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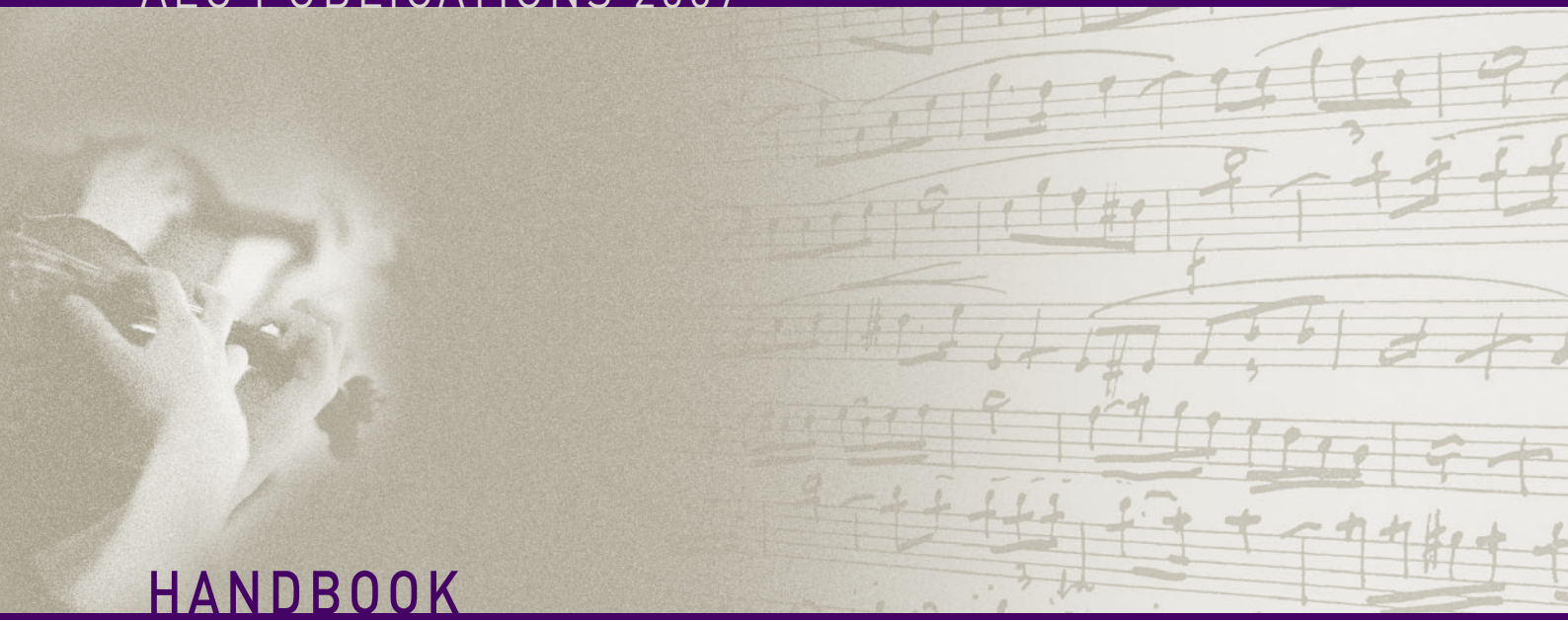

HANDBOOK
CURRICULUM DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER MUSIC EDUCATION

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des Conservatoires,
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polifonia

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A free electronic version of this handbook is available through www.polifonia-tn.org.

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD

This document has been developed in the framework of the ERASMUS Thematic Network for Music "Polifonia"[1], the largest European project on professional music training to date. This project involved 67 organisations in professional music training and the music profession from 32 European countries and 30 experts in 5 connected working groups in an intensive 3-year work programme from September 2004 – October 2007. The project, which was coordinated jointly by the Malmö Academy of Music – Lund University and the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Academies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC), received support from the European Union within the framework of the ERASMUS Programme. The aims of the project were:

1. To study issues connected to the Bologna Declaration Process, such as the development of learning outcomes for 1st (Bachelor), 2nd (Master) and 3rd cycle studies through the "Tuning"[2] methodology, the use of credit point systems, curriculum development, mobility of students and teachers, and quality assurance in the field of music in higher education.
2. To collect information on levels in music education other than the 1st (Bachelor) and the 2nd (Master) study cycles, in particular pre-college training and 3rd cycle (Doctorate/PhD) studies in the field of music.
3. To explore international trends and changes in the music profession and their implications for professional music training.

With the aim to participate in the discussions taking place in the higher music education sector and in the framework of the Bologna process, the AEC formed within "Polifonia" a group with the following experts:

- Jeremy Cox (Chair - Royal College of Music, London)
- Hannu Apajalahti (Sibelius Academy, Helsinki)
- Evert Bisschop Boele (Hanzehogeschool Groningen)
- Cristina Brito da Cruz (Escola Superior de Música de Lisboa)
- Bruno Carioti (Conservatorio Statale di Musica "Alfredo Casella", L' Aquila)
- Grzegorz Kurzynski (K. Lipinski Academy of Music, Wroclaw)
- Jörg Linowitzki (Musikhochschule Lübeck)
- Jacques Moreau (CNSMD de Lyon)

[1] More information about 'Polifonia' can be found at www.polifonia-tn.org.

[2] For more information about the 'Tuning" methodology please see http://www.tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=172&Itemid=205.

In order to assist higher music education institutions with the requirements proposed by the Bologna process, the "Polifonia" project issued a series of publications that can be used by the institutions in the development of their study programmes:

- Several practical handbooks on:
  - Curriculum Design and Development in Higher Music Education
  - Implementation and Use of Credit Points in Higher Music Education
  - Internal Quality Assurance in Higher Music Education
- A document entitled "Summary of Tuning Findings – Higher Music Education", which contains the AEC Learning Outcomes for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycles, as well as the "Polifonia/Dublin Descriptors" as mentioned in paragraph 3.2.6 of this handbook
- A trilingual website called "Bologna and Music" (www.bologna-and-music.org), where all relevant documentation in relation to the Bologna process seen from the perspective of higher music education can be found.

In addition, the AEC project "Accreditation in European Professional Music Training"[3] produced several important documents addressing external quality assurance and accreditation in music.

[3] More information about this project can be found at www.bologna-and-music.org/accreditation.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This handbook is intended as a short guide for those who work in conservatoires and are involved with organising the types and patterns of teaching that go on there. It is not meant to be an exhaustive manual for curriculum design and development, although it does aim to give some practical advice on certain key issues. Its primary focus is upon the way that, in recent years, Curriculum Design and Development have become more consciously and elaborately embedded in the way we run the learning and teaching in conservatoires.

1.2 Because of this focus, the handbook is deliberately concerned with links between curriculum design and development and three of the key elements that have been much talked about in European Higher Education in recent years – ***Learning Outcomes, Credit Points*** and ***Quality Assurance***. All three of these have been given additional impetus by the Bologna Process and this handbook has been written with that background in mind. It is hoped that it will give some help and encouragement to individuals and teams working on implementing changes in their institutions that relate to the Bologna Process.

1.3 I have written this handbook as someone who believes that a well-designed curriculum really can help conservatoire students to learn to be better musicians – in other words, that curriculum design is not just something for the more traditionally academic subjects taught in universities. I can appreciate, though, that some readers may feel that curriculum design is yet another example of modern educational bureaucracy forcing us to put procedures and protocols around something that we, in conservatoires, are used to doing quite freely and naturally. I am also well aware that, however beautifully we may each of us design, balance and integrate the curriculum in our institution, our key teachers – the busy musicians who divide their time between the profession and their 1-to-1 teaching – probably have little interest in aspects of the curriculum outside their specific area - and even less in reading curriculum handbooks and other documents, instead of just getting on with the practical realities of music making!

1.4 In many ways, the challenge to curriculum designers in conservatoires as they work to create courses and documentation in line with the Bologna Process is one of translation – how to convert the European Higher Education jargon into terms that musicians can feel reasonably comfortable with, and how to give the formal coherence and clarity beloved of educationalists to the rich, but often somewhat chaotic, pattern of learning and teaching activities that take place within the walls of a conservatoire. In the end, like any translation, this process won't entirely satisfy the native speakers of either language!

1.5 One of the most encouraging signs, though, is that today's students mostly seem to have relatively little difficulty finding their way around newer-style course handbooks, with their Learning Outcomes, Credit Points, etc. This is partly because their earlier education has been carried out under systems

that are also changing, like those of higher education. But mostly, I like to think that it is because their minds are still young and flexible. I would also hope that, thanks to a learning process that is perhaps more student-centred than that experienced by their teachers, they may retain some of their current flexibility and ability to take in the bigger picture when they, in turn, become the teachers of the next generation. We owe it to them to try to design the curricula that will help that process to come about.

2 SOME PRELIMINARY REMARKS ON CURRICULUM DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT – WHAT IS IT AND WHAT IS IT FOR?

2.1 The word "curriculum" is used to describe the course of study that is offered by an educational institution and taken by its students. Historically, curricula within institutions have tended to evolve relatively informally and in a piece-by-piece way. This is not to say that there is not extensive common ground, nationally and even internationally, across institutions teaching the same discipline. On the contrary, each academic or vocational discipline tends to have developed its core elements, generally taught in every institution offering the discipline. For conservatoires, the foremost of these core elements is the one-to-one Principal Study lesson, delivered by a teacher who is usually also a distinguished professional performer or composer outside the conservatoire. Almost all conservatoires offer much more than just this lesson, however, and there are many common patterns to what they offer in addition – usually group musical activity of some kind – chamber, orchestral, choral, etc; supporting theoretical study; perhaps a second or related instrumental study, often some kind of training in the pedagogy of one's instrument and, increasingly, some kind of preparation for the challenges of the profession. Collectively, these elements constitute the curriculum - recognisable from one conservatoire to another but, in its specifics, almost certainly the product of the unique history and circumstances of each institution.

2.2 Part of this uniqueness arises because curricula have a tendency to grow of their own accord. Where curricula are relatively modest - and if resources are reasonably abundant and not too closely monitored - new elements can simply be added as and when a need is identified - or perhaps when a particular member of staff wishes to contribute an element that reflects a personal enthusiasm. Conservatoires have a particularly rich tradition of offering a range of activities that are almost "optional extras" in this sense; in fact, they may not be considered part of the formal "curriculum" at all – this latter may actually be quite narrow and not at all flexible. The more energetic and enthusiastic a student, the more of these activities he or she can benefit from, but there is usually no penalty attached to not taking them. Crucially, these activities are not therefore separately assessed; they are simply given out to those students sufficiently motivated to take them.

2.3 With increasing accountability, there is a corresponding pressure to formalise or curtail these activities, bringing them within a documented and properly assessed curriculum if they are to be retained. Because of a reluctance to lose the richness they represent, this has led to many curricula reaching a saturation point. Meanwhile, the accelerated pace of change in all walks of life, including the music profession, means that there has been an unprecedented pressure in recent years to add new elements. And yet all this has taken place across a period when conservatoires, like all higher education institutions, have increasingly had to justify their costs and, where appropriate, to deliver their curricula more economically - at the same time as needing to develop frameworks of quality assurance which themselves add to costs. All this has meant that curricula can no longer continue to evolve in the way described. They need to be reviewed from top to bottom, looking at each element and

judging its value, as well as whether that value is constant over time, increasing or decreasing. Then, because not everything can be included, priorities have to be decided – what to keep in, what to take out. In short, the curriculum nowadays needs to be *designed*.

2.4 Good curriculum design can help an institution to get the most from the resources it has available; it can also lead to a curriculum which is easier to modify and update subsequently, helping the ongoing process of curriculum development. In general terms, an effectively designed curriculum will tend to have the following features:

- **Well-balanced**: the various components are each given their different weight, as appropriate, but no element is given more than its fair share.
- **Full, but not overloaded**: deliverable within the resources available - an over-full curriculum will, in any case, lead to students choosing which elements they will attend and which they will miss, since they can't attend everything. The waste in such a situation is obvious.
- **Flexible**: adaptable to the different needs of different students; responsive to changing priorities and alert to likely future requirements of the profession.
- **Progressive**: encouraging students to grow and develop as they pass through the programme, often by starting with a structured and largely compulsory pattern of studies and moving to one in which choice plays a greater part.
- **Student-centred**: recognising that, for each student, the curriculum is more than simply the pattern of lessons and classes that the institution offers – it is the sum total of everything the student is learning and absorbing during his or her time at the conservatoire.
- **Focussed on learning**: selecting teaching methods and methods of assessment on the basis of how well they encourage learning and then demonstrate that it has been achieved.

2.5 This handbook discusses the ways in which certain principles of curriculum design, coupled to tools such as Learning Outcomes and Credit Point Systems, can help institutions to develop curricula that fulfil these characteristics. It then goes on to examine how a curriculum designed in this way can be developed over time, whether in response to changing circumstances or so as to incorporate improvements suggested by the experience of running it.

2.6 It should be said that the content of the chapters that follow is based upon the assumption that an institution has broad control over what it chooses to teach and how it chooses to do so. Of course, some countries have systems where the curriculum, or a major part of it, is fixed at national level; in other countries and systems, part of the mechanism of external quality assurance consists of setting agreed templates, sometimes called ***Subject Benchmarks***, that define the main areas to be covered by curricula and the kinds of standards that students are expected to achieve in relation to a particular type of qualification. Whilst any of these external influences may feel as though it is placing limitations upon an institution's freedom to carry out curriculum design, they are generally intended to promote many of the same characteristics as those listed above. Therefore, even in a situation where substantial elements of the curriculum are predetermined by external forces, the principles in this handbook should still be of relevance.

2.7 This introduction has attempted to set out some of the background to curriculum design and why it has become a process that needs to be more consciously planned and articulated than previously. The chapter that follows continues this somewhat philosophical approach, suggesting a way of thinking that, in my opinion, leads to more effective curriculum design. Chapters Three to Five then deal in more practical terms with the ways in which the principles advocated in the earlier chapters may be put into practice.

3 CURRICULUM DESIGN: THE HOLISTIC APPROACH

3.1 THE PARTS AND THE WHOLE

3.1.1 It is natural, and inevitable, that we should divide curricula into different component parts. Students' learning has to have a structure; there is a limit to how long students – and for that matter teachers – can continue doing the same thing; variety in the daily and weekly activity is helpful and focussing in turn on various specific areas within a discipline helps the lessons learnt to be understood and assimilated. However, it is always important to remember that the end result of the learning process should be a complete individual who uses all their skills and accumulated experience flexibly, fluently and without conscious compartmentalisation. So although curriculum design is partly about dividing up what is to be learnt, it must also be very much concerned with putting all the elements together in a coherent manner and with a well-integrated end result. A curriculum designed with this in mind is on the right track to fulfil the first two features listed above, namely that it should be ***well-balanced*** and ***full***, ***but not overloaded***. Moreover, by having regard to the kind of whole musician who should emerge from the programme of training, it will also tend naturally to be ***student-centred*** and ***focussed upon learning***. How flexible and progressive it is will tend to be more a matter of detailed implementation, as will be discussed in later chapters.

3.1.2 Many teaching situations reflect the idea that learning is not rigidly compartmentalised. In music, the 1-to-1 Principal Study lesson is a perfect example of this. During the course of one lesson, a student may be doing any or all of the following - and probably other things too: honing their technical skills; exploring new repertoire; receiving contextual or valuable anecdotal information about that repertoire; gaining wider insights from an experienced professional musician - even being given valuable tips or contacts for professional networking. Some lessons may at first appear to be more narrowly focussed upon one specific skill but the boundaries are hardly ever rigidly drawn. For example, an aural training class, as well as enhancing the student's aural skills, may almost incidentally introduce him or her to new repertoire, provide insights into musical form and structure and offer opportunities to reinforce effective communication and group interaction.

3.1.3 Despite the fact that these examples show how fluid the various types of learning taking place in a particular lesson can be, most of the time we don't think in this way. We think of the Principal Study lesson as one type of learning, sitting in its own compartment, and the aural class as another – and so on through all the traditional divisions of the curriculum. These divisions have come about for good reasons, of course, but they are not the only way that the subject area might have been divided and they should not encourage similar divisions of thought and experience to be built in the minds of students and teachers. For example, learning through historical and analytical study about musical style and its changes in relation to successive periods and different repertoires is not much use if, at the end of the lesson, the student packs away these ideas along with his or her notes and goes on to an instrumental lesson in which they perform the piece they have prepared thinking only of technique and tone production. Especially with a composer such as Bach, who is both a representative of

a particular historical style period and one of the key figures in the general musical canon, this kind of dislocation between types of learning can be surprisingly common and is almost always damaging to a student's development as a thoughtful and well-rounded musician.

3.1.4 This is the key reason why it is important that curriculum design should start from the holistic viewpoint. The first consideration should be what kind of complete, integrated musician the institution is hoping to help develop. This overall aim or aspiration may begin as a single, all-encapsulating sentence but it will probably quickly take the form of a list of attributes of such a musician. Interestingly, in building such a list a process of compartmentalisation is beginning to take place once again, but it is important to note that this new list is almost certainly not going to be divided in the same way as the traditional divisions of the curriculum, although there may be some overlap between the two. The list is basically what we would call a set of Competencies or, if expressed in terms of specific and measurable things that every successful student should be able to do, a set of **Learning Outcome**s.

3.2 LEARNING OUTCOMES

3.2.1 Learning Outcomes are an increasingly common way of describing the objectives of a course or whole programme. They represent a subtle, but important, shift in the way that we think about education – from what is taught to what is learned. Of course, there is a close connection between these two concepts but they are far from identical. On the one hand, it is clear that a student may easily end up learning, and properly internalising, less than the total of what he or she has been taught; equally, though, the student may be exploring things for him- or herself, learning with and from fellow-students, processing a range of experiences, both inside and outside the formal learning environment, and thereby learning quite literally more than is being taught. Learning Outcomes focus upon this second view of a student's education. In this sense, they are themselves student-centred and they encourage an approach to teaching that is similarly student-centred.

3.2.2 At the same time, Learning Outcomes do not pass the whole responsibility for learning to the student. They are usually worded in something like the following way: "At the completion of their studies, successful students will be able to…". This implies a shared responsibility. The institution will provide the teaching, the resources and the environment which ought to enable a student with appropriate initial aptitude and a reasonably committed approach to succeed in meeting these outcomes; meanwhile, the student, to be successful, will show due commitment and make appropriate use of the teaching, resources and environmental support provided as he or she proceeds along the path of learning to the point of measurement that comes at the completion of their studies.

3.2.3 Learning Outcomes describe what the successful student should be able to do at the end of their studies. More specifically, they describe what *every* successful student should be able to do. As a result, what they describe is a *minimum* for every successful student. Success must therefore be pitched at a realistic "*typical*" level. For most students there will be some Learning Outcomes that they comfortably exceed by the end of their studies, as well as others that they only just manage to

reach. If a student fails to reach the level of one or more of the Learning Outcomes of a programme, then strictly speaking, he or she should not pass the programme. This is why it is important that Learning Outcomes are worded so as to capture what is the minimum level of achievement that a student needs to reach to be successful.

3.2.4 Learning Outcomes describe where students should arrive at the end of their studies, not how they should get there. This not only acknowledges that the learning might involve more than what is taught formally, as seen above, but it also potentially introduces a flexibility as to how long a particular student might take in reaching the destination identified. Different students progress at different speeds and, especially in a discipline like music, different students may arrive at the starting point of higher education with very different levels of prior attainment. This feature of Learning Outcomes is useful in the context of creating comparability between programmes that may be of different duration.

3.2.5 The original Bologna Declaration expressed a minimum number of ECTS credits (and hence learning time) that should apply to each cycle, but did not lay down a maximum – or, indeed, an ideal - duration to be used by all countries and all institutions. As a result, systems with both three and four years for the first cycle and one or two years for the second cycle can be found. Often, institutions are not free to choose which durations should apply in their case. Defining these cycles in terms of the typical Learning Outcomes to be achieved means that institutions can plan their curricula so as to meet these levels across the period of study available to them. Of course, this does not remove all the problems associated with having supposedly equivalent programmes that last a different numbers of years, but it does at least create an environment where everyone is working towards broadly similar goals in terms of the minimum threshold of achievement expected of students at the end of each cycle.

3.2.6 It was with this in mind that the AEC Working Group examining the implications of the Bologna Process for higher music education chose to express its recommendations in the form of a proposed set of shared Learning Outcomes for the first and second cycles[4]. The Learning Outcomes arrived at drew upon models already in existence in European countries and in North America. They sought to describe a pattern of learning sufficiently broad to be recognised by AEC member institutions from different national traditions and offering teaching different specialisms within higher music education. The AEC Learning Outcomes have been refined as part of the work of the Polifonia Erasmus Thematic Network for Music. Outcomes for the third cycle have been added and the language of the Learning Outcomes has been carefully mapped against frameworks and documents that are now emerging to describe higher education across Europe, most notably the so-called "Dublin Descriptors"[5] and the proposed European Qualifications Framework (EQF)[6].

[4] The AEC Learning Outcomes for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycles can be found at www.bologna-and-music.org/learningoutcomes.

[5] A 'musical' version of the 'Dublin Descriptors', which describe the levels for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycles', has also been made- these 'Polifonia/Dublin Descriptors' can be found at www.bologna-and-music.org/learningoutcomes.

[6] More information about the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/index_en.html.

3.2.7 Because the AEC Learning Outcomes are designed to be recognisable to all member institutions, they are not necessarily expected to be taken over literally as the Learning Outcomes for individual programmes. Institutions will almost certainly want to adapt them, perhaps strengthening them in areas where they feel their own strengths lie, but the hope is that they will not feel that there is anything asked of students in these Learning Outcomes that they cannot address in their own programmes. Institutional Learning Outcomes should be ones that people feel comfortable with and that can be realistically shared with teachers and students – who are, after all, the people in the front line of ensuring that Outcomes are met. It is for the curriculum designers to ensure that an institution's own Outcomes remain compatible with the wider AEC Learning Outcomes. Provided that this is the case, they can then be confident that the Outcomes will also be compatible with the frameworks and standards being set out for European Higher Education across all disciplines.

3.3 From Learning Outcomes to a holistic curriculum

3.3.1 Armed with a set of Learning Outcomes with which it feels confident and happy, an institution can then go about designing a curriculum that is holistically conceived. As the designing team comes to consider each lesson or class that it is planning to include, there is a series of questions that it can, and should, be asking:

- Is there one or more of our chosen Learning Outcome that a typical student would be helped towards by taking this lesson or class?
- If not, why are we planning to put the lesson or class into the curriculum? (If it turns out that there really is a good reason to do so, it might be worth going back to look at the Learning Outcomes to see if something important has been missed!)
- If there is at least one Learning Outcome that the lesson or class does address, how does it help the student achieve it?
- Having decided how it helps, does the way the lesson or class is assessed actually measure the student's progress towards the relevant Learning Outcome(s) and, if not, how might it be changed to do so?
- Once we have gone through all the proposed lessons and classes, are there any Learning Outcomes that have not been properly addressed?
- If so, what other lessons or classes need to be added?
- And if there are to be additions, which lessons or classes might we be prepared to drop, trim down or amalgamate to make room within the available budget and/or the learning time available to the student for the elements we need to add?

3.3.2 This last question might feel rather negative, but it can actually be one of the most rewarding aspects of carrying out a curriculum design process organised according to these principles when the process itself uncovers a more efficient, and perhaps a more integrated and elegant, way of delivering the intended outcomes.

3.3.3 Of course, institutions will also need to come back from time to time to look at the Learning Outcomes themselves to make sure they are still happy with them. Often, when they do so, they may decide that they could be improved, whether because times and the needs of the profession have moved on or simply because the institution itself has become more adept at thinking in terms of Learning Outcomes and making them work in a way that is helpful to curriculum designers, teachers and students alike.

3.3.4 As soon as the Learning Outcomes are altered, the list of questions above needs to be gone through again and any appropriate changes made to the lessons and classes of the curriculum. This is the process known as Curriculum Development and it is literally never-ending. However, in order to provide some stability to the patterns of teaching, top-to-bottom review of the Learning Outcomes and curriculum usually takes place on a cycle of anything from five to ten years. Chapter Five discusses the principles and processes of curriculum development in greater detail.

3.3.5 Even without changes to the Learning Outcomes, small adjustments to an individual element here and there will probably happen each year as part of annual monitoring of the curriculum and its effectiveness. This is important if institutions are to avoid curricula being frozen for five years between reviews. Chapter Five will also discuss this process of annual monitoring. Meanwhile, the following chapter goes into more detail about the relationship between Learning Outcomes and the curriculum and how this relationship can be used to shape the curriculum design process.

3.3.6 The practical examples given in the chapters that follow are based upon first-cycle models, whether of a three- or four-year variety. This is because the first is the longest and often the most structured of all three cycles and presents correspondingly complex curriculum design challenges. In general, curricula across the three cycles become progressively more tailored to the individual student's development, such that in some third-cycle research degrees, the only "curriculum" is the early portion that addresses research skills training. Hopefully, the examples used will therefore offer ideas that can be adapted for second- and third cycle programmes. On the other hand, the comments made at several points about flexibility and student-centred learning, if anything, apply with increasing force as one moves through the sequence of cycles.

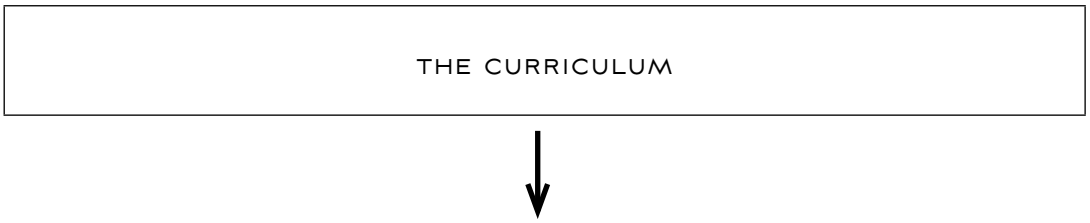
4 THE USE OF LEARNING OUTCOMES IN CURRICULUM DESIGN

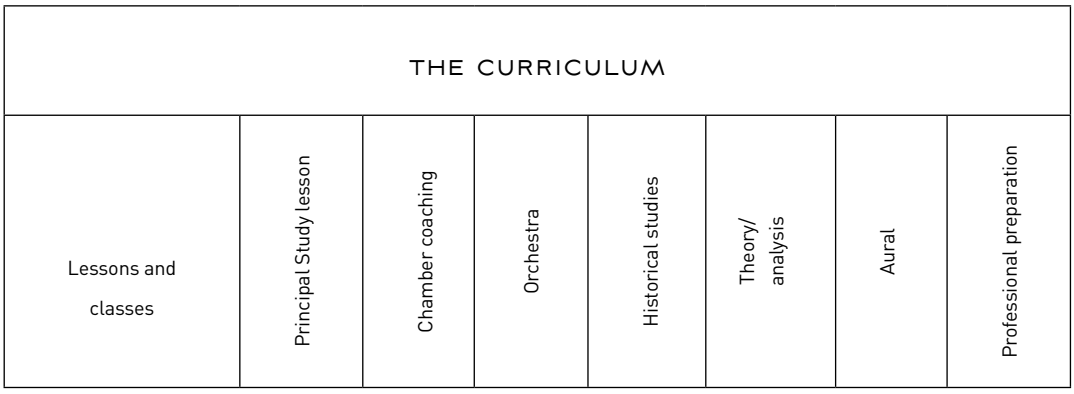
4.1 FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

In the last chapter, it was suggested that the traditional elements of the curriculum and a list of Learning Outcomes each divide the curriculum, and that the ways in which they do so correspond in some respects but not in others. Since a curriculum designed according to Learning Outcomes needs to take these outcomes and relate them to a series of lessons and classes, it is important to look in closer and more practical detail at this relationship. A diagrammatic approach may be helpful here.

4.2 LESSONS, CLASSES, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEM

4.2.1 If we imagine the whole curriculum as rectangular block, the various lessons and classes could be seen as dividing it into vertical columns. The process might go something like this:





4.2.2 Correspondingly, the Learning Outcomes agreed for the curriculum might be imagined as dividing it into a series of rows. Where a lesson or class and a Learning Outcome coincide, this can then be shown by a mark at their intersecting point. The following table shows this principle, using the lessons and classes listed above and, for the sake of illustration, the first eight of the AEC Learning Outcomes, which relate to practical (skills-based) outcomes. These are numbered and

given in headline form in the table. Not everyone will necessarily agree with every one of the intersections suggested here, but hopefully at least the principle will be clear:

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	●	●					●

4.2.3 As this example shows, some elements of the curriculum will intersect with just a few Learning Outcomes and others with several – perhaps nearly all. Because the skills listed here are practical, the intersections with the more theoretical elements of the curriculum are relatively few; if the exercise were repeated for the other two categories - knowledge-based and generic skills - the coverage would become more balanced.

4.2.4 On the face of it, one might expect that the more Learning Outcomes a lesson or class contributes to, the larger the number of credits it should be allocated. Things are not quite as simple as this, however. As will be discussed further in Chapter Four, credit points merely measure the volume of student effort, not the "value" that is set on that effort. Some learning activities may contribute to a number of Learning Outcomes, yet still only take a relatively small amount of a student's time in their completion.

4.2.5 A diagram such as the table above can be useful in course documentation so that teachers and students can see at a glance the relationship between a particular set of lessons or classes and the overall Learning Outcomes of the programme. Indeed, this kind of diagram – sometimes referred to as a ***Competency Matrix*** – is often provided as part of the evidence base in quality-assurance exercises. For similar reasons, the brief description of each lesson or class found in a course document frequently lists those Learning Outcomes to which it contributes.

4.3 Semesters, years and a progressive curriculum

4.3.1 So far, the table above simply treats each lesson or class as a division of the whole curriculum. In practice, curricula that run for more than one year – and a typical first-cycle curriculum will run for three or four years – do not keep the same pattern of lesson types throughout each of the years. Some elements, like the Principal Study lesson, will run throughout; others, especially some of the supporting academic classes, may operate for just the first or first-and-second years. This is where, referring back to the features listed in the introduction, a well-designed curriculum will be built with a ***progressive*** structure in mind.

4.3.2 In order to take account of progression, even those elements which run continuously throughout the programme need to have some sense of the milestones to be achieved year-by-year (or, where the curriculum is structured in semesters, semester-by-semester) so that the student knows whether he or she is on track to reach the relevant Learning Outcomes set for the programme as a whole. These milestones for the programme can also be helpful in setting personal milestones for students as part of their individual ***Study Plans***.

4.3.3 Some classes or lessons that finish before the end of a programme may nevertheless be important preparatory steps for more advanced work that comes later; others may already enable the student to reach the necessary level to satisfy a particular Learning Outcome *before* he or she reaches the end of the programme. Essentially, the ways that the lessons and classes chosen across the years and the Learning Outcomes for the programme as a whole can relate to one another may be seen

as falling into three categories corresponding to the examples given in this and the preceding paragraph. These categories might be described as 1-***continuous***, 2-***consecutive*** and 3-achieving ***early completion***.

4.3.4 In different ways, all three categories require some definition of the intermediate outcomes that a student is expected to achieve by the end of a particular set of lessons or classes. In category 1, the intermediate outcomes are the milestones along the continuous path to the end of the programme; in category 2, they will be formulated as outcomes for each class that ensure that the preparation for later classes has been achieved; in category 3, the outcome for the final class, although completed substantially before the end of the programme, must be the same as the relevant programme Learning Outcome. Again, this may be shown more clearly by the use of a diagram, in this case based upon a four-year first-cycle pattern:

4.3.5

<table>
<tr><th colspan="4">LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THE PROGRAMME AS A WHOLE</th></tr>
<tr><th></th><th>Category 1
(continuous)</th><th>Category 2
(consecutive)</th><th>Category 3
(early completion)</th></tr>
<tr><td>Year 4</td><td rowspan="4">A lesson or class running throughout the years of the programme should be directed towards helping the student to achieve the relevant Learning Outcomes by the end of the programme.

To do so it will need to establish milestones of achievement for each individual year/semester</td><td>A lesson or class in Year 4 builds on Years 1, 2 & 3 and sets a passing standard that will mean that the relevant Learning Outcomes for the programme have been achieved</td><td rowspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 3</td><td>A lesson or class in Year 3 builds on Years 1 & 2 and prepares the student for later classes</td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 2</td><td>A lesson or class in Year 2 builds on Year 1 and prepares the student for later classes</td><td>A lesson or class in Year 2 builds on Year 1 and sets a passing standard that will mean that the relevant Learning Outcomes for the programme have already been achieved</td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 1</td><td>A lesson or class in Year 1 prepares the student for later classes</td><td>A lesson or class in Year 1 prepares the student for later classes</td></tr>
</table>

4.4 Learning Outcomes and intermediate milestones

4.4.1 It may be helpful to give an example of how these intermediate milestones or outcomes might be constructed. Taking Category 1, for example, it is very likely that the Principal Study lesson will be one of the key elements that run throughout all years of the programme. This element is almost certainly going to relate to a Learning Outcome such as the first of the AEC/Polifonia practical Outcomes – skills in artistic expression. This outcome reads in full as follows:

Skills in artistic expression: At the completion of their studies, students should be able to create and realise their own artistic concepts and should have developed the necessary skills for their expression.

This Outcome expresses a rich set of skills spanning from creative imagination to the technical ability to realise the products of this imagination. We tend to think traditionally of working towards a goal such as this by first ensuring that the technical elements are secure and then giving the imaginative and creative aspect increasing emphasis. This straightaway gives us a potential shape and sequence for intermediate milestones which might lead in a progressive and coherent manner towards the culminatory Learning Outcome.

4.4.2 Again, imagining a four-year first-cycle programme, the kind of milestones that might be laid down could well look something like the following:

LEARNING OUTCOME 1: SKILLS IN ARTISTIC EXPRESSION	
Year 4	At the ***completion of their studies***, students should 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 studie***s, students should be beginning to develop their own artistic intentions into creative conceptions spanning entire works and should 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 should be able to formulate their own artistic intentions and should 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 should have developed sufficient technical skills and security to be able to concentrate upon developing their skills in artistic expression.

4.4.3 In Category 2, the consecutive model, a similar process can be carried out to produce intermediate outcomes for lessons or classes concluding in the first, second or third years. Each lesson or class prepares for the succeeding one, just as the milestones do in the continuous model. Because we are now dealing with lessons or classes that formally finish at an intermediate year or semester, they could also be said to form Pre-requisites for the lessons or classes taken in the succeeding year. Each later class can be structured on the assumption that students will enter it with a level of prior attainment corresponding to the previous intermediate outcomes. The content of the later course can therefore take things forward from that assumed level of attainment.

4.4.4 Strictly, this means that a student must have successfully completed the earlier class or lesson – hence its being described as a pre-requisite. In practice, a student who, for whatever reason, has not completed the earlier element (perhaps because they are transferring into a programme at an intermediate point) can usually demonstrate whether or not they have achieved a comparable level of attainment by other means – such as a simply administered test.

4.5 Learning Outcomes, the "typical" student, core and optional units

4.5.1 All of the above has implicitly related to what is referred to as the ***core curriculum*** – the pattern of study undertaken by all students. As was stated in the introduction, one of the features of a well-designed curriculum is that it should be ***flexible***. Flexibility was described there as taking two forms - being adaptable to the different needs of different students and being responsive to changing priorities and alert to likely future requirements of the profession. The second of these will be addressed in the next chapter on credit points; the first is relevant to the present chapter.

4.5.2 As was stated in 2.2.3, Learning Outcomes describe what every "***typica***l" student should achieve if he or she is to be successful. In one sense, therefore, they represent outcomes for the core curriculum since this is what all students take. However, a curriculum which is flexible needs to have room for some students to do one thing while others do another. In particular, the freedom for students to start to specialise during their programme is an important part of ensuring that their learning is developmental and progressive. On the face of it, such flexible and individually-tailored activity might seem to lie outside the scope of general Learning Outcomes. This need not be the case, however, if the Learning Outcomes have been carefully constructed.

4.5.3 In describing the achievement of a "typical' student", Learning Outcomes inevitably set standards that are exceeded by some students. This is true in final assessment of those elements of the curriculum which all students take throughout the programme, such the 1-to-1 lesson. In a similar way, a student choosing a particular option can still be addressing one or more of the general Learning Outcomes of the programme but deliberately taking the outcome to a higher level than the "typical" student.

4.5.4 For example, a student with a special interest in performing upon period instruments might be able to pursue such an option to a relatively high level, while other students are free to do little or no study in this area. As a result, the student might fulfil certain Learning Outcomes to do with breadth of repertoire knowledge, range of performing skills or understanding of historical context more fully than – or at least differently from – other students. Nevertheless, the same general Learning Outcomes apply, just as they would to a student choosing to pursue options in contemporary classical music, jazz, etc.

4.5.5 The principle is perhaps more clearly shown with a diagram. The diagram, this time based upon a three-year first-cycle programme, depicts a first year that consists entirely of compulsory, core subjects, a second with some optional elements and a third where at least half of the student's individual programme of study is made up of optional elements:

<table>
<tr><td></td><td>All Learning Outcomes fulfilled at least to threshold level</td><td colspan="2">Some Learning Outcomes fulfilled to higher than threshold level</td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 3</td><td>Core Curriculum</td><td colspan="2">Optional elements</td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 2</td><td colspan="2">Core Curriculum</td><td>Optional elements</td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 1</td><td colspan="3">Core Curriculum</td></tr>
</table>

4.5.6 In some cases, there may be options which a student can choose which begin to stand outside the scope of general Learning Outcomes. A good, although often contentious, example of this is pedagogy, which is an important element of some students' learning and completely absent from the curriculum of others. It would obviously be nonsensical to say that because pedagogy is not featured in the general Learning Outcomes of a programme it should not feature as a strand in the curriculum for some students. Clearly, in circumstances such as this, a more specific Learning Outcome needs to be drawn up for those students taking this option. Even in a case such as this, though, the learning processes involved in taking an option in pedagogy will almost certainly be found to contribute to one or more of the general Learning Outcomes, particularly if these include outcomes related to generic skills.

4.5.7 Where different students are taking different options, it is important to ensure that their overall workload does not differ too widely. Each student's study pattern, as well as the institution's curriculum

as a whole, needs to be ***full, but not overloaded***, to refer once more to the features of a well-designed curriculum listed in the Chapter One. Credit-point systems can be very useful in controlling this aspect and the next chapter will deal with this and other ways in which they can contribute to effective curriculum design.

5 THE USE OF CREDIT POINTS IN CURRICULUM DESIGN

5.1 CREDIT POINTS, VOLUME AND STANDARD UNITS

5.1.1 Credit points are a clear and easy way to show how the volume of one element of the curriculum compares with another and how the whole curriculum adds up to a volume of study that is manageable for the student -and comparable with curricula in other institutions. In one of the companion handbooks to this, entitled "**Handbook for the Implementation and Use of Credit Points in Higher Music Education Institutions**"[7], a detailed account is given of how an existing curriculum can be divided into suitable numbers of credit points for each element and how to deal with the fact that everyone tends to feel that their part of the curriculum is the most important - and therefore should have as many credits as possible associated with it. As is made very clear in that handbook, credits are a measure of the amount of student time demanded by each element of the curriculum, not how "important" it is in some higher, almost moral, sense.

5.1.2 The models proposed in the credit point handbook all involve some element of compromise but they still end up dividing the credits in quite sensitive ways, such that each element's allotted number of credits is potentially unique. This is clearly the best way to try to capture in terms of credits the shape and proportions of an existing curriculum.

5.1.3 When designing a curriculum in which credit points are incorporated right from the start, a potentially freer range of choice in the use of credit values presents itself. Under these circumstances, it can be extremely helpful if some system of standard credit volume is used. This does not mean that every element of the curriculum has to be the same size; some elements may be double, triple or more times the size of the standard unit. If the ratios are kept simple, though, there are several benefits that arise when designing curricula that are adaptable, both to individual students' different interests and to changes, updates and other developments.

5.1.4 Assuming the pattern of 60 credits corresponding to a full-time student's total effort for one academic year that is found in the ECTS system, there are a number of ways that this sum may be divided. Ideally, though it is probably helpful to have a standard unit of volume that gives somewhere between 10 and 15 divisions of the whole amount. With a range of double and triple units, this will probably give anywhere between 6 and 10 elements into which the curriculum for the year may be divided. In a 60-credit system, we would therefore be looking at a standard credit unit of 4, 5 or 6 points. A 5-point credit unit offers a good range of up to 12 divisions of the total learning effort for the year and – quite importantly for general understanding – makes the mathematics of adding units together simple, since everything is in multiples of 5 and 10.

[7] This handbook can be found at www.bologna-and-music.org/creditpoints.

5.1.5 Whilst a 5-point credit unit works well in year-long teaching patterns, it should be noted that it can lead to problems where a semesterised calendar is used. Teaching in semesters also means assess ing every semester, so it is likely that the standard unit of credits will have to be subdivided when allocating credits across each element of the curriculum and over the two semesters. Although this problem can be overcome by grouping elements of the curriculum together inside the semester and allocating a higher credit value to the resultant compound unit, this can have a feeling of expediency, rather than real curriculum design. Many curriculum designers working within a semesterised structure therefore prefer to use 6 credit points as the standard unit size, thereby permitting 3-credit units within each semester, linked to each other across the year in a 3 + 3 = 6 pattern.

5.1.6 To see how this system of standard credit units might work in relation to an imaginary curriculum, we can go back to the elements used in the example at 3.2.2. There, the curriculum was divided into seven elements. Of these, most people would assume that the Principal Study lesson and the student's independent practice associated with it would take by far the most time and effort of the seven. After that, there could obviously be extensive debate about whether the student effort devoted, say, to chamber music should be more, less or the same as that allocated to orchestral activity and whether either of these should be given more, less or the same time as historical studies, etc. Nevertheless, it would probably be widely agreed that the remaining six elements are probably roughly equivalent to each other in volume – especially when one remembers that we are dealing with an imaginary "typical" student here, not a particular individual who will undoubtedly devote more time to one than another.

5.1.7 Bearing this in mind, the simplest way of dividing this curriculum into standard units and multiples would be to give half, or nearly half, of the student's total effort to his or her Principal Study lesson and allocate equal numbers of credits to each of the remaining six elements. Assuming that this were done within the slightly more complicated semesterised pattern discussed above, this might be achieved using a 6 (3 + 3)-credit standard unit as below:

THE CURRICULUM (60 CREDITS)							
Lessons and classes	Principal Study l	Chamber coaching	Orchestra	Historical studies	Theory/ analysis	Aural	Professional preparation
Total credits	24	6	6	6	6	6	6

Credits in Semester Two	12 (standard unit x 4)	3	3	3	3	3	3
Credits in Semester One	12 (standard unit x 4)	3	3	3	3	3	3

5.1.8 As an alternative to the above, to give just one example, it might be decided that, for some instruments, work in orchestras is more important and the amount of individual practice time required for the Principal Study instrument less. If so, 3 credits per semester might be transferred from the Principal Study lesson to orchestra, giving credits of 9, 3, 6, 3, 3, 3 and 3 respectively in each semester. It could even be that, for a year in which the orchestral work is mainly in the second semester, the pattern shown in the table could be used for Semester One and the alternative given here for Semester Two, as shown below:

THE CURRICULUM (60 CREDITS)							
Lessons and classes		Chamber coaching	Orchestra	Historical studies	Theory/ analysis	Aural	Professional p reparation
Total credits	21	6	9	6	6	6	6
Credits in Semester Two	9 (standard unit x 3)	3	6	3	3	3	3
Credits in Semester One	12 (standard unit x 4)	3	3	3	3	3	3

5.2 THE BENEFITS OF STANDARDISATION

5.2.1 An important point to notice in the example above is that by using a standard credit volume, we can still say that the total credit volume for the first three subjects, Principal Study lesson, chamber coaching and orchestra is constant at 36 credits across the year. By sacrificing a system of counting that is precisely sensitive, on an unique basis, to the perceived weighting of each element, we gain a powerful inter-changeability within the curriculum.

5.2.2 The first way in which this can be useful is when we wish to give students the ability to put elements of the curriculum together in ways that are more individually tailored. Without standardisation, this will lead to some students taking a total of fewer than 60 credits and others more. This is not only untidy but potentially serious. To give just two reasons why: a student who has chosen a pattern with more than 60 credits may fail some element but still have 60 credits overall for the year, making it unclear whether they should progress to the next year or not; another student who notices that they have fewer credits overall in their year's study may start to question whether this "fair" and whether, in a climate where student fees are rising, they are getting the same "value for money" as another student.

5.2.3 A standardised unit size avoids all of these problems and is useful in a second way. Standardisation makes it easier for curriculum designers, and for students choosing their elements of study, to see how one element may be "lifted out" of the curriculum and another of the same volume slotted cleanly into its place. In this way, a group of students may each be taking slightly different patterns of study but all be following a curriculum which, to the same extent, is ***full, but not overloaded***.

5.3 CREDIT POINTS AND LEVELS

5.3.1 So far, it has been assumed that student choice is an unequivocally good thing. Of course, this has to be tempered by the notion that each student's pattern of learning must be ***well-balanced*** and ***progressive***. We have already seen how aspects of the curriculum need to be regarded as forming a core for every student (4.5). We have also seen how there needs to be some control over the order in which a student takes elements of the curriculum and an assurance that, in entering a particular course of study, they have the necessary prior experience to begin working at the appropriate level. This is addressed by the principle of pre-requisites (4.4.3). Although credit points themselves only address the volume of study, not its level, credit–point ***systems***, that combine credit-points with a qualifications framework, can be of assistance here because they add to the issue of volume that of ***Level***. By introducing some kind of ladder or framework against which the key qualifications are mapped, such systems not only allow comparisons of level to be made at the end of particular cycles, but they often provide a number of intermediate levels within a given qualification, especially within the first cycle of higher education study that lasts for a minimum of three years.

5.3.2 Many credit-point systems map the first cycle across three of their levels. How these levels are defined varies in the detail but a common idea is that they correspond to different types of learning, moving increasingly towards autonomy, fluency and the ability to handle complexity. A typical pattern would be something like the following:

First-cycle Level	Type of learning
3	The student ***synthesises*** the skills facts, concepts, etc, applying them in an ***integrated*** manner within ***larger***, ***longer or more complex learning situations***
2	The student ***assimilates*** these skills, facts, concepts, etc and gains ***fluency*** in using them
1	The student ***acquires*** skills, facts, concepts, etc

Referring back to 4.4.2, it will be seen that the intermediate milestones suggested as points of reference on the way to the achieving of the overall Learning Outcome of skills in artistic expression correspond broadly with these types of learning.

5.3.3 A three-Level system maps very conveniently onto a three-Year first cycle, of course, and it is easy to imagine that, in such a pattern, Year and Level are essentially different ways of expressing exactly the same concept. However, it is important to remember that, although Level and Year of study do often correspond to one another, they are not entirely the same and need not invariably map directly onto one another. Once they are mentally separated, it becomes possible to see how, for example, a student who decides in his or her final year that it would be helpful if they learned some of the basics of Music Technology might, if the curriculum structure allowed, take an appropriate course of study at Level 1 alongside other studies that are mostly at Level 3.

5.3.4 Having only three Levels might seem to present a problem when a four-year pattern of first-cycle programmes is used but, in practice, it need not be and can actually give benefits in terms of curriculum design. A four-year programme, set against three learning Levels, increases the scope for later broadening of a student's knowledge and experience along the lines of the Music Technology example above. It can also allow a student to extend some of their Level 2 learning into a third year or spread some of their Level 3 learning across the third and fourth years.

A four-year first cycle	Type of learning
Year 4	The student usually takes mainly **Level 3** units

Year 3	The student usually takes a mixtures of **Level 2 and 3** units but may take one or two units not covered in the previous two years, starting afresh at Level 1
Year 2	The student usually takes mainly units at **Level 2**. Some areas not covered in Year One may be started afresh at level 1. Where a student is already advanced in a particular area, some Level 3 work may be possible
Year 1	The student usually takes units at **Level 1** only

5.4 CREDIT POINTS, OPTIONS AND MANAGING THE COST OF PROVISION

5.4.1 This latter point can be helpful when it comes to trying to design a rich curriculum that is nevertheless affordable. If, say, a Level 3 optional unit is offered in a manner that means it might be taken by a mixture of students from the final two years (advanced 2nd-year with 3rd-year students in a three-year pattern and, especially, 3rd- and 4th-year students in a four-year one) the likelihood of its operating with an economically viable group size is increased. In this context, it is important for institutions offering choice within the curriculum to set limits around the minimum group sizes at which certain options may run in a given year. For example, an institution might decide that a particular option may only run if five students select it. Clearly, the chances of this number being reached are effectively doubled if students from two years may study together on this option. And, thinking of this the other way around, a student potentially has a second chance to take a given option if it does not run in one year.

5.4.2 As well as *minimum* group sizes, institutions may need to set maximum sizes in certain areas. This might simply be a matter of practical issues, such as how many work-stations are available in a teaching room for a Music Technology class, or it may be connected to a more abstract sense of how the dynamic of the learning group may cease to be effective beyond a certain size. In either case, a simple formula can determine not just whether an option should run at all but also the point at which one or more additional classes would need to be set up. Taking the example given above of a five-student minimum, the pattern might be extended as follows:

	Does not run	1 group	2 groups	3 groups
1-4 students				
5-9 students				
10-14 students				
15–19 students				

5.4.3 In a system such as that described here, the number of options advertised each year may be extensive. Students will need to indicate a range of choices, so that even if their first choice does not run, their second or third choice should stand a good chance of being met (and, as already indicated, they might be able to take their first choice the following year). Once all the choices have been collated and the decisions taken about which options should run, the actual number of lessons and classes needing to be arranged for the year will probably be considerably smaller than the "menu" from which the students chose but it will also have been substantially shaped by their choice.

5.4.4 Over time, options that prove consistently unpopular may be dropped from the list of those advertised. Conversely, new options may be introduced over time by first being developed in principle, then advertised and, if selected by sufficient students, incorporated into the curriculum. Such a process is made much more straightforward logistically when using a standardised unit size since, as indicated above, standardisation permits one element to be lifted out and another of the same volume to be slotted cleanly into its place.

5.4.5 The year-by-year process of evolution, whereby "weaker" units fall by the wayside and "stronger" ones take their place begins to lead us into the realms of curriculum development and, therefore, brings us to the topic of the next chapter.

6 REVIEWING AND UPDATING A DESIGNED CURRICULUM – CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

6.1 DESIGN, APPROVAL AND REVIEW

6.1.1 When designing a curriculum, as opposed to simply letting one grow, the design process itself will probably involve some kind of critical review of the existing pattern of teaching to find out which elements work well and which might benefit from change. Such a review will be strengthened if the people giving the answers are not just the teachers of each element of the curriculum but also the students, former students, people in positions in the profession where they are regularly looking for newly-qualified conservatoire graduates (and therefore know what qualities they are looking for) etc. It may also be helpful to do some fact-finding about the ways that other conservatoires organise their curricula – almost every institution will have something in its curriculum that it does in a way worth imitating.

6.1.2 Based on all of this information, the curriculum decided upon will then be designed and its design documented. Nowadays, it is recommended, and in some systems compulsory, to put the proposed curriculum through some process of formal approval before it runs. This is where curriculum design interacts with quality assurance, which is the subject of another companion to this handbook, **"Internal Quality Assurance in Higher Music Education"**[8].

6.1.3 When a newly-designed curriculum is approved, approval is normally given for a certain number of years – usually between five and ten - with the expectation that a review comparable in scale to the one that led to the design itself will take place at the end of this period. This process of ***periodic review*** is important because it re-imposes the discipline of thinking holistically from time to time about the curriculum, how it has evolved over a number of years and how the needs of the profession may also have evolved, not necessarily in identical ways, during the same period. Deciding that a curriculum which was designed and implemented five or more years previously now needs some fundamental changes does not necessarily mean that the original designers got it wrong; it simply means that, in a new situation, another model might work better.

6.1.4 The review process need not always lead to radical revision, of course. Sometimes, a team may look at the curriculum and decide that, apart from a few minor adjustments, it is still fit for purpose. The key thing is that the scope of the review should be thorough, and people's minds open to the possibility of change. As we have seen in the last chapter, a credit structure that makes it straightforward for elements of the curriculum to be lifted out and others put in their place without destroying the whole can make the kind of change that may be contemplated at a time of periodic review seem a much less threatening exercise than it might otherwise.

[8] This handbook can be found at www.bologna-and-music.org/internalqa.

6.2 Learning Outcomes and review

6.2.1 With a curriculum that has been designed using Learning Outcomes, the outcomes themselves are the obvious place to start the review process. Institutions will want to hold each Learning Outcome up for scrutiny and to ask themselves whether each Outcome individually, and the whole list of Outcomes in combination, still correspond to the skills they would wish their graduates to possess. The question will need to be put in a number of ways:

- Is this particular Learning Outcome still relevant and desirable for graduating musicians completing their studies now and, as far as one can predict, for the next five, or more, years?
- Does the overall pattern of Learning Outcomes add up to a description of the kind of complete, well-rounded graduating musician that we are hoping to produce now, and for the next five or more years?
- And, in terms of the kind of musician we are hoping to produce, has our own institutional mission changed over the past five years – for example, in terms of the musical styles and genres that we feel it is important to cover?
- Are there any Learning Outcomes not currently in the overall pattern that ought now to be added?
- If so, and if the number of Learning Outcomes is starting to be unwieldy, are there any that, while still relevant and desirable, can perhaps safely be omitted?

6.2.2 Once the Learning Outcomes have been reviewed, and perhaps modified, the series of questions listed in 3.3.1 needs to be posed once again and any changes that appear desirable as a result incorporated. Even if it is decided not to change or add to the Learning Outcomes, it is still important to ask the questions about lessons and classes. Changes, developments and the influx of new ideas may mean that the answers to the questions that emerged five years previously may not now come out entirely in the same manner.

6.2.3 Initial approval and periodic review are the major landmarks in the life history of any curriculum. However, it is important that a curriculum should be allowed to develop as continuously as possible – again, provided that the changes involved in this do not compromise the overall structure or instil a sense of perpetual flux and uncertainty in the minds of teachers and students. With this in mind, it is a good general principle to observe that any change introduced should be allowed to run for at least two academic years. New elements are almost always unpopular with some groups simply because they are new. By the time they come around a second time, they are more likely to be judged on their merits, rather than by their unfamiliarity (it can often be interesting to observe how an innovation that was met with widespread scepticism at its introduction can, after only a few years, become the orthodoxy that nobody could imagine being changed!).

6.3 ONGOING DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ANNUAL MONITORING

6.3.1 Most of the changes that an institution might want to introduce on a year-by-year basis between reviews will tend to be at the level of operational detail. For example, a course of study, as originally designed, might have been given a pattern of assessment which turns out, in practice, to feel overly heavy to the students and difficult to handle swiftly and effectively by the teachers. This kind of over-zealous design is quite common and, although those leading curriculum design exercises should be aware of it and try to minimise it, in the end, only the experience of running the course is going to prove what works best. Again, it is important not to leap to change something because one group of students finds it uncongenial; it is situations where a pattern emerges that should prompt us to decide that change is required.

6.3.2 To help achieve this balance between continually looking for ways to improve the curriculum and avoiding perpetual change and uncertainty, the process of annual monitoring can be very helpful. This is, in some ways like a scaled-down version of periodic review. It, too, involves gathering feedback but this is usually internal, from students and staff. The one key external ingredient comes where a system of External Examiners is used. Especially when this takes the form of one or more individuals invited to attend practical assessments and review written assessments and then produce a report on what they have observed, this provides an extremely useful perspective to complement the internal one.

6.3.3 Feedback gathered annually will produce a variety of suggestions, ranging from the small and easily implemented to the major and potentially far-reaching. Correspondingly, the straightforward and uncontroversial recommendations can, and should, be acted upon swiftly. Others may be noted and put into a list for consideration at the next periodic review. This ensures that major upheaval within the curriculum between periodic reviews is kept to a minimum. If the curriculum has gone through a thorough design process at its original inception, it is unlikely that an issue should arise that is at once so major as to involve comprehensive re-design and so urgent as to be dangerous to delay to the next periodic review.

6.4 CONTINUOUS ENHANCEMENT – THE DEVELOPMENTAL PHILOSOPHY

6.4.1 Curriculum development depends upon an attitude among teachers that recognises that there is probably no teaching, however good, that cannot still be improved in some way. Although this could perhaps be seen as a challenge to aspects of the traditional view of the conservatoire teacher as "guru" and custodian of wisdom handed down from earlier teachers, it is not intended to be. Constantly looking for improvement is itself a sign of excellence, rather than an indication of inadequacy. Many of the revered teachers of the past acquired their great reputations precisely because they were relentless searchers after improvement. Moreover, their most successful students, some of whom succeeded them as illustrious teachers, succeeded precisely because they were able to do more than

simply take in and reproduce with no personal variation or development, the established wisdom of their teachers. Where a teacher has an explicit "method" of teaching, it will usually be a synthesis of early influences adapted and refined in the light of personal experience – in other words, the result of a personalised and informal version of curriculum development.

6.4.2 If accepted as an institution-wide approach, curriculum development ensures that teachers see it as part of their professional responsibility to continue to develop and retain a curiosity for new ideas and approaches. This may mean, in turn, that they feel encouraged themselves, or are encouraged by others, to talk more to colleagues, both within the institution and outside. For hourly-paid part-time staff, this may involve allocating resources to allow such meetings to happen. As such, it is a process to which the institution as a whole also has to be committed.

6.4.3 In terms of the external aspect of this dialogue, this is where the European dimension can play an especially beneficial role. There can be a tendency to think of mobility first in terms of students and only secondarily in terms of staff. However, the positive impact upon staff of being involved in exchange schemes can be very striking and long-lasting within the institution. The richness and diversity of educational traditions within the countries and regions of Europe and the relative ease of travelling from one European country to another represent advantages for European institutions. Moreover, the availability of European funding to support exchanges of this kind means that, in this area at least, the commitment of resource required by individual institutions can be significantly reduced.

6.5 THE DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH TO MANAGING THE COST OF PROVISION

6.5.1 As the previous paragraphs imply, curriculum development requires a commitment of resource. However, it can also lead to resources being saved. A culture in which curriculum development is the norm is more likely to lead to teachers seeing how elements of the curriculum can be delivered more efficiently, and hence more economically. For example, it might emerge that two previously separate elements of the curriculum could be delivered in an integrated manner. If this is seen to lead to a better and quicker understanding on the part of students, it will be welcomed. But, as a secondary benefit, it may also reduce the overall time and cost involved, whether because the learning process can be covered in fewer lessons overall or because integrating the elements also means integrating their assessment, with an reduction, therefore, in the number of assessments a student must undertake. As well as saving resources, such a development can help to ensure that the student's overall pattern of study, which includes their assessment, is ***full, but not over-loaded***.

6.5.2 From time to time, most conservatoires are likely to encounter circumstances where they need to make more significant economies across the curriculum, as opposed to these minor and isolated efficiency gains. At such times, it is especially important that the potential usefulness of curriculum development as a tool for resource savings be kept in mind. Just as it can help to improve provision for no extra cost and maintain provision with savings, it can ensure that educational damage inflicted

if resources are severely cut can be kept to a minimum. A culture based on clear principles of curriculum design and continuous development can also enable an institution to respond quickly, and in the most beneficial areas, if and when financial circumstances then improve.

6.5.3 The kinds of continuous monitoring described above, and the instilling of an approach geared to the possibility that there is always a potentially better way of doing things, should provide much of the evidence needed to judge the effectiveness of the Learning Outcomes at their periodic review. By thinking holistically of the kind of musician we are hoping to help develop and working from that vision, expressed in Learning Outcomes, to the curriculum that will deliver this individual, we are more likely to remain open to the possibility of change and therefore to ensure that our curricula continue to develop.

6.6 CURRICULUM REVIEW AND EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

6.6.1 In 6.1, it was pointed out that formal approval for a programme, and a similarly formal periodic review of all programmes, is nowadays recommended and, in some systems, compulsory. Where an institution is authorised to conduct its own internal approval processes (for example, in the case of UK universities granted their own Royal Charter) **external** quality assurance will consist of periodic monitoring of those processes to ensure that they are robust in principle and have been correctly operated in practice. In other cases, approval is itself granted through some external agency which therefore conducts the approval and review exercises itself.

6.6.2 In either of the cases described above, some form of external quality assurance is therefore being applied to ensure that the institution is fulfilling the requirements placed on it. Where the external dimension takes the form of periodic monitoring, it usually involves separate visits, generally on a five-to-ten-year cycle, at which documentation from the approval and review events that have taken place since the last visit is scrutinised and the rigour of the processes involved evaluated.

6.6.3 Whether one is dealing with a system of external monitoring or full-scale involvement in approval and review processes, the value of having agreed and widely-shared Learning Outcomes is considerable. Learning Outcomes provide the agency conducting the external quality assurance with a set of benchmarks that they can use as measuring tools. From the institution's point of view, if the Learning Outcomes have been developed among the community of institutions working in this discipline, they should provide some reassurance that those conducting the external review will be looking for things that those in the discipline regard as important. An example of how subject-specific learning outcomes can be used in external reviews can be found in the AEC Framework Document "Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Music Education: Characteristics, Criteria and Procedures"[9], which addresses external quality assurance and accreditation process in music in more detail.

[9] This Framework Document can be found at www.bologna-and-music.org/accreditation.

6.6.4 It might be thought that the previous paragraph implies that an institution is best-advised to stick to any discipline-wide Learning Outcomes that may be available and not branch out on its own at all. This, of course, would make curricula at different institutions tend to become very homogeneous and, over time, might destroy the diversity that is one of the strengths of European higher education. The reality is not like that – or, at least, it should not be. A shared set of Learning Outcomes enables an institution to go along with these where it finds it appropriate to do so, but also to develop clear arguments for divergence where it feels that its own mission requires this. One of the features of shared learning outcomes is that they need to be "ecumenical", and inclusive. This can make them rather generalised, and even bland. It is good that an institution should feel able to construct its own sharper and more specific Learning Outcomes, reflecting its particular strengths, whilst preserving a certain degree of reference to the shared outcomes.

6.6.5 A mature and well-operated external quality assurance system will listen to the arguments that an institution puts forward as to why it has inflected shared Learning Outcomes to its own particular situation and, if it finds them convincing, will not penalise an institution which has the justifiable strength of conviction to be distinctive. This is especially important as the range of musics addressed by conservatoires grows through recognition being given to the importance of popular genres, technology-based music and music from other traditions than that of Western European Art Music.

7 CONCLUSION

7.1 RETURNING TO FIRST PRINCIPLES

This handbook has attempted to show how Learning Outcomes, Credit Points and the cycles of annual monitoring and periodic review can help to deliver a curriculum that starts out, and continues to be, characterised by the qualities listed in 2.4:

- ***Well-balanced:*** the various components are each given their different weight, as appropriate, but no element is given more than its fair share
- ***Full, but not overloaded***: deliverable within the resources available - an over-full curriculum will, in any case, lead to students choosing which elements they will attend and which they will miss, since they can't attend everything. The waste in such a situation is obvious
- ***Flexible***: adaptable to the different needs of different students; responsive to changing priorities and alert to likely future requirements of the profession
- ***Progressive***: encouraging students to grow and develop as they pass through the programme, often by starting with a structured and largely compulsory pattern of studies and moving to one in which choice plays a greater part
- ***Student-centred***: recognising that, for each student, the curriculum is more than simply the pattern of lessons and classes that the institution offers – it is the sum total of everything the student is learning and absorbing during his or her time at the conservatoire
- ***Focussed on learning***: selecting teaching methods and methods of assessment on the basis of how well they encourage learning and then demonstrate that it has been achieved

In concluding, I should like to say a few more words about what is meant by ***student-centred learning*** and about the particular implications of this for conservatoire-style teaching.

7.2 STUDENT-CENTREDNESS: TRADITIONS AND IDEALS

7.2.1 In one sense, the conservatoire teaching tradition has always been student-centred in that at its heart lies the teaching model of the 1-to-1 lesson. Even where a practical teacher works with a class format, this is still usually based upon the principle that he or she interacts with one student while others look on, learning vicariously until it is their turn to be the focus of individual attention from the teacher. Since, at any given moment, one teacher is therefore interacting with one student, it is inevitable that the ground covered in the lesson should be influenced by the material the student has brought to the lesson and by the strengths and weaknesses of that particular student.

7.2.2 However, as can be seen above in the supplementary sentence about student-centred learning, there is more to be understood in this idea than just the element of individual tailoring that comes naturally through the 1-to-1 lesson. In part, it involves a fundamental conceptual shift from teaching to learning and a greater concentration upon the idea that the student is an active agent, seeking out knowledge,

skills, etc. wherever they are to be found, rather than the passive recipient of a body of teaching that others have decided is in his or her best interests. In this respect, student-centredness and a focus upon learning go closely together, as was seen in the initial discussion of Learning Outcomes in 3.2.

7.2.3 Of course, not every student has a clear idea of what they need to learn – and some who do have clear ideas are not always right about this! Especially in the earlier years of the programme, students generally benefit from receiving a carefully-planned pattern of lessons and classes drawn up by those who deliver them. What is important is that the teachers of these lessons and classes should give thought to how, in the course of their teaching and alongside the skills and knowledge they are giving the students, they are also preparing them for greater independence in their subsequent learning.

7.2.4 This is where the 1-to-1 lesson, although tailored to the individual student, can sometimes be less than truly student-centred. At its worst, the 1-to-1 teaching situation can simply encourage the student's passive dependency on the teacher – the very opposite of true student-centredness; at its best, though, it can promote a searching dialogue between teacher and student, the character of which progressively and instinctively changes as the student's experience and skill grow. Where, initially, the roles of teacher and student may be quite distinct and the teacher's contribution substantially directive, ideally, the lessons will gradually turn more into shared journeys of exploration, in which the student will continue to take cues and suggestions from the teacher but will increasingly have insights and counter-suggestions to contribute in return.

7.2.5 Teachers who encourage this metamorphosis – and many do – generate a teaching and learning model which is organic, developmental, optimistically open-ended and genuinely student-centred. The student may grow in different directions from those taken by his or her teacher and may even come in time to eclipse them. When this happens, it is surely to be welcomed - in that the alternative would be a model where each student could only be a slightly imperfect facsimile of his or her teacher and the result, over time, would be diminution, rather than development.

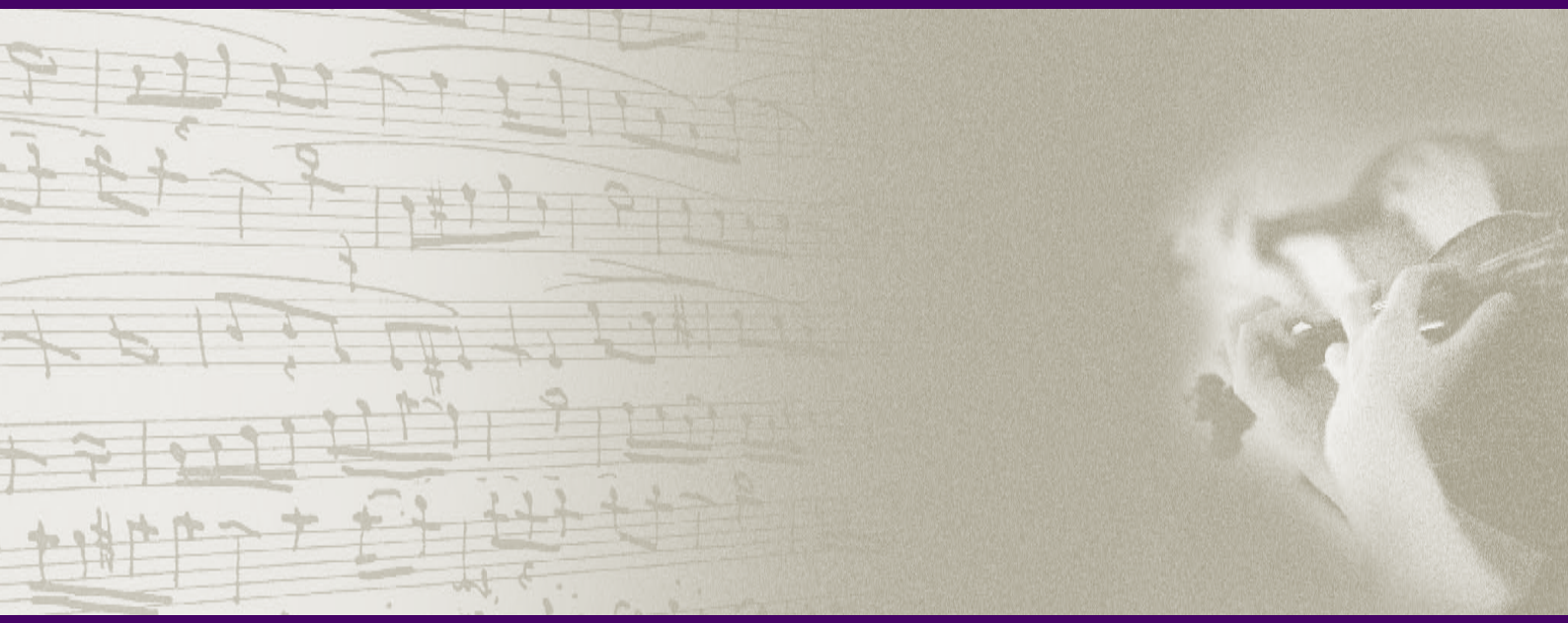
7.3 FINAL REMARKS

7.3.1 Like any document dealing with a specialist subject, this handbook contains words and phrases that have a special meaning – in this case, within the language of higher education. With many of these, explanations of their meaning have been given alongside their introduction during the text. However, the reader may find it helpful to refer to the larger Glossary of such terms that has been prepared separately as part of the Polifonia project. This Glossary may be found at www.bologna-and-music.org/glossary

7.3.2 Throughout this handbook, we have seen principles and practices of curriculum design and development that are intended to encourage student-centred learning. Perhaps it is appropriate to finish by saying that, ideally, each student should similarly, but on an individual basis, reflect on what kind of

graduating musician they wish to be (as it were, their personal learning outcomes) and which lessons and classes they feel will best help them to get there (their personal curriculum).

7.3.3 A curriculum designed according to the principles described above should have the effect of encouraging just this element of reflection, planning and choice. Indeed, it is an increasingly common feature of today's designed and more fully-documented programmes that they should involve the student producing some kind of written Study Plan. Provided that these are kept simple, they can be as useful and relevant for music students as for those in other disciplines. For the student, as for the institution, it can be genuinely helpful for learning to be consciously planned and then, wherever appropriate, developed through reflection and review.



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Education and Culture

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