

POSITION STATEMENT ON QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA (EHEA)



Following extensive work on external quality assurance and accreditation in the European projects “Music Study, Mobility and Accountability” and “Accreditation in European Professional Music Training”, the European Association of Conservatoires (AEC), representing more than 250 institutions for professional music training in higher education in all European countries, would like to express the following view on this theme.

The position of the AEC

In relation to quality assurance and accreditation, the AEC is of the opinion that:

1. Quality assurance and accreditation must function as mechanisms to assist autonomous higher education institutions in the enhancement of their quality instead of bureaucratic processes based on inflexible criteria and procedures.
2. Quality assurance and accreditation processes must take into account in their criteria and procedures the specific nature and characteristics of professional music training in higher education.

AEC action in this area

To demonstrate the strength of its view, the AEC has developed in the above-mentioned projects a set of documents and tools that aim at improving the overall quality of professional music training in higher education in Europe and at facilitating the national and transnational recognition of studies and qualifications in the field of music. For this purpose, a European approach to external quality assurance and accreditation in the music sector has been developed with the following components:

- A “Register of Experts in the Field of Higher Music Education” with a list of experts for peer review panels in quality assurance and accreditation procedures.
- The AEC Framework Document “Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Music: Characteristics, Criteria and Procedures”, which includes the following chapters:
 - An introduction to the special characteristics of higher music education.
 - The ‘Polifonia/Dublin Descriptors’ (a musical version of the ‘Dublin Descriptors’) and the AEC Learning Outcomes for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycles in music study as reference points.
 - A set of common European criteria and procedures for external quality assurance and accreditation in music study, which take into account the specific characteristics and cultural diversity of the higher music education sector. These could be used as a common reference framework adding a European dimension to existing national quality assurance and accreditation procedures and increasing the usability of these procedures in relation to the field of music, as well as a basis for the development of a European subject-specific peer review system in music. The subject-specific criteria and procedures have been tested in 4 test evaluation visits in different European countries and different types of institutions during 2007.
- A handbook entitled “How to prepare for an institutional or programme review?”, a practical publication for conservatoire leaders and staff, and for members of review teams.

Based on these results, we invite:

1. European institutions, as well as national and regional governments to take note of and acknowledge these outcomes, which will not only facilitate quality assurance and accreditation procedures in higher music education but also strengthen their European dimension.
2. Quality assurance and accreditation agencies in European countries to incorporate these outcomes whenever they are planning procedures in higher music education.
3. Higher music education institutions to use these results in their quality assurance and enhancement activities.
4. All stakeholders to consult the AEC in matters related to quality assurance and accreditation in professional music training in higher education.

For more information, please visit www.bologna-and-music.org/accreditation or contact Martin Prchal, AEC Chief Executive, at aecinfo@aecinfo.org