

# AEC – NASM Statement on the Characteristics for Quality Assurance in the Field of Music

for the 2005 Bergen Meeting for European Ministers of Education in the framework of the Bologna Process



**NASM**  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF MUSIC

The Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC) assembles more than 200 European institutions for professional music training. Through international projects, publications and congresses, the AEC assists its member institutions in increasing awareness of relevant political issues and mobility opportunities. The National Association for Schools of Music (NASM), an association of approximately 610 American schools of music, is the national accrediting agency for music and music-related disciplines in the USA. NASM produces statistical research, provides professional development for leaders of music schools, engages in policy analysis and provides information to the public.

In Europe, AEC has responded by issuing declarations and position statements supporting the developments towards a European Higher Education Area and stressing the importance of transparency and comparability of study programmes since the coming into force of the Bologna Declaration in 1999. An important outcome of the work done by the AEC in relation to the Bologna Process is the publication of the AEC Online Bologna Handbook ([www.aecinfo.org/bologna](http://www.aecinfo.org/bologna)). This Online Handbook contains many important documents on the impact of the Bologna Declaration on professional music training in Europe, including descriptions of learning outcomes for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle studies in professional music training, a handbook on the implementation and use of credit points in music training, overviews of the systems for professional music training in all European countries, a list of regulated professions in music and various documents on mobility in the music training sector.

In relation to the quality assurance aspects of the Bologna Process, a statement on the characteristics of an effective evaluation system has been developed specifically for the professional music training sector. This statement is useful to institutions facing an institutional or specialised quality evaluation process, and can serve as a source of information for quality assurance agencies and for national, regional, and local governments. It highlights the qualities that make music training a discipline which in many ways cannot directly be compared with other types of studies and for which otherwise approved methods of evaluation and accreditation may need to be adapted. This document was produced jointly by AEC and NASM in the framework the transatlantic cooperation project “Music Study, Mobility and Accountability” (2002-2004), which has been supported by the EU/USA programme. More information on the project and additional publication are available at <http://msma.arts-accredit.org>.

# Characteristics of an Effective Evaluation System for Music Schools and Conservatoires

In this statement, the term *review* includes accreditation and other types of evaluations; the terms *conservatoire* and *music schools* refer to institutions that provide professional higher education in music. Part I addresses evaluation in general; Part II, the evaluation of music schools and conservatoires.

### **PART I: GENERAL REVIEW POLICIES AND PROCEDURES \***

To fulfil its values, principles, and responsibilities, an effective system:

#### **A. Pursues its mission, goals, and objectives, and conducts its operations in a trustworthy manner**

- Focuses primarily on educational quality, not narrow interests, or political action, or educational fashions.
- Demonstrates respect for the complex interrelationships involved in the pursuit of excellence by individual institutions or programmes.
- Exhibits a system of checks and balances in its standards development and review procedures.
- Maintains functional and operational autonomy.
- Avoids relationships and practises that would provoke questions about its overall objectivity and integrity.
- Analyzes criticism carefully and responds appropriately by explaining its policies and actions and/or making changes.

#### **B. Maximizes service, productivity, and effectiveness in the review relationship**

- Recognizes that teaching and learning, not approved status, are the primary purposes of institutions and programmes.
- Respects the expertise and aspirations for high achievement already present and functioning in institutions and programmes.
- Uses its understanding of the teaching and learning focus and the presence of local expertise and aspirations as a basis for serving effectively at individual institutions and programmes.

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\* Based on the NASM Code of Good Practice in Accreditation and on a Code Approved by the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (USA).

- Keeps the review process as efficient and cost-effective as possible by minimizing the use of visits and reports and by eliminating, wherever possible, duplication of effort with other review processes.
- Works cooperatively with other review bodies to avoid conflicting standards and to minimize duplication of effort in the preparation of accreditation materials and the conduct of on-site visits.
- Provides the institution or programmes with a thoughtful diagnostic analysis that assists the institution or programme to find its own approaches and solutions, and that makes a clear distinction between what is required for accreditation and what is recommended for improvement of the institution or programme.

### **C. Respects and protects institutional autonomy**

- Works with issues of institutional autonomy in light of the commitment to mutual accountability implied by participation in the review process while, at the same time, respecting the diversity of effective institutional and programmatic approaches to common goals, issues, challenges, and opportunities.
- Applies its standards and procedures with profound respect for the rights and responsibilities of institutions and programmes to identify, designate, and control (a) their respective missions, goals, and objectives; (b) educational and philosophical principles and methodologies used to pursue functions implicit in their various missions, goals, and objectives; (c) specific choices and approaches to content; (d) agendas and areas of study pursued through scholarship, research, and policy developments; (e) specific personnel choices, staffing configurations, administrative structures, and other operational decisions; and (f) content, methodologies, and timing of tests, evaluations, and assessments.
- With respect to professional schools and programmes, recognizes the ultimate authority of each academic community for its own educational policies while maintaining fundamental standards and fostering consideration of evolving needs and conditions in the profession and the communities it serves.

### **D. Maintains a broad perspective as the basis for wise decision-making**

- Gathers and analyzes information and ideas from multiple sources and viewpoints concerning issues important to institutions, programmes, professions, publics, governments, and others concerned with the content, scope, and effectiveness of its work.
- Uses the results of these analyses in formulating policies and procedures that promote substantive, effective teaching and learning, that protect the autonomy of institutions and programmes, and that encourage trust and cooperation within and among various components of the larger higher education community.

### **E. Focuses reviews on the development of knowledge and competence**

- Concentrates on results in light of specific institutional and programmatic missions, goals, objectives, and contexts.
- Deals comprehensively with relationships and interdependencies among purposes, aspirations, curricula, operations, resources, and results.

- Considers techniques, methods, and resources primarily in light of results achieved and functions fulfilled rather than the reverse.
- Has standards and review procedures that provide room for experimentation, encourage responsible innovation, and promote thoughtful evolution.

**F. Exhibits integrity and professionalism in the conduct of its operations**

- Creates and documents its scope of authority, policies, and procedures to ensure governance and decision making under a framework of “laws not persons.”
- Exercises professional judgment in the context of its published standards and procedures.
- Demonstrates continuing care with policies, procedures, and operations regarding due process, conflict of interest, confidentiality, and consistent application of standards.
- Presents its materials and conducts its business with accuracy, skill, and sophistication sufficient to produce credibility for its role as an evaluator of educational quality.
- Is quick to admit errors in any part of the evaluation process, and equally quick to rectify such errors.
- Maintains sufficient financial, personnel, and other resources to carry out its operations effectively.
- Provides accurate, clear, and timely information to the higher education community, to the professions, and to the public concerning standards and procedures for review, and the status of accredited institutions and programmes.
- Corrects inaccurate information about itself or its actions.

**G. Has mechanisms to ensure that expertise and experience in the application of its standards, procedures, and values are present in members of its visiting teams, commissions, and staff**

- Maintains a thorough and effective orientation, training, and professional development programme for all review personnel.
- Works with institutions and programmes to ensure that site teams represent a collection of expertise and experience appropriate for each specific review.
- Conducts evaluations of personnel that involve responses from institutions and programmes that have experienced the review process.
- Conducts evaluations of criteria and procedures that include responses from reviewers and those reviewed.

## **PART II: SPECIFIC MUSIC CONTENT AND INSTITUTIONAL MISSION**

To be effective in reviewing professional music schools and conservatoires with respect to music content and institutional mission, a review entity:

### **A. Respects the content and nature of music and their relationships to education and training in music at the professional level.**

- Recognizes music as a unique, nonverbal means of communication, discourse, and insight.
- Respects music as a medium for intellectual work expressed both in music itself and in words about music.
- Works with a conceptual understanding of the elements in the content of professional music study including, but not limited to, performance, composition, musicianship, music theory, music history and repertoire, and pedagogy.
- Exhibits understanding and respect for the multiple ways these elements are ordered, prioritised, and integrated to develop and synthesize the artistic, intellectual, and physical capabilities of students.

### **B. Respects the fundamental characteristics of education and training in music at the professional level.**

- Recognizes and supports the necessity of curricula that includes one-to-one tuition (private lessons), ensembles, courses, and final projects such as recitals and compositions.
- Recognizes fundamental necessities for time allocations that grow from the nature of music and music learning, including the time requirements for developing the integration of artistic, intellectual, and physical knowledge and skills.
- Understands the necessity of resources essential to music study such as expert specialized personnel, facilities conducive to various types of instruction, and financial support.
- Is able to connect issues of financial allocation to necessities regarding time and resources.
- Understands that students must demonstrate significant levels of artistic and technical mastery in order to be admitted.
- Recognises that musical, instrumental, vocal, or compositional technique—while essential for entrance, continuation, and graduation—enable high levels of artistry but are not a substitute for artistry.

### **C. Respects the natures, achievements, aspirations, and structures of individual institutions.**

- Conducts evaluations with respect for, and in light of, the various missions, goals, objectives, and methodologies chosen by the individual institutions.
- Has a sophisticated understanding of how music schools and conservatoires are the same and how they are different.

- Respects the fact that various structures and approaches to music and music study work effectively and produce outstanding results.
- Understands both individual and group responsibilities for the development of musical and educational quality.

**D. Maximizes the use of evaluation systems and methods consistent with the natures of music, music study, and the operation of music schools and conservatoires.**

- Recognises the intense evaluation and assessment pressures that come from the public nature of music performance and composition.
- Respects that the concept of multiple effective approaches extends into teaching and learning as well as to matters of interpretation in performance and aesthetic accomplishment in composition.
- Understands the continuous, moment-by-moment evaluation and assessment essential to both the preparation and presentation of performances and to the composition of music. In music, assessment is integrated continuously into the work as well as being applied to completed work.
- Makes use of high levels of expertise in music, music teaching, the operation of education and training institutions, and the relationships among the three. Peer evaluation is essential for credibility in reviews of music schools and conservatoires.
- Describes in advance the purpose of any review and the specific criteria on which the evaluation is to be based. Does not attempt to conflate artistic and educational criteria with economic and market criteria.
- Makes clear to all evaluators that the focus is on functions to be served, rather than methods to be employed.
- Has protocols indicating that individual evaluators are to make judgments about effectiveness with regard to the criteria chosen for the evaluation and not on personal preferences regarding choices in areas where there are many correct answers.