifonia Pre-College Working Group in its publication, 'Pre-College Music Education in Europe'.[2] An example of this can be seen in Case-Study 1. In defining what may be expected of students at the end of their pre-college training, these competences also form a logical set of entry requirements to the first cycle of Higher Music Education; indeed, they were specifically designed to form a set of appropriate milestones for a student embarked upon the longer trajectory towards successful completion of the first higher-education cycle.

2.17 While some gaps in a student's prior competences may be made good after they arrive at the institution, it is important for consideration to be given as to whether a lack of prior training in an applicant's background may lead to their having problems succeeding in any of the assessments they will encounter during their course. Even if the course as a whole runs for three or four years, as in a typical 1st-Cycle programme, there may well be intermediate assessments which are critical for a student's progression. In particular, there should be broad confidence that an applicant offered a place could cope satisfactorily with the first round of these – which may take place after one year, or even just one semester. Where an otherwise impressive applicant has some area of weakness which may give problems, it may be possible to recommend either a pattern of remedial work to be undertaken before starting the course or a postponement and re-application for the following year, again, with suggestions as to how to make good the deficiencies in the mean time.

2.18 Recommendations such as these suggest a sophisticated system for providing feedback to applicants. Some feedback may be given face-to-face during the interview; however, if assessors are not making final decisions then and there, they need to be careful about misleading applicants, especially by sounding too optimistic if the final result should turn out not to be an offer of a place. Applicants are increasingly sensitive to how they are treated in admissions assessments: they may feel aggrieved if any aspect of the conduct of the assessment seemed off-putting or distracting; they may very well want further explanation if they feel that the tone of the interview suggested acceptance, whereas the final decision is rejection.

2.19 Institutions are increasingly conscious of their responsibilities to enrolled students in terms of providing feedback and establishing recognised and documented procedures within which a

[2] Final Report on Pre-College Education in Europe (AEC Publications, 2007), www.aecinfo.org/Publications

student can make an appeal or register a complaint about an aspect of their course that they feel is unsatisfactory. Across the sector as a whole, the same consciousness is only beginning to develop as far as the rights and expectations of applicants are concerned. Rejected applicants often feel entitled to an explanation of why they were unsuccessful; often the response that they did not reach the required standard will not satisfy them and they expect something closer to itemised feedback which provides them with advice on the areas which they should address for future success. Providing this can be time-consuming and, unless sensitively handled, may only serve to fan the flames of a rejected applicant's anger and frustration. The issue of feedback to applicants is mentioned in both Case-Studies 1 & 2.

2.20 In formulating institutional feedback, written comments provided by assessors can be a help or a liability according to how they are expressed (it should always be remembered that, under access to information legislation, especially as interpreted in some countries' legal systems, a determined applicant would eventually be able to obtain access to anything written about them). Institutions may well consider it worthwhile to offer some kind of training or developmental sessions to staff involved in admissions assessments to help them understand the potential pitfalls, as well giving them an opportunity to compare notes on the kinds of feedback that best come across as being constructive. Since these specialists are often also involved in the assessment of enrolled students, sessions may cover both areas and therefore be doubly valuable.

2.21 Despite the importance of caution and tact when providing feedback to applicants, whether immediate and verbal or in the form of a written report, it is equally important that an applicant who has given an outstanding audition should feel that they have touched the musical sensibilities of the assessors. Communication is intrinsic to performance, and a sensitive performer will rely, to some extent, on feedback from their 'audience' of assessors to continue to deliver high-quality performance. Since face-to-face evaluation is considered essential to the functioning of a fully-effective system of admissions assessment in Higher Music Education, it is equally essential that the demands of objectivity and consistency that normally go hand-in-hand with quality assurance do not introduce a discordantly cold and impersonal note into these distinctive admissions proceedings.

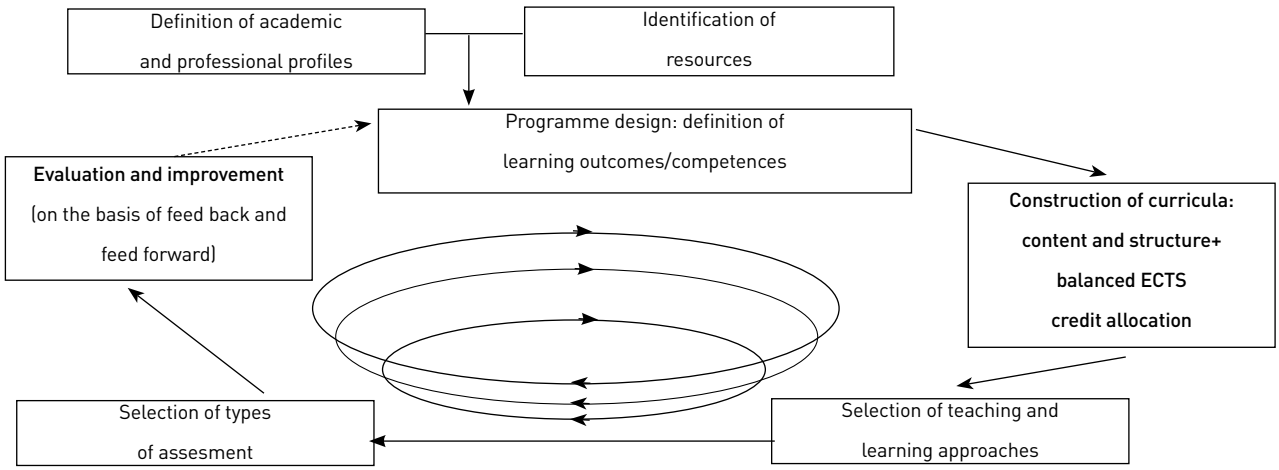
CHAPTER 3:
ASSESSMENT AS A MEASURE OF LEARNING

Summary:

- Once students are admitted to a programme, we must first decide what we want them to learn and why; then, we must find the best means to test whether they have indeed learned these things
- Learning Outcomes can play an important role in formulating assessments
- We need to be clear about which Learning Outcomes are addressed by a particular assessment activity – core and supplementary outcomes
- It is essential that, when all assessments are taken together, all Learning Outcomes have been addressed (the Competency Matrix)
- There is a need for balance between trying to formulate measurable Learning Outcomes and trying to devise measuring tests that feel real, rather than mechanical – a two-way process
- Assessments should measure success, rather than failure
- Assessors should have a clear idea of necessary thresholds of achievement, as well as ways of recording and rewarding success that exceeds these
- See also Case-Study 3

The fundamental purpose of Higher Music Education is educational – that is to say, it is about learning, and about teaching as an aid to learning. Assessment is not an aim or end in itself, but a tool for measuring whether the desired learning has taken place. Therefore, assessments should only be designed once the desired pattern of learning is clearly established and should always have a clear objective in terms of which aspect(s) of the learning process is/are being measured. This sequence is part of the larger, cyclical process of dynamic quality development advocated by the Tuning Project and illustrated by the diagram below, adapted from the Tuning publication 'Universities' contribution to the Bologna Process'[3]:

The Tuning Dynamic Quality Development Circle



3 'Universities' contribution to the Bologna Process', 2nd edition, Publicaciones de la Universidad de Deusto, Bilbao, 2008

3.2 Because measurement interrupts the very learning it seeks to measure, assessments should generally be kept to the minimum necessary to ensure that all the established learning outcomes have been tested. However, across a three- or four-year programme, this minimum would usually include interim checks to ensure that students are on track for eventual success in their final assessments.

3.3 With these points in mind, those devising assessments should follow a mental checklist of questions along the following lines:

- Which learning outcome(s) is this assessment intended to measure?
- How far along the road to achieving the final learning outcome(s) should a typical student be at this point in their programme?
- How do the things the student is being asked to do in this assessment measure his or her success against the learning outcome(s)?
- Could the same measurement be achieved by a simpler method/one which takes up less time?
- Among the overall pattern of assessments being undertaken by the student, are there other assessments measuring the same thing; if so, can the assessments be amalgamated?
- How recently did the student undergo a similar assessment; how soon will they do so again; will anything significant have changed in the interim?

3.4 Among the questions above, one of the most significant is that concerning the possible amalgamation of assessments. This is one of the potential benefits of a focus upon learning outcomes. Historically, when the emphasis was more upon teaching than learning, the main question that would have driven assessment design would have been something more like 'How much of what I have taught has the student learned?'. As a result, each element of teaching potentially called for its own assessment and the same competence might be tested a number of times, albeit with different content.

3.5 Ensuring that an appropriate range of content has been assimilated by the student remains important even in an educational environment geared to learning outcomes, but the move to a focus upon learning recognises the fact that if a student has mastered a learning skill with one particular set of content, they should – at least in theory - have little difficulty in applying this in other contexts. Although this is a principle which could potentially be pushed too far - if it is simply assumed, without checking, that the student has all the necessary skills of extrapolating from one context to another - it should be remembered that the skill of extrapolation is itself capable of being tested. In this way, some of the components of a fully-integrated assessment regime will often be 'meta-tests' of a student's ability to adapt effectively to new or unfamiliar situations, rather than measurements solely of subject-specific competence.

3.6 It is not always immediately obvious which learning outcomes an assessment may be testing. The primary, or core, outcomes will generally be self-evident, but there may be a range of secondary skills that are involved in an assessment task but which, without the checklist above, can pass almost unnoticed. A good example of this, already cited, is the kind of recital examination widely used in Higher Music Education. It is obvious that such an assessment tests a performer's ability to perform, and it is common for that ability to be evaluated from at least the three perspectives of technique, interpretation and presentation. However, the actual range of skills demonstrated, and therefore potentially measurable, goes wider than this. To illustrate the point, here are the practical (skills-based) outcomes for the 1st Cycle as presented in the 'Summary of Tuning Findings - Higher Music Education', together with indications of how almost all of these might be demonstrated in a recital examination (a similar exercise could be applied to the theoretical and generic outcomes and would again produce positive results):

Practical (skills-based) Outcomes	
1st cycle Learning Outcomes	**How these may be measured in a recital examination**
Skills in artistic expression	
- At the completion of their studies, students are expected to be able to create and realise their own artistic concepts and to have developed the necessary skills for their expression.	- This is the core skill demonstrated in recital performance. It covers interpretation (the creation of artistic concepts) technique (their realisation) and presentation (their expression).
Repertoire skills	
- At the completion of their studies, students are expected to have studied and performed representative repertoire of the area of musical study. - In the process, they are expected to have had experience of a variety of appropriate styles.	- A varied programme will usually offer representative repertoire of the instrument. If a programme is chosen more narrowly for one recital, it will generally be complemented by repertoire presented in other assessed performances (some institutions' regulations include restrictions upon repeating repertoire in different assessments). - As above.
Ensemble skills	
- At the completion of their studies, students are expected to be able to interact musically in ensembles, varied both in size and style.	- This skill would only be demonstrated if a student used a variety of ensembles in their recital (as does sometimes happen). But for the recital to test this learning outcome reliably, it would need to be a standard requirement of the recital that it should include varied ensembles.
Practising, rehearsing, reading, aural, creative and re-creative skills	
Practising and rehearsing skills - At the completion of their studies, students are expected to have acquired effective practice and rehearsal techniques for improvement through self-study. - In the process, they are expected to have embedded good habits of technique and posture which enable them to use their bodies in the most efficient and non-harmful way.	- Although effective practising and rehearsal skills might be inferred from a successful recital, they are not tested per se. - Technique and posture are certainly among the elements which might be demonstrated in a recital. Indeed, the maintaining of these under pressure provides a particularly good test of how well they have been embedded.

Practical (skills-based) Outcomes	
1st cycle Learning Outcomes	**How these may be measured in a recital examination**
Practising, rehearsing, reading, aural, creative and re-creative skills (contd.)	
Reading skills - At the completion of their studies, students are expected to have acquired appropriate skills for the transmission and communication of notated musical structures, materials and ideas	- Assuming that the recital includes the performance of notated repertoire, then the appropriate skills for its transmission and communication might certainly be demonstrated.
Aural, creative and re-creative skills - At the completion of their studies, students are expected to have fluency in recognising by ear, memorising and manipulating the materials of music. - At the completion of their studies, students are expected to have acquired the skills to compose and arrange music creatively within practical settings.	- Performance from memory would demonstrate one of these skills; a recital which included improvised elements would demonstrate the ability to manipulate materials. Again, these would need to be standard requirements if the learning outcome were to be tested reliably. - Unless a recital included compositions or arrangements by the student, this skill would not be demonstrated. In addition, it might not be appropriate to give more than marginal credit for this since it would not normally be an outcome measured by this assessment (fuller credit might be given elsewhere, in an assessment directly concerned with composition or arrangement).
Verbal skills	
- At the completion of their studies, students are expected to be able to talk or write intelligently about their music making.	- These skills might be demonstrated either in spoken introductions, programme notes, or both. Some institutions include specific requirements about these in their regulations for recital examinations.
Public Performance skills	
- At the completion of their studies, students are expected to be able to deal with the behavioural and communicative demands of public performance.	- This is another obvious core skill addressed by the format of the recital examination.
Improvisational skills	
- At the completion of their studies, students are expected to be able to shape and/or create music in ways which go beyond the notated score.	- A successful student's interpretational skill in a recital should certainly 'go beyond the notated score', but insofar as actual improvisation is understood here, only in genres and repertoires where improvisation is intrinsic to the style and required by the regulations would these skills be tested reliably.

3.7 Of course, once it has been identified which of the learning outcomes of a programme are potentially measurable within a particular assessment, it is still necessary to agree those which will actually be formally tested and then to establish assessment criteria against which they can be measured (criteria are discussed further in Chapters 6 and 7). An outcome might be measurable but still not adopted as a formal element of a particular assessment if another assessment were felt to provide a better measure. In order to decide this, and to ensure that no outcome is left un-assessed, it is helpful to use a tool of curriculum design known as the Competency Matrix.

3.8 The competency matrix maps elements of the curriculum against learning outcomes so as to ensure that what is taught provides support for students in addressing all of these outcomes. Below is an example of a competency matrix taken from the AEC Handbook on Curriculum Design and Development in Higher Music Education.[4]

The curriculum							
Lessons and classes	Principal Study lesson	Chamber coaching	Orchestra	Historical studies	Theory/analysis	Aural	Professional preparation
Learning Outcome 1 Skills in artistic expression	•	•	•				
Learning Outcome 2 Repertoire skills	•	•	•	•			•
Learning Outcome 3 Ensemble skills		•	•				•
Learning Outcome 4 Practising and rehearsing skills	•	•	•				•
Learning Outcome 5 Reading skills	•	•	•		•	•	
Learning Outcome 6 Aural, creative and re-creative skills	•	•	•		•	•	
Learning Outcome 7 Verbal skills				•			•
Learning Outcome 8 Public performance skills	•	•					•

4 Curriculum Design and Development in Higher Music Education (AEC Publications, 2007), www.aecinfo.org/Publications

3.9 The same concept can be used to map assessments onto learning outcomes as follows (the bracketed examples would probably not be chosen for formal assessment of the learning outcome concerned):

Learning Outcome 1 Skills in artistic expression	•	•	(•)				
Learning Outcome 2 Repertoire skills	•	•	•	•			•
Learning Outcome 3 Ensemble skills		•	•				(•)
Learning Outcome 4 Practising and rehearsing skills		•	•				•
Learning Outcome 5 Reading skills	(•)	•	•	•	•		
Learning Outcome 6 Aural, creative and re-creative skills	(•)	•	•		•	•	
Learning Outcome 7 Verbal skills	(•)	•		•			•
Learning Outcome 8 Public performance skills	•	(•)	•				•
Assessments	Recital examination	Assessed chamber rehearsal	Assessed orchestral participation	Essay(s) on repertoire	Sight-reading tests	Aural tests	Assessed self-managed performance project

3.10 Because the skills being considered above are practical, the same is true of most of the assessment events. For theoretical skills, the balance would probably be more towards traditionally academic assessment events – essays, dissertations, oral examinations – although knowledge can be expressed through practical action and it is important in Higher Music Education for such 'embodied' knowledge to be recognised and evaluated. For generic skills, there might be a more-or-less even balance of practical and theoretical assessment events. More will be said about modes of assessment in the next chapter.

3.11 Among the practical assessments, some are clearly artificial and do nothing to disguise their *raison d'être* as assessments. An aural test, for example, measures skills which a musician may use on a daily basis but takes these out of their everyday context and puts them 'under the microscope', as it were, in an artificial testing situation. This approach is perfectly fine – and, indeed, desirable – for some assessments; others, though, benefit from being designed to resemble real-life situations. This is especially true when assessments are intended to measure integrated competences, rather than isolated skills. In the example given above, the more 'realistic' assessments are the recital examination, the assessed chamber rehearsal, the assessed orchestral participation and the assessed self-managed performance project. Because such assessments reproduce real-life contexts – or, in the case of project-based assessments, are themselves located in a real-life context – they are sometimes called 'context-based' assessments.

3.12 Whilst such context-based assessments all benefit from either re-creating a credible real-life musical situation – the recital, the chamber rehearsal, etc – or capitalising upon such situations as are taking place anyway – orchestral activity in which the student participates – they do raise issues as to whether the introduction of assessment into the event means that it is fundamentally altered as a result. The recital is a good example of this, where the mere presence of a panel or jury of assessors inevitably alters the whole dynamic of the occasion. When the assessors are outnumbered by a sizeable audience, this distortion can be minimised. However, not all students command the same numbers of loyal friends to make up an audience; this, in turn, introduces a disparity between the atmosphere of some assessed recitals and others. Performing to a near-empty hall can have a profoundly depressing effect, and yet it does not seem entirely fair to the assessment of a student's competences that, amongst all their other preparations, they should have taken steps to ensure that the hall is full (unless the capacity to muster a large audience for one's performances is itself to be regarded as a relevant competence for a successful musician!).

3.13 Perhaps an even greater problem arises in an area such as assessing orchestral participation. Here, it is very difficult to make a reliable judgement about the genuine musical contribution being made by any one student to the whole, other than, for example, in the case of a woodwind player with a major solo in a particular work. To evaluate, say, a rank-and-file string player individually would require a level of intrusion that would disrupt the very activity that was supposedly being measured. One commonly employed solution is to fall back upon more measurable issues – such as punctuality, reliability of attendance at rehearsals, etc – but these, although by no means irrelevant to the skills profile of the successful professional musician, are secondary in importance.

3.14 Balancing between musically realistic but logistically problematic assessments and those which permit reliable measurement but are sterile as musical events is a never-ending challenge for those involved in Higher Music Education. Another, similar challenge relates to how one measures students' success or failure in these quasi-realistic assessment situations.

3.15 In higher education more generally, it is common for the range of marks which delineate success to be broad; achieving a satisfactory standard means something very different from achieving near-perfection. But in the case of, say, a truly professional solo recital, a merely 'satisfactory' performance would feel like failure. The two worlds of higher education and music do not sit comfortably alongside one another in this respect. The dilemma could be expressed in a different way: the Bologna Declaration requires that students successfully completing the 1st Cycle should be at a level where, if not continuing to further cycles of study, they are ready to enter the profession. Musicians are only too well aware that being 'good enough in principle' to enter the profession by no means guarantees entry in practice to what is fundamentally a competitive market, rather than one driven by an individual's capacity to demonstrate a certain set of competences.

3.16 All of this brings us back to the point that assessment in Higher Music Education should first and foremost measure *learning*. Students should be assessed on what they have achieved, and in relation to the learning outcomes of the programme. Case-Study 3 shows one example where an institution has taken this principle to heart and developed an integrated scheme in which learning outcomes generate the learning goals, course content, assessment events and assessment criteria of a Masters programme.

3.17 The learning outcomes devised for a particular programme should be appropriately challenging, but should not be so driven by the competitive nature of the music profession as to mean that all but the most outstanding students must be considered inadequate. With this in mind, the language which describes the threshold standards of success should be framed in such a way that it refers in positive terms to what has been achieved, rather than emphasising the shortfalls or inadequacies which place it only just above the borderline for success. More will be said about this in Chapter 7, which deals with criteria for summative assessment.

3.18 Conversely, it is important that success which substantially exceeds the threshold level can be appropriately recorded and rewarded. Students in Higher Music Education are as eager for success in their programmes of study as any students, of course, but their ambitions are usually already focussed upon the higher goal of success in the profession, even before they enter the first HE cycle. One of the great rewards for all those involved in Higher Music Education is the encounters which it provides from time to time with student achievement that utterly transcends any scales of measurement related to study cycles and pass thresholds. An effective assessment system, and one which will earn the trust of musicians, needs to be able to do justice to such transcendent accomplishment, as well as to achievement which only just meets the threshold for success.

CHAPTER 4:

MODES OF ASSESSMENT; MODES OF LEARNING

Summary:

- For Higher Music Education, practical assessments are of paramount importance; but these comprise a variety of modes – individual, small group, large ensemble – and need to be complemented by other modes – written, viva voce, etc and a variety of formats – from short assignments to extended projects
- It is important to try and match modes to Learning Outcomes and to likely future professional situations – e.g. the extended solo recital format may be highly appropriate for some instruments and less so for others
- Different modes of assessment can include differences in terms of who is doing the assessing – self assessment, peer assessment, assessment by the main teacher, assessment by specialists not involved in teaching the student, assessment by internal examiners only, assessment by internal and external examiners
- It is important to understand that participating in, for example, peer assessment can be an additional learning experience for the students
- Student-centred assessment is a counterpart of student-centred learning
- The chapter ends with some comments about 3rd-cycle assessment
- See also case-Study 3

4.1 In the previous chapter, there was already some mention of different modes of assessment and how they might be used in conjunction with one another to capture and measure different types of student learning. This chapter deals with these issues in greater detail.

4.2 Higher Music Education aims first and foremost to produce high-quality, versatile musical practitioners, although it seeks to ensure that they will also be musicians with lively minds, a thirst for knowledge and good problem-solving skills. The former is essential for graduating students to be able to enter the competitive music profession, but the latter is also important if they are to have careers which grow and adapt to changing circumstances. The modes of assessment of Higher Music Education therefore need, above all, to test the quality and versatility of students' musicianship, while also evaluating a range of other supporting competences.

4.3 Few professional musicians operate just in one mode: successful performers may work as soloists, chamber and orchestral players and probably combine performing with other activity, often teaching; composers also frequently teach, as well as benefiting from being able to conduct or perform their own works. Only a minority of musicians spend all their working time focussing upon their core musical activity; most construct so-called 'portfolio careers' in which their core activity, though most important to their self-identity as musicians, is not necessarily the thing they spend most time doing, or for which they get paid most. And, of course, many musicians actually

prefer things this way and do not necessarily see the portfolio career as a 'second best' option. The curriculum and assessment strategies of Higher Music Education need to take account of this, even though it would be impossible to provide specific training for each of the huge variety of activities which musicians include within their portfolio careers.

4.4 Just as the shape of curricula tends to have a trajectory – growing from the embedding of technical security to encouraging full artistic integration and from an institutionally-determined pattern with many components to a student-driven focus in greater depth upon relatively fewer areas – so should the types of assessment employed develop and evolve throughout the student's programme of study. Assessment tasks will tend to become larger, less prescriptive and more integrated as the student's study progresses. They may also progress towards increasingly complex and dynamic 'real-life' situations, as discussed briefly in the previous chapter. All of this implies the need for a range of assessment modes and one which provides variety at any stage of a student's development, but also progression from one stage to the next.

4.5 To take the example, once again, of the recital examination, this format may be used at a variety of stages, often with increasing length being required at each successive stage. It may also be employed with a high degree of prescription as to repertoire or little or none at all – again, the tendency being to move in the direction of freedom and student choice. But before a student is assessed in a recital situation, they will often have undergone assessments more along the lines of the admissions audition, performing repertoire in a smaller space – usually a larger teaching room – and solely to their assessors, without any audience present. Either as part of such an event or separately, they will probably have been assessed in a variety of technical exercises appropriate to their instrument and to the main genre or style of their playing. For most classical styles, the student is on his or her own for these early examinations, other than being accompanied, where required, in the repertoire elements; for jazz and popular styles, a small ensemble format may be more appropriate, even from the earliest stages.

4.6 Early-stage assessments such as those described above tend to focus upon isolating and verifying skills that will then underpin in a more dynamic and integrated way the higher, more sophisticated competences. For example, technical proficiency remains an important aspect of a performer's competence at all levels of study and beyond but, in a recital examination, will be evaluated only insofar as it either allows effective musical communication or, if deficient, impedes it. The assumption will be that the student, having successfully progressed to the later stages of the programme, will previously have satisfactorily demonstrated in separate and specific tests their grasp of the underpinning skills.

4.7 To summarise the above, and extend it to other specialisms, a highly simplified and indicative scheme of possible assessment types and progression patterns is shown in the diagram below:

Student's specialism	Assessment type		
	Initial, underpinning	Intermediate	Final
Classical performer	- Technical examination - Performance of prescribed repertoire, studies, etc.	- Performance of mixture of prescribed and free repertoire, perhaps combined with some more advanced technical exercises	- Recital-style performance, with audience. Some prescriptions as to recital length, memorisation, etc. but freedom as to repertoire
Jazz/pop performer	- Examination of jazz modes/scales etc. - Performance of set number of improvised choruses on prescribed standards	- Group performance of mixture of prescribed and free repertoire, perhaps combined with some more advanced technical exercises	- Gig-style performance, with audience. Some prescriptions as to length of set, extent of individual improvisations, etc. but freedom as to repertoire
Composer	- Portfolio of exercises: compositions based on prescribed material/using prescribed techniques; arrangements, etc.	- Portfolio of compositions, perhaps with some prescription as to instrumentation to be used, duration of one or more pieces, etc.	- Portfolio of compositions. Some prescriptions as to overall duration, provision of recorded performances, etc. but otherwise complete freedom
Conductor	- Assessment of mastery of beat patterns, etc. - Prepared run-though of short prescribed work(s) using piano reduction	- Prepared and unprepared rehearsal/run-through of prescribed works with piano(s) or small instrumental/ vocal ensemble	-Orchestral/choral rehearsal and concert-style performance, with audience. Some choice as to repertoire

4.8 An interesting issue concerning progression arises in the case of students entering an institution at, say, 2nd-Cycle level having completed 1st-Cycle studies elsewhere. In this situation, and even with the tuning of curricula that has taken place as part of the Bologna Process, the security of the underpinning skills has to be taken on trust (although it may be inferred from the student's performance at entry audition). 2nd-Cycle programmes should, of course, build upon those at 1st-Cycle level, but there is often a temptation – and, it might be argued, a value – in briefly revisiting some of the more basic skills early in the new programme to confirm that they are indeed securely embedded and, where necessary, to arrange swift remedial work. Where such confirmation is carried out, it need not be in the form of formal assessment, but can be handled diagnostically as part of the teaching process.

4.9 As already seen, some genres set more store by individual performance than others, where ensemble performance is the norm of the genre. Equally, though, even within one genre, different instruments may be more or less suited to solo, chamber or ensemble performance. For example, other than in the hands of a very few international artists, classical solo recitals on instruments such as the trombone or double bass are rare; and yet such recitals are a common feature of final assessments in Higher Music Education institutions. Students preparing such

recitals have a drastically smaller dedicated solo repertoire from which to choose than pianists or violinists and such repertoire is generally either specially written for the exceptional international soloists mentioned above, or takes the form of concerti – or both. Outside these options, students are frequently dependent upon arrangements of works originally intended for other instruments, and therefore often beset by compromise when transferred to their instrument. Coherent and musically engrossing recital programmes are therefore a challenge to construct and disproportionately hard to perform. Moreover, they constitute a form of musical self-expression that most students of these instruments will rarely, if ever, employ again after progressing beyond student status.

4.10 The reasons for the continued use of the recital format with such instruments are partly historical, partly driven by a desire for parity between the assessments of different instruments and partly logistical, in that only one supporting performer – an accompanist – is usually required. But the principal reason is probably that the focus upon the individual and his or her solo playing, whether professionally 'realistic' or not, makes individually-targeted judgements as to his or her musical achievement easier. In this respect, the expertise developed by institutions specialising in jazz and popular styles, with their emphasis on ensemble-based assessment is a potentially valuable resource for all institutions.

4.11 With small ensemble performance, it should be possible for assessors to distinguish up to a point between the contributions of individuals to the whole. Nevertheless, the issues are not entirely straightforward, since the ensemble as a whole is constantly reacting to the effects of each individual contribution; a lapse by one player in a string quartet, for example, can mar the performance of the whole ensemble for several bars. Subject to any specific rulings on the matter in national education laws, ensemble assessments can potentially adopt any one of three approaches in response to this:

Approach	Rationale
Allocate the same mark to all members of the ensemble, based upon the overall performance	The individual members share responsibility for the overall quality of the performance and for supporting each other in their contributions
Allocate each member a separate mark, based upon their individual contribution	Despite this, individual achievement should be rewarded, especially since the mark may feed into an individual student's overall result. And it is a perfectly valid musical response to single out one member of an ensemble for particular praise
Allocate a single mark but allow for this to be inflected through a certain range (e.g. + or – 5%) to reflect individual contributions that are significantly stronger or weaker than the general level of the ensemble	Although based upon compromise, this is a way of addressing both the rationales given above

4.12 Once an ensemble reaches a size where a conductor is required, individual assessment becomes correspondingly more difficult. The problems of the assessment intruding on what it seeks to measure have already been noted; equally challenging are the logistics of mass individual assessment. Although this might lead one towards the one-mark-fits-all rationale, the problem with this is that the individual orchestral player carries less responsibility for the overall performance quality than the member of an undirected chamber ensemble. Key interpretational decisions are the responsibility of the conductor, as is the main responsibility for dealing with any problems that may arise during the performance. The assessment needs to be an evaluation of the player(s), not their conductor.

4.13 Of course, the conductor him- or herself can often provide very astute inside knowledge and feedback on how individual players have contributed, both in rehearsal and in performance. Against this, the conductor has a sufficiently demanding job to carry out without having to carry the burden of providing reliable assessment of each student's participation. All the same, conductors' comments can be a very useful component of a multi-faceted assessment strategy. Similarly, an individual student's teacher can often use their privileged knowledge to pick out strengths and weaknesses that might otherwise be overlooked in the student's contribution to large ensemble performances. So long as theirs is not the only input, for the sake of overall objectivity, they have a very valuable contribution to make.

4.14 Another resource that is not always valued as much as it might be is the opinions of fellow-students (peer assessment) or of the student him- or herself (self-assessment). In orchestras or choirs, students have a very clear sense of how those around them are contributing. This information can be a valuable component of an overall assessment picture. Indeed, in a situation where students know that they will be assessed by others, as well as assessing them, it can be more reliable than some might think as a main - or even sole - form of assessment. A kind of 'objectivity of equilibrium' emerges in which personalised generosity or severity is ironed out. Tests of peer assessment in which it is compared with evaluation by outside experts generally show high levels of correlation between the two – a result which has led some institutions to put a high degree of faith in this form of assessment.

4.15 An important side-benefit of peer assessment is that it usually sharpens the critical and analytical faculties of students engaged in it and enhances their appreciation of the issues and challenges that surround all assessments. It focuses their attention on how critical language can be used constructively or destructively and can make them more mature in their own receipt of constructive criticism. All of these skills are highly relevant to the effective professional musician – indeed, they often feature in the learning outcomes of Higher Music Education programmes – and in those programmes where peer assessment is widely used, coaching in its techniques often forms part of the curriculum and evaluation of students' performance as peer assessors part of the assessment regime.

4.16 There are similar benefits to be gained from the use of self-assessment, although the safeguard of the 'objectivity of equilibrium' is not available here. Students can find it more difficult to pitch the level of self-criticism appropriately than with peer-criticism but the more experience they gain of this exercise, the more they will mature in an important aspect of their musical self-awareness. Where an institution has made a commitment towards student-centred learning, it is therefore good if this can be matched by a readiness to involve the students in aspects of their own assessment. Self-assessment is rarely employed without some kind of external checks and balances. Two common forms which it may take are the student's self-critique in an oral, face-to-face, interview-style examination (usually known in the UK as a 'viva voce') of the so-called reflective diary which a student might have been keeping across the duration of a project. In both cases, someone else is ultimately assessing the quality of the student's self-assessment and they will generally have something else against which to measure it – for example, evidence from the project itself to set alongside the student's reflective diary.

4.17 At the outset of this chapter, the importance of students' having lively minds, a thirst for knowledge and good problem-solving skills was emphasised. Those areas of the curriculum which deal with more theoretical subjects have a key role to play in supporting the development of these skills. Correspondingly, the assessment formats of the essay, the seminar presentation, the worked-through stylistic composition, the analysis – written, graphic or annotated on the score – and so on, all have their part to play. These assessment exercises, and others like them, will almost certainly be used in the earlier stages of Higher Music Education programmes. Curricula tend to vary more in their later stages, some permitting students to concentrate in practical areas, others insisting upon some component of theoretical learning and assessment at all levels.

4.18 As was seen with practical assessments, those theoretical assessments employed in the later stages of programmes tend to be larger, more project-oriented and geared to likely professional situations and more integrated – often being combined in some way with practical elements. The reflective diary referred to above is itself a good example of a written, theoretically-oriented assessment tool which is usually intimately associated with a practical project. The diary has its own protocols and intellectual disciplines but is rooted in the student's own practical experience and exploration. The integration of theory and practice is a prominent objective among many institutions of Higher Music Education, as they continue to define, and refine, their distinctive position within the higher education landscape. Forms and modes of assessment which encourage, reflect and measure this integration are therefore of increasing relevance and importance.

4.19 The foregoing description has implicitly related mainly to 1st- and 2nd-Cycle programmes and Case-Study 3 which illustrates many of the points made in this chapter, is based upon a 2nd-Cycle programme. As 3rd-Cycle programmes become more common in Higher Music Education institutions, they bring with them their own traditions and developments in terms of assessment. The traditional Doctorate was assessed solely through one very substantial submission made at

the end of the student's study – the doctoral thesis. Several Higher Music education doctorates have preserved the concept of the single, terminal assessment but have expanded the idea of what the submission might contain to include compositions, musical editions, recordings of performances – even in some instances, a live performance scheduled to coincide with the viva-voce examination of the remaining, previously submitted, material. Even where practical and/or creative elements play an important role, most doctorates still preserve the requirement for a substantial written element, often one which articulates research questions and their answers arising out of the practice-based material submitted.

4.20 Especially in the case of composition-based doctoral submissions, there now exist examples of programmes where little, or even no, verbal exegesis is required. The argument goes that the research questions, and the solutions to them, should speak out from the musical substance of the compositions themselves and, often, that the way in which the different compositions submitted cast sidelights upon one another, developing some kind of musical narrative and/or dialogue, is an important part of the means by which the research ideas are communicated.

4.21 In a similar manner, a performance-based doctorate may employ a sequence of performance events, submitted as recordings or attended over a period of time by the examiners, with a view to these generating a narrative of embodied ideas and questions. This is a radical departure from the doctorate with a single, all-encompassing, final assessment, but not altogether out of line with developments in doctoral programmes across all disciplines towards the concept of a doctoral curriculum with its own sequential and cumulative assessment regime. Performance-based doctorates of this kind still demand written commentaries and are assessed on the quality of these, as well as that of their performances. Nevertheless, Higher Music Education in the post-Bologna era feels as if it is edging its way towards the artistic doctorate in which the music may, under certain circumstances, speak entirely for itself.

4.22 More information on third-cycle studies, the extent to which they, too, may be formulated in terms of learning outcomes and the formats of their assessment can be found in the AEC handbook on these studies.[5]

5 'Polifonia' Third Cycle Working Group (2007): *Guide to Third-Cycle Studies in Higher Music Education*. AEC. Utrecht.

ASSESSING PROGRESS; ASSESSING OUTCOMES

CHAPTER 5:
FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Summary:

- The twin roles of assessment – providing feedback into the learning experience and validating significant milestones in the learning experience
- It is important to differentiate between two types, although good summative assessment will also have a feedback role
- ***Formative assessment***: Can be relatively informal, but should be logged; often conducted by those directly involved in the learning & teaching process but with cross-checking; should disrupt the learning process as little as possible; its feedback should be prompt
- ***Summative assessment***: Has a necessary aspect of formality; must include assessors who are relatively distant from the learning & teaching process; according to national practice, may give these individuals a secondary, primary, or exclusive, role compared with the student's teacher; should be a target for learning – the rhythm of the learning process should therefore be geared towards some kind of punctuation at this point
- These types of assessment are linked to the concepts of assessing ***process*** and/or ***product***, but not identical. Formative assessment may pay more regard to process but is likely to include elements of product; summative assessment may examine aspects of process as well as product
- See also Case-Studies 4 & 5

5.1 Throughout this handbook, emphasis has been laid upon assessment's role in measuring learning. This measurement is useful in a variety of ways but these may essentially be reduced to two: feedback and validation. Assessment can provide information about how a student's learning is developing and where it should be focussed next; it can also provide 'proof' or confirmation of the stage at which that learning currently stands. In the first case, it is said to be ***formative*** – helping in the *formation* of the student's skills; in the latter, it is ***summative*** – providing a *summing-up* or *résumé* of the student's range and level of skills at a given point (usually one that corresponds to a widely-recognised stage or milestone in the framework of qualifications, such as the end of the first HE cycle).

5.2 The formative and summative roles of assessment are rarely completely exclusive, especially with the increasing expectation, in higher education and more generally, that any assessment will be accompanied by feedback. In earlier times, it often sufficed to say that a student had passed a particular summative assessment and was therefore entitled to receive the corresponding award, although there was generally acknowledgment that if the result was not a pass, some identification of where the deficiencies lay was required. Now, students generally expect a fuller, more descriptive, account of their success than simply being informed that they have passed.

Also, as qualifications come to be seen more explicitly as forming a 'ladder' of achievement, each summative terminal point, other than the last and very highest, becomes simultaneously a milestone on the larger learning journey, and one from which it is valuable to have feedback for the start of the next stage.

5.3 As well as summative assessments increasingly containing formative information to be fed back to the student, the summative aspect of what would formerly have been purely formative assessments has also increased. One of the driving forces here is modularisation, with its associated credit-rating of blocks of learning. In a modular, semesterised programme, every six-month block of successfully completed work takes the student a definitive step further towards their final award.

5.4 Of course, this does not mean that there is no longer differentiation between interim and final assessments; systems of levels, weightings, etc. can ensure that primary emphasis is still given to the all-important assessments carried out at the end of a programme. Nevertheless, a programme constructed of credit-rated units, with credits awarded once or twice per year, does mean that a student is regularly 'putting into the bank' certain numbers of credits which gradually accumulate into the total required for the award. Each 'deposit' represents a decisive and irreversible step towards the final qualification. Moreover, credit accumulation and transfer potentially mean that a quantity of credits earned which may not, in itself, be sufficient for any final qualification can still be used to help a student along their way to such a final qualification at a fresh institution.

5.5 A module of study, even if it lasts just a single semester, may well have some interim assessments prior to the summative one at its end which determines whether or not the credits for the module are awarded. These would clearly be more unequivocally formative. Even so, it is not uncommon for a module with more than one assessment to have the mark from each assessment contribute to the overall summative mark for the module according to some system of internal weighting (again, generally with the greatest weight given to the assessment(s) taking place at the end of the module). Wherever a contribution like this exists, however small, each assessment is finitely summative.

5.6 Once we reach the level of an interim assessment whose mark makes no contribution to the student's result for the module, or the programme, this can only have value in terms of the feedback it provides on the student's learning and is therefore formative. Such an assessment may be used at the start of a stage of study – for example, to evaluate the individual skill levels of a large cohort of students in order to group them into well-matched classes for a particular area of study. It may be used to gauge progress, especially in lengthier modules where summative assessments may be as long as a year apart. It may serve as a 'dry-run' for a summative assessment, helping the student to pinpoint any last-minute work required and familiarising them with the challenges of

the experience they are shortly to face. In all these instances, the usefulness of the assessment needs to be weighed against the extent to which it delays the start of learning or interrupts it. The less formal the assessment, the less likely it is to disrupt learning. On the other hand, if it is to help a student prepare for summative assessment, it must bear some resemblance to that assessment.

5.7 Formative assessment, as opposed to the informal checking of progress and provision of feedback that may take place virtually on a weekly basis as part of attentive teaching, does imply a stepping outside the teaching process and into the mindset of assessment. It may well be carried out by the teacher most directly involved in the student's learning – this will enhance the level of knowledge from which the feedback is generated – but many would argue that it should also include input from an assessor less directly involved in the learning process to cross-check the feedback against wider institutional standards (and, potentially, to provide feedback to the teacher on how well the teaching/learning dynamic seems to be flourishing, as well as to the student on their individual performance). Its marks and comments should be recorded; even if they do not contribute directly to final results, they may come to have uses beyond those primarily intended – for example, if a student subsequently falls ill, or suffers some other problem, data from a formative assessment might be taken into consideration as part of any strategy devised to safeguard the student's continuation of studies.

5.8 Feedback from formative assessment needs to be delivered promptly if it is to be of maximum benefit. Students respond best to feedback when it is fresh; if it includes recommendations for significant change, the sooner these are implemented the better; delivering feedback provides closure on the assessment and enables the students to concentrate once more upon learning; above all, students need to have time to take the feedback on board, and to assimilate and apply it, before they are next tested summatively.

5.9 Summative assessment carries the extra responsibility of saying something about a student to a wider audience, including those with no personal knowledge of the student, and across a broad timescale – potentially the entire span of a programme from which a student is graduating. Musicians with a qualification in Higher Music Education will still mostly gain professional opportunities on the basis of continuing to demonstrate their capabilities, whether through attending auditions or through one successful engagement leading to others. Nevertheless, their qualification may be used, for example, to determine the grade at which they are employed and remunerated as teachers. In the light of the Bologna reforms, a Bachelor, Masters or Doctoral qualification from a Higher Music Education institution will also be seen as having a certain general currency, in addition to what it may say about the award-holder's musical ability, and it may serve as an entry for that student to graduate professions other than music. It is therefore very important that summative assessments in Higher Music Education, and the qualifications they lead to, are robust, consistent and as widely-trusted as those in any discipline.

5.10 Summative assessment must therefore be conducted in a formal manner and with strong checks and balances for consistency and impartiality. As a result, it will generally be more complex and time-consuming than formative assessment and correspondingly more disruptive to the normal rhythm of teaching. Many institutions allocate specific weeks in the academic year to summative assessment and suspend teaching during these periods. Institutions of Higher Music Education may also have to consider issues such as their calendar of performances and whether this, too, needs to be suspended, or at least drastically reduced, at times of major summative assessments so that students can focus upon these. Given this level of intrusion, summative assessment, too, should not be over-applied; as discussed in Chapter 3, all that is needed is to ensure that students' progress and achievement against all the learning outcomes for the programme have been adequately tested.

5.11 Since learning and teaching are inevitably halted by summative assessments, many teachers and students use the rhythm of these punctuations as a way of structuring and pacing the learning itself. The aftermath of a major assessment is a good moment for taking stock; the span of weeks until the next determines a body of learning time for which proportionate targets can be set; the final weeks of this learning span can be intense and hard-driven, knowing that there will usually be some respite and recuperation immediately after the assessment and before the next phase of learning commences. In this respect, the teacher, especially in the student's main specialism, can act somewhat as a 'personal trainer', helping the student to arrive at the assessment in the best possible condition and mental preparedness to do well.

5.12 Impartiality is even more important in summative assessments than formative ones. Summative assessments are usually related to the mark and even the kind of final award which the student carries away from the institution. As a result, when it comes to summative assessment, the teacher most directly involved in an individual student's learning may either be given a limited role in that student's assessment or excluded from it altogether. This is by no means universal, however; in many national traditions, especially those in mainland Europe, the special knowledge possessed by the teacher is seen as a valuable resource within even a summative evaluation process and one to be given due weight – sometimes even priority. This is arguably an area where the special nature of Higher Music Education comes into play; in this discipline, impartiality must always be balanced against a necessary level of emotional engagement in the process of giving and receiving a musical performance.

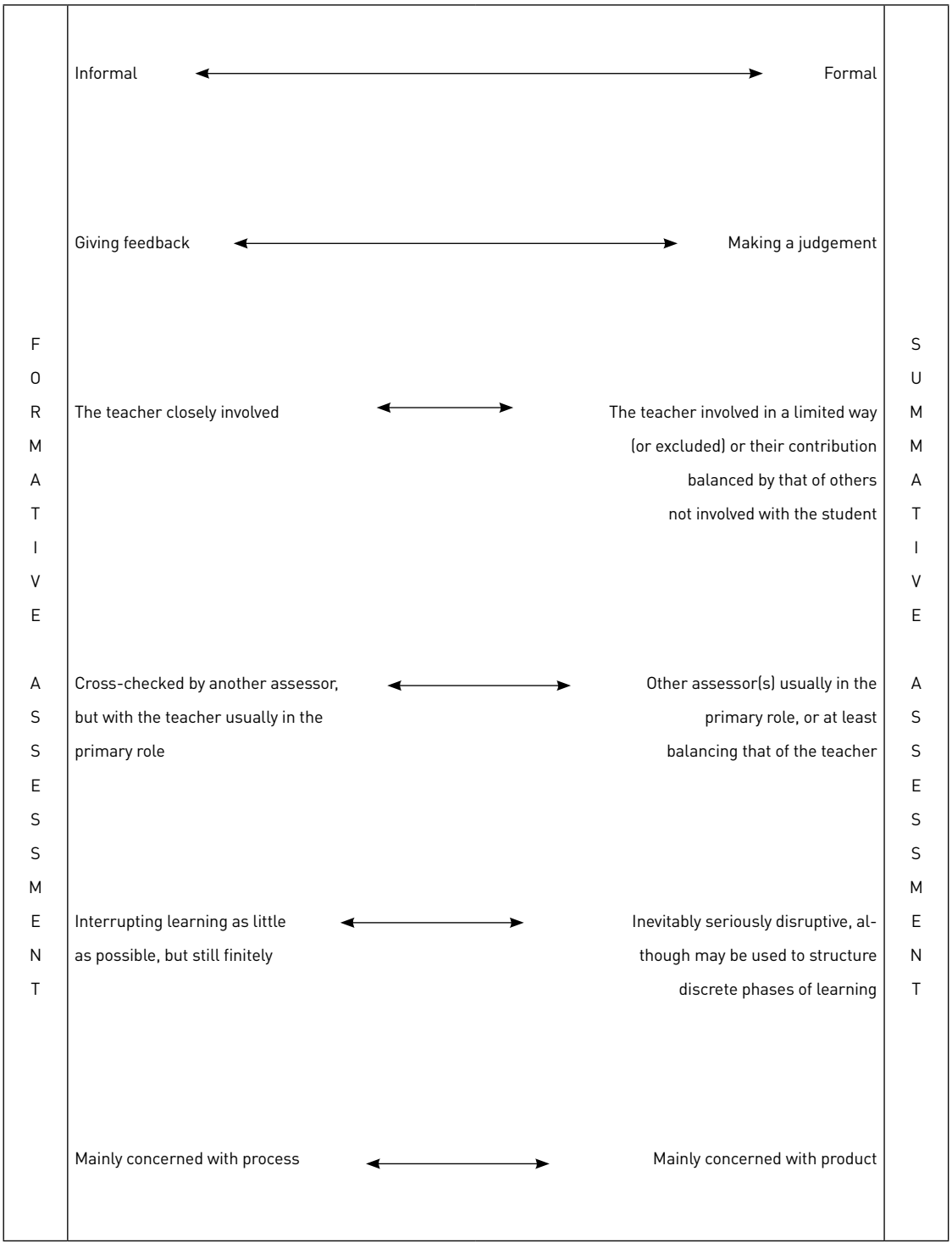
5.13 Nevertheless, even in Higher Music Education it is universally the case that some assessors with minimal prior knowledge of the student will be included among the members of a summative assessment panel or jury, whether alongside the student's teacher or not. They are there to provide evaluations based solely on what the student achieves on the day and in the assessment event, untainted by considerations of how well that student may have performed the previous week, or how much they have improved over the year. It is this that provides a basis of consistency for judgements between one student and another, between examinations in one instrumental faculty and another and between one year-group of students and another.

5.14 Important final summative assessments may also be scrutinised by individuals who are not themselves engaged in assessing the student but, instead, are evaluating the assessment process itself. These individuals, called External Examiners in the UK system where they are most commonly used, comment on the robustness or otherwise of what has gone on and, based upon their own, usually wide, experience, say whether marking standards are comparable with those for equivalent assessments in other institutions. Not all higher education traditions follow this practice but it has increasing relevance within a post-Bologna landscape of harmonised and supposedly comparable qualifications. More will be said about the personnel involved in summative assessments in Chapter 8, and about External Examiners in Chapter 9.

5.15 The emphasis in summative assessment upon the student's performance in the actual event means that such assessment is primarily concerned with ***product*** – what the student delivers on the day – rather than ***process*** – how they may have gone about making themselves capable of delivering it or how far they have travelled since the last assessment milestone in order to do so (the second is a sub-category of process that might more accurately be called *progress*). Conversely, formative assessment is often more concerned with process (and progress), measuring not only how far a student has travelled but, perhaps more crucially, how much further they must therefore travel in the time remaining until their next summative assessment in order to achieve the desired result.

5.16 Again, though, these distinctions are not hard and fast. The kind of assessment described in the last chapter where a student carries out a project, keeping a reflective diary from start to finish of the process, yields a product – the diary – which is simultaneously a record of progress and an account of how the student has used experience gained along the way to adapt and refine his or her original plans. Such an assessment, which may well form an important part of the final, summative evaluation of a student's achievement on the programme, will be judged not just on the quality of the project's outcome but also in terms of the quality of the student's reflective processes along the way. It will probably therefore require clear criteria for determining how these elements should be blended and balanced in the overall judgement, especially in the case of a good project outcome with only superficial reflection by the student on the process or a flawed outcome upon which the student has nevertheless reflected in a profound way. More will be said about the role of criteria in these, and similar, situations in Chapter 7.

5.17 The various points about formative and summative assessment made in this chapter may be summarised in the form of the following diagram. In it, the primary characteristics of each type of assessment are indicated at the left and right extremes, but the arrows emphasise the fact that many assessments lie somewhere on the continuum between the two types:


Informal
Formal
Giving feedback
Making a judgement
FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT
SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT
The teacher closely involved
The teacher involved in a limited way (or excluded) or their contribution balanced by that of others not involved with the student
Cross-checked by another assessor, but with the teacher usually in the primary role
Other assessor(s) usually in the primary role, or at least balancing that of the teacher
Interrupting learning as little as possible, but still finitely
Inevitably seriously disruptive, although may be used to structure discrete phases of learning
Mainly concerned with process
Mainly concerned with product

CHAPTER 6:
FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT: CRITERIA AND PERSONNEL

Summary:

- Criteria, their different types and uses: criterion-referenced, norm-referenced and ipsative assessments
- For formative assessment, it is important to be clear about the time still available until summative assessment, the number of further formative assessments, if any, and the original starting point of knowledge or skills
- Feedback should address areas to be commended and areas needing attention
- Teachers most closely associated with the learning process will be best able to judge the student's progress and their likely trajectory towards the point of summative assessment; a more detached view is a useful complement and safeguard
- Practical assessments: typical constitutions of examining panels
- Written assessments: typical checks and balances - double-marking and counter-marking
- Student peer assessment can be very useful – not least because in evaluating others, students learn how to evaluate themselves
- See also Case-Studies 4 & 5

6.1 Any assessment needs a shared understanding between those doing the assessing and those being assessed about the following basic questions:

- What is the assessment seeking to look for and measure?
- What evidence has been chosen to show that the assessment has found what it is looking for?
- Once found, how will that evidence be measured or calibrated in the assessment to decide whether what has been found is of a sufficient quality for the assessment to be passed?
- Where relevant, what would be the calibration for higher levels of success (e.g. a Pass with Distinction or a high score on a twenty-point scale)?

The answers to these questions will form the raw materials for a set of criteria applicable to the assessment.

6.2 In less formal assessment situations, the amount of written detail required for such criteria is correspondingly less; more formal situations require fuller documentation, both for consistency and because communication between assessors and students is less relaxed and conversational in a formal setting where they may not know each other well, or even at all, and information is therefore best given out to all parties beforehand. The kinds of criteria suitable for more formal, summative assessments will be discussed in the next chapter; here we are concerned with those for formative assessments.

6.3 Criteria can relate to some kind of fixed standard, they can be applied to the range of performance within a group of students or they can compare an individual student's performance with that which he or she achieved previously. The technical terms for these types are, respectively, *criterion-referenced*, *norm-referenced* and *ipsative*. In the examples of formative assessment given in the last chapter, assessments representing each of these types were referred to. An assessment to place students in groups of comparable ability level will be norm-referenced. If all the students in a particular year are unusually strong or weak, this makes no difference; they simply need to be placed in groups where they are compatible with one another. An interim assessment giving feedback on progress may be ipsative, concentrating on how much the student has improved, rather than how their previous or new achievement level corresponds to an external, fixed standard. Finally, an assessment which acts as a dry-run for a summative assessment will need to be criterion-referenced against the criteria for that assessment.

6.4 Obviously, the closer a formative assessment lies to a summative one, the more likely it is to be referenced to the criteria that will be used in the summative assessment. Earlier formative assessments, especially when they will be followed by others before the next major summative event, can afford to be more personalised in their feedback. One important personalised function of formative assessment can be as a diagnostic tool for students when making choices about options within a curriculum. It may be possible to organise such options with an 'induction' period at their beginning, during which students can sample them and at the end of which a diagnostic assessment can be administered. Such assessments, and the feedback they generate, will help students to make informed choices. They may also provide the institution with information upon which to base counselling and advice about alternative option choices.

6.5 As an example of the above, we might consider a situation where an institution offers a range of 2nd-Cycle programmes, some having an important theoretical element and some exclusively practical. Especially if the title of the award given at the end of these programmes differs according to their content, with a higher-sounding award corresponding to a programme with greater theoretical content, a student might be drawn towards this, feeling that the qualification they will gain will be more advantageous, even though their natural abilities lie more in the practical sphere. An induction phase and diagnostic test can be a very valuable way of ensuring that the final decision as to which path to follow is genuinely best for the student. Taking the questions posed at the beginning of the chapter, criteria for this assessment might be established as follows:

- *What is the assessment seeking to look for and measure?* This assessment is seeking to measure the student's suitability to pursue an option with a strong theoretical element
- *What evidence has been chosen to show that the assessment has found what it is looking for?* The evidence it should provide includes how well the student handles thoughts and ideas and how well they can express these, in writing as well as speech; it should also test some of the basic skills of scholarly writing – making footnotes, constructing a bibliography, etc.

- *Once found, how will that evidence be measured or calibrated in the assessment to decide whether what has been found is of a sufficient quality for the assessment to be passed?* The assessment will consider whether basic levels of competence have been achieved, but may also take into account how rapidly a student has progressed during the induction period
- *Where relevant, what would be the calibration for higher levels of success?* Since the purpose of the assessment is purely diagnostic, it can be marked on a simply pass/fail basis

6.6 A principle common to all feedback but no less so in the more informal context of formative assessment is to frame it primarily in terms of what the student has achieved, rather than concentrating exclusively on what he or she has failed to do. To stay with the diagnostic example given above, unless a student has already made up their mind to abandon the option, they will presumably apply themselves seriously to the assessment task and achieve something in the process. Good feedback will start from any individual strengths, before setting these in the context of the expected pass threshold. If the student has met or exceeded this threshold, the feedback will flow naturally from their individual achievements to the conclusion that they have passed; if they have not, it is important for them to understand their failure as 'an achievement that was not good enough in the context of the assessment', rather than a sign of wholesale rejection. Having said this, feedback in the case of a student who has not met the required threshold must confront this, and use words and phrases which reflect a level of achievement that was insufficient. The difficult balancing-act is to be simultaneously constructive and honest. Above all, it is vital not to confuse the desirable motive of emphasising the positive side of achievement with the undesirable outcome of offering insincere or unjustified compliments.

6.7 With formative feedback, descriptions of shortcomings can usually be couched in terms of identifying those areas needing attention. If, as indicated in the last chapter, the feedback is delivered in a timely manner, the student can act upon it and therefore feel able to channel criticism in a constructive way. Especially where the student's main teacher plays a central role in the assessment, there is also scope for the more formally-delivered feedback (usually cross-checked and approved by at least one co-examiner) to be explained and, where necessary, amplified during subsequent lessons.

6.8 This brings us to the question of the personnel commonly involved in formative assessments. In many European countries, it is regarded as acceptable – even desirable – for formative assessment to be provided by the student's teacher, operating autonomously. Other countries follow the principle that, as well as the student's teacher, there should normally be at least one further assessor, although it is rarely felt necessary for the assessing team or panel to be larger than this. This is a key difference between formative and summative assessments in the practical sphere. For summative practical assessments, a panel of three (since a non-even number allows for majority verdicts) is usually seen as the desirable minimum across all national practices, as will be discussed in Chapter 8.

6.9 Where more than one assessor is involved in formative assessments, there is usually still a sense of one being the main assessor and the second operating solely as a check or fail-safe. In formative practical assessments, and in events such as student seminar presentations, the second assessor needs to be present throughout so as to judge to full flavour of what takes place. For written assessments which, in a formative context, would normally be marked first by the main teacher, one of two approaches may be used. These are commonly referred to a *second marking* and *counter-marking*.

6.10 In second marking, the co-examiner studies and marks all the written assignments without being aware of any marks and comments given by the main teacher. This requires two copies of the assignment to be provided; it also means that the two assessors must confer subsequently to reach a final mark. The mark may simply be computed be an average of the two or the assessors may reach a new mark by consensus. In some circumstances, it may be felt reasonable for the student to receive both marks; in fact, this is less contentious where the assessment is formative than if it contributes to an overall result. Second marking is a thorough process and, because the co-examiner is marking 'blind' ensures impartiality. However, because it requires every assignment to be marked in detail by two assessors and then calls for a moderation session between the examiners, it is time-consuming. For this reason, it is sometimes reserved for more significant assessments contributing to an overall result, i.e. summative assessments.

6.11 With counter-marking, the co-examiner examines the scripts after they have been first-marked and therefore sees the teacher's comments and his or her mark as they make their review of the assignment. This approach can be thought to influence the second assessor's viewpoint unduly, but it has certain advantages in terms of ensuring that the assessment process is completed swiftly and feedback provided promptly. It is therefore well suited to formative assessments. Because it does not require a separate set of comments (which might turn out to duplicate – or even contradict the first set) counter-marking can usually be carried out more swiftly than second marking. What is more, in some counter-marking systems, it is felt to be sufficient for the co-examiner to begin by reviewing only a sample of the assignments. If the marks and comments on these agree with the co-examiner's view, the process can end there, making it still more swift and efficient; if differences of opinion start to emerge, the full batch of assignments will need to be reviewed. Obviously, even with counter-marking, disagreements between assessors will mean that they need to go through the same conferring process as with second marking. The difference is that this occurs only when needed.

6.12 *Peer evaluation* can be a very useful component of formative assessment, although it is often helpful for the teacher to act as a convenor or facilitator this, marshalling the responses to a student's performance from his or her peers, introducing counterbalancing remarks where necessary and summarising the prevailing view in the final feedback. Students are sensitive to the development of those around them and able to give a valuable perspective on the progress made by their

peers where an assessment has an ipsative component (see 6.3). The involvement of students in aspects of assessment, as well as the benefits for their own growth already mentioned, renders the process of assessment itself less remote and connects it more obviously for them to the learning process that it seeks to measure.

6.13 For similar reasons, *self-assessment* can be very valuable within many formative assessment processes. The student will, in any case, have their own view of where he or she stands in their development; they will almost certainly want to discuss formative feedback with their teacher and contribute their own opinions as part of this discussion. It makes good sense, therefore, to encourage them to formulate their own self-evaluation as a complement to the other input they receive, rather than simply a reaction to it. One of the benefits for the student is that the discipline of structuring their comments about their own performance encourages them to think in terms of their own criteria for success. Becoming more comfortable with the concept of assessment criteria, and realising the reasons for their sometimes rather impersonal and formulaic character, can be helpful when confronting the more elaborate types of criteria which tend to be associated with summative assessments and which form the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7:
SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT: CRITERIA

Summary:

- Criteria are especially important here because a) demonstrable consistency is vital in such assessments and b) external experts are more likely to be involved at this stage and need to have a way of calibrating their knowledge against institutional standards
- Consistency needs to be lateral (across all students in one year group) and longitudinal (from one year group to another)
- Criteria should link *threshold* Learning Outcomes to whatever is the Pass/Fail borderline of the marking system
- They should offer scope to acknowledge different kinds of failure, from the abject to the marginal, and different kinds of success, from borderline to outstanding.
- Because many assessments are of multi-faceted tasks, criteria may either be multi-faceted themselves or couched in terms of holistic verdicts that may be matched with a variety of different patterns of achievement (examples of criteria are given in appendix)
- Criteria are important tools in assessment but they should *serve* the judgements of the assessors rather than *governing* them
- See also Case-Studies 4 & 5

7.1 In summative assessments, there are a number of factors which make written criteria more critical to the effective operation of the assessment than in the case of formative assessment. They could be summarised as follows:

- *Formality*: the assessment is likely to be conducted with only a minimum of conversational exchange outside that which is part of the assessment itself. Written criteria reduce the need for supplementary verbal explanation. If there were significant extra spontaneous discussion between assessors and the student, this would compromise *consistency*

- *Consistency*: the assessment needs to be administered, as far as possible, in the same way to every student. Ideally, the only variable aspect between one assessment and another should be the student's own performance; since this variation will be used to measure students' performance against supposedly fixed standards and, inevitably, one student *again*st another on the basis of the rank ordering of the marks they receive, it is important that it is not distorted by other, unintentional variables. Written criteria provide a checklist for consistency. Inconsistency in the administering of the assessment would compromise *reliability*

- *Reliability*: a summative assessment needs to be trusted as reliable. A key part of this reliability is its capacity to produce the same result in relation to the same level of performance. In Higher Music Education, because many assessments are based on the essentially unique and complex

factors which go to make up the 'quality' of an individual student's performance, the question of what constitutes 'the same level of performance' is, in any case, problematic and subjective. This makes it all the more important that every aspect of an assessment which can be, is made as reliable and repeatable as possible. Giving assessors a framework of standardised written criteria within which to make their complex and individualised judgements helps them to go about each evaluation in broadly the same way. At the same time, the framework should not be so rigid as to make the assessors feel unable to carry out their work in a natural, musically-attuned way. Such rigidity would compromise *validity*

- *Validity*: summative assessments need genuinely to test the competences supposedly possessed by graduates who hold a particular qualification. The extent to which they do so is an indication of their validity. Validity and reliability might be seen as potentially in tension with one another in assessments. The more the one is pursued, the harder it can sometimes be to guarantee the other. However, a reliable assessment which doesn't, in the end, measure what it sets out to is no more valuable than one which genuinely focuses in on its true subject matter but cannot do so with reliability or consistency. The challenge is to find the optimum compromise. While the reliability of a musical assessment may be increased by having assessors with little or no prior knowledge of the student, its validity depends on their having appropriate expertise. This may often involve the institution using external specialists who, in turn need consistent – and therefore written – guidance as to the procedures and criteria used within the institution.

7.2 From the above, it is clear that not only are written criteria important *per se* but so is their quality. In reinforcing the reliability of an assessment, they should not get in the way of its being administered in a way that is valid. The question of validity will be addressed later in the chapter; first, though, it is worth delineating the various dimensions of reliability and consistency which summative assessment should attempt to achieve.

7.3 Two key aspects of reliability are the consistencies that may be called *lateral* and *longitudinal*. Assessments should be laterally consistent in the sense that a group of violin recitals, say, taking place at the same point in a programme should each be assessed in the same way. Equally, though, lateral consistency may need to be applied across assessments which, although equivalent in terms of where they come in a programme and how important they are, cannot all be operated identically. For example, a one-hour piano solo recital played entirely from memory and a recital of the same length and with the same memory requirements for, say, solo trumpet are not laterally consistent in their demands. Nor, for that matter, are they laterally consistent in terms of their relevance to the professional competence of the two players. Assessments appropriate to each instrument need to be devised but they also need to be tested for their equivalence. Equivalence, rather than literal consistency, therefore becomes the criterion, and decisions about equivalence will need to be taken at a level where representatives of each area are involved, along with senior staff within the institution. Institutions may feel that they wish to bring in external experts for

decisions such as these, or even operate in a coordinated way with other institutions to establish a shared practice common to all. Indeed, there are some areas of consistency where procedures and criteria may be imposed externally by government agencies, accrediting bodies, etc.

7.4 And, of course, the principle of lateral consistency should be seen to apply across institutions as well as across different instrumental types. Especially in the post-Bologna environment, and with the formal confirmation of the establishment of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the expectation of what a student with, say a 2nd-Cycle qualification in performance should be capable of should be reasonably clear and stable. This should include expecting that two performers who hold such a qualification, one of them jazz- and one classically-oriented, should have performing competences which, although potentially very different, are in a fundamental sense equivalent.

7.5 As well as this lateral consistency, however, there is a need for longitudinal consistency. This means that students being examined one year should feel confident that they will be marked in broadly the same way as their counterparts the previous year and those who will take the same assessment in subsequent years. This does not necessarily mean that the assessment must be criterion-referenced; there is a consistency in saying, for example, that in every year, only the highest 10% of marks will be awarded the top grade. Nevertheless, longitudinal consistency is probably best understood when the marks from year to year are referenced to the same, or equivalent, criteria. Longitudinal consistency in every piece of summative assessment ensures that what it means to have gained a 1st-Cycle qualification, for example, will neither be inflated nor devalued over time, nor fluctuate irregularly.

7.6 Relating assessments to learning outcomes and constructing criteria accordingly is an important way of building in consistency at an institutional level. If an institution's learning outcomes are also related to sectoral, national or pan-European outcomes, the inter-institutional consistencies are also reinforced. As already indicated, Case-Study 3 shows these kinds of processes in action.

7.7 Of course, this does not mean that recognised, often historical, hierarchies among institutions, with some having acknowledged international status and frequently producing graduates who emerge onto the world stage while others enjoy, say, good regional reputations, will be eroded. Shared learning outcomes establish a consensus about what is expected of the 'typical' student; they do not set some kind of ceiling upon student achievement that brings al institutions down to the same, universally attainable, level.

7.8 For this reason, an institution's assessment criteria should, above all, seek to define parameters for determining, in that institution's specific context, the threshold between success and failure that relates to the appropriate external standard or benchmark. This is no easy task. To take just one issue, a student's performance in an assessment is rarely consistently good or bad throughout or equally strong or weak in every aspect. Especially in practical assessments, it may often be

necessary to place in rank order students whose performances were all in the region of the Pass/Fail threshold, but widely different from one another, as in the following three examples:

Student A:

> Good in the first part of the assessment, but lacked stamina, lost concentration and could not maintain standard. Poor by the end.

Student B:

> Technically assured but lacking in interpretational understanding or flair. Consistent, but uninspiring throughout

Student C:

> Inconsistent from one part of the assessment to the next. Flashes of excellence counterbalanced by inexplicably poor performance. Possibly affected by nerves.

Assessors faced with this task are not comparing like-with-like. They have to decide, for example, whether lack of stamina (which is an issue which will affect every extended performance the student gives) is a more serious shortcoming than nerves (which may come and go according to the performing situation). They must make a comparative judgement between two performances which mix highs and lows in different ways and one which lies between these extremes throughout. They must decide whether, if a student can show some achievement that is comfortably above the borderline for success, it is reasonable to fail them overall for moments in the assessment, or aspects of it, which unquestionably fell below this borderline. Case-Study 8, although mainly concerned with assessment and levels, also tackles some of these issues.

7.9 Well-written criteria can mean that not all these decisions have to be taken by the assessors then-and-there. Such criteria can offer guidelines which not only reduce the time needed to debate these issues in the live examination situation but also make it more likely that different panels will come to similar conclusions. They cannot – and should not attempt to – describe every possible situation and offer a hard and fast solution for it, but they can shape the 'landscape' of thought within which the assessors will come to their own conclusions.

7.10 Although assessment decisions that lie around the borderline between success and failure are generally the hardest that assessors have to make, there are similar issues surrounding differentiating between performances at the higher end of success and, indeed, in the lower regions of failure. Well-written criteria should be carefully graded across the whole spectrum of success and failure so that assessors are guided towards the appropriate band within this spectrum in which to place a student. In this context, it is important to remember that different grading systems can have dramatically different numbers of individual gradations within them, ranging from the one hundred divisions of the percentage scale, through twenty-point scales to scales with five gradations of pass and one or two of failure – and to the ultimate, binary Pass/Fail scheme. In practice, most criteria use somewhere between five and ten categories

of pass – it would be madness, for example, to attempt to match every percentage point against a corresponding criterion, although this does not stop assessors working within a percentage scheme sometimes debating intensely over whether a particular student's performance is worth, say, 63 or 64%!

7.11 Not only does the extent to which the grading scheme is coarsely- or finely-grained affect the range of criteria needed. Many schemes have idiosyncratic characteristics in terms of where particular thresholds of success may lie. For example, the percentage scale used in the UK has an important threshold of excellence at 70%. Marks at this level or higher are only awarded to relatively few students. By contrast most students being marked within a twenty-point scale and given a mark of 14 (the proportional equivalent of 70%) would probably feel disappointed, knowing that they had fallen short of the conception of excellence associated with that scheme.

7.12 It is disparities such as this that caused designers of the ECTS Grading Table to use the distribution of student marks, rather than actual numerical equivalences, as the basis of the scheme's method for converting from one national grading scheme to another. It is more fair and 'accurate', when converting, to say that a student is in, say, the top 10% of marks than that their mark was 75%; in a scheme where the threshold for the top 10% of students would be in the region of 18 out of 20, 75% would then equate to 18, rather than the considerably lower numerical equivalent of 15. A simplified version of the ECTS Grading Table was produced in February 2009. Further details concerning it can be found in Annex 3 of the ECTS User's Guide.[6]

7.13 Because the pattern of strengths and weaknesses shown by a student throughout an assessment can take many forms, some schemes of criteria divide what is to be assessed into different parameters and invite the assessors to allocate marks within each of these parameter-categories before combining the results to produce a composite score. We have already seen in Chapter 3 how a multi-faceted assessment task such as performing an entire recital can not only be seen in terms of a three-part division into technique, interpretation and presentation but may even be sub-divided many more times than this in terms of how it addresses a whole list of learning outcomes. Scoring the assessment according to each of these outcomes and then combining the scores is certainly one feasible assessment approach; the individual elements can be weighted in the combination process according to the relative importance that they are felt to have.

7.14 The advantage of such an approach is its adaptability to a range of diverse situations and its capacity to score these in a way that eventually brings them together onto a single linear scale. Its disadvantages are that it multiplies the number of scoring events required in an individual assessment and, perhaps more importantly, that it can feel mechanistic and 'unmusical'. We tend to react to music holistically, not compartmentalised into its parameters, and an assessment method which reduces this holistic phenomenon to a series of mathematical formulae can feel alien, even if it can be shown to function effectively.

6 ECTS User's Guide, http//ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/ects/guide_en.pdf

7.15 In practice, a subdivided scheme of assessment criteria can probably function effectively with up to three divisions. Beyond this, the mechanistic and repetitive aspects of the marking process can quickly become counter-productive. Case-Study 8 describes a scheme for practical examinations with three subdivisions, into technique, interpretation and presentation. For written assignments, a similar division might be used between the quality of the actual content, quality of research (evidenced by features such as an extensive, relevant bibliography and properly constructed footnotes) and quality of expression and presentation.

7.16 Between unified, holistic criteria and ones which function with subdivisions, scored separately and totalled according to a mathematical formula, it is possible to have multi-faceted criteria which serve simply as a checklist. They can offer a sequential guide to assessment panels through the range of factors to be considered, thereby helping to ensure an underlying similarity of approach within each assessment, while still working on the assumption that just one mark, arrived at holistically, will emerge at the end of the process. This approach can be a popular and effective compromise.

7.17 Assessors will differ in how comfortable they feel with written criteria. Some prefer them to be minimal – perhaps single-word descriptors for each grading category – others welcome greater detail and the verbal 'fleshing out' of what each category might imply. As an example, here are three single-word descriptors taken from a set of criteria, alongside the kind of fuller descriptions that might be used in the context of a recital examination:

Extremely Good	A performance showing a very high level of achievement in the areas of technique, musical imagination and projection, where either the standard across all of these is **extremely good** or at least one of them is excellent
Very good	A performance showing a high level of achievement in the areas of technique, musical imagination and projection, where either the standard across all of these is **very good** or at least one of them is extremely good
Good	A performance showing considerable achievement in the areas of technique, musical imagination or projection, where either the standard across all of these is **good** or one of them is especially good in relation to the others

Whatever these preferences, it is more-or-less universally accepted now (especially at the higher levels of educational policy-making, as opposed to the opinions of some of those working 'on the ground' in assessment situations) that written criteria are necessary. There must be some explicit common basis of understanding between assessors, students and their teachers about the reference points from which a particular assessment decision was derived, even if each process of arriving at each decision is as unique as the performance which it evaluates.

7.18 The presence of written criteria means that any written feedback given by assessors alongside the mark or grade awarded needs to take them into account. If a performance is graded in the category 'Good' but an aspect of it is described in the feedback as 'excellent', where that word is also used as a descriptor for a higher overall category, it is important that the relationship between the parts and the whole is made clear. Otherwise, the student may be confused and disappointed by the feedback, rather than enlightened by it, wondering why they did not receive the overall grade corresponding to 'excellent'. There are innumerable ways in which confusion and conflicts may arise around assessments and it is important to try and ensure that these are not compounded by any lack of precision, or attention to nuance, in how the language of evaluation is used. Chapter 12 will deal with the range of ways in which conflicting views may arise around assessments, as well as with how to try to avoid this happening, and what steps may be taken if it does.

7.19 Perhaps the most important final point here is that criteria should not be allowed to constrain assessors in ways that feel unnatural or uncomfortable. They are tools to aid consistency and promote shared understanding but they are no substitute for the expert judgement of the assessors. As we have seen, they cannot anticipate all eventualities and they therefore merely set the environment for decision-making, rather than generating the actual decisions. In most assessing situations, good criteria will feel relatively unobtrusive, while generally helping the assessment process to proceed in a regular, patterned way. Where a decision is unclear or where viewpoints differ, they can often help to turn the assessors' discussions towards a final resolution. However, assessors must always feel that they have the discretion, in exceptional cases, to depart from strict adherence to the letter of criteria if there is an obvious and uncontroversial verdict available to them which better reflects their spirit.

7.20 This element of discretion represents just one aspect of the considerable burden of responsibility that rests upon assessors. The kinds of individuals they are likely to be, what kinds of expertise they should possess and how they may be combined for summative assessments to create teams whose strength is greater than the sum of its parts is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 8:
SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT: PERSONNEL

Summary:

- Independence is important in summative assessments since this is more likely to lead to lateral consistency
- Summative assessments are normally related to outcomes, rather than process; where process is also involved, it is important that this, too, is subjected to independent scrutiny
- Assessment teams often include members internal and external to the institution, the latter especially where the assessment is at the final point where the qualification is awarded
- For key final assessments, especially in the practical area, a minimum of three assessors is desirable
- For the assessment of written work, blind double marking, with external sampling and review is generally sufficient
- With three or more assessors, the principal of inter-subjectivity begins to apply – individual preferences become ironed out and a quasi-objectivity emerges at the meta-level
- See also Case-Study 6

8.1 The importance of lateral consistency – ensuring that students undertaking like, or comparable, assessments are treated in a like or comparable way – was discussed in the last chapter. For summative assessments, the involvement in the assessment process of personnel who are independent is widely seen as one of the key ways of ensuring such consistency. This view does require some further examination, though, because, while independent assessors can help to ensure that all students are treated in the *same* way, this may not always lead to truly *comparable* treatment for each student. There are circumstances where it could be argued that treating a student fairly depends on knowing more about them than that which shows at the moment of an assessment event or through the words of a written assignment. For some students, the journey to demonstrating a particular learning outcome may involve far greater determination, sacrifice and personal conquest than for others.

8.2 This was the reason for the main teacher's involvement being seen as important in formative assessment. In many countries, it is also seen as an argument for including the main teacher in summative assessment. The UK is, if anything, rather out of step with the rest of Europe on this issue; nevertheless, since this handbook is written by an author steeped in the UK tradition, what follows is an attempt to balance an objective survey of all approaches with a presentation of the rationale for the approach which minimises the influence of the teacher upon summative assessments.

8.3 The role of formative assessment in providing feedback to the student and the extent to which it is *ipsative* – measuring the student's own progress as much as mapping their achievement onto

external criteria – makes the involvement of the main teacher appropriate and even desirable. With summative assessment, however, the balance shifts towards criterion-referenced assessment and the impartial and objective viewpoint that this requires (although more will be said about objectivity *versus* subjectivity later in this chapter). By this reasoning, the logical starting point of summative assessment is therefore for the assessors to evaluate what the student presents to them with only minimal knowledge of personal factors relating to that student. This is in line with the fact that, as already indicated, the focus of summative assessment is generally upon product, rather than upon the process - or processes - leading up to that particular product.

8.4 An extreme example of this focussing upon product with minimal contextual information is the anonymising of written examination papers, where students are given a reference number and put this, rather than their name, on the paper. Such an approach seeks to eliminate all possible prejudice, whether personal or even, for example, resulting from gender bias on the part of the examiner. In many of the assessments specific to Higher Music Education, such anonymity is impossible, and the achievement being measured is, in any case, more personal and idiosyncratic to the student than, say, in a scientific discipline. As a result, anonymising procedures are rare in the discipline and where they do occur, are usually the result of their being a universal and compulsory practice within a larger, multi-disciplinary institution.

8.5 Even so, it is as important in the discipline of Higher Music Education as in any other to guard against possible distortions arising from bias or prejudice on the part of assessors. This is why teams or panels for summative assessments are generally larger than for formative ones and place greater emphasis upon input from assessors with the least possible prior personal knowledge of the student. Bias is therefore minimised in any individual case and, insofar as some bias may remain, cancelled out amongst the differing perspectives of the assessors involved.

8.6 Where a student's personal circumstances may have an important bearing upon their performance in a summative assessment, this can still be addressed through the official systems and channels employed by the institution for registering such circumstances. For example, a student with a disability may require more time for a given assessment than an able-bodied student. They should notify the institution so that this can be arranged in advance; it is better that more time be given but the student be otherwise treated exactly the same as others than that some allowance should have to be made for their completing less in the same time as others. Adjustments such as this do not require the presence of the student's teacher to be taken into account, and there is a strong argument to say that deciding on them should not be made an additional responsibility of the assessors themselves, occupied as they are with the musical judgements they need to make.

8.7 Most personal circumstances should be known well in advance of important summative assessments, enabling special arrangements to be made or, if necessary, the assessment to be

postponed. Where, exceptionally, something arises on the day, or even during the course of the assessment, this should be reported immediately afterwards and the matter considered by an appropriate body of the institution which can examine all the facts at greater leisure and ensure that its decision balances the interests of the one student with fairness to all. Again, the actual assessors are not in the best position to take such issues into account when fully occupied with the normal assessment process. The student's teacher might well be in a privileged position (having spoken to the student just before the assessment or recognising something amiss that might not be perceptible to an assessor unfamiliar with the student). Even so, their raising the issue during the course of the assessment could be destabilising to the process, as much as informative to it, and could well make it harder to ensure a balance between compassion and consistency.

8.8 Even where summative assessments do concern themselves with process as well as product, this usually means a more objective concern with aspects of that process – and one which should therefore be applicable comparably to all students. An assignment based upon a project and associated reflective diary, for example, although it cannot avoid offering assessors insights into the personal circumstances and unfolding narrative of the student compiling the diary, is concerned with how issues are engaged with, rather than the nature or severity of those issues. With this in mind, it is helpful for at least one assessor with only limited knowledge of the student to have some involvement in the project itself, or for material such as DVD footage to be available to assessors.

8.9 It is not always easy for assessors with appropriate expertise but with the necessary independence from the student to be found within one institution. Especially in small specialist areas, there may be only one expert within the institution who, almost by definition, will probably have been the student's main teacher. In a situation such as this, and where the usual practice is to use independent assessors, it is essential to draw upon the expertise of individuals outside the institution to maintain a uniformity of practice across all students. Even where independent internal experts can be found, however, using externals in addition to these adds an extra level of objectivity to the process and shows that the institution is ready to open itself up to external scrutiny – in terms of the standards it applies to students' achievement and the way in which it operates its assessment procedures. Using external experts across all subject areas also removes a possible lateral inconsistency by which students in small specialist areas might end up being examined by differently constituted panels from those in larger specialisms with greater numbers of internal staff.

8.10 External specialists bring objectivity but they will be relatively unfamiliar with an institution's internal procedures. If their main work is at another institution, they may consciously or unconsciously transpose that institution's ways of operating to their external role. For this reason, there needs always to be a balancing element of local knowledge within the assessing team.

What starts to emerge, therefore, is a pattern where different assessors have finitely different roles, according to their background and main expertise. Ideally, one might wish for all of the following roles to be represented within a panel at a minimum:

- A specialist who is familiar with standards and procedures at the institution but who has minimal personal knowledge of the student
- A specialist who is external to the institution but who preferably has a general familiarity with standards and procedures in Higher Music Education
- An experienced examiner, not necessarily a specialist in the area being examined, who has deep knowledge of institutional procedures and wide familiarity with institutional standards and procedures in other specialisms

8.11 Such a spread of roles might be achievable with only two assessors, one fulfilling the first and third, but it is probably preferable to have a minimum of three individuals. It is also helpful to have an odd number of assessors to avoid the danger of stalemate where opinions are divided. Of course, an assessment team could have more than three members, with correspondingly greater cancelling out of any individual prejudices, but factors such as cost and the logistics of finding dates and times which suit every member of a larger team then start to come into play. It would harm lateral consistency if some students were examined by significantly larger panels than others.

8.12 It is important for each of the assessors to be clear about his or her particular role; it is similarly important for this to be understood by students and by their teachers. Published guidelines, copies of which are provided to externals ahead of their examining visits, are a helpful tool to promote this understanding. Case-Study 6 gives details of how a summative assessment panel in one institution is constituted and, for example, the special role of the Chair. Meanwhile, an example of the kind of material which might be sent out to externals may be found in Case-Study 7. Having a panel with differentiated roles amongst its members should not be confused with these different assessors having greater or lesser status. On the contrary, each of the three roles identified above has a stronger and a weaker aspect, making all three evenly balanced overall. This could be summarised diagrammatically as follows:

Role	Stronger aspect	Weaker aspect
Internal Specialist	Institutional knowledge in specialist area	Close to fellow teachers and their students
External Specialist	Complementary knowledge in specialist area, less influenced by local loyalties	Less familiar with institutional procedures
Experienced Generalist	Deep institutional knowledge across a range of specialisms	Not necessarily expert in the particular area being examined

8.13 With practical assessments, all three assessors, including the external, ideally need to be present at the event when it takes place. An external assessor may review recordings of a performance but they are then assessing something which is qualitatively different from the live performance itself – in just the same way that, for all of us, listening to a CD of a live performance is not the same thing as going to that concert and being part of the whole experience in the same time- and space-frame as the performer. An external who is assessing on the basis of a recording will also normally be adding their viewpoint after internals have already come to a provisional decision. A process such as this can work if it is conceived as a kind of checking, review or moderation, but not as part of the assessment process itself.

8.14 In written assessments, by contrast, there is no reason why an external may not examine, in their own time, materials sent out to them and then submit their proposed marks and comments. Final agreement upon marks will still be necessary, and may be best carried out in a face-to-face meeting, but such a meeting can focus solely upon those cases which require further discussion. In a parallel to the formative marking process, the external may review a sample of written work, rather than examining every script. For summative assessments, though, it is important that internal marking is to a blind, double-marking procedure, rather than based upon counter-marking.

8.15 The use of three or more assessors for each summative assessment does not remove the subjective bias that may exist in any one individual, but it does make it likely that any one voice being raised in a prejudiced way will be outnumbered. The fact that not all the assessors will be close colleagues also helps to add a formality to proceedings and encourages everyone concerned to put aside inappropriate personal considerations. However, the assessors must bring their own musical sensibilities to the examining process; without these, their very expertise is compromised. Therefore, perhaps the most important aspect conferred by having a minimum of three assessors is the phenomenon of inter-subjectivity.

8.16 A widely available definition of inter-subjectivity runs as follows:

'Each individual is a subject, and must subjectively experience the physical world. Each subject has a different perspective and point of view on various aspects of the world. However, by sharing their comparable experiences intersubjectively, individuals may gain an increasingly accurate understanding of the world. In this way, many different subjective experiences can come together to form intersubjective ones that are less likely to be prone to individual bias or gaps in knowledge.'[7]

This echoes the remarks about bias already made above. However, inter-subjectivity also introduces the idea of *congruence* and *incongruence* as being important in shaping consensus. The less one person's account 'fits' with another's, the less congruence it has and the less inter-subjective agreement is produced. Inter-subjectivity works against more extreme or 'incongruent' views and reinforces those that are congruent. It therefore smoothes out the more idiosyncratic aspects of subjectivity while still depending upon a number of subjective inputs for its processes

7 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intersubjective_verifiability

to work. In some ways, it is therefore related to the more everyday idea of 'common sense' – the understanding that most of us would share about something. Perhaps the key difference in the context of the assessment procedures being discussed is that inter-subjectivity represents an understanding that may be shared, but by a special, and therefore 'uncommon' group of individuals, selected for their musical expertise.

8.17 Because assessors in Higher Music Education are assessing young musicians who themselves already have a measure of musical experience and expertise, and are passing judgements on the students of teachers whose experience and expertise will usually be similar to their own, much of the time their inter-subjective judgement is likely to produce results that seem 'congruent' to this wider audience. However, an individual student and his or her teacher are bound to experience that student's assessment from a very particular perspective – one that may contain significant 'incongruences' compared with the way the assessors experience it. That is why there will always be dissatisfaction and controversy about some of the judgements, marks and feedback provided by assessors. The final section of this handbook will be concerned with the various quality assurance arrangements which can be installed around assessments to try and minimise controversy and to help deal with it when it arises.

ASSESSMENT, QUALITY ASSURANCE AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

CHAPTER 9:
MODERATION AND EXTERNAL BENCHMARKING

Summary:

- Assessors should themselves be operating with an eye to benchmarks and consistency. However, it is often helpful to have different personnel involved specifically to consider this aspect. By being aloof from the assessment process itself, these individuals can monitor it and take a broader view than those immersed in the process
- Moderation may be internal or external or both; for assessments at the terminal point of qualifications, it is advisable to have some form of external moderation
- Assessors and moderators must have clear ideas of their respective roles and where, if anywhere, the power of veto or overruling may lie
- See also Case-Study 7

9.1 As has been seen, assessors have a busy and demanding role to fulfil, especially when they are examining practical events, which take place in real time and are usually scheduled one after another in a way that demands strict timekeeping. Assessors will obviously always try to do their work to as high a level of quality as possible, but they themselves are not in the best position to evaluate or measure how far they have succeeded in this. A complete quality assurance system therefore benefits from another level of evaluation, with individuals being able to look in on every aspect of the assessment process without themselves being immersed in it.

9.2 These individuals can confirm whether processes have been secure, consistent and fair and that the standards expected of students are consistent with those across the sector, but they can also make suggestions as to where procedures might be adapted to make them more reliable and robust. The former input can make an important contribution to the quality assurance procedures of the institution; the latter can play a major role in quality enhancement.

9.3 The process whereby these individuals confirm fairness and consistency is generally called *moderation*, while the comparing with broader standards (or benchmarks) is often described as *external benchmarking*. Quality assurance and enhancement processes would normally be expected to address both these dimensions. Of these two processes, and at the time of writing this handbook, moderation systems involving individuals specifically dedicated to this task are arguably more an embedded part of UK practice than they are in that of other countries. As a result, much of what follows in this chapter may feel even more specifically related to the UK situation than the rest of the handbook. The intention is not to suggest that those in other countries should fall in line with the actual processes described here but, rather, that they might wish to consider the principles involved and, perhaps, evolve procedures of their own to address them.

9.4 The kind of moderation that is common in UK practice may be carried out, in part, by internal colleagues. For example, having a colleague from the string department observing assessments taking place in the woodwind department can offer a comparison between expectations and procedures in the two departments which is interesting and potentially beneficial to both. As long as every department is moderated, as well as providing a moderator, the process need not feel unequal or interfering.

9.5 Internal moderation may be relatively informal. Moderators and assessors are likely to be known to one another and undue formality would not be appropriate. At the same time, for the process to have value, it must be entered into seriously by all concerned. It is important to have some written trace of the verdict of the moderation, both to record that it has taken place and to ensure that any recommendations can be fed into processes of review and enhancement. A simple pro forma can reduce the amount of writing required and introduce an element of standardisation between different moderators. A typical format and set of issues might be as follows:

1. The assessment was carried out in a well-organised manner and in accordance with the procedures described in the institution's documentation

1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree

2. The assessors worked effectively together and reached their decisions in a balanced way

1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree

3. The marks/grades awarded were in line with the criteria provided

1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree

4. The marking was neither too generous nor too severe overall

1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree

5. In general, the relative marks from one student to another seemed appropriate

1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree

Any other comments:

9.6 To be fully credible, though, moderation should ideally include an external perspective. And when it comes to the process of external benchmarking, required in some countries although not systematically practised in others, such an external perspective is essential, since even an internal colleague who is richly informed about external standards cannot be seen to be objective when claiming, on the basis of that wide knowledge, that their own institution compares well with others. The fact that it *is* their own institution makes true impartiality impossible. Only by external scrutiny and corroboration can an institution demonstrate unequivocally that it is meeting, or surpassing, external benchmarks. Such a demonstration should also be repeated periodically to show that it continues to be the case. All this is as true for an institution with a long and distinguished history and renowned by word of mouth for its quality as it is for one which is new, relatively unknown or both.

9.7 For external moderators, a written report is essential. It, too, can benefit from a pro forma approach, although the questions for external moderators will normally include wider issues of external benchmarking, as well as those above. External moderators may be asked to provide fuller commentary on each of the pro forma questions, as well as ticking a box, and the section for free comment at the end would normally be expected to be filled out more extensively. This is particularly the case where the external moderator is commenting on the programme as a whole. An example of a report form issued to such a moderator, or external examiner, is given within Case-Study 7.

9.8 In general terms, but especially in relation to assessment, both quality assurance and quality enhancement only work effectively in an atmosphere where it is understood that those with responsibility for these processes are not in some arrogant way 'standing in judgement' on others. If this were allowed to be the case, then they would have disproportionate power, and all the safeguards discussed so far would be compromised, rather than strengthened, by their input to the assessment process. An example of this would be if a quality assurance moderator attempted to override individual assessment decisions according solely to his or her own, subjective views. Quite apart from this being wrong in itself, in a situation where there was known to be a risk of it, assessors would constantly feel as though someone was watching over their shoulder ready to criticise or contradict. As a result, their ability to focus upon doing their job as well as possible would be impaired.

9.9 The situation is similar to that described in differentiating the assessment roles of internal and external specialists and experienced generalists. Once again, the key to successful functioning of the system lies in the understanding that each role – that of being an assessor or of being a quality-assurance moderator – has its own character and function and requires its own brand of expertise, but neither is superior to the other to the extent that the person in that role can unilaterally overturn or ignore the actions of others.

9.10 One helpful way to keep the two roles somewhat distinct from each other is to say that moderation and benchmarking are more about patterns and trends in the assessment procedures than about individual assessment verdicts, which are properly the priority of assessment teams. If a moderator feels that one particular cellist, say, might have been worthy of a higher mark than the figure actually awarded by the assessment panel, that is still an individual opinion balanced against a careful consensus arrived at by several individuals working in conjunction. The moderator might share his or her thoughts with the panel but would not normally expect the assessors to alter that individual decision. On the other hand, if the same moderator felt that a panel's *whole set of marks* for cellists was either too generous or too harsh – in relation either to other panels working in the institution or to standards of marking for this instrument elsewhere – it would be quite proper for him or her to ask the panel to review the marks as a whole and see whether they, too, could detect a pattern that might benefit from some overall adjustment.

9.11 Even in this second case, the panel might review its marks and still feel that the original decisions were valid. The normal next step would be for the moderator to include his or her view, and the fact that it had been discussed with the panel, in the report that he or she makes to the institution, described above. If an institution found a pattern or trend of such views in the reports it received, it would certainly want to look more closely at its assessment procedures in the area in question, but its emphasis would normally be upon enhancement for the future, rather than upon unpicking decisions which, by then, were in the past. It might introduce or expand briefing sessions for assessment panels or run exercises where those staff regularly involved in assessments within the institution came together to compare practices and re-calibrate against one another their own internal sense of standards. Such sessions are, in any case, useful tools for maintaining consistency, whether or not prompted by comments in a moderator's report.

9.12 From the above, it is hopefully therefore clear that in a well-developed system of moderation, no individual's or group's viewpoint completely outweighs another's. Everyone participates according to their allotted role and the outcome does not take the form of violent or sudden reversals of decisions but more of a steady, incremental refinement of the way that an institution goes about its assessments. This is the essence of quality assurance and enhancement; other than in the rarest and most extreme cases demanding urgent action, it is not about continual interventions but, rather, a constant background influence shaping the way the institution itself comes to decisions about its own development.

9.13 Occasionally, a specific situation may arise where it is very useful to have an external opinion to which to turn in order to validate or reinforce a delicate or sensitive decision. In these circumstances, it can be a valuable asset that an external moderator may be seen as independent and capable of bringing to the situation a perspective about how other institutions might deal with the issue in question. A good example of this might occur at a final meeting of an academic board or committee which is reviewing and confirming the results for all the students who are at the end of their programme and about to receive their awards. If one student is very close to a

particular level of award (for example, a class of degree – 1st class, 2nd class, 3rd class – in the UK system) but mathematically just short of the required marks to achieve it, the institution might ask an external moderator with wide moderating responsibilities (in the UK, they are referred to as External Examiners) to review the student's whole profile of marks to see whether, on balance, the higher level might be a fairer reflection of the student's achievement.

9.14 For the external moderator to be the one deciding whether or not the student should be promoted to the higher level of award gives a dimension of independence and probity to the decision which could not be achieved by internal processes alone, no matter how many people were involved. Accordingly, special weight is given to the external moderator's viewpoint and in this situation, and others like it, he or she carries considerable responsibility and power. This is also the case where external moderators may be asked to assist in resolving conflicting views among assessors, as will be discussed in Chapter 12.

9.15 Other than in these kinds of situation, the principle should remain that no one individual within the assessment process has undue power or superiority compared with any other. Effective and reliable assessment depends upon a whole series of checks and balances among which the role and input of moderators is just one element. Quality assurance arises from all these elements working in conjunction and in a manner that achieves an overall balance.

9.16 In countries where the particular kinds of moderation roles and processes described above are not commonplace, there will nevertheless almost certainly be some kind of system of external benchmarking, whether long-established or recently introduced. Many European institutions are currently undergoing accreditation procedures, some applied to the institution as a whole and some to specific programmes within it. Among other factors, such accreditation procedures almost invariably examine the 'typical' standards being achieved by students and the extent to which these match norms for the discipline. The measurements taken may not necessarily be in the arena of assessing actual student performance; for example, a typical indicator might be the number of graduating students successfully gaining work in the profession. But even a criterion such as this can be seen as relating back fairly directly to actual performing standards, since employers will take the best performers available.

9.17 As external benchmarking becomes increasingly prevalent and overt, it inevitably raises questions of possible rankings being applied to institutions. Ranking systems are controversial and there is no doubt that they can be misused, even if they have an arguably beneficial role in helping students to make informed choices about which institution they should choose. Many ranking systems use statistics such as graduation rates and rates of graduate employment; for example, both of these feature in the U-Multirank proposals as at July 2010.[8] Statistics of student satisfaction,

8 U-Multirank Multi-dimensional Global University Ranking project, June 2009 – June 2011. See www.umultirank.eu.

taken from feedback questionnaires, are another common form of measurement. None of these makes direct reference to actual standards of student performance and their comparison from one institution to another, but it is not hard to sense the implied presence of such blunter, more direct comparative judgements behind these deliberately oblique and neutral criteria.

9.18 In such a landscape, it can be argued that it is in the interests of institutions to develop strong collaborative systems of external benchmarking within their discipline. Opening up one's institution to the critical scrutiny of external moderators who have the appropriate expertise can have the benefit of producing data that may be used to counterbalance less sensitively-informed and more formulaically-driven rankings. And, of course, if direct expert critical scrutiny yields a less than flattering picture, while this may be uncomfortable in the short term, it can be an enormously helpful tool for implementing necessary institutional change and improvement.

9.19 The key aspect of external benchmarking is the subject-specific expertise of those carrying it out. For all those involved in assessment, whether delivering it or moderating the process, the shared understandings which give rise to the inter-subjective verifiability discussed in the last chapter are essential. Although, in Higher Music Education, these fundamentally depend upon the congruences that exist between the innate musical knowledge and judgement of all concerned, the process can be both aided and strengthened by appropriate use of standardised reference points. Criteria, discussed in Chapters 5 and 7, form one such set of reference points. From the perspective of quality assurance, standardised systems of levels and similarly standardised, or at least mutually understood, grading schemes are two important further points of reference. Grading schemes have already been discussed in Chapter 7; the next chapter will deal in greater detail with levels.

CHAPTER 10:
ASSESSMENT AND LEVELS

Summary:

- Many assessments of a similar kind are used at a variety of levels (e.g. a music student may perform a number of recital examinations during his or her studies). It is important for assessors to distinguish between the various levels in their judgements
- In some assessments, the difficulty of the task rises with each rise of level (e.g. harder repertoire as the level rises); in others the expectation of mastery rises (e.g. the same, or equivalent, repertoire needs to be played with greater accomplishment and maturity or with certain higher-level skills coming into play); in some, both elements of challenge rise. It is vital that students and assessors share a clear sense of which model is being used
- Level Descriptors can help to distinguish between, for example, first- and second-cycle examinations. These descriptors can help to frame the criteria at each level
- Some sets of criteria may use a sliding scale to articulate the relationship between the different levels – in these, one descriptor is set to correspond to a different grade of outcome according to the level at which it is applied
- See also Case-Study 8

10.1 During the course of undertaking one, two and potentially even three cycles of study in Higher Music Education, a student may be assessed in similar tasks or situations a number of times. As he or she progresses from one cycle to the next, learning and developing as they do so, the level of performance expected from them will rise correspondingly. This concept of progression applies not only to programmes overall but also to successive years within a programme. For example, in a four-year 1st-Cycle programme, a final-year student will be expected to perform at a significantly higher standard than a student just completing their first year and their level of achievement will almost certainly have been formally assessed at least annually to confirm that they are progressing appropriately. At each of these points, the bar of expectation will have been set a little higher than previously.

10.2 For students anxious to confirm to themselves that they are improving, this sense that it is necessary to 'run just to stand still' can be daunting. It can even be confusing to feel convinced that one has improved over twelve months but actually receive a lower mark than before. Nevertheless, this is quite possible in a situation where expectations of the 'typical' student's progress have risen ahead of one's own rate of improvement.

10.3 For assessors, too, it is not always easy to 're-set' one's internal calibration of standards from one assessment to the next if students at different levels within a programme are being examined one after the other – especially if this happens without any obvious difference in the format of the assessment. Where there are large numbers of students (for example, in a series of piano or

violin recitals) it is possible to settle into a stable pattern of expectation during a run of several students at the same level, with perhaps one adjustment to a different level in an entire day's examining. In more specialist areas, where there may be only one or two students per year taking that particular specialism, it is not uncommon to need to adjust from one level to the next almost at every changeover between students.

10.4 From everyone's perspective – students, teachers and assessors – it is vital to have a clear and shared sense of expectation related to levels. Having these various expectations deeply and almost instinctively ingrained in their musical sensibilities is one of the key contributions that the experienced internal generalist assessor, described in Chapter 8, can make to the assessment team. However, in order to be shared in a consistent way, the expectations need to be written down, however briefly. Finding the right words to trigger the right level of musical expectation is not easy but it certainly helps if these relate back in an obvious manner to widely-recognised benchmarks.

10.5 For higher education in Europe, and at the most generalised level which considers the three cycles of the Bologna pattern across all disciplines, the benchmarks that have been devised and are now broadly accepted and incorporated into the European Qualifications Framework are the so-called Dublin Descriptors. From these generalised statements about expectations at the levels of the three cycles, a cascade of more detailed descriptions can be made, moving down through individual disciplines to individual institutions, to the programmes offered by those institutions and eventually to formulations which differentiate between years and sub-areas of study inside those programmes. This is not to say that the process is exclusively a 'top-down' one – and certainly not in terms of forcing institutions into conformity; the very generality of the higher level statements is designed to give room for an institution with a strong sense of its own distinctive characteristics and mission to articulate these within a framework which has room for diversity. Just as there is no 'average student' in reality, so there is no 'typical institution'.

10.6 The table below shows how this cascade operates for Higher Music Education and lists the various documents already available at the European level to help institutions in formulating their own, personally-tailored descriptions of learning outcomes by programme, year and sub-area of the curriculum:

General description of 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycles for all higher education disciplines across Europe ↓	***Dublin Descriptors*** ↓
General description of 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycles for Higher Music Education across Europe ↓	***'Polifonia/Dublin Descriptors'**** ↓
Learning outcomes for 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycles for Higher Music Education across Europe ↓	***AEC/Polifonia Learning Outcomes**** ↓
Learning outcomes for each of the cycles offered by an institution ↓	To be devised by the institution ↓
Learning outcomes for each programme offered within each cycle ↓	To be devised by the institution ↓
Interim learning outcomes for each year of the programme ↓	To be devised by the institution ↓
Decisions as to which learning outcome(s) are to be addressed by each sub-area of the programme ↓	To be agreed by the institution ↓
Appropriate expectations when assessing each sub-area	To be devised by the institution
* See ***'Reference points for the Design and Delivery of Degree Programmes in Europe'***[9]	

10.7 When formulating the 'Polifonia/Dublin Descriptors' and AEC/Polifonia Learning Outcomes, the working groups involved carried out extensive cross-checking to ensure consistency at each step. Therefore, institutions can adopt the Learning Outcomes with confidence, knowing that they harmonise with the Dublin Descriptors. This means that only the last five steps in the cascade depicted above need to be carried out by the institution. These, in themselves, may seem to amount to a significant piece of work, but at each step the task need only consist of adapting and making more specific the wording of the level above. At each step, it is a positive strength if the wording of the new, lower level resembles that of its immediately preceding neighbour, but it is clear that by the time the final level of the cascade is reached, the wording of expectations associated with specific assessments in a given year of a programme will have moved a considerable distance from the very generalised statements of the Dublin Descriptors seven steps above them.

10.8 In the process of defining the expectations appropriate to each level, there are fundamentally two factors that can be adjusted – how hard the task should be and how completely the student should succeed in the task. In an assessed recital, for example, several factors can affect the difficulty of the task. The following are some of the more obvious:

9 'Polifonia' 'Bologna' Working Group; Messas, L. & Prchal, M. (eds.) (2009): Reference points for the Design and Delivery of Degree Programmes in Europe. Tuning Educational Structures in Music. Deusto.

- *Duration* – the longer the recital the greater the size of the preparation task and the greater the test of stamina and corresponding risk of fatigue

- *Complexity* – prescribing some or all of the repertoire enables there to be control of the challenge presented by the works; experts in the repertoire can ensure a graded increase of challenge from one level to the next

- *Diversity* – either through specifying works or by making a contrasted programme a requirement of the assessment, the student can be obliged to show their achievement across a broad range of styles or periods

- *Memorisation* – can be required for all or part of a programme, adding to the size of the preparation task and to the level of psychological challenge presented by the assessment itself

It is common for students to be required to play for longer year-by-year as they progress through a programme. It may also be the case that they perform in the lower years in a relatively small space – say, a larger teaching room – and progress to public spaces and eventually to the largest and most prestige performance space available to the institution. They may also be required to perform progressively more demanding repertoire across the interim years of a programme, although it is common for them to be offered partial or complete freedom of repertoire choice in their final recital. Requirements such as memorisation may vary from one instrument to another, depending on typical practice in the profession, but if it would be expected in the context of a professional recital then it will almost certainly be required throughout in the final assessment which students undertake – and often in earlier recitals as well.

10.9 Differentiating between levels on the basis of how well the student is expected to perform a given task requires careful use of language since, in this approach, the differences from one level to another are not as concrete as, say, increasing the required recital length by five minutes. Different people's response to the same language can vary quite considerably – to one assessor, a 'satisfactory' performance may mean something that is 'satisfying' and therefore quite accomplished whereas, to another, this word may carry more negative associations of being 'only just good enough to avoid being unsatisfactory'. Perhaps because of this, it is rare to find systems of differentiation based solely upon expectations of an improving standard of student performance in relation to what is essentially the same difficulty of task from one level to the next. More often, a factor such as increased recital length is also employed.

10.10 In general, it should be obvious whether an institution has adopted a policy of defining the challenge in terms of the difficulty of the task, the standards of execution expected or a combination of the two. However, it is especially important that external specialists, who may be used to another

system, are clear which approach is being used at the institution they are visiting and are given some time to adjust their own mode of thinking accordingly.

10.11 One way in which words can be used in a manner which underlines the relationship of a lower level to a higher one is by using phrases common to both but adding to, or inflecting, the formulation at each successively higher level. As an example of this, we may take the first of the Practical (skills-based) outcomes of the AEC/Polifonia Learning Outcomes as they read for the 1st and 2nd Cycles:

1st Cycle	2nd Cycle
Skills in artistic expression	
At the completion of their studies, students are expected to be able to create and realise their own artistic concepts and to have developed the necessary skills for their expression.	At the completion of their studies, students are expected to emerge as well-developed personalities, having developed to a high professional level their ability to create, realise and express their own artistic concepts.

It is clear that the important phrases in the case of the 2nd Cycle are 'well-developed personalities' and 'high professional level'. Both of these phrases represent additions to the 1st-Cycle statement and describe something of the maturing and development expected of students between completion of the two cycles. However, both are rather abstract and open to different interpretations. What constitutes a well-developed personality or a high professional level would almost certainly mean different things to different people. Nevertheless, it is clear that the differences between the two outcomes are intended to show that students at the end of the 2nd Cycle are expected to have *more fully* developed personalities than their 1st-Cycle counterparts and to be creating realising and expressing their own artistic concepts at a *higher* and *more obviously professionally credible* level. The Learning Outcomes define a *relativity* of level and suggest where the relatively higher level might be manifested but they do not define either the 1st- or the 2nd-Cycle level in *absolute* terms.

10.12 As an institution works its way through the cascade illustrated in 10.5 and fixes its expectations at the progressively lower levels, it will need to become correspondingly more specific, whilst still relying upon the way that the relative values have been set at the higher levels. For example, it might decide that in order to test that a 2nd-Cycle student's ability to create, realise and express their own artistic concepts has been developed to a high professional level, a recital assessment should be held in a venue associated with high professional-level performances; alternatively, it might simply ask assessors to tune their judgement to the sort of standards they would typically expect from a professional recitalist at such a venue; it might certainly base the required recital length on typical professional expectations, implying, for classical performers, a concert of two substantial halves with an interval.

10.13 It is important that decisions such as those suggested above are taken at institutional level so that they may accurately interpret, according to local circumstances and the special character of the institution, the more generalised concepts expressed at the level of the AEC/Polifonia Learning Outcomes. For example, an institution specialising in jazz or popular performance would reference high professional standards to a different kind of venue and performance format from those of the classical recital. Respecting diversity between institutions, and preserving a level of autonomy in how they define their criteria, is vital. At the same time, if the detailed institutional criteria are derived from higher-level descriptors in the manner suggested in 10.5, diversity and autonomy should not stray so far as to produce inconsistency or incoherence between one institution and another. An academic discipline in which coherence and diversity are held in a good balance across institutions, regions and countries has a sound basis for seeking to operate a quality assurance system specific to that discipline and therefore tailored to its special characteristics. Higher Music Education in Europe is currently well-placed to develop in this way.

10.14 Statements such as those in the AEC/Polifonia Learning Outcomes do not address the interim levels of achievement that students might be expected to attain year-by-year. Where students are assessed at the end of each year of their programme, there is a need to define annual milestones in their progression towards final learning outcomes. In the AEC handbook on Curriculum Design and Development in Higher Music Education, an example was given of possible milestones in a four-year 1st-Cycle programme leading to the first of the AEC/Polifonia Learning Outcomes for this cycle, skills in artistic expression. A version of this is reproduced below:[10]

Learning Outcome 1: Skills in artistic expression	
Year 4	Learning Outcome for whole programme: At the ***completion of their studies***, students are expected to be able to create and realise their own artistic concepts and should have developed the necessary skills for their expression.
Year 3	Milestone 3: At the completion of their ***third year of studies***, students are expected to be beginning to develop their own artistic intentions into creative conceptions spanning entire works and to have developed the necessary skills to integrate technical and imaginative aspects almost seamlessly.
Year 2	Milestone2: At the completion of their ***second year of studies***, students are expected to be able to formulate their own artistic intentions and to have developed the necessary skills to implement these, or respond imaginatively to suggestions from their teacher, with fluency and technical security.
Year 1	Milestone 1: At the completion of their ***first year of studies***, students are expected to have developed sufficient technical skills and security to be able to concentrate upon developing their skills in artistic expression.

10 Curriculum Design and Development in Higher Music Education (AEC Publications, 2007), www.aecinfo.org/Publications

10.15 With these milestones, and the level of expectation which they define, it would be possible to construct assessment requirements for each of the four years, matching what the assessment defines as the passing threshold to what the milestone describes as being a typical student's achievement. The same could be done for each of the learning outcomes for which students' progress is similarly measured at interim points in their programme.

10.16 One of the potential problems of such a system is the sheer number of different written criteria which it requires. If each assessment in each year were to need different words to describe the various levels of achievement within it, this would not only produce a confusing array of verbal formulations but it would also be likely to have similar words representing slightly different functions at different levels. To give an example from the milestones above, an assessment at the end of the first year would define as the pass threshold evidence that showed that the student had 'developed sufficient skills and security to be able to concentrate upon developing their skills in artistic expression'; by the end of the second year, if this was not accompanied by evidence of the ability to 'formulate their own artistic intentions' and 'implement these [...] with fluency and technical security', it would correspond to something more like a marginal failure than a pass.

10.17 It is possible to turn this feature to advantage. If assessors are given one set of verbal descriptions for *all* levels of examination and asked simply to decide which description best fits the student's achievement, without initially considering what kind of a mark or grade this might correspond to, the process of mapping their verdict onto the appropriate mark for the level of examination that the student is undertaking can then be carried out as a second stage, following a set of pre-designed tables. Although this introduces a two-stage process into the assessment, it does at least ensure that the crucial musical judgements are all carried out in relation to a single, unvarying set of verbal descriptions.

10.18 To illustrate how the process might work, it may be helpful to return to the example discussed in 10.15. Let us imagine that our assessors are working to a scale of descriptions, not initially equated with any particular year or cycle of study, where two consecutive statements read as follows (the order of the statements, as in the diagram in 10.15, rises in quality as one moves from bottom to top):

> The student is able to formulate their own artistic intentions and has developed the necessary skills to implement these with fluency and technical security.

> The student has developed sufficient technical skills and security to be able to concentrate upon developing their skills in artistic expression.

The assessors discuss the student's performance which they have just witnessed, doing so purely in relation to their musical response to it and to which set of verbal formulations best fits that response. They decide that the performance was worthy of the higher of these two descriptions. Only then do they turn to the table that tells them that, as a second-year student, this equates to a pass, as below:

	Year One	Year Two
The student is able to formulate their own artistic intentions and has developed the necessary skills to implement these with fluency and technical security.	High Pass	Pass
The student has developed sufficient technical skills and security to be able to concentrate upon developing their skills in artistic expression.	Pass	Marginal Fail

If, later in the same session, they encounter another performance which they feel matches this description, but the student on this occasion is at the end of their first year, the result would be a high pass.

10.19 The example of a set of criteria divided into subsidiary areas of achievement given in Case-Study 8 of Section Two is also representative of the kind of approach discussed here. In that case study, having produced an overall score for each student, assessors then turn to the second page to identify the percentage band to which this score corresponds for the level at which the student is being assessed. The criteria used in Case Study 8 cover a span of levels stretching from the third year of a 1st Cycle to the second, final, year of the 2nd Cycle.

10.20 Through a well-developed system of levels and criteria, and through the ability to convert from one grading scheme to another, much can be done to ensure consistency, comparability and readability between different systems. All of this contributes to a robust framework of quality assurance. Even so, no amount of apparatus of this kind can completely eliminate situations where opinions differ and consensus cannot be found. The next chapter addresses such situations and discusses some of the strategies which may be employed to deal with them.

CHAPTER 11:
CONFLICTING VIEWS IN ASSESSMENTS

Summary:

- Most assessment processes operate by consensus and in most cases, this is achievable
- Some processes oblige individual assessors to declare their verdicts independently before discussion and resolution of any differences; others use discussion as the route to convergence and only deal in grades or marks at the end of the process
- In either process, a strong voice may overwhelm a weaker one: in the first, a stronger personality may be reluctant to modify their declared opinion; in the second, a weaker personality may privately modify their judgment, sensing the direction of the discussion
- Assessment processes benefit from the participation of individuals who, in addition to their expertise, are trained and experienced in leading discussions towards balanced conclusions. Often, these individuals function formally as Chairs of assessment panels
- Assessment systems must have some procedure for dealing with conflicts that cannot be resolved into consensus. These may include majority voting, a Chair's casting vote or reference to an internal or external moderator
- ***Appeals***: Students or their teachers may, from time to time, feel unhappy with results of assessments. There needs to be a framework within which appeals on certain grounds are admissible. However, it is not usual to allow appeals which simply question the assessors' verdict *per se*
- Criteria, which should be widely publicised to students and teachers, can help to reinforce a sense of confidence in the process as a whole, even if individual outcomes may occasionally give rise to disappointment
- See also Case-Studies 9 & 10

11.1 We have seen how the process of inter-subjectivity, operating amongst assessors with similar backgrounds and expertise, generally leads via congruence to consensus. The precise sequence involved in this journey to consensus varies. Some assessment schemes have every assessor declare a mark before knowing his or her colleagues' opinions; others begin from generalised discussion, narrowing this down progressively to the point where the actual mark is considered, by which time the discussion will largely pre-determine where this mark should lie. Both approaches have their advantages and disadvantages, which might be summarised as follows:

Approach	Advantages	Disadvantages
Independent declaration of marks before discussion and eventual agreement on single mark	- Assessors must disclose their initial view without any influence from colleagues - Keeps strong-willed personalities in check – their initial mark has equal weight with all others - Forces more diffident personalities to 'show their hand'	- Almost invariably means that discussion starts from a position of different views - Strong-willed personalities may be unwilling to move from their initial positions - More diffident personalities may still compromise for the sake of consensus
Discussion moving from general impressions towards agreement upon a mark as final stage	- Moments of direct confrontation are minimised - More diffident personalities can inflect the discussion without having to contradict strong-willed colleagues directly - Inter-subjective congruence can emerge smoothly and progressively	- Can mask real differences of viewpoint between assessors which should be exposed and explored honestly - Still allows strong-willed personalities to dominate in the discussion - Tends to produce a narrower band of marks in the 'average' area

11.2 Whichever approach an institution decides to adopt, it should obviously be employed consistently. Of the two approaches, the second is probably less likely to generate situations where panels become deadlocked and consensus fails to emerge. Even so, it is not entirely unknown for conflict to set in during discussions and for assessors' positions to become so polarised, even before specific marks are discussed, that entrenched disagreement over these, too, is inevitable. This is most likely to occur where the standard of a student's performance is close to a critical threshold – especially the one between passing and failing – and where two or more assessors take a different view about which side of this threshold the performance actually lies.

11.3 There are some steps which can be taken to reduce the likelihood of such conflicts arising and there are others which may be employed in an attempt to resolve deadlock once it sets in. In both cases, it is helpful if one member of the assessing team has a recognised role in steering the discussion, ensuring a balance of input from all assessors, calling attention where appropriate to documentation which may guide the decision-making and generally keeping the process moving forward in a timely fashion – in short, acting as Chairperson to the team.

11.4 When discussing the personnel for summative assessments in Chapter 8, it was suggested that an assessor internal to the institution, not necessarily a specialist in the specific area being assessed but widely experienced in the assessment procedures of the institution was a useful member of the team. This individual is the obvious candidate for a Chairperson. Whilst specialist assessors may not readily defer to anyone else in terms of their specialist knowledge, they are generally more prepared to do so from the point of view of institutional procedure. Conversely, an internal generalist functioning as a Chairperson can defer on matters of specialist knowledge whilst still taking valid leadership of the running of the assessment.

11.5 The following are some of the ways in which a Chairperson can guide proceedings so as to minimise the likelihood of conflicting views leading to deadlock:

- Ensuring that all assessors are properly introduced to one another at the start of an assessment session and allowing some conversational exchange to take place so as to relax the participants

- Reminding everyone of their respective roles and emphasising the equality among these roles and their complementary status

- Talking briefly through any written documentation, criteria, etc to emphasise why it is there and how it should support the assessment process, but not dominating or controlling it

- Clarifying people's responsibilities for providing written feedback, especially in a situation where this may circulate amongst the team from one assessment to the next

- In discussions, varying the order in which specialists are asked for their views and/or their suggested marks

- Suggesting that the first two or three assessments might initially be marked provisionally and the marks reviewed as a small group once the team has started to get 'into its rhythm' (of course, this is not possible in systems where each student receives feedback from the panel directly after his or her performance)

11.6 If a particular assessment begins to generate controversy, there may still be ways to avert deadlock. These include:

- Suggesting a revisiting of the written criteria. As well as possibly offering helpful clarification, this process will, in itself, introduce a calming interval into the discussion

- If appropriate, citing a previous assessment where there was agreement among the assessors and which may have similarities with the one over which there is now disagreement

- More generally, using other assessments, and the marks awarded for those, as comparators

- If there are more students still to be assessed, suggesting moving on to these and returning at the end of the session to attempt resolution.

11.7 In the event that none of these tactics resolves the conflict, it may be necessary to propose a majority verdict. This is where having panels or teams made up of odd numbers of assessors is advantageous. If the Chairperson has stayed outside the controversy up until this point, it may

be appropriate for him or her to exercise a casting vote. An arrangement somewhat along these lines is described in Case-Study 6, where the Chair of the Board has the authority to rule on a tied decision.

11.8 A compromise mark that splits the difference between the conflicting positions may sometimes be accepted, although, in general, if the disagreeing assessors were prepared to accept such a 'middle-ground' compromise, they would already have done so. Moreover, if the conflict is over marks that lie just either side of a critical threshold, there may be no realistic middle-ground option available.

11.9 Where a moderator, of one of the kinds described in Chapter 9, is in attendance at an assessment that has become deadlocked, it may be helpful to consult them for their opinion. Although this strictly takes them over the boundary from moderation into direct involvement in the assessment, their input can sometimes set the discussion moving in a fresh direction and loosen the deadlock. In particular, an external moderator may be able to offer insights from comparable situations encountered in other institutions, thereby enriching the range of precedents upon which a possible solution might be based.

11.10 Some institutions make provision for a dissenting assessor to submit a 'minority report', thereby allowing them to maintain their own viewpoint but nevertheless accept that the assessment should be settled according to the majority view. Whilst this can be valuable in closing discussion, it is important for everyone to be clear what will be done with such a report subsequently. In general, it is more likely to create confusion and unhappiness than enlightenment if fed back to the student. If the minority view is more critical than the main result it is simply unsettling; if it is more generous, it is bound to spark the feeling that the main result was weak and questionable, and therefore unfairly harsh. One solution is to note and retain the minority report and take it into consideration only if the student should turn out to be a possible candidate for the kind of overall promotion of result discussed in 9.12.

11.11 Whatever the difficulties in achieving it, ultimately a result has to be confirmed and communicated to the student. It is important that there is confidentiality among the panel, especially if there has been controversy over the mark to be awarded. In small institutions such as are typical in Higher Music Education, those who have been involved in assessments and those who have taught the students are frequently close colleagues and used to discussing all kinds of musical and educational issues on a regular basis. It can often feel awkward to maintain silence about what has gone on in a particular assessment process, but most colleagues understand the necessity for this. Even so, it may be useful for an institution to publish guidelines as to behaviour in the form of an agreed 'code of practice'. It is especially helpful for such a document to be approved by whatever is the institution's key committee of teachers and senior academic managers – its Senate, Academic Board, etc.

11.12 Despite all of the safeguards described, no institution can completely eliminate situations arising from time to time where students and/or their teachers are so unhappy with the result of an assessment that they feel unable to let the matter rest. Of course, this need not necessarily arise from an assessment result where the panel has been divided or equivocal; sometimes an assessment panel can be quite clear and unanimous about its verdict but still produce a deeply unpopular result. As discussed in Chapter 8, the congruence of view which may emerge within a panel will relate to their task of assessing a range of students; for each individual student and their teacher, the one result that applies to them is far more important than all the others, and therefore there is an inbuilt incongruence between their inter-subjectivity and that of the panel. Codes of practice such a that described above can attempt to encourage students and teachers to accept individually unpalatable results, but a system that has no means of redress whatsoever will sooner or later find itself challenged as unfair.

11.13 There is a delicate balance to maintain here. On the one hand, assessors must feel supported by the system within which they work - to the extent that if they should have to deliver a harsh and unflattering verdict, they are confident of being protected from the all-too human outrage and desire for redress of those whom they have judged. If they lose this confidence, they may be tempted to produce results designed to please, rather than reflecting their honest judgement (of course, this is where the use of external specialists is a strength, in that they can deliver their verdicts safe in the knowledge that they are unlikely to encounter those upon whom they have passed judgement during the weeks that follow). On the other hand, if students and their teachers feel that an institution will always 'close ranks' and defend an assessment decision, once delivered, whatever evidence may be produced to question it, they will also lose confidence. Their individual sense of demoralisation may quickly spread, undermining the assessment process as a whole.

11.14 In attempting to strike this balance, many institutions have procedures for *appealing* a result. Such procedures will usually set out the grounds on which an appeal might be considered, as well as the steps which need to be taken by the student submitting the appeal and those that the institution will take in considering it. Most appeals procedures begin by emphasising that the process should be regarded as one to be used only in exceptional circumstances - and certainly not as a means of questioning any unexpectedly low or disappointing mark. It is common to expressly forbid appeals which simply challenge the judgement of the assessors (although, of course, this is precisely what most students who launch appeals are trying to do!).

11.15 The two most common grounds upon which appeals may be accepted are as follows:

- That the assessment procedures set out by the institution were not properly followed by the assessors

- That there were circumstances affecting the student's performance of which the assessors were unaware (and of which the student could not have reasonably made the institution aware beforehand).

  Where the first of these grounds forms part of an appeals process, it demonstrates how important it is for panels to be well-informed about assessment procedures and disciplined in the way they follow them. Students may not normally read an institution's regulations closely while everything is running smoothly, but they will certainly do so, searching for any loophole, if this might give them grounds for a successful appeal against a mark. This is where having a Chairperson who is thoroughly familiar with the procedures and regulations can be so valuable to the assessment process. Not only do they protect the panel against procedural failures with this knowledge, but they also leave the other, more specialist, assessors freer to focus upon the actual musical judgements to be made.

11.16 All written documentation produced by the institution that relates to assessments is potentially relevant when considering procedural irregularities. This therefore includes not only descriptions of how the assessment will be conducted – number and nature of assessors on the panel, duration of assessment, type of venue, etc – but also the actual criteria used in the assessment. That is why, as was stressed in Chapter 7 when discussing criteria, it is important for any key words which appear in such criteria to be used with care in feedback reports, matching the vocabulary of the report to that of the criteria used to describe the grade awarded. Extreme though it may seem, there have been recorded cases where students have attempted to use a mismatch between criteria and the language of the feedback report as evidence of a procedural irregularity and therefore as grounds for a successful appeal of the result.

11.17 Although written criteria can be dangerous in this way if used carelessly, they are more usually helpful safeguards, reinforcing the assessment process and giving it a demonstrable consistency. Ultimately, this consistency is the strongest protection against students' unhappiness with individual marks. Whilst they may find it hard to accept at the time, it is an assessment system's ability to function reliably, producing results which, in the overwhelming majority of cases, feel fair, predictable and likely to have replicated by a different team of assessors, which guarantees its probity – not its ability to deliver results that are welcome in every case.

11.18 Of course, a student's unhappiness at a result is likely to be most acute if it means that they actually fail the assessment. In this situation, not only is their pride hurt, but the failure will have consequences for their progression, and perhaps even for their completion of the programme. It is important for the institution to have some mechanism for failure to be redeemable through some kind of reassessment opportunity, although it must also have clear and consistent procedures for determining when and how repeated failures must ultimately result in the student leaving the programme. These issues are the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 12:
REASSESSMENT

Summary:

- A student's right to redeem failure is important and fundamental; but there is an equal importance of there being some limit to reassessment opportunities
- There needs to be a clear framework and rationale for reassessment opportunities
- Reassessment may be 'as though for the first time' (i.e. where the actual mark gained will stand) or alternatively, mark capping may be used
- Reassessment should observe the principle of balancing fairness to the individual with that to other students – there are serious implications if a reassessment mark 'leapfrogs' another student's mark achieved at the first attempt
- Capped reassessments should be recorded as such in students' transcripts of achievement
- Matching the conditions of reassessment to the original assessment is an important principle – with practical assessments, this may include issues of venue and personnel
- See also Case-Study 10

12.1 Especially in a discipline such as Higher Music Education, the demands placed upon students are rightly high and the competition between them intense because this is how it will be for them in their chosen profession. From time to time, institutions with appropriately high standards that are rigorously enforced will inevitably find that they have some students who fail to meet these standards in one or more of their assessments. This is not to say that simply having a proportion of students who fail, of itself demonstrates high standards; it is merely that having no failures at all would, over time, begin to suggest that a rather over-flexible approach to standards was being applied.

12.2 Failure in the competitive environment of the music profession can be a situation from which it is hard to recover. Music students need to be trained to expect this, and to acquire the discipline to be able to summon up their best in the situations where it counts the most. At the same time, they are still students and not yet the fully-hardened professionals they will shortly need to be. Like any students, therefore, they have a certain right to be given the opportunity to redeem failure. The nature and extent of this right is something for the institution to decide, publicise and then apply consistently, but on some level it will undoubtedly involve the concept of *reassessment*.

12.3 There are a number of principles that might affect how an institution sets up its reassessment framework. These are some of them:

- Balancing the opportunity given to failing student against the interests of those students who passed at the first attempt but might also have improved their performance if given a second chance to undertake the assessment.

- Balancing cases where a student has given total commitment but has serious difficulties against those where a fundamentally talented student has failed to apply themselves sufficiently

- Distinguishing between failures caused by external factors outside the student's control – injury, damage to their instrument, health or emotional issues, etc - and those which genuinely reflect weaknesses or inadequacies in the student's capabilities

- Taking account of the larger picture of a student's performance: is their failure one of many in a given year? Do they have a pattern of initial failures in a particular area from one year to the next? Do they have compensatory strengths despite weaknesses in that particular area? Is the area of weakness core to what they will need to survive in the profession or in an area of the programme which they might not need to engage with in their subsequent careers?

- Considering what is in the student's best interests overall: does a further reassessment opportunity merely offer false hope and encouragement? Are they at a point in their studies where a change of direction and discipline might be better for them in the long term?

12.4 Based upon considerations such as these, an institution will decide what opportunities for reassessment it should offer, whether as an automatic process, one that depends upon consideration of individual cases or, most probably, some combination of the two. Case-Study 10 compares the systems operated by two institutions in different European countries.

12.5 One issue to decide is whether every area of the programme should have the same basic reassessment opportunities, or whether the student's main specialism should be treated differently from the other components of their study. If the main specialism is to be treated differently, there are arguments for giving both more and less generous opportunities for reassessment in this area: on the one hand, weakness in the core area of the student's musical ability is clearly a serious flaw and, in a competitive discipline, should perhaps lead to early elimination from the programme, making way for others with greater potential; on the other, the journey of development in this core area is rarely entirely smooth and even, and the institution should arguably keep faith with a student whom it selected at the point of admission as having the potential to succeed.

12.6 Different institutions will view these arguments differently and construct their reassessment frameworks accordingly; others will decide that, on balance, a framework that is applied consistently across all areas of the curriculum is preferable. Whatever pattern they adopt, most institutions would certainly want to give serious individual consideration to what might be the best course of action if a student fails either catastrophically or repeatedly in their main specialism.

12.7 For most situations of failure, especially if the student has been successful in the other elements of their programme and the failure is not too far below the pass threshold, it is normal to offer him or her at least one opportunity to be reassessed. Some institutions set a normal limit of one reassessment; others might extend this to two or three; in some cases, a student may be allowed to re-attempt the assessment as many times as necessary to pass it. This last situation is becoming increasingly rare as funding for institutions becomes more closely tied to students' proceeding successfully through their programmes of study in the set number of years.

12.8 Successful progression includes negotiating the critical points of articulation from one stage of a programme to the next (either semester-by-semester or year-by-year). Strictly speaking, a student who has failed any element of the programme should not continue past such points. In practice, some institutions at least allow students to carry a failure from the first semester of the academic year to the second, provided that the student then redeems any failure by the end of the year as a whole. The danger of moving on to fresh elements of the programme while still carrying a failure is threefold: the student will need to re-take the failure alongside a full workload of new study; success in the element failed might be an important underpinning for tackling the fresh elements; and, perhaps most uncomfortable of all, if the student cannot eventually turn the failure into success, any further progress they may have made in the meantime will count for nothing – or, at least, will not be enough for them to receive their qualification.

12.9 With these dangers in mind, many institutions operate a dedicated reassessment period just before the start of each new academic year or, where appropriate, each semester. Students are reassessed and their results quickly processed so that, by the time of registration for the new academic session, they know whether they are able to progress or not.

12.10 If a student has previously failed without there being any mitigating circumstances, it is the custom in some countries for their reassessment mark to be capped at whatever is the pass threshold for the assessment. The student must reach this threshold, but if they surpass it with marks to spare, they are not given the full credit for this achievement. The reasoning behind this is based on fairness to other students who may have passed at the first attempt but only by a small margin. Their original achievement was greater than that of the student who failed, but they do not normally have the same second chance to improve their mark (although both the institutions featured in Case-Study 10 do offer students limited opportunities for re-taking an already-passed assessment with a view to raising their mark in it). As a result, if a previously failing student were allowed to receive full credit for their achievement in a reassessment, they might end up being credited with a higher mark than their originally more successful counterpart – a result that seems contrary to natural justice.

12.11 By contrast, if there *were* mitigating circumstances which contributed to the students' failing in the first place, it does not seem unreasonable to allow them to receive full credit for any

subsequent success they achieve in a reassessment. For them, the reassessment is usually conducted as though they were taking the assessment for the first time. Indeed, this might genuinely be the case if they were previously affected by illness or injury which forced them to pull out of the assessment when it was originally scheduled. Even if they did attempt the original assessment, if it can be shown that circumstances beyond their control prevented them from giving a performance truly representative of their abilities, it seems fairer to set aside the original result altogether.

12.12 Of course, it would be easy for a student to put forward excuses for failure which might not be genuinely or fully valid. Institutions therefore normally have their own procedures for testing the validity of a student's mitigating circumstances. These would commonly include confirmatory checks such as requiring medical certificates for claims of illness. Although such procedures can sometimes seem lacking in sympathy for a student who is going through a difficult experience, they are again important in ensuring fairness to all students.

12.13 Where a student is found to have mitigating circumstances and allowed an uncapped mark for a reassessment, there is no reason why the final mark should not be entered in their transcript with no further comment. For a student who is reassessed and has their mark capped, it is in their interests to show this on the transcript so that it is clear that the minimum pass mark shown is a consequence of the capping, and not necessarily an accurate reflection of the mark they were able to achieve.

12.14 Especially where an institution only allows one reassessment opportunity, a reassessment can be a tense and demanding experience both for the student and the assessors. The fact that the student has already failed would normally suggest that this is not a strong area for them. The likelihood of repeated failure is therefore significant, unless they have been able – and sufficiently motivated – to focus on the area to a far greater extent than previously (this is one of the reasons why it is dangerous to allow reassessments to be delayed until they run alongside fresh areas of challenge in the programme). Knowing that, this time, failure would have much more serious consequences than at the original assessment only puts further pressure on the student. Assessors, too, will be conscious of what is at stake and may find it correspondingly harder to mark the student with brutal honesty in circumstances where he or she has still not succeeded in raising their standard to the pass threshold.

12.15 All these factors make it crucial that the reassessment is carried out as scrupulously as possible, in terms of the running of the event, the personnel involved and the decision-making in which they engage. Even if it is quickly obvious that a given student who is being reassessed has done enough to pass, their reassessment must be no less scrupulous because there needs to be consistency of process between this and other reassessments, any one of which may result in a failure.

12.16 The starting point should be to make the reassessment resemble the original assessment as closely as possible. For practical assessments, this might include holding the event in either the same venue or in one that is comparable, and making it for the same duration. The assessing team should also be comparable, although here opinion divides as to whether it should consist of the same individuals who awarded the original failure or different, but equivalent, assessors. One argument goes that the original assessors are 'tainted' by their previous experience and cannot regain the truly open-minded expectation that they had the first time around; the other maintains that they know best what were the deficiencies before, and can home in on these so as to evaluate what improvement has taken place. Indeed, there is even a viewpoint that a fresh team of assessors might bring different – perhaps even contradictory – perspectives to bear on the student's performance, finding a new set of deficiencies even though the student had successfully addressed those identified in feedback from the first assessment.

12.17 Where an assessment team includes an assessor in the role of Chairperson, a common solution to this dilemma is to maintain the same Chair but use different specialists. This arrangement provides the important element of continuity and consistency, but still allows the student to make a fresh impact upon specialist assessors in his or her main specialism.

12.18 Where external moderators are part of an institution's quality assurance systems, it is useful, where possible, to have them present at, or involved in, reassessments. Their presence and corroboration of the result takes some of the pressure off assessors if they have to fail a student. Having been present, they may also be able to play a useful role subsequently in discussing with senior academic managers of the institution what should happen to a student who has now used up all their assessment opportunities and still not passed.

12.19 Such discussions can be critical because, even in an institution with regulations that normally permit only one reassessment opportunity, it would be very unusual for a student who has failed a reassessment to have their studies terminated without any deliberation or consultation. The opportunity to progress may no longer be available, but it might be thought appropriate, for example, to allow the student to re-take the entire year. Another alternative might be that they do not attend the lessons a second time – and therefore do not block the place of another student coming through the programme - but simply take the various assessments at their normal times during the year. In some countries, such an option is not possible because of education law; in others, the institution has the autonomy to frame whatever remedies seem most appropriate to the individual case.

12.20 Where they are permitted, last-chance rescue packages such as this are, by definition, tailored to individual students and therefore benefit from a broad range of input and correspondingly broad support for any solution finally agreed. As ever, fairness and appropriateness must be uppermost in everyone's minds, always remembering that if, in another case, the institution decided that

termination of studies was indeed the right outcome, the student who had been refused any kind of extra 'lifeline' would certainly wish to know why it had been offered to others and not to them.

12.21 Where a student who fails and is unable to progress is one of those funded by the ministry or government under whose jurisdiction the institution operates, there may be financial implications both for the student and the institution. Institutions have to be increasingly detailed and accurate in the way they record students' completions of years of study or entire programmes. Rescue packages for failed students such as the examples given above may be the right solutions educationally but may have to be ruled out for financial reasons. Governments rarely fund students re-taking an entire year of study, but many will reinstate funding the following year if the student redeems their failure and becomes cleared to progress. For others, once a student falls out of funded status, there can be no return. Moreover, institutions with significant numbers of students who lose their funded status through non-progression or non-completion may find that their overall funding is also cut back, sometimes irrevocably.

12.22 Changing funding conditions represent just one of the many factors which bear upon an institution's approach to all aspects of its operation, including assessment. As we have seen, assessment policy can be especially powerfully affected in this respect because of its close linkage to student success which, in turn, is an important indicator used by accreditation systems in measuring institutional strength and by governments in distributing funding. For this reason alone, an institution's assessment strategies need to be regularly reviewed and, if necessary, updated. But there are also more educationally-driven reasons why assessment, along with every aspect of the curriculum, should be subject to regular review. This is the subject of the final chapter.

CHAPTER 13:
UPDATING ASSESSMENTS

Summary:

- Just as Learning Outcomes require periodic review, so assessments should be reviewed in parallel with these processes
- Assessment is often a focus for attention in external accreditation exercises
- Given the tendency of curricula to grow, the overall assessment load should be reviewed periodically
- Current and future trends in assessment
- **Afterword**: Some concluding 'health warnings' and a proverb
- In general, assessment should be set at the minimum level that ensures adequate feedback and reliable final evaluation - *'No pig was ever helped to grow fatter by being put on and off the scales'*

13.1 In the foreword to this handbook, the close relationship between learning and assessment was emphasised. Institutions need first to decide what they want students to learn and what they expect them to be able to do at the end of their study; then, they need to ensure that the assessments they put in place genuinely test those learning outcomes. Since it is now generally expected that institutions will periodically review their curricula and the learning outcomes that they intend for their students, it follows that they should examine their assessments as part of this periodic review.

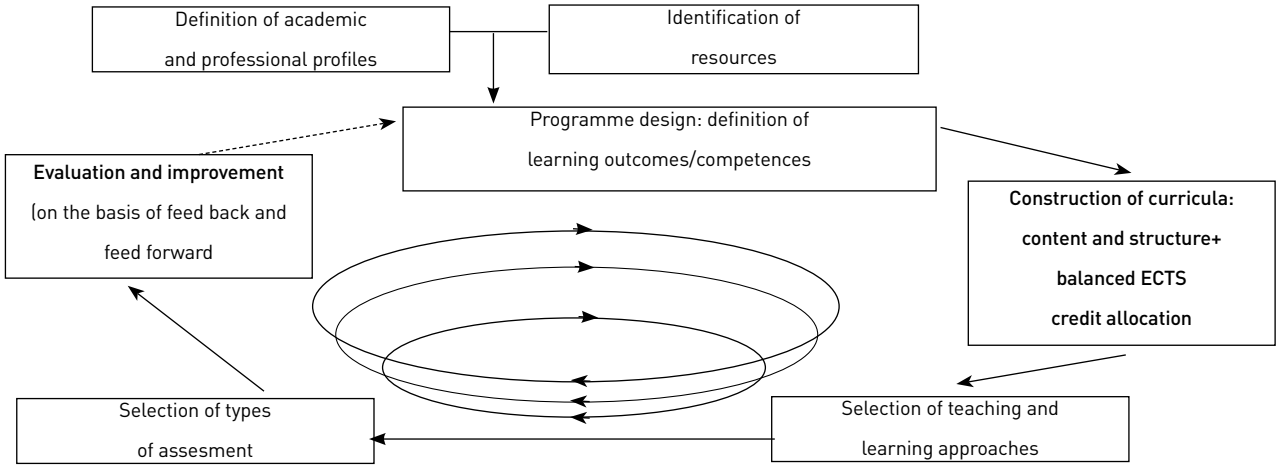
13.2 Perhaps as importantly, institutionally-mounted periodic reviews such as those described above increasingly sit within systems of periodic external accreditations. Such accreditation exercises consider every aspect of the institution and its running: its programmes, its staff, its students, its facilities and infrastructure and how it looks after, and seeks to enhance, all of these. In practice, assessment is frequently one of the areas given particular attention in such exercises, and their increasing prevalence is therefore yet another reason for institutions to think closely about assessment and how to ensure that it is as relevant, effective and up-to-date as possible.

13.3 Often, what accreditation panels are looking for is as much about how the assessment procedures are described as what they actually consist of. As has been repeatedly underlined in this handbook, it is a fundamental principle of robust assessment that everyone engaged in the assessment process – those being assessed and those doing the assessing – should have a good shared understanding of just what is going on, what the criteria are for success and how fairness, consistency, reliability and validity are being assured. An accreditation panel may not be able to witness actual assessments taking place (although sometimes such direct scrutiny is possible) but it can certainly examine the paperwork that is provided by the institution as a support to shared understanding. Therefore, whether we like it or not, here is another reason to take the written aspect of assessment protocols seriously.

13.4 In this way, it can be seen that, even if the curriculum remains essentially unchanged, periodic review of assessment procedures is still important. As well as improvements to the descriptions of them, it may be that experience in operating assessments shows that they could be carried out more simply or efficiently whilst still capturing the same measurement of learning outcomes. Simplicity and efficiency will themselves contribute to the ease with which everyone involved can reach a shared understanding of the processes.

13.5 Where periodic review does prompt a change in the curriculum, this will almost certainly involve some corresponding adjustment to assessments. Once again, the interconnectedness of teaching, learning and assessment in the Tuning Project's Dynamic Quality Development Circle, illustrated in Chapter 3, is of direct relevance:

The Tuning Dynamic Quality Development Circle



13.6 The checklist provided in Chapter 3 for designing assessments is just as relevant as a tool for reviewing them, and is therefore also worth repeating here:

- Which learning outcome(s) is this assessment intended to measure?
- How far along the road to achieving the final learning outcome(s) should the typical student be at this point in their programme?
- How do the things the student is being asked to do in this assessment measure their success against the learning outcome(s)?
- Could the same measurement be achieved by a simpler method/one which takes up less time?

- Among the overall pattern of assessments being undertaken by the student, are there other assessments measuring the same thing; if so, can the assessments be amalgamated?

- How recently did the student undergo a similar assessment; how soon will they do so again; will anything significant have changed in the interim?

13.7 Of the six points listed above, the first three are about the relevance and accuracy of the assessment, while the final three are about its efficiency. As indicated in 13.1, experience of running assessments may offer reassurance that they can be pared down further than originally thought, without sacrificing the quality or comprehensiveness of their measurement of learning outcomes. Where this is the case, the path of efficiency should always be followed. It is worth remembering that assessments draw upon the same resources that might otherwise be used for learning and teaching – time, physical space within the institution, teaching staff and the payment they require. Although learning requires assessment for its validation, the fact that it is in competition with it for resources means that, within reason, priority should be given to learning wherever possible.

13.8 The quality assurance arrangements surrounding assessment discussed in the preceding chapters bring their own demands on resources. External specialists and moderators obviously require payment for their work and the systematic use of criteria and provision of carefully-crafted written feedback reports is time-consuming in itself. Therefore, where an institution is seeking to develop or enhance its quality assurance procedures, as is currently the case in many European regions, the additional costs need to be taken into account. In some countries, where developments have been going on for longer, the trend is, if anything, to try and control and reduce these costs but, once embarked upon, the process is difficult to reverse.

13.9 As part of their ongoing curriculum development processes, institutions will regularly be examining whether new trends in the profession require new elements in the curriculum to ensure that students continue to be well-prepared. This process creates a tendency for curricula to grow over time, unless room is created by reducing or eliminating other elements. With each addition to the curriculum, there is a need to ensure that students' learning in this area is evaluated. Therefore, assessments, too, can proliferate unless care is taken to ensure that similar reduction or elimination takes place amongst them. This is where it can be especially important to ask the question: 'are there other assessments measuring the same thing; if so, can the assessments be amalgamated?'.

13.10 As discussed in Chapter 4, it is not always necessary to create a separate assessment event in order to measure students' achievement. Introducing an element of assessment to an event that is taking place anyway – say, a live concert – can avoid duplicating resources and help to ground the assessment in a realistic musical situation. Although there are limits to this approach if

reliable and consistent assessments are to be maintained, institutions should always be looking for ways to move further in this direction where it is prudent to do so.

13.11 Among the modes of assessment discussed in Chapter 4 were peer assessment and self-assessment. Institutions may feel wary of moving too far or too fast in the direction of such assessment modes, but their potential should not be underestimated. Above all, the fact that they can combine a contribution to assessment with an extension and enrichment of students' learning makes them an important area for further exploration and development.

13.12 As more institutions explore ways in which their activities can become more closely integrated with the wider musical environment outside their walls, this trend also opens up fresh possibilities for developing realistic assessment opportunities. An example of this might be the so-called 'side-by-side' sessions offered by professional orchestras in which students are invited in to rehearse, and sometimes perform, alongside their future professional colleagues. Such sessions are mostly regarded as providing complementary experience to the core learning and assessment activities of the institution, but they have the potential to be more directly integrated into the curriculum. The educational model is that of the 'work placement' which, in other disciplines, is frequently a fully-embedded component of a student's programme and assessed as such. Some Higher Music Education institutions have already made great strides in integrating learning with professional experience in this way; it is a trend that is likely to spread and develop further.

13.13 Alongside all these developments, however, it is unlikely that other modes of assessment will displace from its central role the evaluation of a student in their main specialism by a team or panel of experts. Whether this takes the form of a recital-style solo performance, an ensemble concert in jazz, pop or classical styles, a review and discussion of a portfolio of compositions or another format suitable to the specialism in question, this mode of assessment has the capacity like none other to go to the heart of a music student's uniquely individual blend of strengths and weaknesses, their technical capabilities and their capacity for creative expression.

AFTERWORD:
SOME CONCLUDING 'HEALTH WARNINGS' AND A PROVERB

This handbook has attempted to set out some of the key principles of assessment in Higher Music Education, first as they apply to the process of admission and then in terms of how they measure learning during a programme and determine the nature and grade of the qualification that should be awarded at the end of it. It has also described some of the assessment practices which are seen as reflecting these principles. The intention has not been to advocate one particular practice; on the contrary, where different approaches can be found across the sector, this has been acknowledged and their respective virtues have been set out as objectively as possible.

However, given that the author's experience is primarily focussed in the traditions of UK higher education and the genre of Western European Art Music, the examples cited throughout the main text inevitably reflect an orientation towards these. Moreover, even though every attempt has been made to acknowledge those areas where practice differs, it has probably been impossible to censor completely the author's own views as to best practice and the ways these have coloured the discussion.

A key example of this is the question of the presence, or otherwise, of the student's own teacher at final, summative assessments. The reader of this handbook will certainly take the impression from it that, whilst the arguments pro and con are conscientiously presented in the text, the balance of the author's opinion comes down quite firmly in favour of an approach which excludes the teacher, or at least ensures that his or her voice is subordinated to those of more 'objective assessors. An early reviewer of the pre-publication text of the handbook made the following persuasive argument for the contrary viewpoint:

> *Having had the opportunity to serve as the External Examiner [at a UK Conservatoire] for the past 4 years, I was able to observe a system in which not only the main subject teachers but also other 'internal' teachers of the main subject are rigorously excluded from the assessment process of their own students. At first I thought this was an excellent approach, but over the years I have fundamentally changed my mind and see now that there are advantages and disadvantages to both approaches:*

- *First, if teachers are never to be on panels for their own students' examinations, the institution will have to make an additional effort to ensure that the teachers are aware of what the standards of the final examinations actually should be; otherwise the standards may vary substantially from one student to another.*

- *Second, one could argue that the sense of responsibility of the teachers may increase if they are members of the panel; in the end, it will be their students performing in front of their colleagues. The teachers may also learn something from the feedback of their colleagues.*

- *Third, the actual feedback the student will receive could be problematic in such a highly objectivised approach. Without his or her own teacher (or any other internal teacher) being present at the final recital, the only feedback the student will receive (sometimes after a considerable amount of time) will be written comments, usually from an external panel member. The quality of this written feedback may vary, and if the feedback from the examination (even if it is a summative one) is poor, than I believe the entire purpose of the final recital (which is seen as so central to our type of training) will diminish.*

Arguments such as these only serve to underline that the topic of assessment is more complex and equivocal than we often give it credit for. This handbook has tried to cover as many of the issues as possible, but it can never hope to be definitive. Nevertheless, by emphasising principles, rather than practices, it is hoped that the points which it raises will provoke thought and debate and can be readily adapted to different traditions and genres. Meanwhile, the case-studies in Section Two, which are deliberately drawn from a wider European context, offer some pointers as to how common principles can feed into a range of diverse practices. To go no further than the issue raised above, it is noteworthy that where these case-studies deal with the personnel involved in final assessment, they more often than not adopt the principle of having the student's teacher not only present but fully involved in the assessment process.

A central theme of the handbook has been of the need for assessments to be consistent, reliable and valid and for them to have the necessary level of formality for their context and purpose. However, a separate strand running throughout has been the caution that assessments should be no more complex and numerous than the minimum required for the measurement and validation of learning. Learning is the core concern of education and this applies as much to Higher Music Education as to any discipline. Although, by careful design, assessments can be entwined with students' learning, and even contribute to it, they are fundamentally interruptions to the learning process and should be limited in number and paced in their occurrence through the year so as to disrupt as little as possible the natural rhythms of learning. There is a proverbial saying in English that is of relevance here:

'No pig was ever helped to grow fatter by being put on and off the scales'

SECTION TWO

INTRODUCTION

THE TEN CASE-STUDIES

1.1. In this second section of the handbook, the aim has been to provide a set of concrete examples of the ways in which assessments are designed and administered and to do so in a sequence which links directly back to the structure of the first, theoretical, section of the handbook. In this way, it is hoped that two goals will be achieved:

- That some of the key ideas of theoretical section will be shown in action, helping the reader to ground the theory in actual practice, and encouraging him or her to make similar extrapolations from the ideas of the handbook to what goes on currently in his or her institution

- That the picture painted by the case-studies taken as a whole, with some institutions having quite highly developed protocols for assessment and others relying on relatively free and flexible conventions, will encourage the reader to think creatively about practice in his or her institution: about where it stands within this spectrum and whether it might profitably be reviewed, changed or updated.

1.2 There are ten case-studies in all. As the contents page preceding this introduction shows, they are grouped in a way that connects them to particular chapters of Section One. Chapter One, which is general and introductory, and Chapter Thirteen, which mostly reviews and sums up earlier material through the viewpoint of how assessments should be updated, have no corresponding case-studies. Otherwise, there is at least one case-study that is applicable to each of Chapters Two to Twelve.

1.3 The first two case-studies offer examples related to admissions assessment. In the first, we see how a mapping exercise has been carried out between the skills tested during the course of existing institutional practice and the AEC/Polifonia Learning Outcomes for pre-College training. Exercises such as this generally show that learning outcomes, although they may sometimes seem alien, are largely codifications of what has traditionally been thought important anyway. Certainly, this example shows a high degree of correspondence between the skills-based and knowledge-based Polifonia outcomes and the qualities tested during the practical and theoretical admissions tests carried out by the institution.

1.4 Case-Study 2 describes a rather different admissions situation, within an institution in France geared specifically to selecting and training pedagogy students. The process is quite highly-developed, with a variety assessment strategies and a formalised, multi-staged voting system

to decide which candidates should be admitted. If offers a good opportunity to consider the pros and cons of relatively complex assessment systems and how a balance may be struck between institutional quotas for student numbers and more individually- and musically-based factors.

1.5 Case-Study 3 brings together in one example issues from Chapters Three and Four of Section One. Like Case-Study 1, it demonstrates how AEC/Polifonia Learning Outcomes can be adapted to, and reflected in, individual institutional practice. Here, they are seen to generate not only the learning goals, but also the course content, assessment events and assessment criteria of a Masters programme.

1.6 Like the first two case-studies, Case-Studies 4 & 5 also form a pair. Between them, they cover issues relevant to Chapters Five, Six and Seven of Section One, covering both formative and summative assessment. The grading systems which they feature show many points of similarity, despite having evolved in very different geographical locations.

1.7 Case-Study 6 relates to Chapter Eight, although it covers more than just issues of personnel in relation to summative assessment. In particular, it shows how protocols may be used to ensure that the different individual opinions of a multi-person jury can ultimately be resolved into a single, composite verdict.

1.8 Case-Study 7 brings together some of the written guidance offered by one UK institution concerning moderation and external benchmarking. Especially given that these are areas where UK practice is rather different from, and generally more extensive than, that in continental Europe, it is hoped that these examples, which seek to provide clear explanations of the roles and functions of moderators, may be of benefit and interest to a wider readership. In order to flesh out the kind of contribution expected from the kind of overall external benchmarker known in the UK system as an External Examiner, a sample pro-forma report for External Examiners is also included.

1.9 In Case-Study 8, as well as presenting one institution's approach to differentiating levels in assessment, the example given documents the kind of process whereby issues that arise during examining can be discussed within an institution and modification to assessment procedures trialled to see if they offer solutions to these issues. This is therefore a case-study which highlights the processes of review and development that may be applied to assessment, as well as an illustration of a particular system of criteria and levels.

1.10 Case-Study 9 focuses upon student appeals as one of the key areas where conflicts can arise in relation to assessments. We see a range of protocols that have been developed to cater for cases of student dissatisfaction at 1st- 2nd- and 3rd-Cycle level.

1.11 The same two institutions compared in case-Studies 3 & 4 are, once again, compared in the final case-study. This comparison shows that, in the area of *re*assessment too, they have notably similar processes in place, although it is also interesting to note that both institutions see themselves as operating currently through a period of change that, in one case, looks forward at least 2-3 years.

1.12 In each of the case-studies, some background is first provided - a greater or lesser amount according to how unique or distinctive the situation is (for example, it is hoped that the relatively detailed summary of the French system for music teacher training will be of interest, as well as being necessary to the contextualisation of the admission procedures used in one Cefedem).

1.13 In some cases, self-evaluation also forms part of the case-study; elsewhere, the features of the example are explained without the interpolation of value-judgements. In all the examples provided, the reader is invited to come to his or her own conclusions as to whether the example is one worthy of imitation or adaptation, or whether it represents a course of action which they would not wish to follow.

CASE-STUDY 1:
A MUSIKHOCHSCHULE IN GERMANY
DESCRIPTION:
ENTRANCE EXAMINATION TESTS FOR AN INSTRUMENTAL AND VOCAL MUSIC PROGRAMME

1. Background

1.1 The institution whose admissions processes are being described here divides its admissions examination into a two-day process, the first practically-oriented, the second concerned with more theoretical issues. Examiners are also encouraged, during both days, to pay attention to issues concerning the candidate's psychological and social skills.

1.2 The processes are interesting in themselves, but arguably not so different from those to be found in many institutions. What makes the case-study particularly interesting is the mapping exercise shown in the table below. In this table, the various criteria addressed during the two days of examining are shown in relation to the AEC/Polifonia Learning Outcomes for pre-college training. The sequence used in the table follows the alphabetical categories used in the institution's own criteria but, with only relatively minor re-ordering of the AEC/Polifonia Learning Outcomes, the degree of correspondence becomes abundantly clear.

2. Commentary

2.1 An exercise such as this can provide an institution with useful corroboration that its procedures are attuned to wider European standards. This can be helpful internally, but also externally, whether in the context of formal accreditation processes or, more generally, in relation to institutional reputation. An institution which can demonstrate that it is well-aligned with what is regarded, across its subject association at European level, as best practice can only be strengthened by this.

2.2 The exercise also potentially adds a further level of detail to the criteria used by examiners. To give just one example of this, the institutional criteria speak of the candidates' needing to show 'technical skills' and 'musicality' but do not indicate the level to which these should already have been developed. Experienced admissions examiners will know that they are looking for a combination of achievement and potential, and that technical skills, for example, may well still be in a phase of partial development. Nevertheless, they may feel reassured and reinforced in their judgements by referring to the phraseology of the AEC/Polifonia Learning Outcomes, with their reference to 'some experience of creating and realizing their own artistic concepts, as well as some necessary skills for their expression'. Although still broad and generalized, these descriptors make it explicit, through the use of the word 'some' that not all these features need

necessarily be in place.

2.3 The institutional criteria do not contain a separate and specific section detailing generic skills in quite the same extensive manner as can be found in the AEC/Polifonia Learning Outcomes. There is certainly no comparable sense of these outcomes forming a third and distinct category, requiring separate examination. Even so, the format of the two days of examination offers a significant range of opportunities to assess and evaluate aspects of the candidates' personal qualities – what the institution calls their 'psychological and social skills'. These are unequivocally generic skills, even though they are measured exclusively in musical contexts.

3. Marking System

3.1 The examination process described in the table yields a series of marks for each of the tests. Each mark is determined according to the marking scheme below. Obviously, not all tests carry the same weighting; an agreed weighting system is used when they are combined to produce an overall mark for the candidate.

3.2 It should be noted that the marks go through a process of evaluation and approval before they are communicated to the candidate. This is an important stage and is used by many institutions to ensure, among other things, that the overall number of offers of places made matches the available space to take in new students. This is an issue that will also be seen to be important in Case-Study 2.

Assessment evaluation - process of finding the admission result:

All single parts of the examination are evaluated according to the following range of marks:

exceptionally suited	11 - 13 points
well suited	8 - 10 points
suited	5 - 7 points
not suited	0 - 4 points

The total results are determined by combining the marks according to a specified weighting key.

The results of the entrance audition are forwarded in written form, including legal instructions,

after they have been evaluated and confirmed by the Board of Examiners.

They have a validity of 12 months.

Assessment by internal examiners The applicant presents him/herself with prepared music pieces of the required degree of difficulty, depending on the duration and the level of his/her pre-college education		
Mode of assessment	**Assessment criteria**	***Polifonia* Pre-College music education competences**
Day One: **Practical Examination** Duration of the admission exam in **major** plus **piano** as compulsory subject - 30 minutes	**A. Professional skills** - technical skills - musicality **B. Interpretative skills** - musical expression - creativity **C. Aural, creative and re-creative skills** music theory - written and practical: basic knowledge of: - the major minor tonal harmonics - form principles and genres performance of cadential progressions aural training - written: - understanding of intervals, chords - correlation between rhythm and harmony, - musical dictation of one and two voices **D. Ensemble skills** E. Ability of teaching music	**Practical (skills-based) Outcomes** Skills in artistic expression After the pre-college phase, students should be ready to demonstrate some experience of creating and realizing their own artistic concepts, as well as some necessary skills for their expression Repertoire skills After the pre-college phase, students should be ready to - show evidence of their experience and, where appropriate, performance of some representative repertoire of the Principal Study Area - their experience of a variety of appropriate styles Aural, creative and re-creative skills After the pre-college phase, students should be ready to demonstrate some fluency in recognizing by ear, memorizing and manipulating the materials of music Reading and writing skills After the pre-college phase, students should be ready to demonstrate sufficient skills for the communication of musical scores relating to their Principal Study area Ensemble skills After the pre-college phase, students should be ready to describe their experience of interacting musically in ensembles Practising and rehearsing skills After the pre-college phase, students should be ready to demonstrate their experience of basic practice and rehearsal techniques as well as their understanding of good habits of technique and posture which enable them to use their bodies in an effective and non-harmful way *[not specifically addressed in Polifonia outcomes]*

Day Two: **Theoretical Examination** In written format - depending on a chosen focus of the studies - 60-90 minutes; questions in music history included	**F. Knowledge and understanding of context** - music history **G. Verbal skills** - interview/speaking test: Identifying the applicant´s ability to reflect and verbalize by speaking about the reasons of the choice of studying music as a profession, ideas regarding the professional career, when indicated - the affinity for following a pedagogical focus of the studies.	**Theoretical (knowledge-based) Outcomes** Knowledge and understanding of repertoire and musical material After the pre-college phase, students should be ready to demonstrate knowledge of a representative selection of the mainstream repertoire of their Principal Study - Students should be ready to demonstrate knowledge of the basic elements and organizational patterns of music Knowledge and understanding of context After the pre-college phase, students should be ready to demonstrate: - knowledge of the main outlines of music history - familiarity with musical styles - a basic understanding of how technology can be used in the field of music - some knowledge of the music profession Verbal skills *[NB these are located in the Practical Skills area in the Polifonia outcomes]* After the pre-college phase, students should be able to talk or write about their music making
	[Not specifically addressed in audition but some information gained through interview/speaking test above]	**Generic Outcomes**

CASE STUDY 2:

A CENTRE DE FORMATION DES ENSEIGNANTS DE LA DANSE ET DE LA MUSIQUE (CEFEDEM) IN FRANCE

DESCRIPTION:

ENTRANCE EXAMINATION TESTS FOR AN INSTRUMENTAL AND VOCAL MUSIC TEACHING PROGRAMME

1. Background

1.1 In France, there are currently three kinds of profiles for music teachers[11]:

a) one for general music education in pre-college schools: these teachers need not be performers and are educated by Universities, Musicology Departments, the Ministry of Education (Bachelor, Master, Doctorate). Access to such courses is subject to the same conditions as any other discipline; the curriculum is within the Bologna system.

b) one for practical music education in primary schools: these teachers are performers and are educated by specific institutions within universities called *"Centres de Formation des Musiciens Intervenants"*, answerable to both the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education, and not yet in the Bologna system. Access is subject to an entrance examination; candidates undertake two years of higher education; the level of performance is not an eliminating criterion at entry. After two years, the students are awarded a *"Diplôme Universitaire de Musicien Intervenant" (DUMI)*.

c) one for instrumental and vocal education in pre-college music schools: for this profile, two levels of qualifications exist, delivered by two different kind of institutions, each one subject to an entrance examination and neither yet in the Bologna system:

c1) the first grade is at short-cycle level (level 5 of the European Qualifications Framework) delivered by the *"Centres pour la formation des enseignants de la musique" (Cefedem)*: candidates must have graduated at the highest level from a pre-college music school; the level of performance is a major criterion for the entrance assessment; after a two-year curriculum, students are awarded a *"Diplôme d'Etat de professeur de musique"*.

c2) the second grade is a postgraduate diploma: candidates must have graduated from the Conservatoires supérieurs of Paris or Lyon and so have a high level of performance skills; they are selected only after a interview by a jury; after a two-year curriculum, successful students are awarded a *"Certificat d'Aptitude aux fonctions de professeur de musique"*.

Both qualifications can also be obtained by a professional examination under the control of the Ministry of Culture. This examination is taken externally, without undergoing the two-

[11] This case study is based on the current situation in France. The law defining the conditions to obtain these qualifications is expected to change.

year curriculum; therefore, it is not taken into consideration in this case study of admissions processes.

1.2 The 11 Cefedems of France (as described in 1.1.c1) were created between 1990 and 2005 by the Ministry of Culture (to be precise, there are 10 "Centres" and 1 "Department" for instrumental and vocal teacher education at this grade of qualification). The objective of the Ministry when creating the Cefedems was to educate, within a two-year programme, instrumental and vocal teachers able to take into account the important evolution of music schools in France since the 1980's.

1.3 With this in mind, the curricula of the Cefedems comprise the following domains: artistic development, pedagogical practice, knowledge of educational and human sciences (history of education, new teaching processes; insights into sociology, psychology, history of institutions, etc.). For their final assessment, students have to write a *"mémoire"* concerned with a pedagogical issue of their choice.

1.4 The present case-study concerns the entrance examination to the *Cefedem Rhône-Alpes* in Lyon. When first created, this Cefedem catered only for Classical and Early-Music teachers; in 1996, it integrated Jazz musicians and, since the year 2000, it has educated students of all kind of music genres – adding pop and folk music and being the first Cefedem to do so. This led the institution to develop a student-centred curriculum, based on projects and implemented by learning contracts between students and the teaching staff.

2. Description of the examination

2.1 According to legal decree, the framework of the entrance examination is the same for all Cefedems: written tests; practical tests in front of a jury: a sight-reading test, a performance and an interview. Within this framework, each Cefedem may choose specific subjects or ways of assessing – for instance, whether to allocate specific marks or not. The details below are specific to the *Cefedem Rhône-Alpes.*

2.2 Two written tests :

- Music analysis (this test is specific to each genre concerned): The objective is to be able to estimate the candidate's musical knowledge of his or her genre, ability to comment on a previously-unseen piece of music piece and/or ability to reflect on a short musical commentary (for example, Nikolaus Harnoncourt on performing or Charles Rosen on the use of analysis for a performer).

- Analysis of a text on a pedagogic matter (this test is the same for all candidates): Summarising the text; connecting the main points of the text with the candidate's own experience of teaching or what he/she knows or expects of music teaching; adding to this any personal concern on music education that the candidate would wish to address during their studies.

2.3 Sight-reading test: in groups of three-to-five, within the same musical genre, the candidates have to work up a performance of a previously-unseen piece. Candidates have half an hour to prepare the performance. In the different genres, this works as follows:

- For classical music: from a score not written for the instruments of the group, propose and perform an arrangement of the piece (example: a piece for solo piano to be performed with flute, guitar, marimba)

- Jazz: perform from a given written theme

- Pop music: perform from a given recorded piece

2.4 Performance test: a free 20-minute programme. The candidates are asked to give as full as possible an image of their artistic profile, including, if possible, their engagement with ensemble performance.

2.5 Interview: a 20-minute discussion. The questions to the candidate can touch upon all of the tests, but also range across general questions on the candidate's musical or general education, his or her teaching experience, artistic practice, etc.

2.6 After having performed the group sight-reading test, each member of the group presents in turn his or her performance test immediately followed by the interview.

3. The Panel

3.1 The composition of the Entrance Examination Jury is determined by law: it is Chaired by the Director of the Cefedem, it includes a Music-School Director, two instrumental or vocal teachers qualified at the second grade (*Certificat d'Aptitude aux fonctions de professeur,* see 1.1.c2), and a distinguished musical personality. Each Cefedem chooses its jury members. The jury can ask specialists to assist them for the performance test assessment. Members of the teaching staff may attend all tests.

3.2 In regard to its specific teaching specialisms, the *Cefedem Rhône-Alpes* generally manages to include in the jury representatives of all the different music genres. If a genre cannot be represented, the jury requests the assistance of a specialist of the genre, usually a member of the teaching staff.

3.3 Two teaching-staff specialists correct the written tests. They then attend all the tests taken by the candidates in front of the jury.

4. Criteria of assessment

4.1 The criteria to which the jury refers are as follows:

- Sight-reading test: How did the candidate act musically within his or her sight-reading group, in his/her performance and in the partnership with the other musicians? How original and imaginative was the arrangement of the piece?

- Performance test, the main criterion is: Did the candidate show an appropriate performing level for access to higher education? Then additional criteria are: Was the programme relevant to the musical level of the candidate? Did the chosen repertoire show an open and developing musical view? Did the candidate include an ensemble piece in his/her programme; if so, how did he/she act as a musical partner? if not, did the explanations given during the interview show an positive attitude regarding ensemble playing or not?

- Interview: Is the candidate able to understand the questions in all their implications? Is the candidate able to communicate relevant answers to the questions? Did the candidate show an ability to be, or to become, self-reflective, open minded, able to adapt? Is the candidate able to express a real vocation for teaching, whilst keeping an active artistic development? Is the candidate able to analyse his or her own previous learning path with a certain objectivity? Is the candidate able to comment on his/her own performance, rationale for choice of programme, behaviour during the test, etc.? If already with some experience of teaching, is the candidate able to derive from this experience questions as to his or her own way of teaching?

5. The decision

5.1 To choose 25 candidates from among the 80 to 90 who attended the examination, the jury proceeds in two major stages, the first further sub-divided into two steps. There is no mark given to each individual test, each member of the jury establishes his own balance between the different criteria explained in point 4.

5.2 1st stage, step one: After each half-day, the jury has an initial discussion on each candidate auditioned during that period. If a specialist was requested, he or she gives their opinion to the jury. This discussion ends by a mark being given by each member of the jury panel:

1 the candidate should definitely enter the programme
2 the candidate should enter the programme but with a second-rank priority
3 the candidate shows interesting qualities for entering the programme, but some elements give rise to doubts
4 the candidate should not enter the programme

Each member has to provide a rationale for his or her chosen mark; the Secretary of the jury writes down this rationale. The 1st-step mark is a temporary indicator of the jury's perception of the candidate.

5.3 1st stage, step two: During the 1st jury panel discussion and immediately after the jury gives its marks, the teaching-staff specialists give their view of the written work of each of the candidates. They express their opinion using the same marks as the jury. The Secretary writes down their opinion and the rationale leading to their mark

5.4 2nd stage: At the end of all the tests, and after the previous two steps, the jury proceeds to its final vote to choose from among all the candidates those who will definitely enter the programme. The voting takes place in two rounds:

5.5 1st round: for each candidate, each jury member must give his or her vote. The jury takes into consideration the first, shaping, vote of the jury and the opinion of the markers of the writing tests, but now with the benefit of having a view of all the candidates. There are three possible marks:

1 the candidate is to enter the programme
2 the candidate may enter the programme, but with a second-rank priority
3 the candidate may not enter the programme

At the same time, the two teaching-staff members who attended all the tests and interviews give their own final opinion, using the same marking scheme.

5.6 Both those results are compared, and if the vote of the jury concerning a candidate shows a significant difference from the opinion of the teaching-staff representatives, there follows a discussion on that candidate. At the end of the discussion, the jury can either express a new vote on the candidate or stick to its original verdict.

This very specific part of the process is due to the fact that jury, whose composition is organised by law, is aware of the importance of taking into consideration the opinion of those who will have to educate the students during two years in an intensive way. The jury wishes to be fully informed, and to have reflected deeply, on any disagreement between their view and that of the teachers.

5.7 The jury then establishes the list of the candidates by order of votes, starting with those with the minimum of points: 5 points means 5 votes for a 1 (all five members of the panel voted for "1 - the candidate is to enter the programme").

5.8 The jury must select 25 students. If this amount of students leads the jury to stop the list in the middle of one category of points, it then proceeds to a second round of voting within that specific category.

Example:
10 candidates received a score of 5 (5 votes for "1 – the candidate is to enter the programme)
10 candidates scored a 6 (4 votes for 1, 1 vote for 2)
10 candidates scored a 7 (3 votes for 1, 2 votes for 2)
The total of 30 candidates is 5 greater than the capacity for the cohort.
The 20 first candidates' selection is confirmed.
The 10 candidates who received 7 points are selected for a 2nd round of voting.

5.9 2nd round: The panel establishes an order of preference for those candidates in the critical category (i.e. the final ten in the example above).

A scoring system is used thus: each candidate receives an amount of points in relation to his place in the list (1st position = 10 points, 2nd position = 9 points, etc.). This produces a ranking order for all the relevant candidates and enables the jury to allocate the remaining available places.

5.10 So, in the same example given above, the five candidates with the highest scores are selected, and the complete list of 25 successful candidates is thus finalised.

5.11 The five remaining candidates are put on a reserve list, using the ranking order established in the 2nd round of voting; this list is established in case of the departure of a student (or students) during the first semester of the programme.

6. Feedback to candidates

6.1 The President of the Jury, the Director of the Cefedem, keeps all the written notes produced by the Secretary of the jury. Later, he will receive each selected student and explain to him or her the rationale that led to the jury's decision. He will do the same for any rejected candidate who requests an interview.

CASE STUDY 3:

AN ACADEMY OF MUSIC IN THE NETHERLANDS

DESCRIPTION:

INTEGRATED USE OF LEARNING OUTCOMES TO GENERATE THE LEARNING GOALS, COURSE CONTENT, ASSESSMENT EVENTS AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA OF A MASTERS PROGRAMME

1. Background

1.1 This Academy of Music in the Netherlands offers a Master of Music programme lasting two years. Masters students build upon the skills achieved in their Bachelor programme and are expected to develop into professional all-round musicians at the highest level.

1.2 The Masters programme is designed to enable students to shape a personally-tailored plan of study. Within this, two elements are paramount; the **artistic-professional skills (1)** of the student and his or her **personal and professional development (2)**. As an expansion and deepening of this, the student is also trained in **research skills (3)** and in establishing and executing practical **research (4)**. Finally, the Masters student is expected to work on intensifying his or her **organizational and communicative skills and ability to cooperate (5)**.

1.3 The conservatoire has developed a systematic tool for ensuring that these aspects are not only mapped against shared benchmarks such as the AEC/Polifonia Learning Outcomes, but are also tested against the content, assessment and assessment criteria of the programme.

2. How the System Operates

2.1 As with Case-Study 1, the mapping tool is presented in the form of a table. Within the table are five columns: the first lays out the AEC/Polifonia Learning Outcomes; the second maps these against the five key areas of achievement of the institution's Masters programme, listed above; the third column summarises the course content, the fourth the assessment type and the fifth lists the criteria to be used in the assessment.

2.2 What is shown below is only that part of the table which relates to the first of the programme's key elements: **artistic-professional skills (1)**. The process for the other elements follows the same principles.

3. Rationale

3.1 It should be noted that the wording in columns two to five of the table is entirely that of the institution. The terminology of the AEC/Polifonia Learning Outcomes does not need to be incorporated directly into that of the institution; the key is in the careful matching of elements using the codifying scheme P1, P2, etc.

3.2 Setting out all this material in tabular form ensures that the criteria used when carrying out an assessment really do relate back to the Learning Outcomes that the programme was intended to achieve.

4. Commentary

4.1 To show how this follows through into practice, reproduced below is a specimen of a report form. Here, the student's identity has been made anonymous but this is a real case.

4.2 It is not hard to imagine the kind of recital performance that prompted this report and the points made are straightforwardly musical; nevertheless, the format of the report reminds both the jury members and the student which aspects of the recital need to be addressed to ensure that the programme's Learning Outcomes may be seen to have been tested and demonstrated.

Part 1

Final Mark: 8.0 (signed by all five jury members)

Part 2

Assessment Report:

A. Professional Skills

- Technical skills (P1.1; P2.1; P2.2; P4.1):

  The candidate has a beautiful sound on his instrument but the sound is rather flat. The tuning demands more attention; it isn't perfect. The technique level is well developed.

- Professional practice (P1.1; P2.1;P2.1; P3.1; P4.1):

  The candidate has a well developed feeling for style and interpretation. The vibrato, however, is too fast.

- Stage performance (P4.1):

  The stage performance is satisfactory, but not polished enough. He has to learn how to receive prolonged applause.

B. Interpretative Skills

- Musical expression (artistry) (P1.1; P2,2; P4.1):

  Mature musical consciousness but there could be me more depth. He has a sense of the structure.

- Personal vision (originality) (P1.1; P2.2; P4.1.):

  He has a lot of imaginative power and a well-developed identification with the music but could have more discipline.

AEC/Polifonia Learning Outcomes (PLOs) for 2nd-Cycle programmes (P) Practical(skills-based) outcomes 2nd cycle) (Codes between brackets)	Master of Music qualification and learning goals: 1.Artistic and professional skills development (Between the brackets are the codes which refer to the PLOs)	Course content:	Assessment	Assessment criteria (Between the brackets are the codes which refer to the PLOs)
(P1) Skills in artistic expression (P1.1) At the completion of their studies, students should emerge as well-developed personalities, having developed to a high professional level their ability to create, realize and express their own artistic concept (P2) Repertoire skills (P2.1) At the completion of their studies, students should have built upon their experience of representative repertoire either by broadening it to a comprehensive level and/or by deepening it within a particular area of specialisation (P2.2) Students should be fluent across a range of styles and/or should have developed a distinctive and individual voice in one particular style (P3) Ensemble skills (P3.1) Where students have engaged in ensemble activity as part of their 2nd cycle study, at the completion of their studies they should be able to take a leadership role in this activity (P4) Practising, rehearsing, reading, aural, creative and re-creative skills (P4.1) 2nd cycle curricula usually assume that students have already acquired these skills. At the completion of their studies, students should have ensured that any areas of relative weakness have been addressed. Through independent study they should also have continued to develop these skills sufficiently to support their ability to create, realise, and express their own artistic concepts.	***General qualification:*** *The Master of Music graduate possesses the instrumental/ vocal expertise demanded by the profession and the technical skills and knowledge that go with this. Based on this he/she has acquired a musical-artistic personality and has developed the skills to create, to realise and to express personal artistic concepts independently and on a high professional level, being conscious of his/her position in a international context.* *(P1,P2,P3,P4)* **Learning goals:** The Master of Music graduate - is able to practise independently, on a professional level from a personal artistic view in accordance with the stylistic demands of the music (P1.1, P2.2; P4.1) - Is able to compile, to present and to perform a programme of his own with solid knowledge of the historical context and of the practice of performance (P1.1; P2.1; P4.1) - Has acquired a broad or a specialist repertoire and/or has broad skills of improvisation (P2.1; P4.1) - Possesses interpretative skills and can conceive and realise an interpretation autonomously (P1.1; P4.1) - Has knowledge of literature and a broad knowledge of repertoire (P2.1; P4.1)) - Is able to function in a variety of co-operative situations (P3.1; P4.1) - Can make functional connections with other disciplines from his/her own discipline and translate these in concrete activities (P3.1; P4.1)	The course content addresses the following repertoire: - Solo playing - Duo repertoire - Chamber music or - Orchestral excerpts / audition repertoire	Recital	The Masters student presents him/herself through the medium of a concert. The concert programme must fulfil certain requirements of duration, level, the progress achieved since previous assessments, the styles/genres included and the organisation and presentation of the concert. *Assessment criteria:* A. Professional skills - technical skills (P1.1; P2.1; P2.2;. P4.1) - professional practice (P1.1; P2.1;P2.1; P3.1; P4.1) - stage performance (P4.1) B. Interpretative skills - musical expression (artistry) (P1.1; P2,2; P4.1) - personal vision (originality) (P1.1; P2.2; P4.1.)

CASE STUDY 4:

A UNIVERSITY OF MUSIC AND PERFORMING ARTS IN AUSTRIA

DESCRIPTION:

FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT WITHIN A SYSTEM DESIGNED TO MAINTAIN A BALANCE BETWEEN FLEXIBILITY AND FORMALITY

1 Background

1.1 Within the Austrian institution which uses the system described below, assessing according to pre-set agreed assessment criteria is not common, although those involved in assessment matters do naturally relate their judgement to unwritten criteria of musical evaluation passed down from generation to generation. Furthermore, as of 2010, the concept of learning outcomes is new to higher education in Austria and therefore not yet sufficiently implemented to feed back into assessment.

1.2 On the other hand, formal approaches and processes have a long tradition in the Austrian university system as universities have been public institutions governed by ministries and public law for a long time. Study matters - and therefore teaching, assessing and grading - have been, and are still mostly, governed by general rules applying to every university in Austria (although in recent years, the institutions in question have become more and more autonomous).

1.3 Through accumulated tradition, rather than by investing specific thought in assessment criteria, the procedures surrounding assessment have been formalised in a way that gives the students a maximum number of chances for reassessment after initial failure and/or proper remedies in the case of irregularities in examination procedures. In this way, the rights of students - and thus the rights of the individual against the public authority - are at the heart of this system.

2 Assessment in the main study area

2.1 Typically, assessment in the main study area is continuous. As mentioned in Section 5.6 of Section One of the handbook, this continuous assessment consists of a rather informal checking of progress by the teacher in the main subject area, whom the students meet on a weekly basis. At the end of each term this results in a mark.

2.2 At the end of a cycle, or after 4 and 6 years in Diploma Studies, an assessment takes place in front of a jury. The teacher of the main study area is a member of the jury. The panel consists of a minimum of three examiners, who are all teaching in the subject area at the university. It is possible to invite external members to join a jury but this is done only in rare cases where insufficient internal personnel are available. The Dean of the study area chairs the panel.

3 Grading

3.1 Grading is regulated by law as follows:

Grades for the Assessment of Individual Courses

Grade	Category	Translation	Comments
Sehr gut	(1)	Very good	An excellent performance
Gut	(2)	Good	Generally good, some mistakes
Befriedigend	(3)	Satisfactory	Balanced, a number of substantial mistakes
Genügend	(4)	Sufficient	A performance corresponding to the minimum criteria for success
Nicht genügend	(5)	Unsatisfactory	Requiring further work

Grades for the Assessment of Individual Courses on a Simple Pass/Fail Basis

(where the numerical categories given above would not be appropriate)

Category	Translation	Comments
Mit Erfolg teil-genommen	Successfully completed	The assessment criteria have been met
Ohne Erfolg teil-genommen	Unsuccessfully completed	The assessment criteria have not been met

Grades for Comprehensive (Final) Examinations

(covering materials from various subjects)

Category	Translation	Comments
Mit Auszeichnung bestanden	Pass with Distinction	In the case of an excellent performance
Bestanden	Pass	In the case of a positive performance
Nicht bestanden	Fail	

3.2 In assessments where a panel has to decide for a certain grade, the decision is firstly reached by majority voting. If this procedure fails to produce a result, the grade that each member of the panel would like to award is taken. The sum of all these grades is calculated and then divided by the number of panel members. The result of this calculation is the final grade awarded.

4 Conclusions

4.1 This system leaves a lot of freedom to assessors and is therefore very flexible, while, at the same time, keeping in mind minimum standards of fairness and objectivity. It ensures that at the end of a study cycle, more than one person assesses the achievements of the student without interfering in the year-to-year process of learning and teaching in the main subject area.

4.2 Standards and quality are hard to measure in art. Sometimes doing so by grading seems to be inappropriate and unnecessary. As long as the aim of training is met, and this can be agreed on upon by student and teacher, a training period has, in perhaps the most relevant sense, been successful. It is not really important to differentiate meticulously between numerous levels of achievement as long as the threshold standard is met. For such cases a grade that marks only successful completion of courses or a "pass" can be an advantage in the system. On the other hand, articulated criteria can offer more transparency for students and teachers as well as for the interested public in what the required standards are. Formalised procedures alone cannot do this job.

CASE STUDY 5:

A MUSIC CONSERVATORY IN NORWAY

DESCRIPTION:

A SYSTEM OF EXAMINATION CRITERIA DESIGNED TO ADDRESS THE ASSESSMENT OF A RECITAL PERFORMANCE AND TO BE APPLICABLE TO BOTH 1ST- AND 2ND-CYCLE ASSESSMENTS

1 Background

1.1 The system of assessment described below was developed at a Music Conservatory in Norway and has been used since the national implementation of the Bologna Declaration in 2004. It is under continuing local and national evaluation.

1.2 The criteria for the grading scale A-F were first developed on a general basis for all the sectors of higher education in Norway. The music conservatories in Norway found that these criteria did not fit to the needs of the music sector and proposed new general criteria to be used in the music sector. Their proposal was then adopted for *all* the sectors of higher education in Norway.

1.3 Grading is regulated by law as follows:

Either: **Pass/Fail** - it is generally assumed that the Pass/Fail threshold roughly corresponds to the evaluation criteria for C or D in the graded scale below

Or: ***A to F*** - with these national criteria:

Symbol	Description	General, qualitative description of evaluation criteria
A	Excellent	An excellent performance, clearly outstanding. The candidate demonstrates excellent judgement and a high degree of independent thinking
B	Very good	A very good performance. The candidate demonstrates sound judgement and a very good degree of independent thinking
C	Good	A good performance in most areas. The candidate demonstrates a reasonable degree of judgement and independent thinking in the most important areas
D	Satisfactory	A satisfactory performance, but with significant shortcomings. The candidate demonstrates a limited degree of judgement and independent thinking
E	Sufficient	A performance that meets the minimum criteria, but no more. The candidate demonstrates a very limited degree of judgement and independent thinking
F	Fail	A performance that does not meet the minimum academic criteria. The candidate demonstrates an absence of both judgement and independent thinking

2 Procedure for Formative Assessments

2.1 Formative assessment is done continuously in all subjects by the teacher, either orally or by a written test.

2.2 At the end of every semester, every performance student is expected to play a short programme (10-20 min) which is evaluated by an internal committee appointed by the Dean. This performance test has both formative and summative functions.

2.3 The grading scale used in the performance test is Pass/Fail (see 1.3). The student receives oral comments concerning his/her playing which provide formative feedback. However, it is important for the test to be passed, hence its summative function; a student who fails, is allowed reassessment a month or two after the original test. It is a requirement of being allowed to try for the final exam that these tests should be passed.

3 Procedure for Final Assessment

3.1 For final assessments, the Faculty Board or the Dean appoints the members of the Assessment Committee, which, for the first cycle, normally consists of two members - one external and one internal. The internal member is usually the candidate's supervising teacher.

3.2 A Master's degree performance is assessed by two external committee members. The candidate's teacher is not involved in the grading itself, but has the right to be present at the assessment and to participate in the discussion.

3.3 Starting with the Academic Year 2012, the grading scale used at all recital performances will be a simple Pass/Fail (see 1.3). A candidate will pass with a performance that is good in most areas and which demonstrates a reasonable degree of judgement and independent thinking in the most important areas.

3.4 The candidate has the right to know the Assessment Committee's reasoning and will receive a summarizing written statement about his/her achievement.

3.5 Conflicting views among the committee are normally solved by weighing the external member's vote more than the internal's and/or by giving him/her the last word.

3.6 The external member of the Assessment Committee is expected to write a short report on the exam, commenting on the recital programme and how it is related to the goals and learning outcomes of the study programme.

CASE STUDY 6:

A MUSIC UNIVERSITY IN FINLAND

DESCRIPTION:

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT PERFORMANCE EXAMINATIONS: PERSONNEL, MARKING MECHANISMS AND FEEDBACK PROTOCOLS

1 Background

1.1 In this Finnish Music University, performance examinations sometimes take the form of single events and sometimes consist of a string of events whose results are combined to produce the final examination result. The following case study looks at both situations.

1.2 The processes described show, on the one hand, the formality of a summative assessment process, with its clear mechanisms for determining final grades, etc. On the other hand, they underline an important feedback component, with the student and teacher being fully integrated into the discussion phase of the examiners' deliberation and the communication of the final grade being either immediate or as rapid as possible to ensure that it comes while the performance is still fresh in the student's mind.

1.3 All the performance examinations discussed are evaluated on a scale of 0-5, where the numerical grades are regarded as follows:

Grade	Descriptor
5	Excellent
4	Very Good
3	Good
2	Satisfactory
1	Adequate
0	Fail

1.4 It will be noted that this scale is used both for the individual evaluations of each members of the examining Board and for delivering the overall result recorded for the student. The precise way in which the second is derived from the first is set out below.

2 Performance examinations based on one single event

2.1 Every Board member assesses the examination on the scale of 0-5 described above. The grades are recorded in the minutes of the examination.

2.2 The total grade of an approved examination is the whole number closest to the average of the grades given by all the Board members. If the average of the grades is exactly between two whole

numbers, the final grade will be the natural number closest to the grade given by the Board Chair. The examination will be a fail if half or more of the Board members grade the examination as 0. In a tie, the Chair of the Board will decide.

2.3 It should be noted that the clause about half of the Board members grading the examination as 0 means that a student may potentially emerge with an average grade of, say, 2 but still fail the examination.

3 Performance examinations in several parts

3.1 Every Board member present at a given part of the examination assesses that part on the scale of 0-5. The grades are recorded in the minutes of the examination. A total grade for a part of a performance examination will not be calculated. Every part of a performance examination must be approved separately.

3.2 Any given part of an examination will be a fail if half or more than half of the board members grade the examination as 0. In a tie, the Chair of the board will decide. The total grade of a course is the whole number closest to the average of the grades given by the Board members. If the average of the grades is exactly between two whole numbers, the grade will be the natural number above the average.

3.3 If the performance examination is the student's demonstration of proficiency or part of it, the Board will issue a written assessment.

4 Protocol for Evaluation and Feedback from Performance Examinations

4.1 After the performance examination, the Chair invites the performer and his/her teacher for the evaluation discussion. The Chair opens the discussion and Chairs the session. Every jury member gives aural feedback to the student. The feedback is especially concerns especially the way in which the learning outcomes of the course in question have either been reached or failed to be reached. The Chair is the last person to give his/her statement.

4.2 The student has an opportunity to comment on the feedback he/she has received. The Chair then ends the evaluation discussion. The student and his/her teacher leave before the grading discussion begins.

4.3 The performance is graded and the result recorded in the minutes as described above. In addition, all the main points of the aural feedback the student has received is recorded in the minutes by the Chair.

4.4 The student (and his/her teacher) is usually called back immediately to hear the result of the grading of the performance. If this is not possible on the spot, the student should still be informed about the result of the assessment as soon as possible. The jury which assesses the performance/recital which is a demonstration of proficiency relating to the final award or part of it, must in addition to the aural feedback, give a written feedback statement for the student.

CASE STUDY 7:

A CONSERVATOIRE IN THE UK

DESCRIPTION:

GUIDELINES ON MODERATION AND THE ROLE OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

1 Background

1.1 As indicated in Section One of this Handbook, moderation and external benchmarking are particular features of the UK tradition of higher education. This case study reproduces extracts from documents used by a UK conservatoire, in which it seeks to set out the principles behind moderation, the occasions in which it might take place and, in particular, the role and manner of operation of the key figure in UK moderation process, the External Examiner. The extracts are taken from two documents: one is a booklet giving detailed guidance for the conduct of practical examinations, the other is a handbook setting out all the quality assurance procedures of the institution, of which the role and activities of the External examiner is seen as an important element.

1.2 Until recently, the concept of External Examiners was virtually unknown in conservatoires in continental Europe. However, in recent years, a number of experienced musicians and academic leaders from institutions in mainland European countries have been invited to serve as external examiners within UK institutions. This phenomenon has had two consequences:

- UK institutions have been able to gain a fuller and more systematic picture of how their standards compare with those of institutions in continental Europe
- Those individuals who have accepted these roles as External Examiners have come to see the strengths of such a system of external benchmarking.

2 Moderation

2.1 The first extract below comes from early in the booklet on practical examination procedures, where a number of points about membership of panels are made. The explanation of why there might be other individuals in attendance alongside the actual jury at an assessment is important to avoid distraction, concern or embarrassment at an actual examination event.

Membership of examining panels

18 Additional staff may sit in with panels for the purposes of monitoring or of staff development. They are not part of the panels and should not participate in the discussions leading up to decisions. Once a decision has been reached, Chairs may invite general observations about the process from anyone attending in a monitoring capacity.

19 Especially where they are public recitals, examinations will often be attended by External Examiners, not only for monitoring but, where appropriate, for moderation (see below). External Examiners should always be invited to comment once a decision has been reached.

Note that External Examiners are specifically mentioned in paragraph 19

2.2 Later in the same document comes the short section devoted to moderation referred to in the extract above. Here is the text of this section in full:

> Moderation of marks
>
> 35 Where a panel is examining a number of students during a session, it is recommended that cross-checks are made periodically, and certainly at the end of the session, to confirm that the relative positions of the marks awarded feel correct. This is particularly important with panels whose operation may run across several days. It may be helpful to enter marks in pencil until they have been moderated in this way.
>
> 36 Moderation with smaller panels may be more difficult. The combination of comparison across different instruments by the Chair and innate familiarity with standards on the instrument on the part of the specialist(s) is crucial in arriving at appropriate marks. When schedules are being drawn up for External Examiners, priority is given to their attending sessions where only one or two students are being examined, so as to reinforce the moderating mechanisms in these areas.
>
> 37 Any moderation conducted by panels themselves, by Programme Leaders as internal moderators or by External Examiners within the time-span of the examining itself may be applied to individual marks (to fine-tune the rank order of results) or to the set of results as a whole (to improve the correlation with other sets). After the session is closed, any subsequent moderation (for example at the Board of Examiners) should normally be applied only to an entire set of marks from a given panel, other than in the case of moderating a mark where a standard penalty has been applied by the panel.

3 External Examiners

3.1 The two extracts quoted here are from the institution's quality assurance handbook. The first of them sets out in general terms a definition of the role of an External Examiner. Although this definition is specific to one UK institution, it is one that would be recognized by colleagues elsewhere in the UK in all its essential features.

The role of the external examiner

1 External examining assists the Institution in ensuring that:

- the academic standard for each award and award element is set and maintained at the appropriate level and that student performance is properly judged against this;
- the assessment process measures student achievement against the intended outcomes of the programme appropriately, and is fair and fairly operated;
- that the Institution is able to compare the standards of its awards with those of other higher education institutions.

2 The Institution asks external examiners, in their expert judgement, to report on:

- whether the standards set are appropriate for the awards by reference to the UK music subject benchmarking statement (in the case of the Bachelor of Music), the national qualifications framework, diploma supplement and other relevant information;
- the standards of student performance in the programme and on the comparability of the standards achieved with those of similar programmes in other UK higher education institutions;
- the extent to which the Institution's processes for assessment, examination, and the determination of awards are sound and have been fairly conducted.

3 In order to carry out these responsibilities, the external examiner must:

- be able to judge each student impartially on the basis of practical and written work submitted for assessment without being influenced by previous association with the programme or any of the students;
- be able to compare the performance of students with that of their peers on comparable programmes elsewhere;
- be entitled to request access to all assessed work;
- ensure that assessments are conducted in accordance with the approved programme regulations;
- be properly briefed by the relevant Programme Leader on their role, the programme and the Institution's expectations of students on the programme;
- produce an annual report.

3.2 Later in the same document, specific guidance is given to External Examiners as to how they should function within the context of practical examinations. External Examiners are also given copies of the booklet giving guidance on practical examinations so that they will see what is written there about the roles and responsibilities of jury members and how those individuals will understand the presence of additional moderating colleagues during the examination process.

The Role of the external examiner in practical examinations

30 External examiners are invited to attend the main practical examinations for the award. They are expected to attend a reasonable proportion of final recitals or their equivalent. The precise proportion will be determined in any one year in discussion with the relevant head of programmes. External examiners do not participate personally in examining practical examinations. The role of the external examiner in a practical examination will be to observe the process and the marks awarded.

31 If the external examiner has an immediate concern about the conduct of any practical examination which cannot be resolved with the chair of the panel, he or she is asked to contact the Programme Leader directly and immediately. External examiners are specifically asked to comment on the standards of practical examinations in their written annual report.

3.3 Finally, on the following pages are shown an adapted version of the pro-forma Report Form given to External Examiners towards the end of each year for which they serve and which they are asked to use in order to give their report consistency with those of other external examiners and with their own reports in previous or subsequent years.

3.4 It should be noted that External Examiners are appointed for a fixed period of time only – generally between three and four years. By this means, their external status and relative separateness from the institution is guaranteed; an open-ended commitment to serving as an External Examiner would almost inevitably lead to an over-loyal attachment to the institution and to colleagues within it who, over time, would become friends of long standing.

3.5 The fixed-term appointments offered to External Examiners for reasons of impartiality do also mean that the quality of guidance material in this area is especially important. External Examiners have to be replaced on a regular cycle and no individual external Examiner is ever more than a few years from being a novice when it comes to the particular procedures and characteristics of the institution whose assessments they are invited to moderate and benchmark.

We place a high value on the comments of external examiners, which have a crucial role in annual course monitoring. You will receive a written reply to your report from the relevant Programme Leader after the annual monitoring report has been considered by internal committees. This will address the key points you raise and will inform you of the action which will be taken in response

- *Please respond to the following questions on the report form, supplementing them where appropriate with more detail, either on the form or on a separate sheet*
- *This report form is usually provided as a Word email attachment. It can, however, be provided in hard paper copy form on request*
- *Please use as much space as you would like when completing questions*
- *The completed report should be sent to: [name of appropriate institutional member)*

Academic year which this report covers	
Name of external examiner	
Title of programme(s) examined	
Dates on which you were in attendance as an external examiner	
Dates of Boards of Examiners meeting(s)	

Standards

Please comment on:

- the standards demonstrated by the students (you may wish to comment separately on academic and performance standards, if appropriate to the course concerned)

- the extent to which these standards are appropriate for the programme

- the strengths and weaknesses of the students as a group

- the appropriateness of the design, structure and marking of assessments

- the appropriateness of the procedures for assessments and examinations

Comparative standards

Please comment on:

- students' performance in relation to students on comparable courses

- the basis and rationale for any comparisons of standards (eg one or more of: UK music college, UK university, European/international music college, the music profession in the UK, the music profession abroad)

Teaching and learning

Please comment on:

- the appropriateness of the course aims and content and the success of any developments which have come to your attention since last year

- the quality of teaching and learning methods, suggested by what you have seen of students' standards of achievement

Support for your role as external examiner

Please comment on:

- whether you feel that appropriate action has been taken on the issues you raised in your previous year's report (if applicable)

- whether you have been given sufficient access to, and the power to call upon, any material, such as course work or syllabuses, needed to make judgements about the standards achieved by students

- the appropriateness and coherence of the policies and procedures relating to your role as external examiner

Any other issues

Please continue if there are further issues on which you would like to comment

CASE STUDY 8:
A CONSERVATOIRE IN THE UK

DESCRIPTION:
A SYSTEM OF EXAMINATION CRITERIA DESIGNED TO ADDRESS THE DIFFERENT ELEMENTS OF A RECITAL PERFORMANCE AND TO BE APPLICABLE TO BOTH 1ST- AND 2ND-CYCLE ASSESSMENTS

1 Background

1.1 The system of criteria described here was developed in a UK conservatoire and then evaluated as to whether it should be adopted. Eventually, certain features were drawn from it and used to adapt existing criteria, but the system as a whole did not go beyond a design exercise. As such, it provides a useful case study, in that it incorporates a number of ideas about recital assessment without reduplicating any actual system currently used in higher music education.

1.2 The reasons for developing the system were twofold:

a. Examiners sometimes found it difficult to use criteria where each descriptor consisted just of an overall description of the level of achievement in the recital because:

- Students' recitals are not always consistently of one quality throughout; a student's physical stamina and their mental discipline to sustain a performance across anything up to an hour are relevant factors in judging them as performing musicians. Should examiners base their mark on the best that the student has shown themselves to be capable of at some point in the recital, or should they mark to some imaginary mean standard of the recital as whole?

- Even where the recital itself is broadly of one quality throughout, some students are very proficient technically but relatively uninteresting artistically, while others can be enthralling to listen to despite being prone to occasional technical lapses. Individual cases vary but, in general, there is almost certainly a level of technical perfection that a live audience would be prepared to sacrifice for the sake of an inspiring performance; the question is how to reflect this in examination judgements.

- Then again, a performance may be of a high standard both technically and interpretatively, but somehow lacking in terms of the student's engagement with the audience – their stage manner, dress, posture, projection and, in the case of spoken introductions being provided, their articulateness. These matters are perhaps secondary to core issues of how the music itself is played, but they do affect audiences and are relevant to a music student's competence to enter the profession. As such, shouldn't they also be reflected in a judgement upon a student's performance as a recitalist - especially if competences related to communication skills have been linked with this assessment?

The result of all of these factors is that examiners were sometimes doubtful as to whether they were genuinely comparing like-with-like when trying to decide whether a particular recital should be judged as good, very good, excellent, etc. Recital events of a widely different character from one another might often end up with the same overall mark. This may not actually be 'wrong', but it can start to feel dangerously vague and may be vulnerable to the individual whims and preferences of examiners in terms of what they value most in a recital experience.

b Examiners also sometimes found difficulty equating their *musical* response to a particular recital with their sense of where a student was in the course of their *studies* and the expectations that this should generate:

- Say that two students, one in the third year of their 1st-Cycle study, the other coming to the end of their second year of 2nd-Cycle study, each perform a recital which feels of a broadly similar level. It seems clear that the student still at lower stage deserves some kind of additional reward for their achievement but, if so, how big should this be?

- It is true that the fact that the two cycles should have different learning outcomes, including in those areas relevant to recital performance, ought to help examining panels in their decision-making. In reality, though, examiners relying on these learning outcomes need to weigh up the nuances that lie in the slightly different wordings of 1st- and 2nd-Cycle learning outcomes and then put a numerical value on these. Not all panels feel equally confident about this and it is clear that, without specific guidance, there is some scope for inconsistency to creep into the ways in which different panels make such adjustments.

- On a more practical level, some examiners spoke of finding it difficult when, as can often happen for timetabling reasons, they were obliged to assess in quick succession different students at different stages in a cycle or even different cycles. The sense of having to rapidly recalibrate one's own internal value-systems between each recital can be distracting. This raised the question of whether any necessary recalibrating could be made according to an external, pre-determined system. Such a system would enable the initial judgements to be purely musical, and only subsequently require examiners to make an alignment with a particular level in the student's ladder of academic progress.

1.3 As part of an ongoing process of quality enhancement, a development project was commissioned to see whether a new system might be evolved to deal with these issues. A small team undertook the development and then the proposed design was circulated for feedback and tested in a 'mock' examination situation alongside existing criteria. As already indicated, some of its features were adopted, but not all.

1.4 The next section gives a rationale for the system that was developed and the section after that, a description of how it might operate in practice.

2 Rationale

2.1 The first decision was to attempt to address the concerns in 1.2 a. above by dividing the whole recital experience into its key components. It was quickly agreed that there were three of these which were most important and which, between them, covered almost every aspect of the experience as a whole. These were:

- **Technique**
- **Interpretation**
- **Presentation**

The next step was to agree some kind of ratio of importance among these. This ratio had to be mathematically simple if calculations were to be made safely and speedily during the examination process itself, and so it was agreed that technique and interpretation were probably roughly equal in importance and both of them more important than presentation. The simple solution was therefore arrived at of placing them in the mathematical ratio 2:2:1.

2.2 The second decision was to use an initial scoring scale that was different from the usual percentage scale, commonly used throughout UK higher education, and which would therefore be untainted by all of the associations which examiners tend to have in their minds when thinking in percentages. This was important if the initial marking was to feel genuinely separate from academic systems, cycles, levels, etc. Eventually a system based on a maximum total of 60 marks, divided between technique (24), interpretation (24) and presentation (12) was agreed. This system gave a set of scores from 1 to 12 for presentation and, by employing the same number of steps (12) but in increments of 2, gave the totals of 24 each for technique and interpretation. As well as providing simple mathematical relations within itself, this scheme also made final conversion to a percentage score straightforward in that it was based upon a simple 3:5 relationship.

2.3 With the overall framework determined, the task was now to provide verbal descriptors for each of the steps and for each of the three parameters of technique, interpretation and presentation. Given that a large number of descriptors – at least 3 x 12, i.e. 36 - was inevitable, it was decided to make those for the three parameters very obviously similar to one another and simply to inflect the language according to context. It was decided that the key characteristics of success in each of the parameters could be verbalised as follows:

Technique	*should be*	***secure***
Interpretation	*should be*	***Persuasive* or, at the higher levels, *compelling***
Presentation	*should be*	**Effective**

These words were then employed consistently for their respective parameters (apart from the deliberately special topmost categories) while the description for each of the twelve rising increments

used similar language for each parameter. So for example, the 8th, 9th and 10th increments were described as follows:

Increment (out of 12)	Technique	Interpretation	Presentation
10	Very secure	Very compelling	Very effective
9	Secure	Compelling	Effective
8	Almost entirely secure	Almost entirely persuasive	Almost entirely effective

2.4 This approach dealt with situations where the success of a recital might be very different in terms of the three parameters. For example, a recital which was very secure technically but unpersuasive from the point of view of interpretation, and which was effective presentationally in some respects but not all, would receive a separate mark for each of these parameters. When the three marks were added to together, a total would be produced for the recital as a whole. It is true that recitals with different strengths and weaknesses might still therefore end up with a similar overall mark but at least this kind of process would be taking place in consistent ways across instruments and from one year to the next.

2.5 There remained the question of a recital which might begin well but deteriorate before the end (or, for that matter, of a recital which might begin hesitantly but grow in confidence). Arguably, the dividing of the marking into different parameters already helped here because technique and presentation, of their nature, need to be displayed consistently – a recital which is technically secure for the first half and then starts to fall apart is actually not technically secure. Interpretational issues, on the other hand, may legitimately vary in their perceived success from one piece to another during a recital; there is perhaps more of an argument in the case of this parameter than with the other two for giving credit to the best that the student achieves during the recital.

2.6 In addition to this, though, it was decided to introduce a column of overall descriptions based more obviously on the idea of how well a certain level of achievement was sustained. The intention was that panels might use this as a cross-check, having given scores for individual parameters, where the recital as a whole was uneven in quality (it has to be said that this was one of the less popular and less well understood aspects of the prototype system when it was tested).

2.7 The resultant table is reproduced on a small scale below. The criteria in their complete form are shown full-scale in landscape format at the end of this case study.

Criteria for Recital Examinations

Overall Description	Technique	Score	Interpretation	Score	Presentation	Score
Fully-realised and utterly persuasive throughout	Utterly flawless	24	Having the capacity to deepen and redefine the listener's conception	24	Meeting the highest standards	12
An extremely high level of achievement throughout	Extremely secure	22	Extremely compelling	22	Extremely effective	11
A very high level of achievement throughout	Very secure	20	Very compelling	20	Very effective	10
A high level of achievement throughout	Secure	18	Compelling	18	Effective	9
Substantial achievement maintained almost throughout	Almost entirely secure	16	Almost entirely persuasive	16	Almost entirely effective	8
Sustained and significant achievement	Largely secure	14	Largely persuasive	14	Largely effective	7
Sustained achievement	Reasonably secure	12	Reasonably persuasive	12	Reasonably effective	6
Widespread signs of achievement	Secure in many respects, but not all	10	Persuasive in many respects, but not all	10	Effective in many respects, but not all	5
Signs of achievement	Secure and insecure in roughly equal measure	8	The elements that persuade and those that do not in roughly equal measure	8	Effective and ineffective in roughly equal measure	4
Some signs of achievement	Insecure in many respects	6	Unpersuasive in many respects	6	Ineffective in many respects	3
Few signs of achievement	Generally insecure	4	Generally unpersuasive	4	Generally ineffective	2
Scarcely any discernible signs of achievement	Utterly insecure	2	Wholly unpersuasive	2	Wholly ineffective	1

2.8 The next step was to produce a grid by which the overall 'raw musical' mark for a student could be converted into a percentage score appropriate to that student's year and cycle of study.

2.9 Some of the elements used here were simply a consequence of the UK system of award classifications. For example, it is a national standard that the pass threshold at 1st-Cycle level is 40%, whereas that at 2nd-Cycle level is 50%. Similarly, 1st-Cycle degrees are given a so-called 'Honours classification' into First, Second and Third classes of pass, with the Second divided into an upper and lower category; 2nd-Cycle degrees are not classified in this way, although it is usual to have a category of Distinction for the higher levels of success.

2.10 The fact that the percentage threshold for First-class Honours in the 1st Cycle and Distinction in the 2nd Cycle is usually the same – 70% - is a good example of how it can be difficult, without something like the system of criteria developed here, to make confident and consistent differentiations between levels of success in the various cycles.

2.11 In addition to these externally-given factors, it was decided to introduce an internal differentiation between the third and fourth years of the 1st Cycle and the first and second of the 2nd Cycle. This formalised an approach that some panels had been applying instinctively. It thereby made the marking process more consistent - and more easily understood by students who were sometimes baffled and frustrated to find that, when they felt they had performed as well, say, in Year Four as Year Three, they were nevertheless given a slightly lower mark.

2.12 Since, in the institution concerned, recital examinations only took place in the third and fourth years of the 1st Cycle and the two years of the 2nd Cycle, it was possible to incorporate all of these cases on a single page. This, in itself, provided for the first time a graphic visual portrayal of the ways in which examiners' expectations rise year-by-year as students progress through these stages of their studies.

2.13 The second table has a column on the left giving the mark range from 0 to 60 in 5-mark increments. The student's mark out of 60 is read across to the appropriate column, according to examination-type, to give the percentage range and the grade to which it corresponds. Again, the table is reproduced here on a small scale:

Overall Score	Bachelor Programme, Year Three		Bachelor Programme, Year Four		Masters Programme, Year One		Masters Programme, Year Two	
	Percentage	Grade	Percentage	Grade	Percentage	Grade	Percentage	Grade
60	100%		100%		100%		100%	
56	95%		90%		85%		85%	
55	94%		90%		84%		84%	DISTINCTION
51	85%		80%	I	75%	DISTINCTION	70%	
50	84%	I	79%		74%		69%	
46	75%		70%		70%		65%	
45	74%		69%		69%		64%	
41	70%		65%		65%		60%	
40	69%		64%	II:1	64%		59%	
36	65%		60%		60%		57%	
35	64%	II:1	59%		59%	PASS	56%	PASS
31	60%		55%		55%		54%	
30	59%		54%	II:2	54%		53%	
26	55%		50%		50%		50%	
25	54%	II:2	49%		49%		49%	
21	50%		45%		45%		45%	
20	49%		44%	III	44%		44%	
16	45%		40%		40%		40%	
15	44%	III	39%		39%		39%	
11	40%		30%		30%	FAIL	30%	FAIL
10	39%		29%		29%		29%	
6	25%		2%	FAIL	20%		20%	
5	24%	FAIL	19%		19%		19%	
1	0%		0%		0%		0%	

3 How the system operates

3.1 Let us imagine a student performing a recital in the final year of their 1st-Cycle studies. The panel listens to the recital, each examiner with a copy of the first sheet in front of them. At the end of the recital, the examiners discuss and agree which description of technique, interpretation and presentation on the table best describes the recital. They come to the following conclusion:

Technique	*was*	***Almost entirely secure***
Interpretation	*was*	***Persuasive in many respects but not all***
Presentation	*was*	***Effective***

This gives the student a mark of 16 + 10 + 9 = 35 out of 60

3.2 At this stage the mark is disconnected from any academic scale of achievement and can be debated and agreed purely on musical terms. However, when the panel comes to use the second sheet to find the percentage score to which the mark corresponds for a final-year 1st-Cycle student, they discover that 35 marks equate to 59%. This figure lies right at the top of one Honours classification and therefore just below a critical threshold to the next. As things stand, the student will receive a good Lower Second class grade but will fall short of the Upper Second class category. At this point it is quite appropriate for the panel to begin thinking in terms of academic result, rather than pure musical judgement. If they believe that the student deserves a grade in the higher Honours category, they can return to the original scoring and decide which mark might be raised slightly without compromising their original verdict.

3.3 The panel may decide that the description for the next increment above for **Interpretation** fits the recital almost equally well with the one originally chosen. Instead of ***Persuasive in many respects but not all***, the examiners consider the merits of ***Reasonably persuasive***. In truth, there is little to distinguish between these two descriptors, but now that the panel knows the implications of a choice one way or the other, it can make an informed decision as to which to opt for. It even has the option of adding just one mark, rather than the two on the grid – ie, in effect, placing the student exactly between these two descriptors. The result of this would still be to promote the student to an Upper Second class grade, since 36 marks are enough to achieve this. In our imaginary scenario, the panel decides to use this option.

4 Conclusion

4.1 The process described above may seem mechanical, but it does have the virtue of beginning with a set of purely musical judgements that inform a discussion which, in turn, generates an initial mark free of any overtones of academic grades and their consequences. When, in the example given, one of those consequences was subsequently discovered, the system was flexible enough to allow a small adjustment to be made without this adjustment compromising the very process by which the original mark had been decided.

4.2 The UK system of Honours classification for the 1st Cycle is a peculiarity of that country and raises questions like the one discussed above which would not apply in other countries and systems (significantly, the UK national committee appointed to review the Honours classification system has essentially recommended that the country move to a system without the Honours categories and where the quality of a student's degree is communicated through their transcript and Diploma Supplement – i.e. a move towards Bologna).

4.3 All the same, if the student had been awarded a score of, say 15 out of 60, a similar issue of possible adjustment would have arisen when the conversion to percentages was made and the result was found to be just short of a pass. Clearly, in such a situation, the panel would have known they were awarding low marks and would have expected these to translate into a poor result; but it is legitimate for them to review the original marks where they discover that the student is to be placed immediately below a critical threshold – in this case, a threshold even more critical than one between Honours classifications!

4.4 As happened with this prototype system of criteria when it was originally tested, readers of this handbook may feel that it contains some elements which they might wish to incorporate into their own systems without necessarily being convinced that all its features are desirable. Such a selective approach represents the kind of process whereby systems evolve, adapt and, it must be hoped, improve over time.

Criteria for Recital Examinations

Overall Description	Technique	Score	Interpretation	Score	Presentation	Score
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Some signs of achievement	Insecure in many respects	6	Unpersuasive in many respects	6	Ineffective in many respects	3
Few signs of achievement	Generally insecure	4	Generally unpersuasive	4	Generally ineffective	2
Scarcely any discernible signs of achievement	Utterly insecure	2	Wholly unpersuasive	2	Wholly ineffective	1

For each recital, an overall score is obtained by combining	Score 1	with	Score 2	and	Score 3

The resultant overall score is then equated with a percentage and grade, as appropriate to the level of the recital, according to the table on the next page

Overall Score	Bachelor Programme, Year Three		Bachelor Programme, Year Four		Masters Programme, Year One		Masters Programme, Year Two	
	Percentage	Grade	Percentage	Grade	Percentage	Grade	Percentage	Grade
60	100%		100%		100%		100%	
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45	74%		69%		69%		64%	
41	70%		65%		65%		60%	
40	69%		64%	II:1	64%		59%	
36	65%		60%		60%		57%	
35	64%	II:1	59%		59%	PASS	56%	PASS
31	60%		55%		55%		54%	
30	59%		54%	II:2	54%		53%	
26	55%		50%		50%		50%	
25	54%	II:2	49%		49%		49%	
21	50%		45%		45%		45%	
20	49%		44%	III	44%		44%	
16	45%		40%		40%		40%	
15	44%	III	39%		39%		39%	
11	40%		30%		30%	FAIL	30%	FAIL
10	39%		29%		29%		29%	
6	25%		2%	FAIL	20%		20%	
5	24%	FAIL	19%		19%		19%	
1	0%		0%		0%		0%	

CASE STUDY 9:

A MUSIC UNIVERSITY IN FINLAND

DESCRIPTION:

PROCESSES FOR DEALING WITH STUDENT APPEALS ACROSS 1ST -, 2ND - AND 3RD - CYCLE PROGRAMMES

1 Background

1.1 The following is a translation of the relevant sections of the University regulations of a Finnish Music University. The regulations were first approved by the University's Academic Board in December 2004 and subsequently amended in May 2005, February 2006 and June 2006.

1.2 This case-study shows how an institution attempts to anticipate the variety of circumstances that may arise during the course of musical assessments and to clarify the rights, the limits to those rights and the obligations resting upon students who are dissatisfied with their result. It goes into some detail about the procedures to be adopted and, in each case, the locus of responsibility for decision-making.

1.3 The process of revisiting and potentially changing the outcome of an assessment is referred to here as 'rectification'.

2 Regulations

[this section is drawn directly from the institution's own regulations, translated into English]

2.1 CHAPTER 7

RECTIFICATION OF ASSESSMENT OF EXAMINATION

2.1.1 *Section 31*

The students have a right to be notified on the assessment criteria applied to their exams or performances and a right to an appointment where they can get feedback on their written work or otherwise saved performance which has been assessed.

2.1.2 *Section 32*

Students dissatisfied with the assessment of studies other than a doctoral dissertation, licentiate dissertation or a demonstration of proficiency equal to these can ask the assessor or the assessing committee for a rectification orally or in writing. The Board of Appeals of each department can be asked for a rectification concerning the dissertation or other demonstration of proficiency of the Bachelor's or Master's Degree in writing.

The request for rectification should be made within 14 days of the notification of the assessment results as well as of the assessment criteria applied in his/her case.
Those dissatisfied with the outcome of the rectification decision may take the case to the Board of Examiners for rectification cases within 14 days of the day when they were informed of the results.

2.1.3 *Section 33*

Each university department has a Board of Appeals for rectification cases concerning demonstrations of proficiency of the Bachelor's and Master's Degrees, as referred to above in Section 32. The members and the advisory members of the Board of Appeals are appointed by each Department Council either for each case separately or for a three-year term. The Head of Department acts as President of the Board and the secretary shall be a civil servant working at the University acting as presenting official of the Department Council. In addition, the Board of Appeals should have two other members and advisory members, one of which should hold the title of Professor and one should be teacher at the University.

The University has a Board of Examiners for decisions of rectification cases of studies as mentioned above in Section 32. The Rector appoints the President of the Board and other members, as well as personal advisory members either for each case separately or for a three-year term. The president of the board and his/her advisory member shall be a professor appointed for a professor's post. At least half of the other members shall be teachers of the University and at least one member shall be a student. The Secretary of the Board shall be a civil servant working at the University appointed by the Rector.

2.2 REGULATIONS GOVERNING APPEALS REGARDING DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS, LICENCIATE DISSERTATIONS AND OTHER DEMONSTRATION OF PROFICIENCY

2.2.1 *Section 34*

Students who are dissatisfied with the marks awarded to them for a doctoral dissertation, licentiate dissertation or a demonstration of proficiency can lodge an appeal to the Board of Appeals for Doctoral Degrees within 14 days of the publication of results.

2.2.2 *Section 35*

The University has a Board of Appeals for Doctoral Degrees. The Board deals with the assessment of doctoral dissertations, licentiate dissertations and similar demonstrations of proficiency. The Rector appoints the chairman of the Board and the other members, as well as personal advisory members, either for each case separately or for a three-year term. The Head of the Board and his/her advisory member should hold the title of Professor. At least half of the other members should be teachers at the University and at least one member should be a doctorate student. The Secretary of the Board should be a civil servant of the University appointed by the Rector.

2.2.3 *Section 36*

The Board of Appeals for Doctoral Degrees may submit the assessment to the Teaching and Research Board for reassessment.

2.2.4 **Boards' decision-making and quorum**

Section 37

The Board of Examination Appeals and the Board of Appeals for Doctoral Degrees meet when invited by the Head of the Board, or in his/her absence the Vice-Chairman. The Board has a quorum when the Head of the Board is present at the meeting, or in his/her absence, the Vice-Chairman, and at least half the other members.

Before making a decision on the rectification of an assessment, the Board of Examination Appeals shall give the teacher, Board or Department Council responsible for the assessment an opportunity to respond to the statement. Before making a decision on the rectification of an assessment of a doctoral dissertation, a licentiate dissertation or a corresponding demonstration of proficiency, the Board of Appeals for Doctoral Degrees shall meet with the Teaching and Research Council in order to give them the opportunity to respond to the statement.

A full written and justified explanation of the decision reached by the Boards shall be sent to the appellant.

As laid down in the Universities Act (645/1997), subsection 2, the decision taken at the end of the rectification procedure on the assessment of the appellant's study attainments by the Board of Examination Appeals and the Board of Appeals for Doctoral Degrees cannot be appealed.

3 Commentary

3.1 ***Section 31***, at the beginning of the extracts quoted from the regulations, sets out clearly the student's right to know exactly the criteria upon which he or she is being assessed. As was seen in Section One of this handbook, such a right is fundamental but does tend to lead institutions down the path of written criteria and correspondingly formalised statements about the processes students must follow if they feel that they have been dealt with unfairly within the assessment system.

3.2 As can be seen from these regulations, the composition of the various panels is an important part of ensuring fairness and consistency. In the system described here, panel members are usually appointed for fixed terms, and sometimes for specific cases.

3.3 A great deal of responsibility for selecting members rests with the Rector of the institution. This is logical in many ways: the Rector has the natural authority to make appointments and also carries an overview of individuals' suitability, their current workload, etc.

3.4 Whilst it is appropriate for the head of the institution to have responsibilities as described above, it is generally unhelpful for him or her to be involved directly in appeals processes, especially at their earlier stages. On the contrary, it is useful, institutionally, to retain a certain 'headroom', so that when, hopefully rarely, a case goes through the regular process and is still unresolved, the head of the institution can act as an 'ombudsman' without having themselves already become tainted through direct involvement in the process.

CASE STUDY 10:

A UNIVERSITY OF MUSIC AND PERFORMING ARTS IN AUSTRIA AND A MUSIC CONSERVATORY IN NORWAY

DESCRIPTION:

A COMPARISON OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR REASSESSMENT AND APPEAL

1 Introduction

1.1 As discussed in Chapter 12 of Section One of this Handbook, the right to reassessment is an important entitlement for each student, but one which must also be balanced against fairness to other students. Institutions also need to take up some kind of clear position as to where and how a line should be drawn concerning repeated unsatisfactory performance by a student.

1.2 The two examples below show the position adopted by two institutions separated by large geographical and cultural distances. Given this, their similarity of approach is perhaps striking. However, another interpretation might be that the most important factor here is the shared chronology – both descriptions represent the position in 2010 and both are set in a context where changes are either in train, planned or felt to be likely over the coming years. A liberalising attitude to student rights on the one hand, and an increasing consciousness of the cost to the institution of repeated reassessments on the other, are likely to be the main determinants in shaping the future landscape of reassessment opportunities for students in conservatoires.

1.3 As well as considering the issue of reassessment in its own terms, both these examples also refer to the circumstances under which a student may earn the right to a reassessment through appeal. They therefore complement Case-Study 9.

1.4 In each case below, we will hear first about the institution's approach to straightforward reassessment and then to reassessment on the basis of a successful appeal. In the case of the Music University in Austria, the author has also added a personal evaluation of the system described.

2 University of Music and Performing Arts in Austria: Reassessment

2.1 If a student fails an exam, he or she is automatically allowed to retry the same exam at least three times (and even further reassessment is possible if the University permits it). The third reassessment has to be held in front of an entire panel of assessors. If the student asks for it, the second reassessment already has to be held in front of more than one assessor. At the final permitted reassessment, the Study Director acts as Chair of the panel.

2.2 Students also have the right to retake a *successful* assessment if they wish to go for a better mark. This may happen only once, and must take place within six months of the date that the first assessment took place. In such a case, the first mark is rendered void and the second, even if no better, remains the final one.

3 University of Music and Performing Arts in Austria: Appeal

3.1 Students have the right to appeal within two weeks from the date when the result of the assessment was communicated if they believe there has been a major fault in procedures. Besides compliance with the minimum formal requirements for a proper course of assessment – such as the presence of all members of a panel of assessors throughout the examination and conformity with the assessment regulations of the course - the underlying principles of fairness, impartiality and objectivity to which all public acts have to correspond must be safeguarded in assessment procedures in order to make them incontestable. However, disagreement with the judgement of the assessors itself is not an acceptable ground for appeal.

3.2 If a student is successful in appealing, the assessment is considered as not having taken place. The student can therefore repeat the exam without any negative consequences and it does not count as a reassessment in the sense understood in 2.1 and 2.2.

4 Institutional Self-evaluation of these Systems

4.1 'The system gives sufficient chances for reassessment – almost to the point of excluding the possibility of failure entirely. In the light of a very high and competitive level at entrance to the institution where it is used, this seems not to be a concern. However, in some cases where standards are definitely not met, it can lead to unnecessary prolongation of study when it is clear to all involved that it is not going to end successfully.'

5 Music Conservatory in Norway: Reassessment

5.1 If a candidate fails an exam he or she is allowed to retake the same exam up to three times. And even further reassessment is possible if the University permits it.

5.2 As long as the graded scale continues to be in use within the Music Conservatory (i.e. up until 2012-13) a candidate will continue to have the right to retake a successful assessment if he or she wishes to go for a better mark. In such a case the better mark is the one which stays on the student's record, whether or not this was the most recent result obtained.

6 Music Conservatory in Norway: Appeal

6.1 Candidates have the right to appeal to the university's Complaint Board within two weeks after the result of the assessment has been communicated, if they believe there has been a major fault in procedures.

7 Commentary

7.1 Both the systems described here are relatively flexible and generous in terms of the numbers of reassessment opportunities they offer to students. It is not uncommon to find systems where only one reassessment opportunity is permitted.

7.2 There is an interesting connection between this relative generosity and the possibility that students enjoy in both systems to re-take a passed exam if they feel they can improve upon the mark originally obtained. Without this, the rights afforded to failing students might seem to be unfairly generous in relation to those who pass first time.

APPENDICES

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