

AEC PUBLICATIONS 2007

HANDBOOK

INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE IN  
HIGHER MUSIC EDUCATION  
EVERT BISSCHOP BOELE



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

ERASMUS THEMATIC NETWORK FOR MUSIC

polifonia



MALMÖ ACADEMY  
OF MUSIC  
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*A free electronic version of this handbook is available through [www.polifonia-tn.org](http://www.polifonia-tn.org).*



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The Polifonia project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views of its authors and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which might be made of the information contained therein.

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## FOREWORD

The ERASMUS Thematic Network for Music “Polifonia”<sup>1</sup>, the largest European project on professional music training to date, 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, Académies 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’ methodology<sup>2</sup>, 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)

<sup>1</sup> See for more information about “Polifonia” [www.polifonia-tn.org](http://www.polifonia-tn.org).

<sup>2</sup> 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”
- A trilingual website called “Bologna and Music” ([www.bologna-and-music.org](http://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”<sup>3</sup> produced several important documents addressing external quality assurance and accreditation in music.

<sup>3</sup> More information about this project can be found at [www.bologna-and-music.org/accreditation](http://www.bologna-and-music.org/accreditation).



## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This handbook is meant to be a short guide for conservatoires who want to develop a system for internal quality assurance.
- 1.2 It does not aim at a complete introduction into the world of quality assurance, with its many different sorts of systems and its elaborate and sometimes confusing jargon. This handbook explains in the first four chapters in a simple way the main elements of a possible internal quality assurance system. Chapter five and appendix A give you some practical assistance by presenting a simple procedure which you might use in developing a first system for internal quality assurance, and by presenting the systems for internal quality assurance of two European conservatoires.
- 1.3 This publication is written for people working within a conservatoire, with a good overview of the institute, maybe with management responsibilities such as a head of department or maybe even a principle, or in other cases as a staff member who is, on behalf of the management, asked to develop an internal quality assurance system.
- 1.4 Work on this handbook has started with gathering some insight in the current state of affairs of internal quality assurance in conservatoires by means of a questionnaire. 69 conservatoires filled out the questionnaire. Roughly, two third of them stated explicitly to work with or work on a system of internal quality assurance<sup>4</sup>. Further examination of the answers given in the questionnaires, and subsequent discussions with people from within various conservatoires, suggested however that actually much more conservatoires are working on internal quality assurance, but many do not label their activities on the fostering of quality in terms of internal quality assurance. I thank those often unknown colleagues all over Europe who answered the questionnaire and those who engaged with me in discussions on quality assurance.
- 1.5 I also thank the members of the Tuning working group of the Polifonia project, and my colleagues from Hanze University of Applied Science in Groningen, the Netherlands, for their insightful discussions and their careful comments on various drafts of this handbook. I finally thank my dear colleagues from the AEC Office in Utrecht for their patience and loving tenacity. Without them this handbook would probably never have been finished.

<sup>4</sup> The results of this questionnaire on internal quality assurance can be found at: <http://www.bologna-and-music.org/internalqa>.

## 2. SOME PRELIMINARY REMARKS ON INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

### 2.1 QUALITY

2.1.1 “Quality”, and specifically artistic or musical quality, has been about the most important concept of conservatoire education since its very beginning. Musical quality tends to take the shape of an ideal which can never be fully reached, but must be aimed at continuously. It takes different forms and shapes, and is often immediately recognized but hard to put in words.

2.1.2 Assuring that quality is offered and being accountable for the quality you deliver has always been central to conservatoire education. In a recent document “Quality, Assurance, Accountability: A Briefing Paper”<sup>5</sup> it is put as follows:

*Music study is permeated with accountability. (...) In practice sessions, rehearsal, and even in performance, constant evaluation and adjustment are the norm. The success of professional music study is evaluated in the light of the high standards and high expectations of the larger musical world. Tours, recordings, and international competition continue to define professional expectations by exchange of work at the highest levels. In music, we have standards because we have art, not art because we have standards.*

2.1.3 The normal way of assuring that the highest musical quality is delivered is to have the quality tested and verified by musicians who are acknowledged as outstanding, by their peers and by society in general. Because musical quality is such a fuzzy concept and can take different forms and shapes, in many cases the assessment of musical quality is trusted to not one, but several outstanding musicians at the same time. A committee or jury deliberates in all freedom and tries to reach a conclusion that can be shared by all. Musical quality is thus formulated in, or through, an “inter-subjective debate”.

2.1.4 Quality assurance, including internal quality assurance, is at present a kind of buzzword amongst higher education policy makers. It has since the beginning been a topic in the Bologna process<sup>6</sup>, has grown in importance over the years and is specifically referred to in the Bergen Communiqué (2005)<sup>7</sup> and further developed in the document “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area”<sup>8</sup> by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher

<sup>5</sup> See [www.arts-accredit.org/site/docs/pdf/10-MSMAP-Quality-Assurance-Accountability-BriefingPaper.pdf](http://www.arts-accredit.org/site/docs/pdf/10-MSMAP-Quality-Assurance-Accountability-BriefingPaper.pdf). The paper was published within the “Music Study, Mobility and Accountability Project”, a joint project of the European Association of Conservatoires (AEC) and the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM; United States).

<sup>6</sup> For more information on the Bologna-process and higher music education, see: [www.bologna-and-music.org](http://www.bologna-and-music.org).

<sup>7</sup> See [www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main\\_doc/050520\\_Bergen\\_Communique.pdf](http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/050520_Bergen_Communique.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> See [www.enqa.eu/files/BergenReport210205.pdf](http://www.enqa.eu/files/BergenReport210205.pdf).

Education ENQA, adopted in Bergen as well. Many kinds of organisations are in one way or another dealing with it, and it has its own specialists and its own jargon.

2.1.5 This publication will focus on internal quality assurance and will try to relate the international discussion on (internal) quality assurance in higher education to higher music education as taught in conservatoires all over Europe. It is inevitable that some of the quality assurance jargon will trickle into this publication, and that at some times you, the reader, may find his mind a bit troubled – “Are we still talking about quality here?”, is a question that might occur.

2.1.6 It is therefore good to remind ourselves at the beginning of this handbook that we are not talking about a totally new concept called “quality” that needs to be introduced to conservatoires because they have never thought about it themselves. Conservatoires have been talking about quality continuously, and as musicians we quite often recognize it easily and from a long distance. Eventually everything described in this publication should serve the goal of fostering this primary quality within our education.

## 2.2 ASSURANCE

2.2.1 In essence, the assurance of quality is nothing more than securing that one is offering the quality one promises to offer. This, again, is nothing new for conservatoires. For a long time, assuring the general public that outstanding quality was offered by conservatoires was not problematic. Conservatoires were expected to offer musical education of the highest possible quality, and the general public mostly assumed they did, unless the contrary was proven. They assumed this probably because in conservatoires outstanding musicians were teaching, musical quality was measured by outstanding peers, and the world’s best musicians mostly had received their training at a conservatoire. If the musicians themselves would not be able to guarantee musical quality, who would?

2.2.2 Things have changed. Unconditional belief in professional authority has given way to a modern, more economical driven view on any form of higher education, and therefore also on conservatoire education. Conservatoire education is viewed not only as high-quality education per se, but also as a public commodity, a service offered on the market place to customers. If it is paid for by the government (read: the tax payers), the government has to show that the money invested in conservatoire education is well-spent. If it is offered by a private institution, quite often its “customers” are given the right to be shown that the money paid is worth its value. Do conservatoires deliver the results they have promised and for which they are paid for by tax payers and/or customers? Can they ensure they will continue to do so in the future?

2.2.3 In fact, that is what the “assurance” bit in quality assurance is about. It is about looking whether or not certain promised results have been obtained, and whether one reasonably may expect that these results will continue to be obtained in the future. For some of us the idea that conservatoires are

held responsible for their promises on quality is slightly worrying because it may be perceived as intrusion from outsiders into the autonomy of the conservatoire. However, we must remember that the society we live in rightfully may ask us questions about who we are and what we do, as one of our goals is to serve this society with the education of excellent musicians. We must also remember that in most national systems the autonomy of the individual institution to maintain its own system of internal quality assurance, and therefore its own definitions of quality, is left untouched and actually highly regarded. External quality assurance systems will be increasingly focusing upon the internal quality assurance systems of the institution, as is also stressed in ENQA's "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area"<sup>9</sup>.

2.2.4 The basic principle of quality assurance: looking whether or not certain promised results have been obtained, and whether one reasonably may expect that these results will continue to be obtained in the future, can take many shapes. The results to be obtained may be defined by the government, by a national institution, by conservatoires collectively, or by a single conservatoire. They may be defined in terms of minimum results, or of average results, or of target results. The results may be measured by the institute itself, by a collective of institutes, by an independent body, or directly by the government. They may be very concrete or very vague; they may even be defined on a meta-level, so that not the actual results but the ways in which institutions secure that these results will be obtained are measured.

2.2.5 In this handbook we define three key elements in any form of internal quality assurance:

- defining your goals,
- measuring your results,
- relating goals and results in what is often conceptualized as "the PDCA-circle".

2.2.6 The chapters three and four will discuss goals and results. The PDCA-circle is a basic concept behind the two which will be explained here. It lies at the very heart of any quality assurance system. Simply put:

- Plan what you are going to do;
- then Do it;
- afterwards Check if you have done what you meant to do and if it delivered good results;
- reflect on the results of your checking and prepare Adaptations for future actions;
- then start again: Plan – Do – Check – Adapt<sup>10</sup>.

2.2.7 A concrete example of developing a new module in a curriculum may explain this:

- develop the module and plan how you are going to deliver it to students (Plan);

<sup>9</sup> See [www.enqa.eu/files/BergenReport210205.pdf](http://www.enqa.eu/files/BergenReport210205.pdf), p. 7, point 2.1. See also Appendix B on page 45.

<sup>10</sup> The "A" in PDCA may also be referred to as "Act". We prefer "Adapt" because the difference between Do and Act may seem confusingly small.

- deliver the module (Do);
- check, for example by student questionnaires and interviews with the teachers, if the module has worked out the way you meant it (Check);
- on the basis of the remarks of students and teachers, decide which changes should be made in the module and adapt the module (Adapt);
- then, start the circle again by planning the teaching of the module for the second time (Plan);
- et cetera.

2.2.8 Of course the idea behind this is not simply that you execute this circle endlessly. The idea is that, because of structural checking and adapting, your results will become better and better, and you will find yourself not in the treadmill of the circle but on a staircase in the form of a spiral, aspiring to ever better quality. Or, in the theoretical case that your quality goals have been reached, maintaining your quality on the same high level.

2.2.9 So before going into the intricacies of internal quality assurance, it is good to remind ourselves that internal quality assurance is nothing more than elaborating a way of making sure that what you deliver lives up to the set standards. Further on in this brochure we will see into such questions as what we mean by “what you deliver”, what we mean by “standards” and on who “sets” those standards. Until then, things are as simply as they are stated here.

## 2.3 INTERNAL

2.3.1 Generally, two forms of quality assurance are discerned: internal and external. External quality assurance refers to quality assurance systems operated by outsiders (such as governments or accreditation agencies). Internal quality assurance refers to quality assurance systems set up and operated by the institution itself.

2.3.2 This handbook will concentrate on internal quality assurance and will pay minimal attention to external quality assurance. In external quality assurance, many national, European and global developments take place. They will not be described in this handbook. For anyone interested in external quality assurance and its consequences for conservatoires, we refer you to the results of the AEC-project “Accreditation in European Professional Music Training”<sup>11</sup>.

2.3.3 As has been stated earlier, internal quality assurance lies at the core of conservatoire education. From its very beginning, every conservatoire has been very conscious of the musical quality it offered. Internal quality assurance systems in conservatoires nowadays can be found in very many different forms, from a nearly implicit or intuitive way of securing the musical quality delivered up to elaborate (and sometimes rather bureaucratic) systems taking into account quality on various levels in a rigorous, continuously repeated and densely documented process.

<sup>11</sup> See [www.bologna-and-music.org/accreditation](http://www.bologna-and-music.org/accreditation).

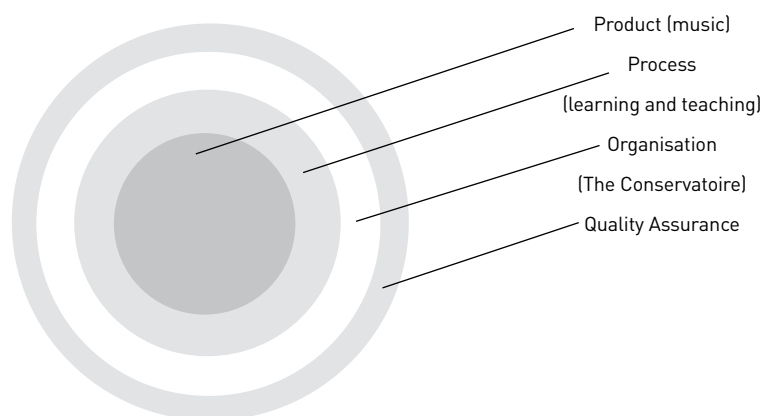
- 2.3.4 Internal quality assurance is at present often related to external quality assurance. We repeat here what we already stated in paragraph 2.2.3: it is increasingly the case that external quality assurance is expected to take into account the internal quality assurance systems of the individual institute, and that therefore institutional autonomy and internal quality assurance should form the basis of thinking in quality assurance terms. Not only ENQA's "Standards and Guidelines", but also the 2005 Bergen Communiqué mentions "the systematic introduction of internal mechanisms and their direct correlation to external quality assurance".
- 2.3.5 In many countries conservatoires have to show to outsiders – be it direct to the Ministry or to a separate official body - on a regular basis that they offer the quality they promise to offer. Quite often one finds that internal quality assurance systems are in such cases not only (and maybe not even in the first place) maintained because it is felt as an intrinsic need, but that they serve also, and sometimes mainly, as a means of preparing oneself for external quality assurance procedures.
- 2.3.6 That is fine: earlier we already stated that society is entitled to question us on quality. There may however lurk a danger there. As has been said before, the concept of quality lies at the heart of conservatoire education, and conservatoires have always, albeit sometimes intuitive and implicit, had their own forms of internal quality assurance. This is an important fact, and its core should be maintained. Adequate internal quality assurance is something one does not because someone tells you it has to be done or only because it is a preparation for external quality assurance. Internal quality assurance is something that comes as a natural concern to anyone who takes part in conservatoire education, be it management, teachers, students or external relations. This is so, simply because the concept of quality lies always at the core of any musician's work.
- 2.3.7 Building an internal quality assurance system in any conservatoire therefore never starts from scratch. There always will be a sound core of ideas concerning quality from which a conservatoire can start and which gradually can be built out a bit if necessary in order to fit the more expanded meaning of the word "quality" nowadays or in order to adjust it more to the demands of external quality assurance procedures. In essence, however, internal quality assurance is a natural feature of conservatoire education.

### 3. AIMING FOR QUALITY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION: A MODEL

3.1.1 The key word in quality assurance is “quality” - as it is in conservatoire education – but quality is in itself an abstract concept. Not one, but many definitions exist; a recent publication of the European University Association EUA mentions amongst others “fitness for purpose”, “customer satisfaction” and “excellence”<sup>12</sup>. In this publication, we will not choose for one single definition, but will base ourselves on an overarching idea of quality.

3.1.2 One element is standard in any definition of quality: to make it concrete, it must be attached to a “something”. If we want to express our quality goals, we are always talking about the quality of something. In this publication, we propose a model in which quality goals can be formulated on four different levels: we may be talking about the quality of the product, the process, the organisation or the quality assurance system.



3.1.3 The four levels may be expressed in a model of concentric circles. Central in the model is the product. The final quality of what a conservatoire offers to the world lies in its product: the musician, composer, music teacher et cetera. To make sure the product is eventually there, learning and teaching processes are carried out. This is the second level. The learning and teaching processes are carried out within an organisation, the third level of the model. On a fourth (meta-)level you will find the systems devised for assuring the quality of the products, the processes and the organisation. The model thus encompasses the two main approaches of looking at quality as defined in the EUA- report mentioned earlier: an approach that focuses on quality of outputs and an approach that focuses on quality of processes – the output of the product being right in the centre, and the stress shifting from output to process as one moves away from the centre.

<sup>12</sup> See [http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/Quality\\_Culture\\_2002\\_2003.1150459570109.pdf](http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/Quality_Culture_2002_2003.1150459570109.pdf).

- 3.1.4 The model is in a way a hierarchical model: the levels become more and more abstract as we move from the inside to the outside of the model, and each circle is in a way a precondition for the circle that lies within it. The product is at the heart because eventually the product is the ultimate goal. Learning and teaching processes may be an important issue on their own but the final aim of them is the product we deliver. In the same way the organisation is never a goal in itself but is meant to foster the proper carrying out of teaching and learning processes which in its turn are only meant to lead to the highest quality of final products. And quality assurance systems are important, but only to assure the quality of organisation, processes and, finally and most important, products.
- 3.1.5 A remark on the simplicity of the model is necessary, because it actually oversimplifies reality. For example, the key concept in each of the levels - "product", "process" et cetera - seems rather big and monolithic terms, but in reality can only be handled if the terms are further specified, often by breaking them down in separate but related elements. Talking about the quality of "the product" or "the process" can be quite meaningless if we don't specify which elements of the product or the process we exactly mean. Also, the term "quality" quite often has to be specified a bit more, as there may be many different kinds of quality, as has been mentioned before. In the paragraphs below we will make a short investigation of each of the four levels and will comment on the possible further specification of the key terms as well as on the various kinds of quality one may discern.
- 3.1.6 Finally, a word of caution must be made here and will be repeated again and again in this publication. It is very tempting in quality assurance to cover the complete field and work in "total quality management" terms: trying to monitor all four levels, within all levels every sort of thinkable subdivisions in various elements, and from all element all kinds of quality. Especially when setting up an internal quality assurance system, it may be wise to work from a different perspective. Do not aim at completeness (as it will never be reached in the first place, and one may drown in the process as a side-effect), but pick selectively with which elements you will monitor which kinds of quality. Make your choice on the basis of what you think are the core concepts of your conservatoire education.

## 3.2 THE PRODUCT

- 3.2.1 As has been said, in former times conservatoires defined quality as musical quality and were happy if they could show, by means of intersubjective procedures, that musical quality was maintained from year to year. What actually was "measured" was the musical quality of a "musical product": most often the performance of one or more pieces of music during a recital. The definition of what the "musical product" was, was quite strictly confined to the audible music. Although a recital has also the connotation of a specific musician playing for a specific audience at a specific place and a specific time, actually in standard conservatoire practice what was measured was purely "the music". The audience and the person of the musician were left out of consideration: we are reminded of this attitude by the powerful image of the orchestral audition behind a curtain.



- 3.2.2 This very narrow definition of the musical product is nowadays in a way still central at the quality concept in higher music education, but has become broader in three directions. To begin with, not only the typical recital of classical music can be the final product of conservatoire teaching. Other styles have of course come in: jazz, pop, various genres of world music. A composition or portfolio of compositions has, from the early start of the conservatoire, been widely accepted as another type of musical product, as has been the conducting of a concert. Nowadays, also teaching a class may be in some cases be considered a musical product, as may be the final product of an educational project, a studio recording, a music therapy session or in some cases simply some kind of thesis.
- 3.2.3 The second sense in which the definition of the musical product has broadened, is that even if we take the classical music performance as an example, the view on the performance has often become broader. The actual, aesthetic quality of the performance of the music still is the heart of the matter. But in addition, other kinds of quality may be taken into consideration and formalised in assessment criteria. For example, the way the musician interacts with his audience before, while and after playing may be considered (“interactional quality” might be a term for this), as may in some cases the recital as an organised event (“organisational quality”) – up to the point where even the lay-out of the programme leaflet may be a point of discussion in the examination committee. Also “entrepreneurial quality” may come in, in which we look at the performance in marketing-terms: would this be a product that attracts public, that “sells”?
- 3.2.4 Finally, the definition of the musical product has shifted in a third sense, related to the previous two. More and more, it is acknowledged that the actual goal of conservatoire training is not the performance (or composition, or ...) per se, but the performance as an expression of the abilities, or competencies, of the educated musician. In a way, the meaning of “product” has shifted from the music to the musician, from the performance to the performer, from the composition to the composer.
- 3.2.5 Summing up, the central product of conservatoire education is a complex notion. A definition might be “the competencies of any kind of musician in any genre and style of music”. Those competencies usually will be expressed and assessed in a so-called “critical situation” – a situation which is specifically created in order to assess the competencies one sees as the goal of conservatoire education. There is a wide range of possible critical situations in conservatoire education, and not one exhaustive model which describes the many possible products and kinds of quality. If one chooses to take product quality into account (an obvious choice in conservatoire education), it is however wise to be aware of the different sorts of products and different kinds of quality one may discern. Finally, one has to be selective: it is no use to monitor all kinds of quality in the products, it would be wise if one would focus on those kinds of quality which one thinks are the most important.

### 3.3 THE PROCESS

3.3.1 Quite often when people talk about quality in conservatoire education the concept is not only applied to the quality of the product. As in any organisation, the final product is the result of a process. In the conservatoire, the final musical product – the musician - is the result of learning and teaching processes: the student learns in many different ways, stimulated by the teaching of the teachers, by co-operation and competition with other students, by musical experiences outside their formal learning environment, et cetera. It is nowadays not uncommon to not only focus on the quality of the final product, but also on the quality of the learning and teaching processes leading to this product.

3.3.2 Just as “the product”, “the learning and teaching process” is a rather big concept as well, and its quality is hard to assess in one stroke. What therefore often happens is that the teaching and learning process is divided into sub-processes. There is not one uniform model for this subdivision. Different views on learning and teaching may lead to different subdivisions of the learning and teaching process. For example, in a strictly teacher-led learning process other elements will be discerned to measure quality by than in student-centred, competence-based learning.

3.3.3 Two models will be presented in order to give a feeling for this. The first is a rather straight subdivision developed in the middle of the last century for use in primary and secondary education but easily transferable to higher education<sup>13</sup>. It takes as its basic unit of description “the lesson” and states that in planning the teaching process one has to take into account the following elements:

- starting situation,
- goals,
- learning processes (within the student),
- didactical processes (teaching),
- use of media,
- learning content,
- forms of student grouping,
- evaluation.

3.3.4 Another model, currently used in a quality assurance model in higher education<sup>14</sup>, is more geared towards competence-based teaching models on the level of a complete curriculum and discerns the following elements:

- research on the stakeholders’ wishes and demands,
- compilation of the specifications,
- compilation of the intra- and extra-mural curriculum,
- design of study components,
- design of assessment,
- design of the learning environment,

<sup>13</sup> Model developed by Van Gelder; source E. De Corte a.o., *Beknopte Didaxologie*, Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1981.

<sup>14</sup> Expertgroup HBO, *Method for improving the quality of higher education based on the EFQM model*, Groningen/Eindhoven: Hanzehogeschool Groningen/Fontys Hogescholen, 2006.

- student and teacher activities,
- monitoring.

3.3.5 And again, different kinds of quality may be discerned in the various elements. One might look for example on the level of the design of study components such as separate modules at the (musical) quality of the content, but also at the quality of the design process, at the quality of the documentation of the modules et cetera.

3.3.6 If one wants its internal quality assurance system not only to monitor the quality of the musical product (as described in paragraph 3.2) but also the quality of the learning and teaching process it is again important to realise that one has to choose which elements are monitored. In theory many different aspects can be discerned in learning and teaching, and all of them can be monitored. Unless one has endless hours to spend on building up and maintaining an all-encompassing system, it is very important to focus on those elements one considers crucial for monitoring the quality of the learning and teaching process.

3.3.7 Summarizing, the learning and teaching processes within a conservatoire are important preconditions for the quality of the product eventually delivered. Learning and teaching processes may be broken down into separate but related elements in various ways, depending on ones view on education, and various sorts of process quality can be distinguished. If one chooses to take process quality into account, it is important again to be selective: focus only on those elements of the process one considers crucial for the overall quality of the institute.

#### 3.4 THE ORGANISATION

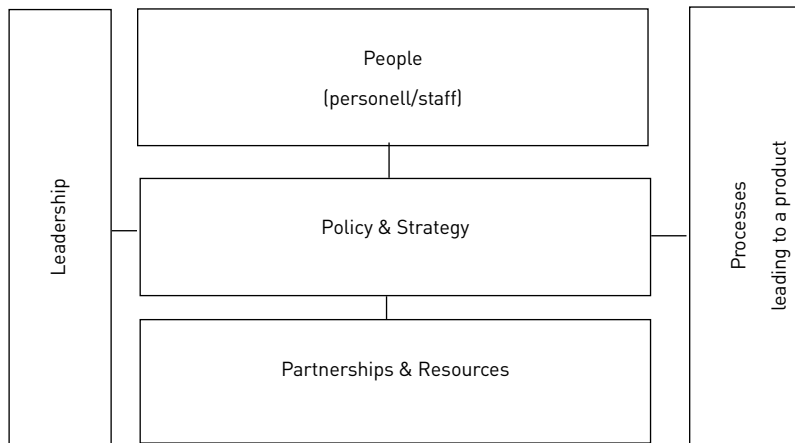
3.4.1 In many quality assurance systems, not only the quality of the product and the processes leading to the product are monitored. One also keeps track of the quality of the organisation which organises processes in order to deliver the product. In conservatoire terms: one looks into the quality of the conservatoire as an organisation that organises learning and teaching processes in order to let students deliver music of high quality at the end of the programme.

3.4.2 As in the preceding paragraph on the process, “the organisation” is too complex a concept to make simple statements on its quality. In order to say something worthwhile about its possible quality, it has to be broken down in organisational elements. A widely used way of looking at an organisation is the following<sup>15</sup>:

- central in the organisation are the primary processes. In the case of conservatoires the primary process is basically “learning and teaching”, in some cases also research. We have elaborated on the process already above in paragraph 3.3, and the primary processes lead eventually to the products of paragraph 3.2;
- supportive elements for the primary process are policy/strategy, personnel/staff, and resources (amongst which finances);
- the whole is run by leadership.

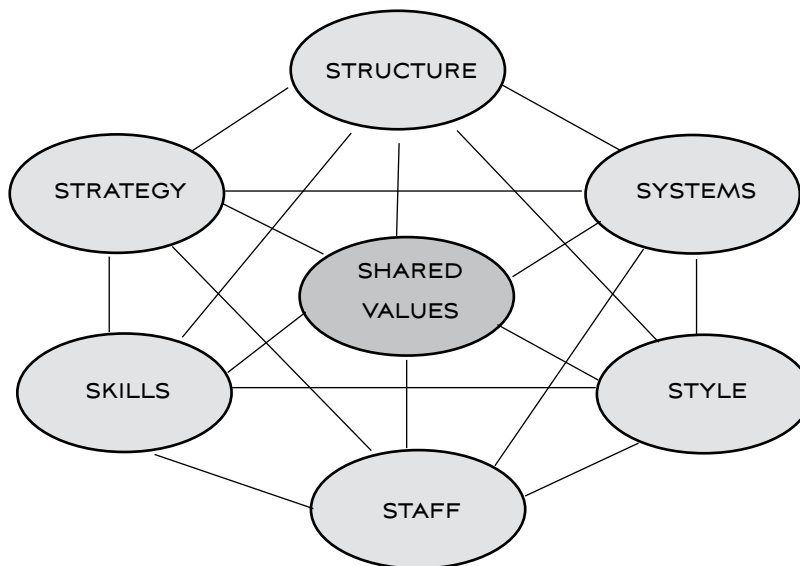
<sup>15</sup> See e.g. [www.efqm.org/uploads/introducing\\_english.pdf](http://www.efqm.org/uploads/introducing_english.pdf).

In a scheme:



Every element of the scheme may then again be broken down into smaller elements, leading to pronouncements on what quality in an organisation is.

3.4.3 To give an example of another possible way of looking at the organisational level: McKinsey's "7s-model"<sup>16</sup> discerns seven factors, all beginning with an "s", which are crucial for the quality any organisation delivers. The seven factors are interdependent and some are "harder" (e.g. structure, systems) than others (style, shared values). In a scheme:



3.4.4 Again those schemes and their breaking up in elements are just two examples of how one may look at organisations – there may be others just as worthwhile. And again, it is possible to discern various kinds of quality: the quality of an organisation may for some be lying in its thorough documentation of processes, for others in its democratic possibilities for creative exchange of innovative ideas.

<sup>16</sup> See e.g. [www.12manage.com/methods\\_7S.html](http://www.12manage.com/methods_7S.html).

Finally, again we must stress that one has to be selective. It is no use to monitor the total quality of all elements of an organisation, one picks those elements that strongly connect to the quality ideals of the conservatoire.

3.4.5 Summarizing, the quality of the conservatoire as an organisation is an important precondition for the quality of the processes carried out within it and the product eventually delivered. It is possible to look at the separate but related elements of the organisation in various ways, and various sorts of organisational quality can be distinguished. If one chooses to make organisational quality part of the internal quality assurance system, one has to be selective and focus only on the elements directly connected to the quality ideals of the conservatoire.

### 3.5 THE QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

3.5.1 Finally, a “meta-level” is sometimes introduced, in which not the quality of the product, the process or the organisation is monitored, but only the quality of the quality assurance system(s) itself. This meta-level will only be mentioned here shortly as it is actually hardly of any use for strictly internal quality assurance systems – it presupposes the existence of an internal quality assurance system and therefore can never excuse you from taking into account the product, process and/or organisational quality.

3.5.2 External parties, though, may be interested in this rather procedural form of internal quality assurance. In some countries government wants to control the quality delivered by institutions but does not want to interfere directly with education or only wants to have control on the main features. In such cases it may be contented by screening the internal quality assurance procedures of an institute without going into the actual qualitative details of organisation, process or product. The current situation in the United Kingdom, where institutions undergo an Institutional Audit for the Quality Assurance Agency and may then receive degree-awarding power, may serve as an example.

3.5.3 If an institution is big enough and a conservatoire only a small part of it, it might be that the central apparatus will not try to take actual control on the deliverance of the conservatoire but only monitor its quality assurance system. In that case this might be considered a form of internal quality assurance on the level of the institution – on the level of the conservatoire that forms a part of the institution it will no doubt be felt as external. Some more remarks on the relation between internal and external quality assurance will be found in chapter 5.

### 3.6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

3.6.1 In this chapter we have been talking about internal quality assurance from the perspective of the “what”: when we are talking about quality, quality of what? What is it we are measuring the quality of?

3.6.2 We formulated answers on four possible levels:

- the quality of the product, which may be a student performing a recital, presenting a composition or teaching a lesson, and may not be restricted to the “strictly musical” quality but may take into account other kinds of quality of the product (communicative quality, for example);
- the quality of the processes leading to the product, in a conservatoire the processes of learning and teaching, which often will be divided into sub-processes in a way that reflects ones philosophy of teaching and learning;
- the quality of the organisation in which the processes leading to a product takes place, mostly broken down into the various elements one can discern in an organisation;
- the quality of the internal quality assurance system that monitors organisation, processes and product. This last level actually lies mostly outside the scope of this publication as it stops being a form of internal quality assurance – most often it is, or comes very near to, an external quality assurance system.

3.6.3 Each level may be analysed or broken down in separate but related elements in various ways and various kinds of quality may be discerned. It is important to remember that one may strive in its external quality assurance system not for completeness, but selects carefully those items that are tightly related to the overall ideas of quality the conservatoire fosters.

## 4. MEASURING QUALITY<sup>17</sup>

### 4.1 HARD FACTS AND SATISFACTION STATEMENTS

- 4.1.1 In the preceding chapter we have proposed a four-level-model to formulate our quality goals in, in order to answer the question: about the quality of what are we talking? Another question is about just as important: what will be the evidence of quality? How do we measure whether or not we reach our qualitative goals? Irrespective of the question whether your quality goals are formulated on the level of a product, a process, an organisation or a quality assurance system, you are measuring it by looking at information that will give you a clue about the quality. Basically, there are two types of information one can draw conclusions from: hard facts and satisfaction statements.
- 4.1.2 Hard facts (in business, you would call them your business results) can be either financial or operational. Financial results in a conservatoire may be for example solvency, liquidity, total annual budget, costs per student, costs per teacher full time equivalent, total costs per realized study credit et cetera. Operational results could be for example the number of enrolled students, the number of newly admitted students, the percentage of students that drops out during the course, the percentage of students that drops out in the first year, the average study duration of drop-outs, et cetera.
- 4.1.3 Satisfaction statements, on the other hand, are linked to (groups of) individuals who are expressing their level of satisfaction with the quality offered by the conservatoire. Typical examples would be: peers who state they are satisfied with the quality of the final examinations (product); students who state they are satisfied with examination practices through the curriculum (process); teachers who state they are not satisfied with the available classrooms and instruments (organization); or employers from the profession who state that your curriculum does not prepare students for their future profession enough (product).
- 4.1.4 To become a bit more “technical”: hard facts and satisfaction statements can serve in relation to your quality goals as “performance indicators”, they indicate how you are performing. You may pick one or several performance indicators for every quality goal you have formulated. For every performance indicator you then define a measuring instrument which you will use for measuring, and a measuring unit. You then state a target result, you measure your actual result, and after comparing the two you draw conclusions and act on them. In the PDCA-circle (see par. 2.2), working with performance indicators, target results and actual results fit specifically in the Check-phase and make sure that one can Adapt on the basis of reliable facts, therewith “closing” the PDCA-circle.

<sup>17</sup> Much of the content and many of the examples in this chapter come from: Expertgroup HBO, *Method for improving the quality of higher education based on the EFQM model*, Groningen/Eindhoven: Hanzehogeschool Groningen/Fontys Hogescholen, 2006.

#### 4.1.5 A simple example would be:

- quality goal: your final assessment methods are state of the art;
- performance indicator: satisfaction of the professional field concerning your final assessment method;
- measuring instrument: three specific questions in a questionnaire for the professional field;
- measuring unit: percentage of answers indicating satisfaction;
- target result: 70% satisfaction;
- actual result: 80%;
- compare: you score higher than your target;
- conclude: no adaptations needed.

## 4.2 HARD FACTS

4.2.1 Considering the hard facts, the business results, one can of course compile an endless list of categories of data. For example, one might make the following list of categories of data: enrolled students, inflow, throughput, outflow (all split into target groups where appropriate), business operation, innovation, staff, and external assessment. Each could be subdivided again; business operation for example in study course demand factor, efficiency ratio measurement, costs of failure, students/staff ratio, investments, accommodation. Accommodation in turn could be subdivided into the average number of functional square metres in use, accommodation costs per square metre, and functional square metre per student. And so on and so on.

4.2.2 Even with an unlimited amount of time, people and money you would never be able to be complete. And to be sure, completeness is not the goal you should be looking for. An endless set of data is meaningless. Data become meaningful only when they tell you something about your quality goals (i.e. when they are used as performance indicators), and when you can analyze them in the light of target results. If you want to analyse data, you need criteria on the basis of which you analyse your data.

4.2.3 The basic thing to do is to take the eight steps already described in the example in the paragraph above:

1. decide which goals you could formulate regarding the quality you want to offer;
2. decide which data are the most telling about this quality; in other words: pick your performance indicators;
3. for every performance indicator, define a measuring instrument;
4. define your measuring unit;
5. state a target result;
6. measure your current result;
7. compare target and actual result, analyse, draw conclusions;
8. change things if you think you have to.

After some time, the cycle may be repeated: measure again if your results have progressed.



#### 4.2.4 An example:

1. your goal is to offer a curriculum that is feasible for students;
2. you think the most telling data will be the amount of students graduated within the standard amount of years, say three years;
3. your measuring instrument will be a count by your administration;
4. the measuring unit will be the percentage graduated after three years from the students enrolled in a particular year;
5. your target result is 80%;
6. your current result turns out to be 60 %;
7. on further analysis you find that most of the remaining 40% drop out before they do a final examination. From this you conclude that either your entrance examination is not selective enough or there is something wrong with your curriculum. You decide to do a quick survey among as many students as possible who dropped out in the last two years. They inform you the main reason for dropping out early is that they could not manage the curriculum because it was overloaded, fragmented and incoherent;
8. you start working on the improvement of your curriculum and every year monitor the graduation percentage after three years, hoping that your efforts will lead to a gradual increase of the percentage.

4.2.5 The main thing this example shows is how you work with “hard facts” in internal quality assurance: they are telling, but only if you are selective and connect them with your most important goals, if you state targets and compare your own results with them, if you take actions afterward and control if they have results. If one of those elements is missing, eventually your data will never be more than data: hard facts without meaning.

4.2.6 One more remark can be made here. The example above suggests an annual repetition of the gathering of hard facts. The frequency, however, is not fixed to once a year. Sometimes, it may be wise to gather your data more often. For example, if you offer a completely new curriculum, you might in the starting phase decide to monitor some elements three or four times a year. If, however, you are quite satisfied with your results, you might decide to gather certain data only once every two or even three years.

### 4.3 SATISFACTION STATEMENTS

4.3.1 Satisfaction statements are statements of (groups of) individuals who are able to tell something about your curriculum – often they are called “stakeholders”. As with hard facts, there are many different (groups of) individuals who could make such statements.

4.3.2 The first option is, of course, yourself. In the narrowest sense meaning: “you - the principal of the conservatoire” or “you – the head of studies” or “you – the principal teacher”. In that case gathering

satisfaction statements in an internal quality assurance system would be quite simple: force yourself for example once a year to take the quality of what you're delivering under close scrutiny, draw conclusions, act upon them and you're ready.

4.3.3 Actually, this is what we are constantly doing by means of our assessment procedures. Assessment is crucial to the fostering of quality within conservatoires. For internal quality assurance, however, this can not be enough. Quality assurance, as explained in chapter 1, is often not just meant to constantly improve one's own quality, but also to justify one's quality towards external parties. "You - the principal teacher" or "you - the head of studies" will undoubtedly be an expert on quality, but there may be some bias in some of your conclusions and you may have developed some blind angles over the years. Your internal quality assurance system will benefit if others will also make statements about the quality you deliver, so that you can compare them with your own thoughts about it and let your consequent actions be informed by them.

4.3.4 That is why quality assurance procedures often skip the level of concrete assessments and look for outsiders' satisfaction statements. The first, well known and widely used other is the "peer": the outside expert from within your field, some-one chosen for his expert knowledge. In fact, the bringing in of peers to judge quality makes your own assessment of the quality you deliver less subjective. Quality remarks are never, and certainly not in music, objective, but with peers they may become "inter-subjective".

4.3.5 You can then broaden the set of people you want to take part in your quality assessment by bringing in various stakeholders. In practice, the following are most used in internal quality assurance:

- students;
- (recent) alumni;
- the professional field (especially peers and employers);
- staff;
- the party ultimately responsible for (and paying for) the conservatoire (most often this is government);
- the general public.

4.3.6 Each of these categories may be subdivided again: to gather specific data you might want to ask a specific category of students (first year's students, for example, or string students), a specific category of alumni (last year's alumni, for example, or jazz alumni), et cetera.

4.3.7 As with the hard facts, satisfaction statements are very useful as long as you are selective. It is no use trying to gather as much satisfaction statements as possible from as many individuals as possible on as many elements as possible – again, even if one had an unlimited amount of time, people and money available one would end up with an enormous pile of data out of which it would be still very hard to extract the information you would want. And as with the hard facts, you might consider the

frequency with which you gather data: maybe you want to repeat a first year's interview every year, but you might consider asking alumni once every two years and send a questionnaire to employers in the professional field only once every three year.

4.3.8 So here again we should work in the eight steps described before:

1. decide which goals you could formulate regarding the quality you want to offer;
2. decide which satisfaction statements are the most telling about this quality; in other words: pick your performance indicators;
3. for every performance indicator, define a measuring instrument;
4. define your measuring unit;
5. state a target result;
6. measure your current result;
7. compare them, analyse, draw conclusions;
8. change things if you think you have to.

After some time measure again whether your results have progressed.

4.3.9 An example would be the following:

1. your goal is to offer a jazz programme that is geared towards professional practice;
2. you decide that the best way to tell is when jazz students are satisfied with the curriculum when they look back on it after graduation once they are in the professional practice;
3. you decide to measure this every year with alumni who graduated two years before. You do this by means of a short interview by telephone;
4. In the interview you ask them to give the curriculum a grade for preparation on professional practice on a scale from 1 (very poor) to 10 (excellent);
5. your target result is an average satisfaction grade of 7;
6. you find out that average satisfaction is 6.8;
7. you decide to carry out a limited amount of longer interviews by telephone and on that basis decide that especially aspects of business and financials are missing from the curriculum;
8. after you have build a course on that topic into the last year of the curriculum you find out satisfaction rates are indeed rising to well above a 7 on average.

4.3.10 This example shows how to work with satisfaction statements in internal quality assurance. As with hard facts, they are telling, but again only when you are selective, relate them to your own goals, state clear targets, make a good comparison with your actual results, take actions afterward and control if they have results. Beware: satisfaction statements are eventually individual and therefore rather subjective. One of the ways around this subjectivity is to ask enough individuals to make a statement. If your sample is big enough, you can more or less abstract from the individual's subjectivity.

4.3.11 Here we touch upon one of the peculiarities of conservatoire education: one-to-one teaching with its close teacher/student-relationship. To gather reliable student satisfaction statements concern-

ing teaching on the main instrument is one of the most important and sensitive issues in internal quality assurance in conservatoires, and many institutions have found their own ways in handling this matter. Some use a formal and anonymous system, which enables students to give feedback on their teacher; this is then discussed between teacher and head of department, for example during annual staff appraisal interviews. Other conservatoires are looking more into redefining and professionalising their systems of mentoring and tutoring<sup>18</sup> in order to take away the possible problems to which one-to-one teaching sometimes can lead. The point is maybe not so much which system a conservatoire develops in this respect, but that a system is developed that works in the specific context of the institution concerned.

4.3.12 However, another aspect that comes in is what sometimes is called “management of expectations”: the individuals you ask actually may expect more from you than reasonably can be expected, which makes them unhappy about certain results, whereas those results as expressed in “hard facts” are not so bad at all. A famous example is students’ satisfaction in terms of the marking and return of work. You may ask students if they are satisfied with the amount of time between a written examination and the marking by a teacher. Teachers can be so busy with written examinations that they can only be expected to have graded written work within two weeks’ time. If students don’t realise this, they may be dissatisfied if marking takes longer than a week, because they are keen to know their results. If students therefore give negative satisfaction statements but hard facts show that marking is done within the time you give your teachers, you may ask yourself whether you want to press your teachers to work even faster, or whether you will try to manage the expectations of your students better by telling them the goal you have set yourself is to have marks within a two weeks’ term because you can’t demand more from your teachers.

4.3.13 Comparable examples may be given on many more satisfaction statements, reason to handle them with a certain care.

#### 4.4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

4.4.1 In this chapter we have been discussing the question what exactly tells you about quality. We made a division in two separate kinds of performance indicators: on the one hand “hard facts”, on the other hand “satisfaction statements”.

4.4.2 Hard facts can be either financial results or operational results. Examples of financial results could be the total annual budget of the conservatoire or the costs per fte. Examples of operational results could be the number of enrolled students or the percentage of students that drops out during the course.

<sup>18</sup> See Peter Renshaw, “the Place of Mentoring”, <http://www.lifelonglearninginmusic.org/BeheerContentPagina.asp?id=170>.

- 4.4.3 Satisfaction statements are statements made by (groups of) individuals on the quality of your conservatoire. Apart from yourself, many other people can make such statements. We distinguished students, alumni, the professional field (especially peers and employers), staff, the party ultimately responsible for the conservatoire (mostly government), and the general public.
- 4.4.4 For both hard facts and satisfaction statements it is important to remember that the amount of possible data to gather is endless. One has to choose careful which performance indicator one thinks tells most about the quality goals one wants to reach, define a measuring instrument and a measuring unit, formulate a target result, gather the data to find out what your actual result is, compare target and actual result, if necessary take action and then measure again to find out whether or not the actions have led to more positive results.
- 4.4.5 Finally, although hard facts as well as satisfaction statements are more or less “objective” data from outside the conservatoire, one has to remember that they only get meaning once they have been related to your goals, your analysis and your decisions. That is the basis of all internal quality assurance: it remains driven from the inside of the conservatoire. There is a nuance to be made on this, but that will be done in the next chapter.

## 5. SETTING UP AN INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM IN YOUR CONSERVATOIRE

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

5.1.1 As has been said before, almost every conservatoire has at least something of an implicit internal quality assurance system up and running. It may not be an integral system, it may not be a strictly documented system, it may not even be a very systematic system, but quality is, by the nature of the conservatoire, a natural concern to all working in it.

5.1.2 In this chapter, however, we will start from scratch and pretend we are working in a new conservatoire that has to set up a new system of internal quality assurance. Basically, we would in such a case take nine steps, as follows:

1. State your quality goals: pick carefully the elements on which you want information considering the quality you are offering;
2. Pick carefully your performance indicators: which “hard facts” and “satisfaction statements” you think are necessary in order to get information on the quality;
3. Add externally formulated quality goals and performance indicators: what is necessary to do because of possible demands from outside the conservatoire concerning your system of internal quality assurance<sup>19</sup>;
4. Pick the instruments with which you will gather information and define your measuring units;
5. Formulate target results;
6. Make an implementation plan for your system;
7. Describe carefully for every action that will be implemented who is responsible, what you measure et cetera;
8. Start your measurements, analyse the results and suggest adaptations if necessary, implement the adaptations, measure again et cetera (make your PDCA-circle a full circle!);
9. Review your internal quality assurance system regularly.

### 5.2 STEP 1: STATE YOUR QUALITY GOALS

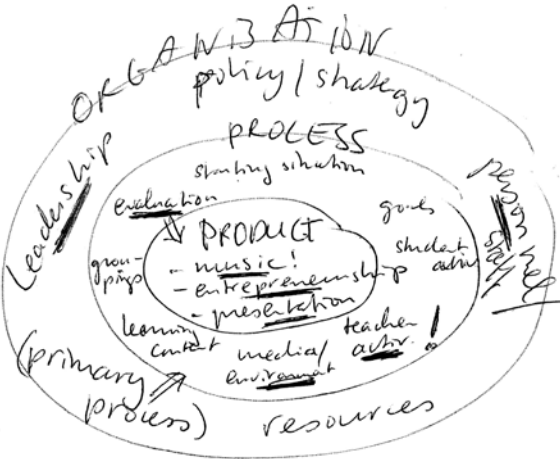
5.2.1 For conservatoire education, there is no “logical level” per se for internal quality assurance. One may look in various conservatoires all over Europe and find that one strictly sticks to product measuring only, another one stresses processes and maintains that once you have guaranteed the quality of the learning and teaching process the product will inevitably be a qualitative good product, and a third one will focus heavily on organisational quality.

<sup>19</sup> The items two and three may be reversed in order so that one first inventarises the external demands to the external quality assurance system and then adds what one considers to be missing. We do, however, prefer the original order, as it starts with the intrinsic preferences of the institute itself and only later adds the demands of the outside world.

5.2.2 What one also will find is that in most of the conservatoires with some history in formal internal quality assurance, a balanced position is taken. There will be general agreement on the fact that in conservatoire education, strict monitoring of the product quality by peers from the profession is the basis of the artistic level of the music profession, but there will also be general agreement on the fact that in order to maintain the highest quality of the product one needs to keep track of the quality of the main processes in learning and teaching, and that for a sound quality of processes and products at least the most basic features of the organisational development must be monitored as well. It is in finding the balance between these three levels, and in choosing where the focus will lie within each level, that each institution makes its own choices and thus gives its internal quality assurance system a personal “face”.

5.2.3 The first step in a new conservatoire would be to carefully pick out those elements on which you want information considering the quality you offer. As described in chapter 3, you may start to consider whether you want to monitor your quality on the level of the product, the process or the organisation (monitoring the quality of the quality assurance system would be another option but as stated in chapter 3 we will leave this out of consideration in the rest of this handbook).

5.2.4 The choices here are not exclusive, and it might be wise to go for a mix of options. A good way to determine this mix might be to take a good look at the totality of the proposed model, sketching a “map” of the possible elements for internal quality assurance and indicating which elements you have picked out. Such a sketch could for example look like this:



5.2.5 The sketch tells you that you take into account elements from product, process and organisation. It also makes you aware that you have defined in the product what you think is important: the musical quality, the entrepreneurial quality and the presentational quality. In the process and the organisation, it at once makes clear that you have only selected a few items to look at: for example, in the process you have decided that teacher activities, media/environment and evaluation are especially important, and that you leave out such aspects as starting situation or learning content.

5.2.6 Elaborating a bit upon this, you may end up with the following elements:

Product:

- musical quality of final examination;
- entrepreneurial quality of final examination;
- presentational quality of final examination.

Process:

- quality of evaluations/assessments, specifically in the main subject areas;
- quality of teaching and coaching;
- quality of learning environment, specifically classrooms, rehearsal rooms, instruments, audio-visuals et cetera.

Organisation:

- quality of artistic leadership;
- quality of teaching staff.

### 5.3 STEP 2: PICK YOUR PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

5.3.1 Once you have determined your quality goals, you determine which performance indicators you need in order to determine the quality.

5.3.2 Your overview could then look like this:

Quality goals:	Performance indicators:
Product:	Product:
- musical quality of final examination	- satisfaction of peers
- entrepreneurial quality of final examination	- satisfaction of peers
- presentational quality of final examination	- satisfaction of audience present
Process:	Process:
- quality of evaluations/assessments	- satisfaction of professional field
- quality of teaching and coaching	- satisfaction of students
- quality of learning environment	- satisfaction of students
Organisation:	Organisation:
- quality of artistic leadership	- satisfaction of general public
- quality of teaching staff	-percentage of teaching staff with own professional practice



## 5.4 STEP 3: ADD OUTSIDE DEMANDS

5.4.1 Up until now you have been concerned with your own crucial quality goals and performance indicators to monitor. Of course, internal quality assurance in most institutes is not entirely self driven. Quite often “outsiders” will ask you to monitor your own quality as well. Such an outsider might be the government who, when accrediting you, will look into your internal quality assurance system and may specifically ask for certain elements. For conservatoires within bigger universities, the general university level may play a comparable role.

5.4.2 An example might be the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area”<sup>20</sup>, adopted by the European Ministers of Education in 2005. Although this document has on a European level the status not of a law but of a recommendation, one may expect that in certain countries individual institutions will be expected to comply with this document. In that case they may amongst others be obliged to cover the following items:

- student progression and success rates;
- employability of graduates;
- students’ satisfaction with their programmes;
- effectiveness of teachers;
- profile of the student population;
- learning resources available and their costs.

5.4.3 It then is wise to incorporate this in the internal quality assurance system. If that is not done, one may every round of accreditation again have to produce, with much effort, the same sort of information.

## 5.5 STEP 4: PICK THE INSTRUMENTS

Now you know which hard facts and satisfaction statements you need, you have to determine how you will gather these and what your measuring unit will be. For example:

Quality goals:	Instruments:	Measuring units:
<b>Product:</b>		
- musical quality of final examination	- count by administrative unit	- grades given by peers at examination (scale 1-10)
- entrepreneurial quality of final examination	- count by administrative unit	- grades given by peers at examination (scale 1-10)
- presentational quality of final examination	- audience questionnaire	- level of satisfaction audience (scale 1-10)
<b>Process:</b>		
- quality of evaluations/assessments	- questionnaire professional field	- percentage of satisfaction professional field
- quality of teaching and coaching	- questionnaire students	- percentage of satisfaction students

<sup>20</sup> For more information about the European Standards and Guidelines, please see Appendix B.

- quality of learning environment	- questionnaire students	- percentage of satisfaction students
Organisation:		
- quality of artistic leadership	- count by marketing unit	- total number of positive items in regional/national newspapers
- quality of teaching staff	- count by staff unit	- percentage of teaching staff with own professional practice

## 5.6 STEP 5: FORMULATE TARGET RESULTS

5.6.1 Finally you have to formulate target results for your performance indicators. This may be a hard thing to do. Sometimes you will quite precisely or more on average now what kinds of results you would like to obtain. Sometimes it is more an intuitive feeling, maybe seconded by result of comparable institutes you know or measured against a benchmark institute you highly respect. In our example, you might come up with the following:

Quality goals:	Measuring units	Target result
Product:		
- musical quality of final examination	- grades given by peers at examination (scale 1-10)	- average 7
- entrepreneurial quality of final examination	- grades given by peers at examination (scale 1-10)	- average 7
- presentational quality of final examination	- level of satisfaction audience (scale 1-10)	- average 7
Process:		
- quality of evaluations/assessments	- percentage of satisfaction professional field	- 70%
- quality of teaching and coaching	- percentage of satisfaction students	- 80%
- quality of learning environment	- percentage of satisfaction students	- 80%
Organisation:		
- quality of artistic leadership	- total number of positive items in regional/national newspapers per year	- regional: 10; national: 2
- quality of teaching staff	- percentage of teaching staff with own professional practice	- 90%

## 5.7 STEP 6: MAKE AN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Once you have made sure what you want in your internal quality assurance system and what others want into it, make an implementation plan. Do not try to implement a complete system from scratch in one year. If you have many things to start, take a few years if possible. Quite often it turns out that once you've build up some experience with questionnaires, interviews or the gathering of "hard facts", introduction of new elements takes less time; whereas a complete introduction at once may cause you to drawn in a swamp of data.

## 5.8 STEP 7: DESCRIBE

5.8.1 Once you have come this far, it is wise to take a step you might tend to forget but which can be of enormous value further on in the process. Make, for every element of your internal quality assurance system, a methodical description: what are your goals, what are your performance indicators, which instrument do you use, what is the target result, how often will you measure, who is responsible for measuring, what is the procedure you follow in order to make the PDCA-circle a full circle.

5.8.2 A description of this kind might look like this:

goal	musical quality of final examination
performance indicator(s)	satisfaction of peers
instrument/measuring unit used	grading of external members of examination committee, scale 1-10
target result	average 7
how often measurement	twice a year, after the examination rounds in January and June
responsible for measuring	administrative unit, on the basis of filled out examination protocols
PDCA full circle	after measurement: feedback to principal and head of studies; results and measures to be taken on the basis of the results to be announced in the Teachers Newsletter

## 5.9 STEP 8: CARRY OUT

5.9.1 Your system is now finished and documented. Carry out what you planned. Gather actual results by measuring, compare them to your target results, analyse the discrepancies and search for possible reasons, make adaptations in your curriculum or your organisation. Then gather new results, analyse them in order to find if you have made satisfactory progress. If not, analyse again carefully; if you have made progress, monitor whether you have kept your standards up.

## 5.10 STEP 9: REVIEW THE SYSTEM REGULARLY

5.10.1 Finally, a system is not meant for eternity. What you will often find, is that a system starts very basic, but will grow quite fast because quite often the analysis of your results makes you feel you need other kinds of results as well in order to make the right decisions. You may end up with an enormous system of data-gathering which in the end may make it hard, or even virtually impossible, to keep your analysis of good quality and therefore to take any sound decisions at all.

5.10.2 That may be the point to make sure to get rid of some of the mechanisms which still at first sight may seem to be useful but strictly speaking have no crucial strategic meaning anymore. You may decide either to divide such an enormous internal quality assurance system in two parts: the basis is a great set of measurements you do, but the real analysis takes into account only those elements you consider of strategic importance. The other possibility is to stop measuring at all all those elements you do not consider as crucial anymore.

## 5.11 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.11.1 In this chapter we have, on the basis of the preceding chapters, proposed a way of devising an internal quality assurance system. We sketched a nine-step procedure which enables you to formulate quality goals and performance indicators, choose methods and units of measuring and formulate target results, plan the implementation and describe the system, carry out the system and eventually revise the system if necessary.
- 5.11.2 Two remarks are to be made. One is that this nine-step path to an internal quality assurance system may differ from much of the literature you will encounter. Quite often literature will stress the virtues of what is called Total Quality Management – systems which pretend to (and maybe indeed do) cover complete organisations. We have nothing against such elaborate systems and if you consider implementing them in your conservatoire, do not hesitate (but be aware of the amount of bureaucracy that may be attached to it). We have, however, chosen the standpoint that for many it will be easier to start bottom up, with few but crucial questions one asks oneself.
- 5.11.3 The other remark is that we have deliberately not presented two or three “complete” systems of internal quality assurance in conservatoires here. It is our firm belief that a good internal quality assurance system has the local as basis, and the sectoral/national, European and global as context. Because such a system is so dependent on context, it is hardly ever possible to integrally transport it from one institute to the other, even within countries. We do have however, in Appendix A, compiled a set of instruments used in internal quality assurance in order to give you an idea of the possibilities.

APPENDICES



## APPENDIX A.

### INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE IN CONSERVATOIRES – SOME EXAMPLES

#### A.1 INTRODUCTION

A.1.1 In this appendix we present elements of the systems of internal quality assurance of two conservatoires: the Royal College of Music in London, UK, and the Prince Claus Conservatoire, part of the Hanze University of Applied Sciences in Groningen, the Netherlands. The examples were at hand as the author is connected to the Prince Claus Conservatoire and the chair of the Polifonia Tuning working group is to the Royal College of Music. In terms of quality assurance procedures both are interesting and both are different from each other.

A.1.2 The Royal College of Music is an independent college (slightly over 600 students) with its own degree-awarding power, offering only music programmes. It has carefully devised its quality assurance systems for the purpose of rigorous quality control completely geared towards the spirit of music education.

A.1.3 The Prince Claus Conservatoire is one of the eighteen schools of a big multisectoral university of applied sciences (about 22.000 students) with a separate and strong central quality assurance department working for all the academies. The internal quality assurance system is explicitly devised in terms of a form of Total Quality Management, with a variety of general instruments to be used which can partly be geared towards the needs of the various academies.

#### A.2 THE QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC, LONDON (UK)

A.2.1 The Royal College of Music has its system of quality assurance laid down in a Quality Assurance Handbook of approximately 25 pages<sup>1</sup>. The handbook not only gives an overview of the quality assurance procedures of the RCM but states the principles behind them as well. What follows below is a text consisting of quotes from the handbook. The text does not give the complete picture of the quality assurance system of the Royal College of Music but highlights the general principles as well as some very music-specific elements.

##### **General features**

A.2.2 “The objectives of quality assurance at the Royal College of Music are: to assure the provision of the highest quality music conservatoire programmes possible, within available resources, of an international standard relevant to the music profession and to enhance the quality of learning and teaching by providing an environment which supports their development.

<sup>1</sup> See [www.rcm.ac.uk/cache/fl0000907.pdf](http://www.rcm.ac.uk/cache/fl0000907.pdf).

A.2.3 The quality assurance processes encompass: programmes, including teaching and performance activities and admissions processes; learning and teaching support services and resources; assessment and standards of outcomes, including performance standards. (...)

A.2.4 In delivering these objectives the RCM's quality assurance systems have five arms:

- programme development, approval, review and monitoring;
- external examiners, external specialists, internal examiners (including auditions for entry);
- student engagement;
- review of performance standards;
- professional development, appraisal and peer observation. (...)

A.2.5 Periodically the College evaluates the effectiveness of its approach to quality assurance. In common with other higher education institutions, the College is subject to institutional audit by the national quality assurance body (currently the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education). In practice, therefore, for reasons of efficiency, it conducts reviews of its approach to quality assurance with the cycle of QAA audit, seeing the QAA audit itself as the culmination of the review process. The College welcomes this external process as an important part of its own review process, providing a valuable external perspective." (p. 2-3)

#### **Programme approval and programme review**

A.2.6 "Initial programme approval and subsequent programme review both involve a development process leading to an extended, usually full day, meeting of a panel of external academics and music professionals and internal peers which recommends either the approval or otherwise of the programme and any recommendations or conditions, following discussions with professorial staff, administrators, representatives of the learning resources, and students. A report is produced by the panel and submitted to the Board of Professors for approval. The relevant programmes committee considers and responds to any conditions and/or recommendations. Programme review is designed to be a key quality enhancement process." (p. 3)

A.2.7 "Programme review is a process of reflective review conducted every five-six years. It draws on annual monitoring and provides an opportunity for making significant structural changes to a programme." (p. 5)

#### **Criteria for programme approval and review**

A.2.8 "The issues below should be addressed by programme developers when preparing for initial approval and review. Initial approval and review panels will wish to satisfy themselves that they have been adequately addressed either by the documentation or as part of their discussions with programme development teams. In effect, these are the criteria for initial or continuing programme approval.



#### *Admission*

- Do the admission requirements relate to the aims and objectives and content of the programme?
- Do the admission requirements and criteria relate to the College's equal opportunities policy and admissions policy?
- What is the scope for admission with academic credit from another institution?

#### *Learning outcomes*

- What are the intended learning outcomes for the programme?
- How do they relate to external reference points including the music subject benchmarking statement (in the case of the Bachelor of Music) and the national qualifications framework?
- How do they relate to the overall aims of the programme?
- Are they appropriate to the aims?
- How does the design and organisation of the curriculum promote student learning and achievement of the intended learning outcomes?
- How are the intended outcomes of the programme communicated to staff, students and external examiners?
- Do the students know what is expected of them?

#### *Achievement of the intended learning outcomes*

- How does the programme encourage achievement of the intended learning outcomes in terms of knowledge and understanding, specific practical skills, transferable skills, progression to careers as performers or composers and/or to further study, and personal development?
- Is the programme content and design informed by recent developments in techniques of teaching and learning, by current research and scholarship, and by changes in the music profession?

#### *Assessment process and standards*

- Does the assessment process enable students to demonstrate achievement of the intended outcomes?
- Are there satisfactory criteria to enable internal and external examiners to distinguish between different categories of achievement?
- Can there be full confidence in the security and integrity of assessment procedures?
- Does the assessment strategy have an adequate formative function in developing student abilities?
- What evidence is there that the standards achieved by students meet the minimum expectations for the award, as measured against relevant subject benchmarks and the qualifications framework?
- How does the programme development team review and seek to enhance standards?

#### *Learning opportunities and effective teaching*

- How effective is teaching in relation to curriculum content and programme aims?
- How effectively do professors draw upon their performance practice, composition, research, scholarship or other professional activity to inform their teaching?

- Is there effective engagement with and participation by students?
- Is the quality of teaching maintained and enhanced through effective professional development, peer appraisal of teaching, effective induction of new staff?
- Are student workloads manageable?

#### *Student progression, academic support and equal opportunities*

- How effectively is learning facilitated by academic guidance, feedback and supervisory arrangements?
- Are the arrangements for academic tutorial support clear and generally understood by staff and students?
- What arrangements are in place to support students with disabilities?
- How does the programme take account of the duty to promote equal opportunities/diversity, including racial equality?

#### *Learning resources*

- Is the collective expertise of the professorial staff suitable and available for effective delivery of the programme, for the overall teaching, learning and assessment strategy and for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes?
- Are appropriate professional development opportunities available?
- Is appropriate administrative support available?
- How effectively is learning promoted by the College's learning resources?
- Is suitable teaching and learning accommodation available?
- Are the library stocks and services appropriate and accessible?
- Are suitable specialist equipment and appropriate IT facilities available to students?
- Is the career guidance service adequate and appropriate for the programme?

#### *Programme management*

- What are the arrangements for programme management?
- Do they ensure the effective division of responsibilities for different aspects of the programme's operation?
- Where the proposal involves liaison with other institutions, what are the mechanisms for maintaining and monitoring these relationships?

#### *Resources*

- Are the resources identified in the resource statement adequate and appropriate for the programme?" (p. 9-11)

#### **Programme monitoring**

A.2.9 "The College's annual programme monitoring system is a process of quality control, which feeds into periodic programme reviews. It is intended to be a concise mechanism which reflects on the previous year's standards of achievement, addresses points in external examiner reports, and sets

an action list for the coming academic year. Like programme review, annual monitoring is designed to be a key quality enhancement process. The relevant head of programmes compiles the report, which is submitted to the relevant programmes committee.” (p. 3)

### **Student participation**

A.2.10 “A variety of student engagement and consultation methods are used:

- questionnaire-based feedback
- consultation sessions with students (year or pathway groups or representatives, for example by external examiners)
- student representation on academic committees
- sessions with students as part of initial approval and review events
- regular liaison with the Students’ Association, via the Student Services Manager
- Director’s weekly open surgeries for staff and students.” (p. 16)

### **External examiners**

A.2.11 “The College has procedures for the appointment of external examiners and a published policy statement about their duties and responsibilities. External examiner nominations originate from the programmes committee, and are subject to the approval of the Board of Professors. External examiners are required to submit annual reports to the Director of Academic & Administrative Affairs, who circulates them to the Director, Dean, the relevant head of programmes, and the relevant registry administrator. The relevant head of programmes is responsible for responding to reports, usually in the context of the annual programme monitoring report, a copy of which is provided to the external examiner once it has been finalised by the relevant programmes committee.

A.2.12 External specialists are included on all panels for graduation or final recital assessments. They are nominated by heads of faculty. Internal examiners for all practical examinations and for entrance auditions are nominated by heads of faculty. Detailed notes for the guidance of examiners and for those conducting auditions are reviewed each year by the AAMG [Artistic and Academic Management Group] and provided for all examiners. Copies of the criteria to be applied are made available for students to ensure that they are fully aware of the parameters against which they will be assessed.” (p. 4)

### **Review of performance standards**

A.2.13 “High performance standards are a cornerstone of world class conservatoire education. For this reason, evidence of the level of standards achieved is carefully monitored and reviewed on periodic basis. The evidence base used comprises reports requested from visiting conductors, those giving master classes or workshops, prize competition adjudicators, and external specialist examiners.

Annual overview reports, which include an analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data from reports, together with external press reports of RCM performances and a record of key student successes in external competitions and other performance-related activities, are compiled by the Dean and are submitted to the Board of Professors for approval.” (p. 4)

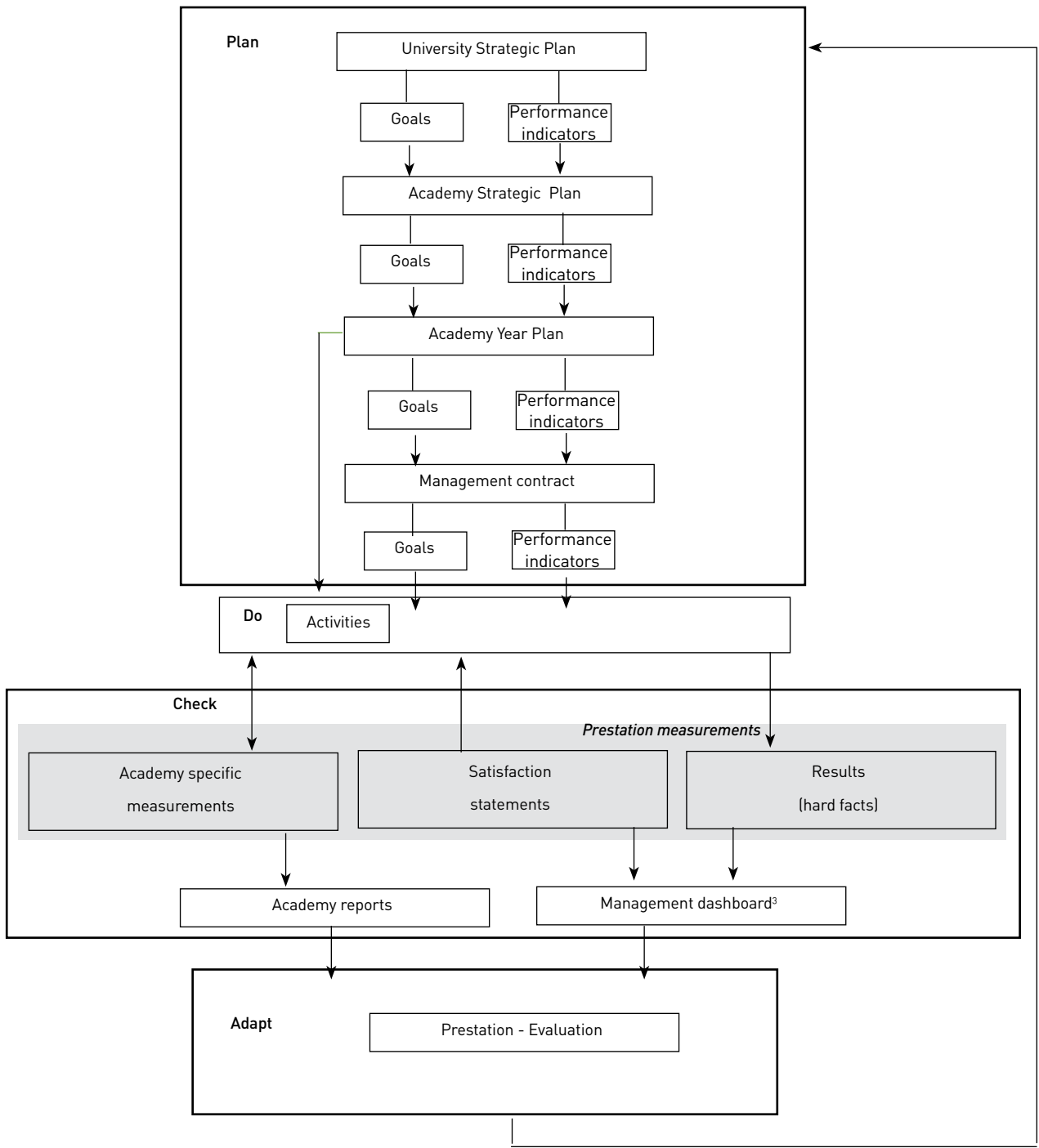
### **Staff**

A.2.14 “The knowledge, experience and skill of members of staff is one of the College’s most valuable assets. To fulfil its responsibilities to students, the College must ensure that the quality of this resource is continually enhanced. The College professional development policy includes provision for the support of individual and group project-based staff professional development activities. Professional development is a core part of staff appraisal systems. Monitoring and evaluation reports on professional development are considered annually by the Board of Professors. The College also supports peer observation through its Learning and Teaching Strategy.” (p. 4)

### **A.3 THE QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM OF THE PRINCE CLAUS CONSERVATOIRE, HANZE UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES, GRONINGEN (NL)**

A.3.1 The Prince Claus Conservatoire has its system of internal quality assurance laid down in an annual Quality Assurance Plan (approx. 35 pages)<sup>2</sup>. The Quality Assurance Plan is written conforming to a university-wide format, which links the plan to an array of other documents, procedures and instruments, both university-wide as academy-specific.

<sup>2</sup> Hanze University of Applied Science, Prince Claus Conservatoire: “Kwaliteitszorgplan en procedurehandboek 2007-2008”, version 0.2.



A.3.2 The Hanze University of Applied Science has defined quality assurance as the permanent, systematic and cyclical attention for measuring, monitoring and fostering quality. It has based its system of quality assurance on the PDCA-circle, represented visually as follows:

<sup>3</sup> Management Dashboard: an instrument showing in real time the relation between actual results and target results for a variety of performance indicators

A.3.3 Crucial in this scheme is the connection between the phase of planning and the phases of check and adapt. In the planning phase, for the university as a whole as well as for its eighteen academies goals and performance indicators are formulated in various documents, ranging from the university strategy to the yearly management contracts between the university board and the dean of each of the academies.

A.3.4 In the check phase, satisfaction statements as well as results (“hard facts”) are gathered related to the various goals and performance indicators. This is partly done centrally for the whole university with generic instruments, and partly has to be done by the academies themselves. Satisfaction statements and results are presented in the general management dashboard and in the various reports on academy level. The phase of adapt consists of study and discussion of these documents in order to decide on future actions which are then fed back into the planning phase.

A.3.5 This whole cycle is for every academy, so also for the Prince Claus Conservatoire, laid down in the Quality Assurance Plan. The Quality Assurance Plan contains:

- a general introduction to the system of internal quality assurance;
- the quality goals and performance indicators for the year concerned
- an overview of the persons playing a role in quality assurance, of the decision making processes, of the relevant documents and of the communication plan connected to quality assurance activities
- a time path for the quality assurance activities
- schemes for every individual quality assurance activity:

Instrument			
Responsible person			
Goal of the activity			
Norm value			
Report by			
Reported to			
Reported by means of			
Frequency and deadline(s)			
Short description of activity (plan/do)	Date	Activity	Executed by
Procedure leading to quality improvement (check/adapt)			
Remarks			

## APPENDIX B

### THE ENQA 2005 STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA (ESG) – SUMMARY VERSION

This summary list of European standards for quality assurance in higher education is drawn from Chapter 2 of the full report and is placed here for ease of reference. It omits the accompanying guidelines. The standards are in three parts covering internal quality assurance of higher education institutions, external quality assurance of higher education, and quality assurance of external quality assurance agencies.

#### PART 1:

##### EUROPEAN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

- B.1.1 Policy and procedures for quality assurance: Institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards. They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work. To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality. The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available. They should also include a role for students and other stakeholders.
- B.1.2 Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards: Institutions should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards.
- B.1.3 Assessment of students: Students should be assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently.
- B.1.4 Quality assurance of teaching staff: Institutions should have ways of satisfying themselves that staff involved with the teaching of students is qualified and competent to do so. They should be available to those undertaking external reviews, and commented upon in reports.
- B.1.5 Learning resources and student support: Institutions should ensure that the resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offered.
- B.1.6 Information systems: Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes of study and other activities.
- B.1.7 Public information: Institutions should regularly publish up to date, impartial and objective information, both quantitative and qualitative, about the programmes and awards they are offering.

## **PART 2:**

### **EUROPEAN STANDARDS FOR THE EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

- B.2.1 Use of internal quality assurance procedures: External quality assurance procedures should take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines.
- B.2.2 Development of external quality assurance processes: The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes should be determined before the processes themselves are developed, by all those responsible (including higher education institutions) and should be published with a description of the procedures to be used.
- B.2.3 Criteria for decisions: Any formal decisions made as a result of an external quality assurance activity should be based on explicit published criteria that are applied consistently.
- B.2.4 Processes fit for purpose: All external quality assurance processes should be designed specifically to ensure their fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for them.
- B.2.5 Reporting: Reports should be published and should be written in a style, which is clear and readily accessible to its intended readership. Any decisions, commendations or recommendations contained in reports should be easy for a reader to find.
- B.2.6 Follow-up procedures: Quality assurance processes which contain recommendations for action or which require a subsequent action plan, should have a predetermined follow-up procedure which is implemented consistently.
- B.2.7 Periodic reviews: External quality assurance of institutions and/or programmes should be undertaken on a cyclical basis. The length of the cycle and the review procedures to be used should be clearly defined and published in advance.
- B.2.8 System-wide analyses: Quality assurance agencies should produce from time to time summary reports describing and analysing the general findings of their reviews, evaluations, assessments etc.

## **PART 3:**

### **EUROPEAN STANDARDS FOR EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES**

- B.3.1 Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education: The external quality assurance of agencies should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance processes described in Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines.



- B.3.2 Official status: Agencies should be formally recognised by competent public authorities in the European Higher Education Area as agencies with responsibilities for external quality assurance and should have an established legal basis. They should comply with any requirements of the legislative jurisdictions within which they operate.
- B.3.3 Activities: Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities (at institutional or programme level) on a regular basis.
- B.3.4 Resources: Agencies should have adequate and proportional resources, both human and financial, to enable them to organise and run their external quality assurance process(es) in an effective and efficient manner, with appropriate provision for the development of their processes and procedures.
- B.3.5 Mission statement: Agencies should have clear and explicit goals and objectives for their work, contained in a publicly available statement.
- B.3.6 Independence: Agencies should be independent to the extent both that they have autonomous responsibility for their operations and that the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders.
- B.3.7 External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies: The processes, criteria and procedures used by agencies should be pre-defined and publicly available. These processes will normally be expected to include:
- A self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the quality assurance process;
  - An external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, (a) student member(s), and site visits as decided by the agency;
  - Publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes;
  - A follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in the light of any recommendations contained in the report.
- B.3.8 Accountability procedures: Agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability.

## APPENDIX C.

### LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

AEC Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen

EFQM European Foundation for Quality Management

ENQA European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

EUA European University Association

PDCA Plan-Do-Check-Adapt

QAA Quality Assurance Agency

RCM Royal College of Music





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**Socrates**  
Erasmus