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**Master of Music
Conservatorium van Amsterdam
Amsterdam University of the Arts**

*Report of the limited programme assessment
27-28 January 2020*

Utrecht, The Netherlands
April 2020
www.AeQui.nl
Assessment Agency for Higher Education

Colophon

Master of Music

Conservatorium van Amsterdam - Amsterdam University of the Arts

Location: Amsterdam

Mode of study: fulltime

Croho: 44739

Result of institutional assessment: positive

Committee

Raoul van Aalst, chair

Robert Ehrlich, domain expert

Keller Coker, domain expert

Cas Smithuijsen, domain expert

Francesca Ajossa, student

Mark Delmartino, secretary

The committee was presented to the NVAO for approval.

The assessment was conducted under responsibility of AeQui Nederland

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Table of contents

Colophon	2
Table of contents	3
Summary	4
Introduction	6
1. Intended learning outcomes.....	8
2. Teaching-learning environment	11
3. Student assessment.....	15
4. Achieved learning outcomes.....	18
Attachments.....	21
Attachment 1 Assessment committee.....	22
Attachment 2 Program of the assessment	23
Attachment 3 Documents	24

Summary

On 27 and 28 January 2020, an AeQui assessment committee visited the Master of Music programme at the Amsterdam University of the Arts (AHK). The Master of Music consists of a full-time two-year programme (120 ECTS) and is offered in English by the Conservatorium of Amsterdam (CvA). For this assessment, the committee has used the 2018 NVAO framework for limited programme assessment. The committee found the Master of Music to be of excellent quality and concluded that studying at CvA must be a very special experience. The assessment committee judges that the programme meets all NVAO standards and therefore issues a **positive** recommendation regarding the accreditation of the Master of Music programme at the Conservatorium of Amsterdam.

Intended learning outcomes

The committee is highly impressed by the way the Conservatorium van Amsterdam is constantly reflecting on the developments in the music sector and in higher education, and is undertaking action to integrate these developments in its programmes. The intended learning outcomes of the Master of Music reflect what professional music education should aim for and are formulated adequately in terms of domain, level and orientation. The distinctive features of studying at the Conservatorium have been embedded well in the Master of Music programme. The committee judges that the Master of Music programme meets the standard.

Teaching-learning environment

The teaching learning environment of the Master of Music is very strong. The committee thinks highly of the five curriculum components, the customised study plans and the opportunities for students to obtain education and training that goes beyond artistic excellence in one instrument. The committee is impressed by the quality of the staff as musicians, pedagogues and mentors, and appreciates the balanced interaction between the master and the apprentice. The material facilities at CvA are impressive and allow students to present themselves in an optimal way to the outside world. The conservatorium succeeds according to the committee in creating a good atmosphere and a safe environment in which students feel at ease to share their concerns. The committee judges that the Master of Music programme meets the standard.

Student assessment

Student assessment at the Master of Music is robust: it is laid down in clear regulations and based on

sound educational and assessment concepts, which are implemented properly in the day-to-day reality of the programme. The committee thinks highly of the three principles of formative, long term and cumulative assessment and the way these are operationalised in valid, reliable and transparent tests and exams. The Examination Board is on top of its tasks and its individual members have adequate experience. The committee welcomes the way in which the research projects are evaluated and appreciates that the final exam - through the composition of the examination committee and the evaluation form - guarantees all students an objective treatment. In its own sample review, the committee agreed to the scores and the feedback on the final exam. The committee judges that the Master of Music programme meets the standard.

Achieved learning outcomes

The committee considers that the quality of the final exams definitely reflects the requirements for a master programme at a Conservatorium. Moreover, it is to the credit of the Master of Music that almost all graduates find relevant positions as performing artists. The final exams it reviewed and the performance it attended confirm according to the committee that the Conservatorium is succeeding in its ambition to train talented musicians to join the top of the international profession. The committee judges that the Master of Music programme meets the standard.

Recommendations

The committee has issued a positive judgement on the quality of each individual standard and on the quality of the programme as a whole. Nonetheless the committee sees room for improvement in a

number of areas. The committee therefore advises the Conservatorium and the Master of Music programme:

- to describe more explicitly in the programme framework and the intended learning outcomes the distinctiveness of both Conservatorium and Master of Music;
- to develop more interdisciplinary projects involving both CvA departments and AHK faculties;
- to provide more training in hands-on entrepreneurship-related topics;
- to communicate more on the available opportunities and services, and to do so in a way that this reaches all students;
- to pay more attention to music medicine, injury prevention and rehabilitation;
- to provide more written feedback in the final exam evaluation forms and to do so by using a standardised vocabulary.

All standards of the NVAO assessment framework are assessed positively; the assessment committee therefore awards a **positive** recommendation for the accreditation of the programme.

On behalf of the entire assessment committee,
Utrecht, April 2020

Raoul van Aalst
Chair

Mark Delmartino
Secretary

Introduction

The Master of Music is a two-year programme in the disciplines of Classical Music, Jazz and Popular Music and includes a wide range of specialisations. The CvA is committed to excellence: it strives to achieve the best learning environment for its students and to prepare them for a successful career in the international music sector. Previously, the Master of Music was assessed as excellent on all accounts. Developments in the music sector and in the higher education music landscape have in the meantime led to adjustments in the profile, direction and focus of both the Conservatorium and the Master of Music. Moreover, the international dimension of the Master of Music programme has been consolidated in all aspects.

The institute

The Conservatorium van Amsterdam (CvA) is one of six faculties of the Amsterdam University of the Arts (AHK), which offers professional training in all arts disciplines. Since its creation in 1884, the CvA has grown in size and offer and is now the largest provider of professional music education in the Netherlands. Currently, the CvA offers five CROHO registered programmes with a variety of principle subjects and specialisations to more than 1000 students from over 70 countries, as well as a national programme for young talents (6-18 years).

Since the previous accreditation in 2011, there have been many developments in the higher education landscape for music that have impacted on CvA and its programmes. The Dutch Universities for the Arts published a sectoral plan to improve the quality of arts education, while the conservatoires across the Netherlands developed a new Music Professional Profile and a corresponding Training Profile. As a result, the CvA reviewed its profile, direction and focus, and reworked the curricula of both bachelor and master programmes. Furthermore, it has expanded its international cooperation network in Europe and across the world. At the time of the current assessment visit, the CvA provides training in almost all genres, for almost all instruments and for the international music profession, on the highest level. In its programmes it involves the professional music practice and focuses on having its students play together in ensembles and orchestras.

The programme

The Master of Music is a two-year programme in the disciplines of Classical Music, Jazz and Popular Music and includes wide range of specialisations: Early Music, New Music, Composition, Creative Performance Lab, Live Electronics, Theory of Music, Orchestral Conducting and Composing for Film. Currently, 277 students are enrolled in the Master of Music. The committee concurs with the choice to run the programme in English, as the field is completely international: both artists and teachers have an international field in which they operate.

Since the last accreditation, where the master programme was assessed as excellent on all standards, the programme and its specialisations have been further developed. This led among others to new master profiles for Classical Music, a revised structure of the Jazz curriculum, and the introduction of the Popular Music discipline. Moreover, the Conservatorium has invested in the international dimension of the Master of Music, making these aspects of its education programme more explicit. The results of these efforts are described in the application of the Master of Music programme for the Certificate for Quality in Internationalisation.

The assessment

The Amsterdam University of the Arts assigned AeQui to perform a quality assessment of its Master of Music programme. In close co-operation with the Conservatorium and programme management, AeQui convened an independent and

competent assessment committee. The committee members are presented in attachment 1. A preparatory meeting with representatives of the programme was held to exchange information and plan the date and programme of the site-visit.

Upon request of the Conservatorium, the assessment committee combined the accreditation visit with an assessment of the programme's Quality of Internationalisation. The committee performed this assessment according to the guidelines issued by the European Consortium for Accreditation and has reported on its findings, considerations and conclusions in a separate report.

In the run-up to the site visit, the assessment committee studied the self-evaluation report on the programme and reviewed a sample of graduation exams of students who graduated during the last two years. A list of the reviewed materials is available in attachment 3. The findings of the report and the results of the exam review provided input for the discussions during the visit.

The assessment of this programme is part of the cluster assessment. During the preparation and the site visit, the panel has discussed and taken into account the several programme assessments in the cluster.

The site visit was carried out on 27 and 28 January 2020 according to the programme presented in attachment 2. The committee has assessed the programme in an independent manner; at the end of the visit, the chair of the assessment committee presented the initial findings of the committee to representatives of the programme and the institution.

In this document, the committee is reporting on its findings, considerations and conclusions according to the NVAO framework for limited programme assessment. A draft version of the report was sent to the programme management; its reactions have led to this final version of the report.

1. Intended learning outcomes

The committee is highly impressed by the way the Conservatorium van Amsterdam is constantly reflecting on the developments in the music sector and in higher education, and is undertaking action to integrate these developments in its programmes. The intended learning outcomes of the Master of Music reflect what professional music education should aim for and are formulated adequately in terms of domain, level and orientation. The distinctive features of studying at the Conservatorium have been embedded in the Master of Music programme. If anything, the committee thinks that the distinctiveness of both the Conservatorium and the Master of Music can be described more explicitly in the programme framework and the intended learning outcomes. According to the assessment committee, the Master of Music programme **meets this standard**.

Findings

Profile

The assessment committee learned from the very informative Management Review for Accreditation (self-evaluation report) that since the last accreditation, the Conservatorium has reviewed all degree programmes, their specialisations and organisation. According to the committee, this review has been performed carefully, maintaining the strong elements and optimising the components that required adaptation. The committee appreciates that after the excellent results of the previous accreditation in 2011, the Conservatorium continues to evaluate and reflect on its programmes and to adapt these to the constantly changing musical landscape.

According to its mission and vision, the Conservatorium is guided by the principle of excellence in education. Over the past years, this commitment to excellence has been a driving force for CvA in investing in six strategic areas: internationalisation, a safe learning environment, a customised student-centred learning approach, research, technological innovation, and social awareness. Throughout the visit, the committee noticed that each of these areas have become part of the day-to-day reality of the Conservatorium in general and the Master of Music in particular. Moreover, this 'new' profile is shared by students, staff and professional field. In this regard, the committee understood that input from the professional field is important: an Advisory Committee has been

formed and is consulted regularly by the Conservatorium and its respective departments. The committee met some of these representatives and noticed that they have adequate expertise to advise the Conservatorium and reflect on possible improvements of the master programme.

Furthermore, the committee learned from the written materials and the discussions that in order to keep abreast with the changes in the music sector and society, CvA and its Master of Music programme are currently working on three challenges. Firstly, how to reconcile specialisation and versatility: there is a clear demand for highly specialised top level musicians, but there is also need for versatile high level musicians with a wider range of skills. Secondly, how to accommodate and mitigate the choice of high level student musicians to start their musical career before they finish the master programme. Thirdly, how to accommodate the role and nature of artistic research (training) in the curriculum. According to the assessment committee, the CvA has identified very relevant challenges and is doing a good job in addressing these in the Master of Music programme.

Intended learning outcomes

The Master of Music is a two-year programme in the disciplines of Classical Music, Jazz and Popular Music and includes a wide range of specialisations: Early Music, New Music, Composition, Creative Performance Lab, Live Electronics, Theory of Music, Orchestral Conducting and Composing for

Film. All disciplines and specialisations of the Master of Music share the same exit qualifications. These intended learning outcomes are based on the Dutch National Training Profile for Music. This profile has been completely renewed since the previous accreditation visit and was adopted by the Vereniging Hogescholen in 2018. The network who renewed the profile involved all conservatories in the Netherlands and was chaired by the CvA director. The committee learned that the new profile addresses the major shifts in the practical context for music graduates, as well as the changes in the educational system since the time of the previous profile in 2002. While the 'old' profile was still considered rigorous and valuable, the new profile underlines among others the importance of entrepreneurship and of developing the relationship of musicians with their audiences.

The national training profile is competence based: in the education of Master of Music students at CvA, knowledge, skills and attitude are learned, trained and acquired in an integral way. Moreover, education at CvA is geared towards the future careers of master students who are expected to possess outstanding self-management competences by the time they graduate. The six competences of the national profile and their definition are listed in attachment 3, which also contains a link to the overall reference document. Three core competences in professional music education - creative skills, technical skills and contextual focus - are the most characteristic skills of a musician and are complemented by research and development, communication and organisational skills. The committee gathered from the extensive background information that the six learning outcomes relate to the European-wide Dublin Descriptors and are formulated at the appropriate master's level. Moreover, the learning outcomes meet the quality requirements formulated in both the European and the Dutch Qualification Frameworks.

All Dutch conservatories apply the national training profile to their programmes. While they are educating their students towards achieving the six competencies, each institution has its own

specific characteristics and distinctive features. The committee learned that the distinctive features at CvA relate to its mission and to the intrinsic international nature of the institution and its network. Moreover, its size and diversity allow the CvA to provide a high degree of customising and a student-oriented learning approach. The highly specialist training combined with the attention to artistic research provide the Master of Music students a thorough and focused programme. Moreover, the Master of Music programme is operating within a so-called "triple helix" for education where students, professional field and Conservatorium reinforce each other through interaction, dialogue and cooperation. The committee noticed that this model is well embedded within the master programme. Finally, the committee understood from the materials, the discussions and its own observations that being situated in the centre of Amsterdam with its high quality international music scene is definitely a distinctive feature of the CvA and its programmes: it attracts top level students, is an asset for recruiting the best teachers, and creates an international network for alumni.

Considerations

The committee is highly impressed by the way the Conservatorium van Amsterdam is constantly reflecting on the developments in the music sector and in higher education. The CvA has made very appropriate choices when investing in the above-mentioned strategic areas and the results of these priorities are reflected very nicely in the day-to-day reality of its programmes. The committee has a similar appreciation for the way in which CvA and the Master of Music programme are addressing the current challenges, which are indeed of great relevance for an institution and a programme that strive for excellence.

The committee considers that the intended learning outcomes of the Master of Music are an adequate and actual reflection of what professional music education should aim for. The six competences of the national training profile are well

chosen and operationalised. The learning outcomes are formulated adequately in terms of domain (music), level (master) and orientation (professional), and benefit the variety of disciplines and specialisations in the Master programme. According to the committee, the training profile in general and the learning outcomes in particular constitute a robust framework for conservatories when designing and implementing the curriculum components. The profile moreover allows to measure the achievement of the learning outcomes through formative and summative assessment.

The training profile and its competences / learning outcomes provide not only an adequate framework but also allow institutions to integrate their own characteristics. The committee thinks highly of the way in which the distinctive features of studying at the CvA have been embedded in - and are operationalised in the delivery of - the Master of Music programme. Based on the materials, the discussions and its own observations, the

committee considers that studying at CvA must be a very special experience. According to the committee, this special experience, the distinctiveness of both the CvA and the Master of Music programme, can be described more explicitly in the programme framework. In this regard the committee suggests to have the distinctive characteristics of (studying) the Master of Music programme at CvA reflected in the intended learning outcomes. By doing so, (potential) students, (new) staff and (envisaged) professional stakeholders will know about the aims of the programme and identify (even) more with the Conservatorium's strive for excellence in higher professional education in music.

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the assessment committee concludes that the Master of Music programme **meets** standard 1, intended learning outcomes.

2. Teaching-learning environment

The teaching learning environment of the Master of Music is very strong, an appreciation that covers its curriculum, staff and facilities. The committee thinks highly of the five curriculum components, the customised study plans and the opportunities for students to obtain education and training that goes beyond artistic excellence in one instrument. The committee is impressed by the quality of the staff as musicians, pedagogues and mentors, and appreciates the balanced interaction between the master and the apprentice. The material facilities at CvA are impressive and allow students to present themselves in an optimal way to the outside world. The conservatorium succeeds according to the committee in creating a good atmosphere and a safe environment in which students feel at ease to voice their concerns. According to the committee four elements can be improved: more interdisciplinary projects involving both CvA departments and AHK faculties, more training in hands-on entrepreneurship-related topics, better targeted communication on available opportunities and services, and more attention to music medicine, injury prevention and rehabilitation. According to the assessment committee, the Master of Music programme **meets this standard**.

Findings

Programme

The Master of Music programme consists of three disciplines - Classical Music, Jazz and Popular Music - and includes a wide range of specialisations: Early Music, New Music, Composition, Creative Performance Lab, Live Electronics, Theory of Music, Orchestral Conducting and Composing for Film. Every curriculum consists of five major components: principal subject, ensembles, research, master electives and individual credits. The curriculum build-up per discipline is provided in attachment 4. It shows that the number of credits allocated to each component differs to some extent per discipline and that the total study load is divided equally over two years of 60 EC each.

Each curriculum component covers one or more competences at programme level; the principal subject focuses first and foremost on the three core competences, but also deals with research and development, communication and organisational skills. The assessment committee noticed in the extensive programme assessment and competence matrix how the six competences are operationalised across the curriculum components in each discipline.

The committee learned that all students have their own individual study plan, which is agreed upon with the main subject teacher at the start of

the programme. Each study plan covers all components, sets out the courses to be followed and is centred around the artistic development of the individual student. The plan is discussed regularly and can be adjusted if the student's artistic development so requires. The committee understood from the discussions that the size of the Conservatorium and its wide range of educational possibilities allow for such degree of customisation. Moreover, the committee noticed that the curriculum structure reflects the profile and strategic priorities of the Conservatorium: each student is exposed to research and to group playing, and encouraged to put together a customised study plan focused on artistic development and excellence. Furthermore, the committee welcomes the attention in every study plan to widening the students' view through the master electives and to deepening their competences in the individual credits they gain for activities / projects that are not part of the regular curriculum.

During the visit, the committee has looked into a number of research products. In these products, which can take different forms ranging from written theses to annotated music scores, students demonstrate their research and development skills. The committee gathered from the discussions that the CvA promotes this type of research and the development of academic / scientific writing skills to enhance a culture of knowledge

acquisition and sharing of know-how within the Conservatorium. Students indicated to the committee that they were quite hesitant at the very start of the research component, but eventually understood its importance for their own development. The committee welcomes the attention of the programme to incorporating applied research in the curriculum and acknowledges the importance the Conservatorium and programme attaches to student reflection on their artistic development and on the contribution of artistic research to their professional practice. The implementation of the master curriculum is supported by four didactic principles: competence oriented teaching, developing individual talent, involving the international community of learners, and reflective practice. Students learn to apply their knowledge, skills and insights in realistic professional work settings, develop sensitivity and social skills to build both an international network and a professional attitude in a culturally diverse environment, and reflect on their education with peers, teams of teachers and professionals. In the video they prepared as student chapter of the self-evaluation report, students indicated that they very much appreciate the customised study plan and the wide range of opportunities the curriculum offers. Moreover, the enormous variety leads to artistic pathways they had never anticipated. During the visit students confirmed the committee's impression that the programme provides a motivating, safe and supportive environment with ongoing feedback on the learning process and results.

According to the data tables in the management review, there are currently 277 students in the Master of Music, representing 48 nationalities. Two thirds follow the classical discipline and about 100 students are in the Jazz programme. About a quarter of the students is Dutch and one fifth comes from outside the EU. Until now, there are about a dozen popular music students, most of them Dutch: the yearly intake is limited and the artistic background of the cohorts diverse in order to encourage group work and play.

The committee was informed that the admission process for all disciplines is transparent but the

expected entrance level high: about 20-25% of the applicants pass the selection. This strive for excellence has also a downside: often top quality students get drawn into promising careers before completing the two-year programme. The detailed figures on success rate over the past five years indicate an average output of 75%, with roughly 65% of the students finishing the programme within the nominal period. According to the representatives of the professional field, these rates are normal in view of the top level quality of students. The CvA considers these figures acceptable but not desirable and is now looking into opportunities to further tailor the study plans of students. The committee understands the tough choices top level students have to make and welcomes the Conservatorium's additional initiatives.

Staff

CvA employs 337 staff members, most of whom on small assignments as the total capacity amounts to 125 fulltime equivalents. This big number of staff and their wide range of expertise allows for considerable individual and subject-specific attention to master students.

The committee gathered from the information materials, including an overview with staff CV's, that teachers are highly competent in terms of artistic performance. Moreover, the statement in the management review that the Conservatorium attaches great importance to outstanding didactic qualities was confirmed by the Master of Music students during the visit.

The committee furthermore appreciates that both CvA and AHK promote staff development and professionalisation: there are many opportunities for interaction with the work field and with international partners; moreover, several CvA staff have been facilitated in their doctoral studies. Representatives of the respective quality assurance bodies – examination board, programme committee, academic council (*medezeggenschap*) – indicated that they are prepared for their tasks and that training is foreseen through AHK for both staff and students.

In addition to in-house expertise, the Conservatorium invites guest teachers and has an artist in residence programme. Several students mentioned in their video contribution that these external lecturers are highly appreciated and very relevant for their artistic development.

Finally, the committee noticed from the discussions that the traditional master-apprenticeship relation between teachers and students is disappearing in favour of a more balanced interaction where students learn a lot of their 'master' but are also encouraged by their teachers to develop a signature of their own.

Facilities

During the visit, the committee was shown around the Conservatorium building and was very impressed by the design of the building and the facilities it offered for students in terms of performance halls, recording studios, and practice rooms. In their video contribution students were unanimous in praising the excellent facilities.

The committee learned that the Conservatorium organises study support and mentoring throughout the entire two-year programme. Study advisers, main instrument teachers, coordinators and the student counsellor all play a role in supporting student wellbeing. Based on good experiences in the bachelor programme, the master programme has introduced study career guidance in 2019. These positions were created with so-called Quality Agreement funds. Moreover, the programme pays attention to the physical and mental impact of musicianship and offers tools and techniques that will support students in future careers on and off the stage. The committee acknowledges these efforts because mentoring, career guidance and healthy musicianship are very important in the development of master students. Based on the discussions with students, the committee found that there is room for more support, notably in the medical field on injury and stage fright prevention and rehabilitation. Moreover, the committee gathered from the discussion that not every student is equally informed about the range of support initiatives available to them through CvA.

Finally, students indicated that the Conservatorium creates a welcoming and safe environment for students, in which students feel at ease to mention their concerns. Constructive criticism can be voiced both formally through the course evaluations and the Programme Committee, and informally to the individual teachers and the study coach. The committee understood from the discussions with students, staff, Programme Committee representatives and the programme management that suggestions are taken into account where possible and decisions are communicated to the students.

Considerations

The committee considers that the teaching learning environment of the Master of Music is very strong, an appreciation covering curriculum, staff and facilities. It thinks highly of the five curriculum components and the way these are integrated into customised study plans that in turn offer students a very rich programme. Based on its own sample review and the discussions with students, staff and management, the committee endorses the Conservatorium's rationale for research and found the research products diverse, interesting and highly relevant. Furthermore, the committee appreciates the efforts of the programme to offer students a much broader education and training that goes beyond artistic excellence in one instrument. In this regard the programme's attention to ensembles, artistic research, master electives and extra-curricular credits constitutes a considerable value added for the students.

The committee is impressed by the quality of the staff as musicians, pedagogues and mentors. It also appreciates very much the interaction between the master and the apprentice, which has become much more balanced and democratic than it used to be in the world of music teaching. Staff have an adequate command of the English language, according to both students and the panel. Moreover, the opportunities for staff development make the AHK and CvA a fine place to work for staff. Moreover, it supports the efforts of the Conservatorium to invite guest lectures and

artists in residence as these external experts are highly appreciated by students.

The material facilities at CvA are impressive, according to the committee. The performance halls and the recording studios are state-of-the-art and allow students to present themselves in an optimal way to the outside world. Moreover, the committee appreciates the efforts of the programme and the Conservatorium to support students in their study and their wellbeing.

In addition to these positive considerations, the committee has noticed four elements that can be improved. Firstly, while the curriculum offers a lot of opportunities, several students indicated that interdisciplinary cooperation is mainly limited to collaboration among CvA departments, hence their request and the committee's suggestion to develop more projects that involve other faculties of AHK. Secondly, while CvA is educating musicians to become versatile professionals, the committee supports the request of several master students for training on entrepreneurship-related

topics that would help them set up their own business. Thirdly, while the Conservatorium offers a lot in terms of support and guidance, it seems that not all master students are aware of these opportunities, hence the suggestion to communicate more and to use communication channels that befit the targeted student population. Finally, while there is attention to the physical and mental wellbeing of students, the committee endorses the comments from master students that more can be done in terms of music medicine, injury prevention and rehabilitation.

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the assessment committee concludes that the Master of Music programme **meets** standard 2, teaching learning environment.

3. Student assessment

Student assessment at the Master of Music programme is robust: it is laid down in clear regulations and based on sound educational and assessment concepts, which are implemented properly in the day-to-day reality of the master programme. The committee thinks highly of the three principles of formative, long term and cumulative assessment and the way these are operationalised in valid, reliable and transparent tests and exams. The Examination Board is on top of its tasks and its individual members have adequate experience. The committee welcomes the way in which the research projects are evaluated and appreciates that the final exam - through the composition of the examination committee and the evaluation form - guarantees all students an objective treatment. It agrees to the scores and the feedback on the final exam, but invites the examiners to provide more written feedback and to do so by using a standardised vocabulary. According to the assessment committee, the Master of Music programme **meets this standard**.

Findings

Assessment system

The rules and regulations on testing and assessment in the Master of Music programme are described in the Education and Examination Regulations of the CvA. The committee has looked into this document for the current academic year 2019-2020 and noticed that it contains both general Conservatorium-wide provisions and topics that concern the Master of Music programme. It includes among others a detailed section on the entrance examination for the master programme. The curriculum of the Master of Music programme is competence based, meaning that every subject touches upon different learning outcomes and that different competences are explored in the respective subjects of the curriculum and then assessed. The committee noticed in the above-mentioned programme assessment and competence matrix that this overall principle is properly operationalised in the respective components and subjects of the Master of Music disciplines. Further to the overall didactic approach to focus on the artistic development of the individual student, the committee gathered from the information materials and the discussions that also testing and assessment contribute towards maximising the development of individual artistic and musical talent. In this regard, the Conservatorium developed a competence based system to

empower educators and administrators in effectively evaluating the students and in providing qualified and transparent feedback. This method explicitly reflects the criteria applied throughout the curriculum, ranging from musical and technical skills, to artistic identity, creativity and entrepreneurship.

The committee learned that the CvA applies three principles of testing: formative, long-term and cumulative assessment. Students regularly receive feedback and recommendations on their progress, both informally in courses and formally during two meetings per year where a team of teachers assesses and discusses the progress of the individual student and his/her current level. Moreover, students learn to reflect on their own performance and development and to set realistic goals that fit their personal ambitions and potential, also beyond the master programme. Finally, students are tested on their musical and artistic levels at their admission, when transiting to the second year, and at their final exam. These assessment moments are cumulative as the student performance is measured and a decision is made about the continuation of the study.

Moreover, the quality of the assessment is safeguarded by the principles of validity, reliability and transparency: the assessment criteria are derived from the requirements of professional practice and coincide with the course profile; the com-

position of the exam committees ensures that examiners have experience in holding professional practical tests and that external examiners safeguard the objectivity of the examination process; moreover, all members are familiar with the assessment of the exam, which is based on established protocols and report sheets; furthermore, test criteria are announced in advance and test formats and assessment criteria are included in the Study Guide.

Course assessment

The committee gathered from the discussions with students, alumni and staff that the above-mentioned principles are rigorously applied in the Master of Music. Students indicated both in the video contribution and the discussion that they are aware of the assessment principles, that they appreciate the variety of testing formats and that they are informed about the assessment criteria.

In the run-up to the site visit, the committee reviewed a sample of final exams and their respective assessment forms. Moreover, during the visit, the committee looked into a number of research projects and their evaluations. Based on its own sample review of both final exams and research projects, the committee noticed that assessment follows the principles set out in the information materials and the procedures stipulated in the Education and Examination Regulations. In both cases, the committee found that the assessment forms were relevant: they measured the appropriate criteria in sufficient depth and the form allowed for written qualitative feedback to underpin the respective grades and results.

In so far as the final exam evaluation form is concerned, the committee agreed to the final scores and to the feedback of the examination committee. If anything, the committee thought that in some cases there could be more comments on the form and that examination teams could be trained in using a harmonised vocabulary when motivating their appreciations. The committee understands that students receive ample oral feedback after their final; however, more extensive written feedback would be useful both for external accountancy purposes (towards external

reviewers such as this accreditation committee) and as part of the long-term assessment of students.

While the evaluation forms for both final exam and research project were completed in handwriting, the committee learned that a new digital format will be used for the research project evaluation as of Spring 2020. The committee welcomes this innovation and found the new form to be highly appropriate. While the previous format contained ample room for feedback, the committee encourages assessors to continue providing insightful feedback to complement their appreciation (ranging from insufficient to excellent) on the five criteria of the research project.

Quality assurance for assessment

The quality of assessment and the end level students should reach in order to graduate the Master of Music programme are safeguarded according to Dutch law by the Examination Board. In the case of the Master of Music programme, the Examination Board is appointed by the executive board of the AHK and is responsible for all five degree programmes at the Conservatorium. It consists of seven members drawn from different departments of the CvA and includes study leaders, study advisers, principal subject teachers and an external member.

The committee gathered from the information materials and the discussion with several members of the Examination Board that most members work as teachers at CvA and therefore have extensive expertise in education and testing. In line with the legal provisions, the Examination Board among other tasks appoints examiners, supervises the quality of the exams as well as their compliance with the assessment procedures.

In order to supervise and safeguard the quality of the final exams, board members attend some of these exams and fill out an evaluation form on the examination process, which is then discussed within the board and might lead to recommendations on the process and procedures. The chairs of the respective Examination Boards meet twice per year with the executive board of AHK: these

meetings are used to exchange good practice and improve the professionalism of the boards.

The committee gathered from the discussion that the Examination Board is robust and can implement its tasks in full independence from the programme management. Moreover, the individual members have adequate expertise to fulfil the different tasks the law has conferred upon Examination Boards.

Considerations

The committee considers that student assessment at the Master of Music programme is robust. It is laid down in clear regulations, which in turn fulfil the legal requirements. According to the committee, assessment is based on sound educational and assessment concepts, which are implemented properly in the day-to-day reality of the master programme. The committee thinks highly of the three principles of formative, long term and cumulative assessment and the way these are operationalised in valid, reliable and transparent tests and exams. According to the committee, this approach to assessment fits particularly well with the educational vision of the Conservatorium on its programmes.

Moreover, the committee considers that the Examination Board is on top of its tasks and that the

individual members have adequate experience. It appreciates that Examination Board members attend final exams with the intention to safeguard their quality and improve their functioning.

The committee welcomes the way in which the research projects are evaluated and the new digital format that will be used as of 2020. Furthermore, the committee thinks highly of the way in which the final exam is organised and evaluated / reported. It is important that students are given a fair chance to demonstrate the different competences they have acquired during their two-year master programme, and the composition of the exam committee and the evaluation form guarantee such objective treatment. Based on its sample review of final exams and their evaluation forms, the committee agrees to the scores and the feedback. Nonetheless, it invites the programme and the individual examiners to provide more written feedback and to do so by using a standardised vocabulary.

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the assessment committee concludes that the Master of Music programme **meets** standard 3, student assessment.

4. Achieved learning outcomes

Based on the sample it reviewed, the committee considers that the quality of the final exams definitely reflects the requirements for a master programme at a Conservatorium. Moreover, it is to the credit of the Master of Music programme that almost all graduates find relevant positions as performing artists. It is the explicit ambition of the Conservatorium to train talented musicians to join the top of international professional music life. The final exams the committee looked into and the performance it attended confirm that the Conservatorium is succeeding in this ambition. According to the assessment committee, the Master of Music programme **meets this standard**.

Findings

Final exam quality

In order to establish whether students achieve the intended learning outcomes, the committee has reviewed a sample of twenty-five final exams from the academic years 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. The final examination takes the form of a public concert, which can only be organised and presented after all other major parts of the programme have been completed. Students are themselves responsible for organising and programming their exam. In addition to the obvious musical skills, the student must also demonstrate the required competences in the fields of entrepreneurship, collaboration and communication. The sample provided a representative spectrum of student performance. According to the committee, the performance reflected in each and every case the minimum quality one can expect of a final master exam at a Conservatorium. Furthermore, the committee agreed in all cases to the scores of the examiners, and found that in several cases the quality of the performance was indeed outstanding.

Alumni

In addition to verifying the quality of the final exam, the professional performance of graduates is another way to establish whether students achieve the intended learning outcomes upon completion of the programme. The committee gathered from the materials and the discussions on site that students and alumni have a positive opinion on their ability to pursue an artistic career upon graduation. According to the national Arts

Monitor (*Kunstenmonitor*), a survey completed 18 months after graduation, 95% of the CvA alumni work as performing artists and 90% indicated that the Master of Music provided a good preparation for the (competences they need to) work as a music professional.

Moreover, the committee learned that the CvA keeps an eye on alumni and their professional practice, their international venues, the competitions they participate in and the prizes they win. The CvA follows them as their careers develop, and invites them to alumni events and CvA projects. The Jazz department recently launched the initiative to bring alumni to the CvA to teach, play and discuss their careers with students. Every five years, the CvA holds its own alumni survey featuring detailed questions about performance practice and current needs and expectations of the professional field.

Considerations

The achievement of the intended learning outcomes is established by looking at the quality of the final exams and at the careers young graduates pursue after their studies. Based on the sample it reviewed, the committee considers that the quality of the final exams definitely reflects the requirements for a master exam at a Conservatorium. Moreover, it is to the credit of the programme that almost all graduates find relevant positions as performing artists.

The committee noticed in the written materials and in the discussions with all stakeholders that it is the ambition of the CvA to train talented musicians to join the top of the international profes-

sion. The final exams it looked into and the performance it attended of young graduates and master students confirm according to the committee that the Conservatorium is succeeding in this ambition.

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the assessment committee concludes that the Master of Music programme **meets** standard 4, achieved learning outcomes.

Attachments

Attachment 1 Assessment committee

Raoul van Aalst MSc.,BA panel chair on behalf of AeQui

Prof. Robert Ehrlich, Rector of the Hochschule für Musik "Hanns Eisler" Berlin

Dr. Keller Coker, Dean of the New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music, New York.

Prof. dr. Cas Smithuijsen, emeritus professor Art & Culture at Radboud University Nijmegen

Francesca Ajossa, BA, master student at Codarts Rotterdam

Mark Delmartino MA, NVAO-certified panel secretary and CeQuInt certified auditor.

All panel-members and the secretary signed a declaration of independence and confidentiality, which were submitted to NVAO.

Attachment 2 Program of the assessment

Venue: Conservatorium van Amsterdam, room 445

Monday 27 January 2020

- 11.00 Arrival panel and preparatory meeting (+ lunch)
- 12.30 Meeting with school board / programme management
- 13.30 Guided tour of the Conservatorium
- 14.30 Meeting with programme co-ordinators
- 15.15 Meeting on internationalisation
- 16.00 Meeting with alumni / work-field representatives
- 17.00 Break (+ dinner)
- 19.30 Master talent showcase
- 22.00 End of day 1

Tuesday 28 January 2020

- 09.30 Arrival panel and preparatory meeting
- 10.00 Presentation of projects
- 11.00 Meeting with teaching staff
- 11.45 Meeting with students
- 12.30 Consultation hour (+ lunch)
- 13.30 Meeting with examination board
- 14.30 Meeting on research projects
- 15.30 Internal panel meeting
- 17.00 Feedback to school board / programme management
- 17.45 Plenary feedback
- 18.00 End of site visit

A list of the interviewees is available.

Attachment 3 Documents

Information reports

- Master of Music, Management Review for Accreditation 2020, Conservatorium van Amsterdam.
- Master of Music, Self-evaluation report for the Certificate for Quality in Internationalisation, Conservatorium van Amsterdam 2020.

Annexes to the information reports

- Student Chapter
- Education and Examination Regulations (OER 2019-2020)
- Dutch National Training Profile for Music
- AEC Learning Outcomes 2017
- Overview curriculum Master of Music
- Programme assessment and competence matrix 2019
- Study Guide Classical Music
- Study Guide Jazz Music
- Study Guide Pop Music
- Research Guide
- Internationalisation Goals
- Selection of prizes won by students, alumni and teachers
- Example of Diploma Supplement
- List of international partners, student exchanges and research partners
- List of staff members – Faculty of the Conservatorium van Amsterdam
- Recommendations previous accreditation Master of Music
- Example project 1 – Research Symposium 2018 & 2019
- Example project 2 – Project week Jazz 2019 – Kind of Blue

Materials made available on site

- Conservatorium van Amsterdam 2019-2020
- Conservatorium van Amsterdam. This is how it works 2019-2020
- Conservatorium van Amsterdam. Faculty 2019/2020
- Selection of research projects and their assessment

Graduation projects

Links to selected final exams and their assessment of 25 Master of Music students who graduated in 2017-2018 and 2018-2019.



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