

PRIhME – Stakeholder Assembly on Power Relations in Higher Music Education

PRIhME is the first attempt to address how power relations inequities in higher music education can adversely affect our culture, our places of study and work. Power relations in the musical context are nuanced and complex because they have pedagogical relevance and can affect [mental] health both during studies and in the workplace.

To create strong institutions and healthy learning environments, we believe it is essential to address power and create a commonly shared understanding of the norms and traditions in which we work.

AEC and the partners' goal was and still is to foster a safe and healthy sector in which we can train and educate creative and socially engaged performing artists through policy recommendations.

PRIhME has thus worked with the following four themes in four Stakeholder Assemblies:

- Understanding Power Relations and Music
- Sexual Orientation and Gender
- Socio-Economic background & Disability
- Artistic Standards

The 50-person PRIhME Stakeholder Assembly has included students, teachers and administrative personnel from 9 European institutions who met regularly to address these four themes. Special attention has been given to geographical spread, social and cultural backgrounds, expertise in social inclusion and civic engagement. The stakeholder assembly is inspired by the citizen's assembly model and deliberative democracy, in which a small but diverse and representative sample of people affected by a theme makes inclusive recommendations and conclusions for a larger group in a mixed and egalitarian setting.

Remit (Main Question)

How can we improve the HMEI environment by suggesting ways to deal with power relations within our institutions: what standards are realistic to set to achieve a safer and more supportive environment in HME?

Recommendations

The PRIhME Stakeholder Assembly submits the following resolutions and recommendations to the AEC General Assembly. These resolutions and recommendations were formulated as answers to the Remit (Main Question).

As stakeholders of the PRIhME Assembly,

- We believe that addressing power relations can strengthen higher music education institutions, as doing so creates more transparency around personal and professional relations in the music sector. People can then use their power to empower others, thereby leading to safer and more supportive learning environments.
- We think language and tools should be developed to address power relations clearly and successfully. This involves providing vocabulary and an understanding of key concepts so that all actors can recognise the realities of power relations within the institution. Workshops, dialogue and knowledge sharing facilitate raised awareness about power relations, and all students, teachers, staff and high-level management need to be involved to ensure their understanding and support.
- We often experience processes and spaces related to power relations currently available in institutions as inadequate, and believe they could be improved. Depending on the context, these could be made more explicit, provide better care for those in positions of lesser power, be better communicated to students and staff, or ensure better follow-up once a process has been initiated (e.g. on a complaint), thereby ensuring greater efficiency and impact.

Resolution on addressing Power Relations in Higher Music Education (Assembly 1)

The PRIhME Stakeholder Assembly came together on 10 and 11 September 2021 to discuss Power Relations in the context of Higher Music Education for the first time. We now want to share our conclusions and recommendations to the wider sector. We, the participants, have taken note of the expert information presented, compared our personal and institutional experiences, and focused on understanding power, the impact of power and empowerment in the context of HME.

Therefore,

1. We strongly recommend HMEI create networks of care to provide students, teachers, and staff with support for their physical and mental wellbeing.
2. We urge institutions to explore ways of fostering dialogue by creating safer spaces where issues related to power relations can be discussed openly, without fear or prejudice.
3. We propose the creation of a glossary related to power relations and empowerment, and annual (workshop) sessions to address the issue.
4. We urge institutions to engage in more conversations on the topic of power relations, for example through the development of specific learning modules.

5. We urge institutions to empower students, teachers, and administrative staff through the implementation of obligatory workshops and training to understand and recognize the positive and negative aspects of power relations.

Resolution on addressing Gender and Sexual Orientation in Higher Music Education (Assembly 2)

The PRIhME Stakeholder Assembly came together on 22 and 23 February 2022 to discuss Gender and Sexual Orientation in the context of Higher Music Education. We now want to share our conclusions and recommendations to the wider sector. We, the participants, have taken note of the expert information presented, compared our personal and institutional experiences, and focused on understanding gender and sexual orientation, the impact of gender and sexual orientation on power relations in the context of HME.

Therefore,

1. **Gender Balance:** We urge HMEI to strive for gender balance in recruitment of all teachers, staff, and students.
2. **Awareness and Training:** We urge HMEI to raise awareness of issues related to gender and sexual discrimination through ongoing mandatory workshops and training for students, teachers, and staff. These should include gender appropriate language and behaviours, information regarding institutional policies and support systems relative to discrimination or harassment, and advice for teachers.
3. **Safe Teaching and Learning Environment, Safe Spaces:** We urge HMEI to create safe, inclusive, and equitable teaching and learning environments through development of appropriate tools, including regularly updated and clear policies regarding sexual orientation, harassment, or discrimination. We further recommend the creation of both internal and external safe spaces in which students, teachers and personnel can confide in trusted experts.
4. **Policies:** We recommend HMEI develop comprehensive policies and procedures relative to gender discrimination in all its forms. Students, staff, and teachers should be made aware of their rights and responsibilities in this regard, as well as procedures by which they can register complaints regarding gender discrimination or harassment in any form.
5. **Communication:** We urge HMEIs to make information and institutional support systems regarding gender and sexual orientation, discrimination, or harassment widely visible. This can be done digitally, and through posters, buzzwords, photos of relevant support personnel, and contact details of people who can help.

Resolution on addressing Socio-Economic Background and Disability in Higher Music Education (Assembly 3)

The PRIhME Stakeholder Assembly came together on 28 and 29 June 2022 to discuss Socio-Economic Background and Disability in the context of Higher Music Education. We now want to share our conclusions and recommendations to the wider sector. We, the participants, have taken note of the expert information presented, compared our personal and institutional experiences, and focused on understanding diversity, difference, socio-economic background, disability and the impact in exclusion and inclusion in HME contexts.

Therefore,

1. We recommend development of safe spaces within HMEIs for students with disabilities to speak openly with professors and staff. Therefore we recommend mandatory training programmes for teachers, students and staff to assist students with disabilities.
2. We recommend HMEIs employ or consult with a trained diversity/disability officer.
3. We urge HMEIs to develop sustainable forms of financial support for students in need (e.g. students with financial, physical or mental health issues, disabilities, etc.). Possible forms of support: part-time and full time jobs, housing, instruments and practice space, in-kind or financial support, business/corporate partnerships, etc.
4. We recommend accommodating staff, prospective and current students with disabilities, or other physical or mental health issues with individualised support as well as continued professional development and training with a dedicated annual budget.

This is a recommendation which received support only from a significant minority, and is therefore included as minority report:

1. We recommend private HMEIs provide students that demonstrate clear financial need discounts for retaking a course if the students fail to pass the final exams, in order to avoid study dropout. (20% in favour, 80% against)

Resolution on addressing Artistic Standards (Assembly 4)

The PRIhME Stakeholder Assembly came together on 14 and 15 February 2023 to discuss artistic standards in the context of higher music education. We now want to share our conclusions and recommendations to the wider sector. We, the participants, have taken note of the expert information presented, compared our personal and institutional experiences, and focused on understanding artistic standards, artistic excellence and the impact of it in the context of HME, specifically in assessment situations.

Therefore,

1. We recommend that institutions introduce and implement a clear system of assessment criteria, made available to students, teachers and examiners.
2. We recommend that each institution implement a systematic examination approach, with documented feedback/feed forward delivered in a balanced and constructive way.
3. We suggest establishing an institutional forum dedicated to assessment in all its aspects. The forum's work should be transparent and disseminated throughout the institution.
4. We recommend, where external examiners are appointed, they be suitably qualified, with a proven track record in education as well as performance.
5. We recommend the introduction of performance classes at all institutions to enable cross-faculty feedback (from both tutors and students).

These recommendations received support from a significant minority, and are therefore included as minority report:

1. We urge HMEIs to include a member of the student body in joining examination juries to observe and monitor the process, especially for entrance exams. (Exactly 50% in favour, 50% against)
2. We urge HMEIs to facilitate students performing their final recital for a professor other than their own prior to the final examination taking place. (48% in favour, 52% against)