

HOW TO PREPARE FOR AN
INSTITUTIONAL OR PROGRAMME
REVIEW IN HIGHER MUSIC EDUCATION:
GUIDANCE FOR PARTICIPATING IN AN AEC
QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PROCESS

POLIFONIA ACCREDITATION
WORKING GROUP



KUNGL. MUSIKHÖGSKOLAN
Royal College of Music in Stockholm



Association Européenne
des Conservatoires,
Académies de Musique
et Musikhochschulen (AEC)

ERASMUS NETWORK FOR MUSIC

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



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INTRODUCTION

The *Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen* (AEC)¹ has developed a framework for reviews of European higher music education institutions and programmes in music. This framework is outlined in the AEC Framework Document *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Music Education: Characteristics, Criteria and Procedures*².

The AEC offers services in quality assurance and accreditation based on this framework in the following contexts:

- **Informal:** the AEC Quality Enhancement Process for Institutions and Programmes is a European music-specific peer review system, engaged in voluntarily and consisting of visits carried out by panels of experts.
- **Formal:** the AEC has established several types of bilateral cooperation with national quality assurance and accreditation agencies in Europe and is involved in joint formal reviews of higher music education institutions or programmes conducted collaboratively with such agencies.

This handbook focuses on the first of these two contexts, the AEC Quality Enhancement Process for Institutions and Programmes. It contains all the necessary information and descriptions of procedures with respect to this process and outlines an indicative time schedule for it (from the point where an institution applies for a visit until the production of the final report). It also provides a programme template for the visit itself. As such, much of the information it contains could be useful for reviews of institutions and programmes in music regardless of their status and context; therefore, the general terms of 'review' and 'AEC review' are used at points within the handbook, along with the more specific title of 'AEC Quality Enhancement Process'.

The main aim of the AEC Quality Enhancement Process for Institutions and Programmes is to provide valuable experience and a frame of reference to assist AEC member institutions in their quality assurance and enhancement activities, whether as part of preparations for formal review or as a more general tool for institutional development. As the AEC does not currently have recognised legal status as a national or other official quality assurance and accreditation agency, reviews conducted under the AEC Quality Enhancement Process are informal in legal terms, but rigorous in nature, providing institutions with detailed, well-informed scrutiny and impartial advice from 'critical friends'.

The AEC Framework Document *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Music Education: Characteristics, Criteria and Procedures* addresses European developments in the field of quality assurance and accreditation, sets out the principles governing the AEC framework for reviews in music and outlines the distinction between internal quality assurance systems³ (set up and operated by the institution itself) and external quality assurance and accreditation systems (operated by agencies such as governments and accreditation agencies).

¹ See for more information about the AEC www.aecinfo.org.

² The AEC Framework Document can be found at www.bologna-and-music.org/reviewscheme.

³ See 'Handbook for Internal Quality Assurance in Higher Music Education', Evert Bisschop Boele, August 2007 at www.bologna-and-music.org/internalqa.

Please note that the AEC Framework Document should be considered as the principal formal document of reference for the AEC Quality Enhancement Process for Institutions and Programmes. The present handbook is designed as a supplement to clarify practical aspects of the review process set out in the AEC Framework Document. It is not a substitute for the Framework Document but a complement to it.

1. APPLYING FOR A REVIEW UNDER THE AEC QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PROCESS

1.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

Quality assurance systems aim at maintaining and enhancing the quality of the work of higher education institutions and, subsequently, of higher education itself. Institutions are first and foremost responsible for the quality of their provision. No external body can be responsible for ensuring the quality of the work of an institution. Consequently, a quality assurance system should be built into the normal operating routines of an institution.

External quality assurance takes many different forms including evaluation, accreditation and audit. All of these processes contain strong elements of self-assessment. Professional musicians and music educators are accustomed to being assessed. Professionals assess themselves continuously and most of their output is performed in public arenas. This process of self-assessment forms the basis of learning for the next performance.

An external review of a conservatoire results in a similar process. It can confirm the institution's own assessment of its quality and it will identify areas where quality needs to be strengthened. The AEC Quality Enhancement Process draws upon the extensive musical expertise held by the Association and by its members to ensure that judgements on quality made during the course of such a review are undertaken by well-qualified subject specialists.

1.2 RESPONSIBILITIES

In an AEC review process there are three parties, each with specific responsibilities for actions, and a fourth with an important monitoring role:

The *institution* seeking a review or accreditation is responsible for:

- Co-operating with the AEC and the Review Team in planning and implementing the visit. The Rector (or equivalent) should designate a contact person who will liaise with the Review Team through its secretary.
- Providing the necessary documentation as described in the AEC Framework Document.
- Supplying the Review Team with all other information required for review.

The *AEC Office* is responsible for:

- Administering applications. This includes formally submitting applications to the AEC Accreditation Committee so that it can assure itself that the overall timetable and workload of review activities is appropriate to the staffing and other resources available in the AEC Office.
- Through its Chief Executive, identifying and appointing members of the Review Team from the Register approved by the AEC Accreditation Committee, ensuring that the experts selected form a well-balanced team qualified overall to participate in all aspects of the process and, where necessary, seeking the approval of the Accreditation Committee for an expert not yet on the Register whose expertise is needed to complete the team.

- Administering the Review Team.
- Appointing a secretary to support the experts. The secretary will be responsible for the communication with the institution before and after the review and for writing the first draft of the Review Team's report.
- Ensuring, through the secretary, that the Review Team's report adheres to the criteria and remit of the review.

The *Review Team* (composed of the experts and the secretary) is responsible for:

- Liaising with the AEC.
- Performing the review of the institution or programme in accordance with the criteria set out in the AEC Framework Document.
- Contributing to the report of the review at two stages of the process: by completing and/or suggesting adjustments firstly to the draft report written by the secretary and, secondly, following the response of the institution to the report.
- Abiding by all other review protocols and procedures including the clause on confidentiality.

The *Accreditation Committee* is responsible for:

- Assembling and maintaining the Register of experts from which Review Teams are usually drawn.
- Where necessary, giving prompt consideration to nominations of new experts made by the AEC Chief Executive to complete particular teams.
- Reviewing the team's report once the process is completed, and writing to the institution confirming that it has found the process to be consistent with, and relevant to, the review criteria.
- Where necessary, arbitrating between the Review Team and the institution, should there be any unresolved disagreements over the content of the final report.
- Monitoring the whole process and periodically advising the AEC Office on issues of good practice or areas for possible improvement observable as trends arising from the reports it reviews.

1.3 CRITERIA

AEC reviews are based on criteria defined in the AEC Framework Document (Chapter E) and institutions are responsible for providing all relevant information.

1.4 REQUEST FOR AN AEC REVIEW

A higher music education institution wishing to be reviewed (whether on a programme or institutional basis) should submit a request to the AEC Office in writing addressed to the AEC Chief Executive. This should be signed by the Rector or equivalent. The letter should be submitted a minimum of twenty weeks before the review visit is expected to take place.

The request should include:

- The type of review requested by the institution (programme or institutional).
- A motivation for requesting a review.
- The preferred period (month and year) for the visit of the review team.
- Any specific areas of expertise required for the review (this will enable the AEC to recruit the appropriate experts).
- Information about the institution (departments, study areas, degree structure and number of students) or about the programme (level of degree, study focus and number of students).

Upon acceptance of the request, the AEC Office will liaise with the institution on matters relating to planning, financial details and process.

2. PREPARING MATERIALS FOR AN AEC REVIEW

The preparation of materials for an AEC review of the institution or of specific educational programmes includes the following:

- A self-evaluation report based on the criteria outlined in the Framework Document. The report should be a product of a full institutional self-evaluation process.
- Supporting documentation providing evidence for the self-evaluation report.

2.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-EVALUATION

The self-evaluation process is an important element in most quality assurance and accreditation procedures. This process is the means by which the institution critically examines itself and/or its programmes and it is expected that staff and students will be involved in full. A well-conducted self-evaluation process offers a major opportunity for significant quality enhancement of all aspects of the institution. Self-evaluation normally results in a report, which forms the basis for the review by an external team of experts (Review Team).

Such a process may be structured and implemented in a variety of ways. The following points are usually helpful to the review process:

Useful points in the self-evaluation process	
Senior Management advocacy:	The success of the process is dependent on the wholehearted support of the self-evaluation process by the Senior Management. It should strongly encourage all levels of staff and the student body to be involved in the process.
Preparation:	Thorough preparation is vital for success. All those involved need to know what is expected of them and clear and comprehensive guidelines should be drawn up.
Briefing:	Heads of departments, student representatives and other key officers require thorough briefing. It is advisable that members of staff who are required to work towards the review (drafting of documents etc) be given advice and briefing information well in advance.
Structure:	A self-evaluation process will normally involve all levels of the institution. One successful approach has been to start the process at the lowest organisational levels. Input from these levels may form the basis for more overarching deliberations at higher levels. The structure of the review should be decided well in advance, giving clarification of the context of the review and what might be achieved as a result.
Issues:	As indicated below, the self evaluation-process will focus on a number of issues, many of which are fairly broad. It is important that the questions to be discussed in the various fora and groups in the course of the self-evaluation process are selected carefully for each forum or group, and that they are formulated with a high degree of accuracy.

Atmosphere:	Discussing quality issues is difficult in itself, and it is particularly challenging to take a critical perspective on one's own work and institution. However, working for improvement and quality enhancement is an important aspect of being professional, indeed for artists and scholars. It is of great importance to create an atmosphere of confidence and openness around the process in order for all to feel secure when sharing their thoughts and ideas.
Past, present and future:	Most institutions are proud of their history and traditions, which may be rooted in specific historic events and/or individuals' outstanding achievements. Quality enhancement should indeed find energy and impulses in the past. At the same time it should relate very concretely to the present situation – personnel, students, resources, facilities etc. Above all, it should be aimed at the future, in the knowledge that it may take time to establish change.
Documentation:	It is important to document all the various stages of an internal self-evaluation process thoroughly. Such documentation is used as evidence for the leadership to draw conclusions and initiate change.

Both internal self-evaluation and external review should be measured against the institution's stated mission, vision, objectives and priorities. The challenge of self-evaluation is to make clearly defined and well-supported statements about how these translate into the profile and operations of the institution, including its internal decision making processes. These statements will help the Review Team to make its own assessments and recommendations based on the evidence provided by the self-evaluation report and the review process itself.

2.2 THE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT IN PREPARATION FOR AN AEC REVIEW

The self-evaluation report is the most important document in the external review process. Through this document the institution conveys information about, and reflection on, itself and/or the programme(s). It is used by Review Teams as the starting point for their enquiries.

The report should relate and respond to all the areas of enquiry and criteria/questions to be addressed, as listed in the AEC Framework Document (Criteria for Institutional and Programme Review – Chapter E).

2.2.1 AEC CRITERIA FOR PROGRAMME AND INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW

The AEC criteria consist of the following seven main areas of enquiry:

- 1. Mission and vision of the institution or (in the case of programme reviews) programme goals and context:** Statements on vision and mission reflect the value system on which the institution is founded and they will normally attempt to define the institution's background, its distinctive features and its educational and artistic objectives. Statements are normally broad and should provide the framework for and context of all activity that takes place within the institution. This will be an important feature of institutional reviews; both institutional and programme reviews

will consider the relationship between the educational aims and objectives of the programme and the vision and mission statements.

- 2. The educational process:** The educational process is normally based on a written curriculum. From the teachers' and students' perspective it is the sum total of the work that takes place in teaching rooms, studios and reading rooms and which results in work presented in concert and other public arenas, whether assessed or not. Educational processes will reflect the vision and mission of the institution and they may be supported by policies on learning, teaching and assessment. They will always be aimed at preparing students for professional work and/or for further studies. Students' achievements through the educational processes and programmes are assessed by examinations and other evaluation methods. The criteria/questions to be addressed in this category are aimed firstly at identifying to what extent the institution/the programme takes the Polifonia/Dublin Descriptors and/or AEC learning outcomes⁴ into account when designing the curriculum and teaching, learning and assessment methods. Secondly, they are aimed at ensuring that there is consistency between the written curriculum, the teaching, and the assessment methods. Thirdly, they are concerned about the influence of international co-operation on the educational environment, an aspect which is very important in the Bologna Declaration. Institutional review is likely to consider the educational curriculum in broader holistic terms than programme review.
- 3. Student profiles:** The AEC criteria relating to the Polifonia/Dublin Descriptors state that a student who has completed one of the three cycles of study should be qualified for specific professional roles and/or for further studies at specific levels. The criteria/questions to be addressed in this category are concerned firstly with the students' qualifications when they apply to and enter a specific study programme; secondly, with progression of students from one level of a programme to another and their achievement of the programme's qualification/award; thirdly with the outcomes of a study programme in terms of graduates' employment and success and finally with the extent to which there are equal opportunities for all candidates and students. This category will be considered in both institutional and programme review.
- 4. Teaching staff:** The teaching staff is recognised as an essential and valued asset of a higher music education institution. Criteria/questions to be addressed in this category focus firstly on the teachers' expertise relative to the educational programme; secondly, they are concerned with their expertise as educators of advanced students and finally there is consideration of their deployment within the institution. Criteria/questions to be addressed will include the profile of the staff as a whole in relation to programme needs, flexibility of deployment to permit programme and institutional innovation and the opportunities for staff development. Institutional review is likely to consider these elements broadly, whilst programme review will be focussed on the needs of the programme and its students.

⁴ The AEC learning outcomes and Polifonia/Dublin Descriptors can be found at www.bologna-and-music.org/accreditation.

- 5. Facilities, resources and support:** This category includes physical resources such as the facilities (building, instruments, technological equipment, library); the allocation of the institution's/ programme's financial resources and planning processes and the provision of support staff (technical and administrative). Review teams are likely to consider the adequacy and sustainability of provision along with procedures for planning for an environmentally supportive institution. Whilst institutional review will examine provision throughout the institution, programme review may consider this category in terms of the programme's sustainability and context within the institution. It may examine programme funding and planning mechanisms/policies.
- 6. Organisation and decision-making processes and internal quality assurance system:** In this section, criteria/questions to be addressed will be focussed on organisational and management structures, communication systems and quality assurance and enhancement. Institutional review will consider these more broadly in the context of the institution as a whole, its vision, mission and operations. Programme review will be focussed on programme management, communication and systems of quality assurance and enhancement.
- 7. Public interaction:** A music conservatoire is a huge resource in society, first of all through staff's and students' knowledge and experience, but also through its physical facilities. Institutions are often expected to be present in the public sphere, through artistic and scholarly manifestations, and through participation in, and contribution to, arts, educational and cultural policies. The criteria/questions to be addressed in this section focus on how the institution engages with the wider public world, both as a contributor to the broader community and as a recipient of expertise and advice from external public agencies for its own activities and programmes. Enquiries will also focus on the consistency between the public image that the institution projects of itself and the reality with regard to educational programmes, resources, facilities etc. This section is likely to be explored in greater detail during institutional review although it will nevertheless be of some importance to programme review.

2.2.2 THE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

The self-evaluation report should be supported by documentary evidence and should show appropriate balance between description and evaluation of strengths and weaknesses. Brief historical accounts on changes that have recently been implemented, and their effects, may help to place future strategies for quality enhancement into context. Institutions are encouraged to adopt an open and self-critical approach towards quality assurance.

The report should:

- Not exceed 30 pages (excluding supporting documents).
 - Be written in English unless otherwise agreed by the AEC Office.
 - Be organised in accordance with the way in which the criteria are listed and numbered in the AEC Framework Document.
 - Include:
 - An introduction including a brief account on how the self-evaluation process was organised and how the report was produced.
 - An executive summary including some key facts and data about the institution.
 - A short chapter on the history of the institution.
 - A brief description of the national music educational structure or system and the place of the institution within the structure. This will provide important contextual information for the Review Team.
- *Institutions are strongly encouraged to use the AEC Country Overviews of higher music education systems, available on the Bologna & Music website⁵, as an aid for the description of the national music educational structure or system.*
- Provide easily readable statistical overviews and supporting information in relation to students, staff, graduates, alumni, applicants etc.
 - Be presented on behalf of and signed by the Rector (or equivalent).
 - Be sent electronically to the AEC Office with a list of the proposed supporting documents, a minimum of eight weeks in advance of the Review Team's visit.
 - Be sent by post in hard copy and with all supporting documents to each member of the Review Team a minimum of five weeks before the Review Team's visit. In addition, an electronic version of all the material should be sent to the AEC Office.
 - Be circulated to all members of staff and students who are to meet the Review Team.
- *In order to assist institutions with the structure of the report, a template for the self-evaluation report (institutional and programme review) will be provided by the AEC.*

The self-evaluation report will be considered as confidential.

⁵ Descriptions of national higher music education systems of 30 European countries exist on the AEC Bologna & Music website in English, French and German versions. See section 'Country Overviews' on www.bologna-and-music.org.

2.3 SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Chapter E of the AEC Framework Document outlines the areas of enquiry and acceptable forms of supporting materials for the self-evaluation report. Three types of materials are requested: statistical data, existing documentation (curricula, facilities, etc.) and strategic and policy documents.

Institutions are recommended to:

- Adhere closely to the list of 'Supporting materials' given in the AEC Framework Document and ensure that all the criteria are supported by an appropriate document.
- Include any relevant statistical information (students, staff, graduates, alumni, applicants, facilities etc) in an easily readable format.
- Include any documentation relevant to the national educational system, the institution and/or the programme.
- Contact the AEC Office to discuss the language of these materials. It is normally agreed that larger documents (catalogues, comprehensive study plans, etc.) may be presented in the original language if comprehensive summaries are provided in English.
- Number the attachments and establish easily visible cross-references between the self-evaluation report and each of the attached documents. The self-evaluation report should list the supporting documents in full.
- Include, by special agreement with the AEC, only a representative selection of students' work (recordings/coursework etc).

3. PREPARING THE ITINERARY OF AN AEC REVIEW

3.1 PREPARING FOR THE VISIT

Every effort should be made to prepare thoroughly for the review. The Rector and his/her co-leaders should ensure that all staff and students, in particular those who are directly involved, are given the required information. It is hoped that the institution will perceive the Review Team as peers, who come to support and assist its endeavours to enhance the quality of the institution, rather than as inspectors.

The Review Team should therefore be considered as guests of the school; highly qualified and internationally experienced leaders, artists and academics who have been invited to conduct a review process in close collaboration with the leadership, staff and students of the institution. Every effort should be made to ensure that working conditions are appropriate.

3.2 PROGRAMME AND ITINERARY

Elements to be included in the programme of a review visit are listed below (as mentioned in chapter F of the AEC Framework Document).

Compulsory items:

- Meeting with the head of institution and institutional/departmental/programme leaders.
- Meeting with the Chair and/or a member of the relevant Board/Council (e.g. Academic Council, Conservatory Council).
Meeting with artistic and academic members of staff (professors and teachers).
- Meeting with senior administrative officers (responsible for quality assurance and enhancement, the international office, financial services, the alumni office, the planning unit, co-ordination of artistic and research activities, public relations etc.).
- Meeting with students on various study cycles (including where relevant a representative of the student union/council).
- Meeting with former students.
- Meeting with representatives of the profession (employers, organisation representatives etc.).
- Review of facilities (studios, concert venues, practice facilities, libraries etc.).
- Attendance at concerts or other public presentations of students' work and/or visits to classes.
- Plenary meetings of the Review Team (including one for the preparation of the report).

Recommended items:

- Feedback by the Review Team to the institution at the end of the visit.
- Review of assessed student works such as concert recordings, compositions and final papers to consider the standard and modes of assessment and the learning achievements of students.
- Attendance at performance examinations including the follow-up discussion by the examination committees.

- The institution may combine the personnel of meetings for the sake of efficiency –for instance, representatives of the profession and former students, or students and former students. Conflicts of interest should be avoided so, for example, it is not recommended to have members of staff with current students in the same meeting.
- A template for the programme of AEC review visit has been designed by the AEC Office (see annex 1).

The final programme and itinerary should be negotiated and agreed between the Review Team, through its secretary and the institution. Other than small adjustments to take account of unavoidable changes in availability, it should be fixed a minimum of five weeks before the date of commencement of the visit. Once the schedule has been agreed, the institution will be asked to confirm the names and functions of all the personnel the Review Team will meet. The proposed programme will be sent to the Review Team through its secretary and any further adjustments will be agreed with the institution if needed.

The Review Team will not be able to examine every aspect of the institution. The itinerary should therefore be designed to give the Review Team as full a picture as possible of the institution and/or the specific programme(s). Special emphasis should be given to strategies and measures adopted to enhance the quality and relevance of the study programme(s).

3.3 MEETINGS

- **Length of the meetings:** Most meetings should last between 60 and 90 minutes. Initial and final meetings with the leadership may be extended. Visits to classes will normally not last longer than 30 minutes.
- **Scope of meetings:** The meetings will be chaired by a designated member of the Review Team. After introductions, the Chair will inform the participating staff and/or students of the main areas of enquiry for that meeting.
- **Meetings' participants:** The institution should select participants who are able to speak and discuss with authority on areas of enquiry of the meeting. The number of participants in each meeting should normally be between 5 – 12 persons for a 90 minute meeting. Representatives of the management should only be present in those meetings indicated on the schedule.
- **Language:** Meetings will normally be conducted in English. However, it is essential that institutional representatives have the opportunity to express themselves in their national language. If the experts are not conversant with this national language, appropriate translation arrangements should be decided in advance. Institutions may be asked to hire a professional translator acquainted with the music field subject area.
- **Reflection/discussion time for the Review Team:** The Review Team will hold several meetings on its own. It will commence with a two-hour initial preparatory session and there will normally be a summary meeting towards the end of the review where the Review Team will prepare initial feedback to the institution along with the final report. The itinerary should permit the Review Team to meet on its own between meetings. It might allow 15 to 30 minutes for this purpose or

it might leave a more extended period of time after every two meetings. The Review Team might also reserve lunch breaks for further meetings of this nature. There will be a summary meeting of the Review Team at the end of each day.

- **Parallel meetings:** If a Review Team has more than three members it is possible – by agreement with the Team and the institution - to run a parallel meeting of the team with representatives of the Institution.
- **Flexibility of the schedule:** The institution is encouraged to leave one to three hours free in the programme so that members of the team may explore more thoroughly specific areas, meet other representatives or visit the facilities (being guided for example by students).
- **Informal meetings/encounters:** The team should have the opportunity to meet informally (perhaps at dinner or lunch) with the leadership and other key members of the institution. Such encounters will underline the important concept of peer review rather than inspection. The team may also engage with students informally if, for instance, they act as guides to classes, facilities and events.
- **Concert:** A conservatoire will normally wish to organise a concert or recital as part of the programme for the visit.

Schedules should try to minimise the risk of delay and disruption.

3.4 PRACTICAL ISSUES

It is important that the Review Team is offered appropriate working conditions while working on the site.

The Review Team will need:

- A separate room for the duration of the review set up for individual work as well as group meetings. This room should be big enough to accommodate all meetings.
- Appropriate refreshments (tea, coffee, fruits, cookies, drinks) available in the room at all times.
- Name cards with the names of all Review Team members and of all the institution's participants.
- A computer with internet access (wireless if possible) and a printer.
- Lunches - either a nearby restaurant (with the assurance that the lunch will be served fast) or on-site catering in the Review Team's room. The Review Team may wish to meet on its own during lunch periods.
- A list of all classes available to visit (if a class visit is listed within the schedule). The institution should ensure that each expert is guided from one class to another, perhaps by students.

4. THE REVIEW TEAM

4.1 APPOINTMENT

The AEC Chief Executive is responsible for nominating the Review Team, based on the register of experts approved by the AEC Accreditation Committee. In most cases there will be 3 experts accompanied by a secretary. The AEC is responsible for ensuring that all members of Review Teams are well briefed and qualified for quality assurance work.

Criteria for the composition of Review Teams are defined in chapter F of the Framework Document. The institution is requested to notify the AEC Office if it requires specific areas of expertise. Matters such as gender and language will be taken into consideration when teams are put together.

Where an institution's specialist requirements include expertise not available from the register of approved experts, the Chief Executive will identify an individual with this expertise from among AEC member institutions and will approach the individual to establish their willingness, in principle, to participate in an AEC Quality Enhancement Process. If the individual is willing, their CV is submitted to the AEC Accreditation Committee for prompt consideration for approval. If approved, they are added to the Register and included in the review team; if approval is withheld, a new expert is sought and the same process applies.

The AEC Office will submit a draft list of team members to the institution within sixteen weeks prior to the review. This may list more individuals than those needed for the final team. The draft will designate the Chair of the team. The institution will be given one week to comment on the names suggested and to indicate where proposed experts are not suitable or if there are conflicts of interest. Having considered any comments by the institution, the AEC Chief Executive then confirms the final set of team members and submits this to the AEC Accreditation Committee for information.

4.2 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Conflict of interest may arise from past, current or planned association between the expert and the members of the institution. This may include financial associations and geographical closeness. The AEC Chief Executive will not knowingly suggest members of a Review Team who have family associations with the institution or who have publicly expressed themselves in negative terms about the institution, the AEC or its review programme.

It is the responsibility of all parties (the AEC, the experts and the institution) to make an immediate disclosure should they be aware of a potential conflict of interest.

5. THE REVIEW VISIT

5.1 STATUS OF THE VISIT

Experts will carry out reviews in accordance with the criteria outlined in Chapter E of the Framework Document. The work of the Review Team should be seen as a peer quality enhancement process rather than a judgemental inspection.

5.2 AIM AND FOCUS

The review process aims to provide assistance to institutions as they establish and/or build their internal systems for quality assurance within the national and international contexts. The main aim of the visit is for the Review Team to collect evidence and information on the various areas of enquiry and criteria in order to complete the picture of the institution/programme as described in the self-evaluation report and in the supporting materials. Thus, the external perspective brought in by the Review Team and informed by its expertise and international experience takes as its point of departure the internal perspective as expressed in the self-evaluation report.

More specifically, the visit will give the Review Team a unique opportunity to gain an understanding of the specificities of the institution and to what extent there is consistency in the way in which the institution presents itself. Secondly, the Review Team will be able to explore whether, how and with what results the institution's strategic policies and procedures for quality enhancement are implemented throughout the institution, and indeed have the desired impact. Both of these foci are similarly important. All the scheduled encounters should aim at exploring issues directly relevant to these two foci.

5.3 DURATION

The visit will normally last 1.5 days for a programme review and 2.5 days for an institutional review (subject to variation depending on the circumstances).

6. FROM DRAFT REPORT TO PUBLISHED RESULT

6.1 DRAFT REPORT

The Review Team will draft a report in English normally within six weeks of the site visit. This will be based on all the information received by the team through the institution's own self-evaluation document and supporting materials (see 2.2 and 2.3 above) and on insights gained during the site visit.

The report will be structured around the criteria/questions to be addressed listed in the AEC Framework Document. It may also address other issues which the Review Team finds relevant to the aims of the review exercise.

The draft report will normally be presented to the institution by the AEC within ten weeks of the visit. The institution will be invited to comment on the factual accuracy of the report within four weeks.

6.2 FINAL REPORT

The Review Team will consider the comments submitted by the institution and adjust the report to ensure factual accuracy and consistency between the factual information and the conclusions drawn.

The team will normally submit its final report to the AEC Chief Executive within four weeks of receipt of the institution's comments. The submission of the final report represents the end of the involvement of the Review Team. The final report will be submitted to the institution within a further two weeks, together with an explanatory letter about the follow-up approval process (see below).

It is normally expected that the final report will be accepted by the institution. In the exceptional event of the institution finding it unsatisfactory in relations to the points raised at the draft stage, the matter may be referred to the AEC Accreditation Committee for arbitration.

6.3 PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

Once a particular report has been sent to the institution, it is also copied to the AEC Accreditation Committee. The Committee reviews the report for overall consistency with, and relevance to, the review criteria and, provided that this is the case the institution will receive a letter confirming this and attaching a summary of the main points of good practice and recommendations for enhancement contained in the report. The institution is entitled to use this summary, or extracts from it, in any responsible way that it sees fit – as part of the evidence base for formal quality assurance processes or, where relevant, in its own institutional publicity; correspondingly, the institution agrees to an electronic copy of the summary being uploaded to the AEC Accreditation and Quality Assurance area of the AEC website as part of a growing dossier of quality enhancement activity undertaken by the Association.

The final report as a whole may only be published on the AEC website with the explicit approval of the institution. Institutions are however strongly encouraged to give permission for the publication of the complete report so as to promote transparency, good practice and the AEC process as a whole.

7. TIME SCHEDULE

The table below summarises the normal time frame for the AEC Quality Enhancement Process. All changes will be mutually agreed by the AEC and the institution.

Responsible body	Action	Time-scale (can be varied by mutual agreement)	Reference
Institution	Submission of written request for review to the AEC Chief Executive	At least 20 weeks prior to the visit of the Review Team	Point 1.4
AEC	Response to the institution	In reply to the request	Point 1.4
AEC/ AEC Accreditation Committee	Selection of possible review team members and, if necessary, approval process for experts not already on the Register	Variable, depending upon whether fresh approval is required. Where none, 18 weeks prior to visit	Point 4.1
AEC	Submission of list of possible Review Team members to the institution	16 weeks prior to the visit	Point 4.1
Institution	Response to the list of possible members of the Review Team to the AEC	15 weeks prior to the visit	Point 4.1
Institution	Preparation of the self-evaluation report and documentation	Between the request for the review and the submission of the material	Point 2
Institution (in cooperation with AEC and the secretary of the Review Team)	Organisation of the review visit: - Finalisation of the schedule - Hotel booking for the Review Team - Organisation of lunches, dinners, coffee breaks	During the 16 weeks prior to the visit	Point 3
AEC	Assembly of the Review Team and briefing of the experts	From 12 weeks prior to the visit	Point 4
Institution	Submission of self-evaluation report and list of appendices to the AEC (electronically)	8 weeks prior to the visit	Points 2.2 and 2.3
AEC	Checking process of the report and document (with consultation of the Review Team)	8-5 weeks prior to the visit	Points 2.2 and 2.3
Institution	Submission of self-evaluation report and documentation to the AEC and the Review Team members (by post)	At least 5 weeks prior to the visit	Points 2.2 and 2.3
	Visit of the Review Team		Point 5
Review Team	Submission of draft report to the AEC office	6 weeks after the visit	Point 6.1
AEC	Submission of draft report to the institution	10 weeks after the visit	Point 6.1
Institution	Submission of response to the draft report to the AEC office	14 weeks after the visit	Point 6.1
Review Team	Submission of the final report to the AEC office	18 weeks after the visit	Point 6.2
AEC	Submission of the final report to the institution	20 weeks after the visit	Point 6.2

AEC Accreditation Committee	Confirmation that report is consistent with, and relevant to, the review criteria and communication of this to institution	Variable but not longer than 6 months after visit	Point 6.3
AEC	Publication of report in part or (with the institution's agreement) in full on the AEC website	Co-incident with issuing of letter from AEC Accreditation Committee to institution	Point 6.3

ANNEX 1

TEMPLATE FOR AEC *INSTITUTIONAL* REVIEW SCHEDULES

(Please note that a template for AEC *programme* review schedules is available upon request. As both types of schedules have many similarities, it was decided not to include the template for AEC programme review schedules in this handbook).

TEMPLATE FOR AEC *INSTITUTIONAL* REVIEW SCHEDULES

(N.B. *this is indicative and may be varied by mutual agreement between the AEC and the institution. Schedules for programme reviews may also vary.*)

Day 1 (half day)

Time	Session (venue as notified by the institution)	Names and functions of participants from the visited institution
In advance of the first meeting	Arrival of Review Team members	N/A
14:00-16:00	Preparatory meeting of the Review Team	N/A
16:00-16.30	Break	
16:30-18:00	Meeting 1 <i>Example: meeting with the Head of the Institution, institutional/departmental/ programme leaders</i>	As proposed by the institution <i>Example: Head of institution, institutional/departmental/ programme leaders</i>
18:00-19:00	Guided tour - Review of the facilities (studios, concert venues, practice facilities, libraries etc.)	Guides as proposed by the institution (may include students)
19:15-21:00	Dinner	N/A

Day 2 (full day)

Time	Session (venue as notified by the institution)	Names and functions of participants from the visited institution (meeting personnel can be combined taking care to ensure conflicts of interest)
09:00–10:30	Meeting 2 <i>Example: meeting with students</i>	As proposed by the institution <i>Example: 5 students (from different years/cycles, studying different subjects), including if possible a representative of the student union/association</i>
10:30–11.00	Break	N/A
11.00–12.30	Meeting 3 <i>Example: meeting with senior administrative officers</i>	As proposed by the institution <i>Example: Heads of Finance, Administration, Library, Quality Assurance and the International Office</i>
12:30–13.30	Lunch	N/A
13.30–14:30	Review Team meeting	N/A
14:30–16:00	Meeting 4 <i>Example: meeting with artistic and academic staff members</i>	As proposed by the institution <i>Example: 5 professors and teachers from different departments</i>
16:00–16:30	Break	N/A
16:30–17:30	Meeting 5 <i>Example: attendance at concerts or other public presentations of students' work and/or visits to observe classes</i>	As proposed by the institution
17:30–19:00	Review Team meeting	N/A
20:00	Dinner	As proposed by the institution

Day 3 (full day)

Time	Session (venue as notified by the institution)	Names and functions of participants from the visited institution (meeting personnel can be combined taking care to ensure conflicts of interest)
09:00-09:30	Review Team meeting	N/A
09:30-11:00	Meeting 6 <i>Example: meeting with representatives of the profession and former students</i>	As proposed by the institution <i>Example: former students at different stages of professional life. Representatives of the profession and additionally from other external agencies with whom the institution has formal and informal links.</i>
11:00-11:30	Break	N/A
11:30-13:00	Meeting 7 <i>Example: meeting with members of the relevant board/academic council</i>	As proposed by the institution Example: the Chair and/or a member of the relevant board/academic council
13:00-14:00	Lunch	N/A
14:00-15:00	Meeting 8 <i>Example: extra session if required by the Review Team (members of the team may explore more thoroughly specific area, meet other representatives of their choice)</i>	As notified by the Review Team
15:00-17:00	Review Team meeting - Preparation for the feedback meeting	N/A
17:00-18:00	Feedback to the institution	Leadership of the institution (normally the same personnel as the first meeting)
18:00-19:00	Free time	
19:00	Dinner	As proposed by the institution

**ASSOCIATION EUROPÉENNE DES CONSERVATOIRES,
ACADÉMIES DE MUSIQUE ET MUSIKHOCHSCHULEN (AEC)**

PO BOX 805 NL-3500AV UTRECHT THE NETHERLANDS

TEL +31.302361242 FAX +31.302361290

EMAIL AECINFO@AECINFO.ORG

WEBSITE WWW.AECINFO.ORG



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme