

# The latest developments in QA in Europe, and what these mean for conservatoires

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# What is MusiQuE – Music Quality Enhancement?

- An independent European-level subject-specific external evaluation organisation
- Focus on enhancement

# Structure of the session

- Some trends from conservatoires' practices
- *Zoom out*: latest developments in QA at European level
- *Zoom in*: what this means for conservatoires and how can we react

# Some trends in conservatoires' practices

*Source: MusiQuE's trend analysis published in 2017*

## Relationships with the local/regional cultural environment

- Recommendations: track student and alumni professional engagement; bring external partners to the institution regularly
- Benefits: placement opportunities, curriculum encouraging employability; enhanced programme development; student commitment to social engagement and citizenship...

# Some trends in conservatoires' practices

*Source: MusiQuE's trend analysis published in 2017*

## Assessment

- Critical area for development: links between learning outcomes and assessment, assessment criteria, assessment methods and feedback
- Recommendations: assessment policy (also to develop staff); student self-assessment, peer-assessment

# Some trends in conservatoires' practices

*Source: MusiQuE's trend analysis published in 2017*

## Quality assurance

- Need for QA mechanisms that optimise internal engagement (students and staff) and used for improvement
- Recommendations: sharing good practices across institutions, involving external experts

# Some trends in conservatoires' practices

*Trend analysis on quality enhancement processes and accreditation procedures in the higher music education sector, 2014-2016, Christopher Caine, September 2017*

<http://www.musique-qe.eu/documents/trend-analysis>

# The latest developments in QA in Europe

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# A step back: the Bologna process...

Why is Quality Assurance (QA) so important for the Bologna process?

- ✓ To ensure mobility and cooperation in higher education are based on the same principles for quality assurance with a view on recognition

Organisations and tools developed to achieve this:

- ✓ Creation of Quality Assurance agencies at national level
- ✓ European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG)
- ✓ European Network of QA Agencies (ENQA)
- ✓ European Register for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (EQAR)

# The response of the AEC sector

## Creation of:

- ✓ AEC Institutional and Programme Review Scheme in 2008
- ✓ *MusiQuE – Music Quality Enhancement* as an independent organisation in 2014
- ✓ Registration of MusiQuE on EQAR in 2016

What are the latest developments?

EU 2018 report:

**Study to evaluate the progress on quality assurance systems in the area of higher education in the Member States and on cooperation activities at European level**

# What are the latest developments?

- Very dynamic development in QA at national and European levels during the past decade
- Because of the strong development of external QA, there is a focus in the institutions on internal QA
- Understanding that QA is not only about compliance but also about improving yourself as an institution (“quality culture”)
- A European trend towards institutional vs programme evaluation
- Discipline-specific approach (**MusiQuE as a good practice example!**)
- Strengthening international dimension

# What does this mean for us as AEC institutions?

- QA won't go away, but this is good!
- Subject-specific and international approaches are increasingly accepted
- Especially in development of internal systems: room for flexibility to create systems that are relevant for our type of education
- How to deal with:
  - ✓ Artistic dimension
  - ✓ Formal/informal
  - ✓ International
  - ✓ Relevance to our students and teachers

# MusiQuE's response to these developments

- The reviews that MusiQuE currently provides:
  - **Quality enhancement reviews** for institutions, programmes and joint programmes
    - 'Classic review'
    - Tailor-made services: research, pre-college music education and benchmarking
  - **Accreditation procedures** for institutions, programmes and joint programmes
  - **Joint procedures: with national quality assurance and accreditation agencies**
  - **Quality Assurance Desk**
- Further development of innovative models for external review: the 'Critical Friend Approach'

# How to make QA more meaningful?

- Be sensitive to disciplinary diversity
- Concept of quality: 'Artistic standards' <-> Educational Quality
- Speak the same language
- Think of quality assurance tools that make sense to our students and teachers, and help them to engage with quality issues in a positive way

# Looking for new review models...

## Challenging the 'Classic Review Model' – the '**Critical Friends Approach**':

- Annual visits 'Critical Friends' at department/faculty/section level + one follow-up visit within 6-year period
- Reports 'Critical Friends' + institutional responses form (part of) self-evaluation report
- Prepares and informs ('light weight') 'classic review' every 6 years




# Benefits

- Personal contact with students and teachers
- Speaks the language of students and teachers
- Takes both aspects of the concept of quality into account
- Strongly focused on quality enhancement because of qualified recommendations
- Permanent QA workload evenly divided at different levels
- An increased sense of ownership for QA at various levels

Experiences so far...

Malmö pilot project:

Staffan Storm and Berth Lideberg (Malmö Academy of Music, Sweden) to share experiences with the 'Critical Friend Approach'



How do you ensure that your QA activities are relevant to your students and teachers?

How do you deal in your QA activities with:  
Artistic dimension?  
Formal/informal?  
International?