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REPORT

FINAL REPORT ON
ASSESSMENT AND STANDARDS

'POLIFONIA'
WORKING GROUP
ON ASSESSMENT
AND STANDARDS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AEC Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen

EQF European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning

HME Higher Music Education

HMEI Higher Music Education Institution

LO Learning Outcome

PDD 'Polifonia' Dublin Descriptors

WG Working Group

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

1.1. CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT

Since its launch in 2004, the ERASMUS Network for Music 'Polifonia' [1] has proactively addressed European higher education policy issues (such as mobility, research, quality assurance and accreditation, admission and assessment, links with the profession, etc.) from the perspective of higher music education (HME). Through the consistent output of high quality products, it has been able to raise the awareness of these issues throughout the sector, which has subsequently supported the implementation of these outputs at both institutional and national levels. From a general higher education point of view, 'Polifonia' has often been cited as a good example of what can be achieved through a subject-specific and European-level approach to the modernisation agenda that was initiated by the Bologna Declaration and is now embedded in the Europe 2020 strategy.

The 'Polifonia' project, supported by the ERASMUS Networks programme of the European Union [2], is the biggest European project on professional music training to date. The first project cycle ran from 2004-2007, the second from 2007-2010 and the third, jointly coordinated by the Royal Conservatoire The Hague and the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC), from 2011-2014. In this last cycle, experts from 55 different institutions in the field of higher music education and the music profession were involved, coming from 26 European countries and 4 countries outside Europe.

The overall aim of 'ERASMUS Network for Music 'Polifonia' is to promote innovation in and enhance the quality, attractiveness and accessibility of European higher music education through cooperation at the European level.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

'Polifonia' had the following objectives:

To contribute to the Modernisation Agenda for Higher Education in Europe through:

- Curriculum reform by:

    a   promoting competence-based learning with the use of learning outcomes for the 3 cycles in higher music education with a specific focus on how such outcomes should be assessed;

    b. deepening the implementation of the 3-cycle structure through a reflection on the content and structure of the 2nd cycle, based on the principles laid down in the European Qualifications Framework for Higher Education;

    c. addressing research as a new component in study programmes in higher music education through the creation of a new European Platform for Artistic Research (EPARM), linking institutions and individuals engaged in the development of Artistic Doctorates and giving music students from all study cycles the possibility to exchange information on research activities, methodologies and progression routes to Artistic Doctoral study.

- Governance reform by:

    a. taking the existing European-level and subject-specific approach to quality assurance to the

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[1] For more information about the 'Polifonia' project, visit its website www.polifonia.eu.

[2] The Erasmus academic networks were supported by the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) of the European Commission, the European Funding programme in the field of education and training, in place between 2007 and 2014. The Erasmus academic networks were designed to promote European co-operation and innovation in specific subject areas. For more information on this funding programme, visit the website http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/erasmus/erasmus_networks_en.php.

next stage through the further development of expertise in this area and exploration of the feasibility for a European-level quality assurance agency for the sector;

    b. developing a new model for international institutional benchmarking specifically designed for institutions in the sector as a quality enhancement tool.

- Promoting closer cooperation between higher music education institutions and organisations in the music profession through activities that benefit from strong involvement of organisations in the music profession in identifying:

    a. the relevance of the current study programmes for the changing labour market, in line with the EU debate on 'New Skills for New Jobs';

    b. continuing professional development needs of professionals in the workplace;

    c. examples of research partnerships between educational institutions and organisations which can serve as models for the further development of expertise in the cultural sector.

- Promoting mobility in the higher music education sector through the development of expertise and tools for the full recognition of student achievement gained through exchanges and multi-site learning in joint degrees.

- Enhancing the quality and international attractiveness of the European higher music education sector by involving as participants in the project experts from key institutions in third countries.

In the 3rd 'Polifonia' cycle, five working groups (WGs) were engaged in different topics connected to the general aims of the project:

- WG 1 on 'Assessment and Standards'
- WG 2 on 'Artistic Research in Higher Music Education'
- WG 3 on 'Quality Enhancement, Accreditation and Benchmarking
- WG 4 on 'Lifelong learning: Educating for Entrepreneurship'
- WG 5 on 'Mobility, Recognition, Monitoring and Joint Degrees'

This report illustrates the work that has been undertaken on Assessment and Standards by WG1.

1.3 MEMBERS OF THE WG ON ASSESSMENT AND STANDARDS

- Cristina Brito da Cruz and Sandra Barroso (Escola Superior de Música de Lisboa, Lisbon)
- Hannah Hebert and Eleonoor Tchernoff (Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC))
- Peder Hofmann (Royal College of Music in Stockholm, Stockholm)
- Mary Lennon (Dublin Institute of Technology Conservatory of Music and Drama, Dublin)
- Jörg Linowitzki (Lübeck University of Music, Lübeck)
- Gary McPherson (University of Melbourne, Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, Australia)
- Jacques Moreau (Cefedem Rhône-Alpes, Lyon)

- Jan Rademakers (Conservatorium Maastricht, Maastricht)

- Ester Tomasi-Fumics (Chair - University of Music and Performing Arts, Vienna)

1.4 BACKGROUND

Despite the efforts made by countries and institutions within the Bologna Process to contribute to a harmonisation of country specific higher education systems, there is still need for reflection about relevant areas of this process. In particular, the philosophy underpinning the Bologna Process has still to be transported to everyday life within institutions. Assessment of students and their academic achievements is a prominent element in the educational process and a central issue on the higher education agenda in Europe. It has major implications for learning and teaching as well as justifying the awarding of credits, degrees and qualifications on the basis of a set of certified standards and competences.

Especially in the artistic disciplines, where assessing artistic ability and quality has a strong subjective aspect and often a non-verbal form, assessment has always been a challenging issue for teachers and students alike. Additionally, recent developments relating to output-oriented curriculum design and competence- based education raise questions regarding the nature and purpose of our assessment practices. Recurring questions include:

- Are we really assessing what we think we assess?

- How can artistic performance be assessed fairly and transparently?

- How can we give constructive feedback and justify awarded grades?

- Do we agree on the standards we assess students against?

- Do the assessment methods and criteria applied support the learning objectives (e.g. independence, critical awareness and ability to create, realise and express the student's own artistic concepts)?

- How are learning outcomes and assessment linked?

Other important questions relate to assessment systems and the usefulness of criteria in assessing, the role of external examiners, the issue of grading and the understanding of the concept of standards across departments, institutions and even countries.

The WG is aware that within European higher music education institutions assessment systems and policies vary significantly. The spectrum covers detailed and descriptor-rich procedures in assessing student achievement as well as rather holistic approaches towards assessment. This diversity becomes evident when elements of assessment such as grading scales, grading criteria, the composition of examination panels or quality assurance mechanisms are being monitored.

Assessing whether graduates have reached the expected outcomes has an important quality assurance aspect, as well as an obvious pedagogical impact. It would not be possible to discuss standards for academic achievement without understanding the teaching and learning processes that underpin assessment. As assessment is closely linked to each institution's educational profile and to its teachers' shared values and understanding of the nature of learning, a completely uniform way of assessing student development is not a realistic or even desirable goal. However, in order to meet the objectives of the Bologna process and the development of the European Higher Education Area, it is important to reach a higher level of consensus on good practices and principles in assessing student academic achievement. This is also critical in developing the implementation and understanding of concepts such as output-oriented curriculum design, competence-based learning, and qualification frameworks. Understanding assessment practices, and having a shared understanding of standards across institutions, can contribute significantly to the quality of recognition of qualifications within Europe and beyond.

This report aims to help interested members of higher music education institutions to access the working process and the results of the 'Polifonia' project's work on assessment and standards that tackled some of the above questions. On the following pages findings and conclusions of a 3 year project period are outlined.

1.5 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

To engage with assessment is a logical consequence of the ongoing work undertaken by the AEC across more than 10 years of European project work that has focused on the development of curricula and quality assurance. The development of shared reference points for higher music education, the so-called AEC Learning Outcomes [3], which started in 2001, was an important step towards the creation of a common understanding and a broad discussion about the aims of higher music education in Europe. In a subsequent phase the 'Polifonia'/Dublin Descriptors [4] were formulated in 2006 with reference to the shared Dublin Descriptors. In 2011 the participation in the formulation of a sector wide qualifications framework for the Humanities and the Arts (HUMART) [5] led to descriptions of competences from level 4 to 8 according to the European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) [6]. The later products were cross-checked with the AEC Learning Outcomes to ensure the highest possible congruence between the different tools.

In addition, a handbook on curriculum design[7] and a handbook on assessment [8] have been produced. The handbooks highlight the importance of aligning learning outcomes and assessment in curricula and the role these aspects of teaching and learning play in quality assurance. Many higher music education institutions across Europe have been assisted by these tools when developing their own curricula and learning outcomes in line with national demands and European standards[9].

1.6 CURRENT PROJECT

In the 3rd 'Polifonia' project (2011-2014), coming from a history of work on learning outcomes and competences on a European level in two previous cycles, the initial focus was on how much these reference points influenced practices across the different institutions and, more specifically, how they may have impacted on assessment practices. While in a first working phase, it became clear that the main aim of the WG on assessment and standards was to strengthen the shared understanding of assessment methods, procedures and standards in European higher music education. This shift in focus occurred in response to the diverse assessment practices to be found across a range of European institutions. It was the working group's intent to link the theory represented by earlier 'Polifonia' work on curriculum development and assessment to the reality of teaching and assessment practices in institutions, and to explore ways of developing shared understandings of standards and procedures.

1.7 OVERVIEW OF WORKING PROCESS

The WG consequently has engaged in a discussion on factors influencing assessment processes in HME institutions.

[3] www.efpa.eu/download/ff50966dba871e96230fdf9542586e4d, pp. 55-64

[4] www.efpa.eu/download/ff50966dba871e96230fdf9542586e4d, pp. 51-54

[5] www.unideusto.org/tuningeu/sqf-humanities-and-arts.html

[6] http://ec.europa.eu/eqf/home_en.htm

[7] Cox, J. (2007) Curriculum Design and Development in Higher Music Education, Utrecht: Association Européenne des Conservatoires

[8] Cox, J. (2010) Admission and Assessment in Higher Music Education, Utrecht: Association Européenne des Conservatoires

[9] More information on the previous 'Polifonia' cycles can be found on the website www.polifonia.eu

Sources of evidence that were considered by the working group included: discussions between international experts within the working group and within the 'Polifonia' project network; a sample survey on important elements of assessment for European HME Institutions; a literature review; discussions during workshops at the AEC congress and the AEC international relations coordinators' meeting; the analysis of a questionnaire on external examiner; and the outcomes of two international seminars on assessment and standards.

The seminars had a twofold intention. First, they were intended to reflect existing assessment practices and second, to discuss current standards within the community. The method employed to develop a common understanding of standards was consensus moderation [10] . A relevant project that lent expertise to the 'Polifonia' WG developing this method is the 'Assessment in Music' (AiM) project at the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University, in co-operation with the University of Newcastle and the University of Tasmania in Australia. [11]

1.8 OUTCOMES

From the evidence found, the WG concluded that competence-based learning has impacted unevenly on everyday teaching and assessing. While institutions may have learning outcomes or competence profiles in place, it is often the case that this has not changed the way teachers assess. The standards HME shares by agreeing on a set of European reference points as represented by the AEC LOs do not guarantee that we share the methods or processes by which assessment decisions are being reached concerning the academic achievement of stated learning outcomes. Research shows that numerous factors impact on the complexity of assessment processes. Some of these are extrinsic factors such as the local or national system the institution operates in or the setting of the assessment situation. Others are intrinsic such as the personal experience or the expertise of the assessor.

The findings of the WG highlight that the results of assessment in HME, however they are measured, are not always seen to be fair, reliable and consistent even within one institution. In order to achieve comparable results (as a basis for potential benchmarking) on a European level, more attention has to be given to processes such as consensus moderation. At the same time it has to be stressed that individuality in artistic expression and unexpected creative outcomes remain highly valued in this artistic discipline and, by nature, are not a subject for institutional benchmarking.

In the light of the above, the material and conclusions of the project work are meant to assist institutions in reflecting on and developing their own assessment systems. What follows in the chapters below provides an overview of the work of the group focusing on:

- **Assessment Practices in HME in Europe**

  This section includes a general introduction on the principles of assessment followed by a description of the survey, focusing on the rationale behind the theoretical framework, outlining the methodological approach adopted and presenting the analysis and interpretation of the data.

- **Developing a shared understanding of 'standards' and reference points**

  This section reports on the two seminars, focusing on both process and product. Information on how the seminars were set up and framed are provided before a discussion of the outcomes in relation to emerging issues such as the panel process, the use of assessment criteria, grading systems, the role of feedback, contextual factors along with challenges and implications for institutions.

[10] More about the method of consensus moderation can be found in Chapter 3.2

[11] http://assessmentinmusic.com.au/research-results/

- **Roles, contexts and challenges for examiners and assessors**

This section explores the role of the examiner in assessment in HME, focusing on both internal and external examiners. It highlights the role that external examiners can play in developing shared understandings and in ensuring comparability of standards across institutions and countries. It examines the external examiner profile and discusses codes of practice.

- **Conclusions and reflections**

This final section offers an overview of the project outcomes, explores the implications of the findings for assessment in HME in Europe, and provides some reflective questions for institutions to consider when developing and refining their own assessment systems and processes.

2. ASSESSMENT PRACTICES IN EUROPEAN HME INSTITUTIONS

2.1 SURVEY OF EXISTING ASSESSMENT METHODS AND PROCEDURES

As part of the initial funding agreement a Europe-wide survey of existing assessment methods and procedures in HME was proposed, as a means of contextualizing information that would allow the WG to understand more broadly the current state of assessment practices across AEC institutions. In formulating the survey, the WG discussed variations within European HME systems with regard to assessment practices and assessment processes, and the degree to which these are transparent, and are reflected and embedded in assessment policies within individual institutions.

Based on these discussions, an online questionnaire was developed to survey existing assessment methods and elements of assessment processes in HME Institutions. The purpose of this questionnaire was to provide insight concerning the different practices found in European institutions and to stimulate discussion around those common elements that would be helpful for the WG and future AEC discussions.

2.2 THE ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

Twenty institutions in 9 different European countries completed the questionnaire. We acknowledge the limitations that are inherent in such a sample, so the following information provides only a guide to what we found after analysing the results from the institutions who completed the survey.

2.2.1 FOCUS ON PERFORMANCE

A methodological question arose in relation to the range of programmes, modules, disciplines and subjects found in HME institutions and the variety of assessment methods and procedures employed. In order to produce survey data that would be both meaningful and manageable, the WG decided to focus on assessment of music performance as this aspect of practice remains the core activity in all Conservatoires as described in the 'Tuning' Report (2011). [1]

> *"Practical assessments usually form the most important element in a Conservatoire student's final examination and in the determining of his or her award. These usually take the form of final recitals, although ensemble situations may be assessed…. Assessment is multi-faceted, and dependent on the specific content and competencies. One aspect stands out however: 'intersubjective' assessments by professionals in juries play a key role in higher music education, and help in securing a sound, balanced, state-of –the art informed assessment of students (p.42)."*

After much deliberation, this emphasis on performance assessments and the practice of using juries and panels of assessors became the main focus for the WG in its approach to developing the survey, and exploring the concept of equivalence and comparability in assessment processes and procedures across institutions. The survey therefore sought to obtain data on the following issues:

- use of learning outcomes (AEC or other);
- use of assessment criteria;
- composition of assessment panels;
- training of panels;

[1] www.aec-music.eu/userfiles/File/aec-brochure-tuning-educational-structures-in-europe-en.pdf

- panel grading and decision making processes;

- grading scales;

- feedback to students;

- strengths and weaknesses of current systems.

A description of each of these issues is provided in the following sections.

2.2.2 LEARNING OUTCOMES (LO)

A majority of the institutions answering the questionnaire employed Learning Outcomes (15 institutions) with 9 institutions using the AEC Learning Outcomes, and 6 using Learning Outcomes (LO) devised in their respective institution.

Within institutions that do use LOs can be found a range of approaches, from those who use the AEC LOs, through to those who use a combination of AEC and institutional LOs, LO that are based on the PDD [2] and Module LOs, individually formulated LOs that are developed by individual subject specialists, and LOs derived from national accreditation and evaluation agency requirements.

Learning outcomes that were included in the assessment process of institutions were described across a range of performance related areas. In order of frequency reported by institutions, they included: artistic expression (autonomy, interpretation, creativity, originality), technical abilities, social interactions (cooperation/communication among ensemble), a sense of musical understanding (critical judgments, evaluation), and pedagogical factors.

2.2.3 USE OF ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Assessment Criteria were reported in only a small number of institutions and where these occurred, key terminology included criteria that described 'technique'; 'physiological'; 'physical'; 'instrumental'; 'interpretation'; 'expression' and 'communication'.

2.2.4 COMPOSITION OF ASSESSMENT PANELS

Performance examinations were most often conducted by a panel comprising a diverse membership, with large differences in size and expertise, and also in relation to the roles and function of the panels, being noted between institutions,. Typically, institutions use internal members (3-4 panel members), but we note also that the range of personnel on panels ranged from 1 to 12 members. Nine of the institutions used external panel members (1-3 panel members), and in 5 of the institutions, internal members included senior administrative staff or management. The student's own teacher was included in 13 of the institutions, while other teachers of the same subject area from the same institution were included in 13 of the institutions, and teachers of other subject areas in 6 of the institutions. In some institutions (4), panel membership included students or researchers (2). Typically, these internal panel members do not vote but rather observe and are able to make comments. In 6 institutions, examiners and moderators from other institutions are used, with 6 institutions including experts from the field on their panels. Typically, external panel members are allowed to vote.

2.2.5 TRAINING OF PANELS

Seventeen of the institutions do not train their assessors with only one reporting that it provided ongoing workshops

[2] 'Polifonia' Dublin Descriptors see also www.aec-music.eu/about-aec/work--policies/curriculum-design

for the purpose of training members for its assessment panel.

2.2.6 PANEL GRADING AND DECISION MAKING PROCESSES

It is noteworthy that almost all institutions (18) used either a final summative assessment (9), or a mix of summative and formative evaluation (9). Only 2 used formative evaluation to assess progress throughout the learning process.

The decision making process was described in a variety of ways with reference to the use of discussion, consensus, voting, and various ways of marking and grading, including: taking an average of the individual assessors' marks; the proposal of a grade by the student's own teacher followed by discussion; or arriving at a final grade through general discussion. One institution reported that there was no panel involved and that 'it is only the student's main subject teacher who assesses all the 3 parts of the final exam'. The descriptions below are indicative of the kinds of answers provided:

- *'Discussion among the panel with the proposal of an individual mark. The final mark could be reached by an agreement of all the members or, in the rare cases of impossibility of the agreement, an average of all individual marks.'*

- *'There is discussion on the performance and then the panel members vote (open vote or secret vote, both are possible). Everybody proposes a grade, the result is mediated.'*

As can be seen in the above comments decisions regarding the grade/mark/award are typically taken after deliberation, after which, panel members provide marks or a rating to the chair. This rating or mark is then combined to form an average mark or grade by averaging all contributions.

2.2.7 GRADING SCALES

Grading systems among the institutions vary greatly. We observed 10 different systems. In the majority of institutions (17) the final overall grade is provided and in 9 of the institutions the single subject is weighted as well as the final assessment.

There were almost as many grading/marking scales indicated as institutions involved. These included: 1-5 (5 - excellent/4-very good/3-good/2-satisfactory/1-unsatisfactory); 1-5 (5-fail/4-sufficient/3-satisfactory/2-good/1-very good); 1-6 (6 indicates fail); 1-10 (1-4-fail/5-10-pass); 1-20; 1-25; 1-30 (3 grades, 18-30 is the highest grade); 45-60; 1-100 and A B C D F. In some institutions the grades awarded for performance are weighted amongst grades from other subjects to formulate a final overall degree award/classification whilst in others, the final grade is based solely on grades for performance.

15 of the responding institutions stated that reassessment was possible when a student fails. Examples of reassessment included allowing students to repeat the same program within 6 weeks, screening students before allowing them to undertake the next exam, and requiring a medical certificate or other evidence as justification for reassessment.

2.2.8 FEEDBACK TO STUDENTS

All institutions provide some form of feedback to students. The types of feedback provided included written (2), oral (14), or a combination of both written and oral feedback (4). Explanations provided by respondents included the following:

- *'The jury talks with the student about the positive and negative aspects of his performance and give indications of how he can improve';*

- *'There is a short conversation with the student after the grade is given';*

- *'grade is written, the feedback about the grade is oral';*

- *'oral feedback and written summary of the feedback of the jury'; and*

- *'feedback by own teacher'.*

2.2.9 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF CURRENT SYSTEMS

Respondents were asked to identify the strengths and weaknesses in their current assessment procedures. Responses can be described as both individualised and contextualised with answers focusing on a wide range of issues in relation to assessment processes and procedures. The comments below provide an indication of the kinds of areas addressed:

'The positive aspects of this assessment [system] is the fact that all members of the panel, although no specific training in assessment, have experience in this field and know in a general way the work done by the student over the years and the requirements of the school. In some cases we find a variation of ratings [in instrumental exams] - a very good recital may be in some cases 19, others 17 - and it is a problem that we face. It is important:

- *to clarify what represents each classification (we are working on this);*

- *the interest and reliability of the presence of external members on the jury in assessing, teachers from other schools in the area. For economic reasons it is difficult to do this in the present.*

- *the presence in all examinations of a teacher or group of teachers (commission), not necessarily the area but belonging to the school.'*

'The discussions around the level of the performance are toughest when it comes to the thresholds of passing and distinction. As there are no criteria this happens on the basis of the personal values of the teachers, calibrated against the performance of other students. An element that relativizes the judgement is, that the grade is a medium of all panel members present. The panel has to have a minimum of 3 members.'

'In some situations a women is required on the panel, if no female teacher is available then a representative of the equal treatment commission is present.'

'Strong: easy to organise because of the budget

Weak: no committee, no written reports, no criteria for students to improve their study'

2.3 SUMMARY POINTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The results of the survey were discussed among the WG, who identified the following issues that deserve to be considered by individual institutions and more generally across AEC institutions.

- **Learning Outcomes** provide statements about the outcomes of learning that capture specifically what knowledge, skills, attitudes learners should be able to exhibit as a result of their learning. Creating clear LOs for each component of a music course therefore serves to connect content and assessment around learning and guide how institutions teach and assess progress.

  Whilst we recognise that there are many cultural, institutional and regional differences between AEC institutions, LOs provide institutions with a means of benchmarking their efforts with other comparable institutions, and are an important means of ensuring that students understand standards and what is expected of them.

- The **Assessment Criteria** used to guide examinations vary considerably across institutions. The WG agreed however, that LOs and assessment criteria used for performance examinations should balance expressive, contextual and technical dimensions. The collation by the AEC of a range of assessment criteria would provide institutions with a resource they could draw upon as they refine their own assessment practices.

  Interestingly, Assessment Criteria were not always made available to students in the institutions who completed the survey. With this in mind, the WG discussed the advantages for institutions to think about 'assessment for learning' in which the LOs and Assessment Criteria used for examinations are clearly known and understood by students. This would enable students to better understand what is expected of them at each level of their education, and why they have received the grades and evaluations provided after their examinations.

- The **Composition of Assessment Panels** varies across HME institutions and as expected was dependent on institutional needs. The WG discussed the general lack of informal or systematic training of panel members that would ensure that each member of a performance assessment panel provides evaluations that are based on institutional LOs and assessment criteria, balanced with their own personal experience and specialist knowledge about the instrument or voice.

- **Grading Systems** are dependent on institutional needs, and as would be expected, vary enormously across institutions within the EU. The WG discussed the importance for institutions to benchmark their own practices with other institutions, so that they can refine further their own assessment practices. In this regard, the WG felt that the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation Systems' (ECTS) [3] grading scale that is proposed in the ECTS users' guide [4] is difficult to implement currently within HME institutions because it implies a normal 'bell like' standardised curve of grade distributions that is easier to achieve in institutions that have large cohorts of students. Furthermore, overrepresentation of high grades (for example 3-5 on a scale of 1-5) in performance assessment also impacts on attempts by institutions to adopt the ECTS grading scale. There are a number of reasons for this, among them. First, because of the intensive one-to-one collaboration with the teacher in the main subject, in some institutions, there is a very tight control of when a student is allowed to take the final exam. Second, as this area of student development is so central for the students' future profession (actually some level of excellence is a prerequisite for survival in this highly competitive field), students are frequently allowed to re-sit the final performance examination in order to reach a sufficiently high level. Third, the subjective and personal nature of artistic expression does not combine easily with a comparative approach to assessment. Many institutions are currently discussing the possibility of introducing a pass-fail assessment and putting more focus on oral feedback, where the assessment is not judgmental or comparative. These comments demonstrate that further discussions and work is therefore needed on this issue.

The results of this survey were focused on performance. However, the WG noted the need for institutions to examine assessment practices in other parts of the curriculum and to consider how these might interface with what is being undertaken in the performance programme.

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[3] http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/ects_en.htm

[4] http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/docs/ects-guide_en.pdf

3. TOWARDS A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF STANDARDS

3.1 'STANDARDS' IN EUROPEAN HME

The second objective outlined in the project proposal referred to 'a benchmarking exercise to strengthen shared understanding of standards in European HME' ('Polifonia', 2013). In any benchmarking situation it is important that like is being compared with like. As the results of the survey showed evidence of widely varying practices and traditions in relation to assessment processes and procedures, the WG were of the view that in order to benchmark or compare academic achievement standards there is a need for consistency and reliability in relation to assessment policy and practice. Therefore, in the context of this project, we define benchmarking as an effort to map out and contextualize the diversity of assessment approaches within European HME institutions in ways that work toward a shared understanding of current practices and standards. In considering the concept of 'standards', the WG have focused on both academic achievement standards, and on standards relating to assessment processes and procedures, in an effort to provide information and reference points that might be useful for individual institutions to consider as they seek to refine and improve their own programmes.

In addressing the issue of academic achievement standards in HME in Europe, the group's theoretical framework was informed by the work of Royce Sadler and by the 'Assessment in Music' (AiM) Project [1] ('An Approach to Aligning Assessment with Threshold Learning Outcomes in the Creative and Performing Arts'), based at the Queensland Conservatorium at Griffith University, Australia. In discussing academic achievement standards, Sadler explains how:

> *'Achievement is inferred from student responses to assessment tasks, and is often represented by marks, scores or other symbols. Ultimately, these appraisals lead to grades in academic courses, the grades being the main object of interest for quality assurance purposes.' (Sadler, 2010, p. 2)* [2]

Sadler's concept of 'consensus moderation' is the core methodology employed in the Australian project and has obvious resonances with the "inter-subjective' assessments by professionals in juries' referred to in Chapter 1, which are characteristic of assessment of music performance in HME in Europe. Sadler describes consensus moderation as follows:

> *'A common method of moderating the marks awarded by different assessors in a course is for them to all trial-mark the same sample of student responses to a given assessment task. They then compare the marks they tentatively allocate, engage in focussed discussion and come to agreement on appropriate academic achievement 'standards' to which they agree to mark the remainder of the student work...This model is referred to...as consensus moderation. Observe that it provides a concrete environment in which to work, not an abstract environment of words, descriptors and statements. It taps directly into the primary evidence of student achievement.' (Sadler, 2010, p.4)*

The WG recognised the potential of the consensus moderation approach in working towards the goal of inter-institutional consensus on standards in European HME, through providing a means of developing shared understandings of standards among individuals and institutions. Thus, it was decided to use the Training Seminars that were built into the project proposal as a means of exploring the possibilities for developing consensus moderation in the European context by focusing on moderation policy and procedures and the calibration of standards for the awarding of grades.

[1] Information on the AiM Project at www.assessmentinmusic.com.au

[2] http://app.griffith.edu.au/assessment-matters/pdfs/assuring-academic-achievement-standards-second-edition.pdf

3.2 TOWARDS A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF 'STANDARDS'

The WG organised two seminars: 'Enhancing Standards for Assessment through Effective Practice: An International Dialogue' was held in the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna 26-27 April 2013 and 'Intensive Workshop on Assessment, Standards and Institutional Policy' was held in the Bellini Conservatoire, Palermo, 7 November 2013. The seminars served a number of purposes: to develop expertise in calibrating standards across HME institutions in Europe through exploring the possibilities of consensus moderation at international level; to raise awareness of issues around assessment in music through initiating and facilitating dialogue and discussion on processes and procedures, and to gather information on assessment policies and practice in participants' institutions. As might be expected, the outcomes of the seminars informed the ongoing working process of the WG on a number of different levels. A similar format was adopted for the two seminars involving practical assessment exercises, keynote presentations, and opportunities for participants to reflect on and discuss aspects of assessment practices within their own institutions. [3]

The design and content of the seminars was informed both by the on-going deliberations of the WG as we refined and developed our working plan and our theoretical framework, and by the results of the preliminary survey as outlined above. The Vienna seminar was advertised as providing a forum for AEC colleagues involved in assessing in HME institutions to engage in dialogue around principles and processes of assessment in music and to explore specific issues in relation to the use of criteria in assessing, the role of external examiners, the issue of grading and the understanding of the concept of 'standards' across institutions. The Palermo seminar was advertised as offering senior staff of HME institutions and those involved in assessment (as both internal and external examiners) an opportunity to reflect on specific topics around assessment including quality, standards and institutional policy. While directed primarily towards a different audience, the seminar maintained the same dual focus as the Vienna seminar - focusing on exploring ways of calibrating standards across institutions and on developing existing assessment policies within institutions. In relation to this latter point, participants at the Palermo seminar were asked to provide written reflections on an aspect of their own institutional assessment policy regarded as a strength, and an aspect they would like to improve. This had a dual purpose - providing more data for the WG and also in encouraging participants to reflect on the issues prior to the seminar.

3.2.1 STANDARDS OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: CONSENSUS MODERATION IN PRACTICE

Of particular interest to the WG were the assessment exercises that were undertaken by participants, generally in groups of five, simulating a panel, and involving the panel members in a process of consensus moderation. The participants were asked to:

a. make an individual assessment of recorded performances of final year students and produce a mark/grade and written comments on the performance

b. discuss the performance with the other members of the group, arrive at an agreed mark/grade and provide written feedback for the performer from the panel

At the Vienna seminar, the exercise was undertaken under three different conditions – without criteria, using detailed criteria and using grade descriptors. In Palermo, the same detailed criteria were used during each of the three assessment exercises. In Vienna the performances being assessed were all piano performances whereas the exercise in Palermo involved flute, violin and piano assessments. The same grading scale (1-5 / Excellent – Unsatisfactory) was used at both seminars. The WG members were involved as observers during the process.

The observers reported that, through a process of discussion, each group was able to reach consensus on a grade to be awarded to each student, while still allowing for differing opinions within the group. The discussions within each group

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[3] A detailed report on the seminars is available on the 'Polifonia' at www.aec-music.eu/polifonia/project-events/seminars-and-conferences/seminar-vienna-26-27-april-2013.

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were wide-ranging and the process of coming to agreement and calculating a grade varied from group to group, with the criteria playing a more important role in some groups than others. It was observed that the criteria provided an important reference point when there were differing views expressed but it was noted also that some groups omitted to use them at all. In some cases, other *'criteria'* were brought into the discussions whereby some panels also made comparisons between the three students and made reference to the age and 'potential' of the students as a factor and also the suitability of the repertoire for the level and for the particular individual. The demands of the profession also featured in the discussion and there was some debate around the idea of a Bachelor degree as a *'threshold'* award qualifying the student for immediate entry into the profession or as an entry level for 2nd cycle study. The term 'prospective' assessment was used, whereby the panel would appear to be assessing the student's performance on the basis of what job/position they might be able for in the future. Reference was made also to the specific demands of the different instruments and attention drawn to the impact of the quality of the accompaniment, the quality of the instruments themselves and in this particular context, the quality of the recording, pointing to issues of reliability in assessment.

The observers were conscious of the group dynamic as an important factor in the assessment process. While the discussions covered a range of issues and the participants were successful in communicating their views and critiquing the performance within the group, the task of providing written feedback for the students caused problems for some of the groups, perhaps due to difficulties with the language or lack of experience in providing detailed written feedback. There was evidence that the exercise in consensus moderation achieved its purpose in facilitating the exchange of views on *'standards'* and that such an approach, could, over time, lead to shared understandings amongst European colleagues.[4]

3.2.2 ASSESSMENT PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES: ISSUES EMERGING FROM THE SEMINARS

As was pointed out above, as part of the process of addressing the issue of benchmarking of standards in HME, the WG sought also to move towards shared understanding of current assessment processes and procedures within AEC institutions, and to provide information and reference points for developing and improving existing practices. To this end, both seminars included time for discussion. Participants' reflections on the assessment exercise stimulated rich dialogue and more general discussion on related issues pertaining to their experiences of assessment processes in their own institutions, highlighting both areas of concern and of good practice. In addition, the written reflections, referred to above, provided by some of the Palermo seminar participants, also informed the discussions. These discussions allowed the WG to explore further the core issues examined in the survey, addressed in Chapter 2. We have tried to capture the most salient points of these reflections and discussions below.

ASSESSMENT PANELS

In relation to the composition of the panel, there was general agreement that the panel should include at least one instrumental expert. The composition of the panel was also discussed in relation to the role of the student's own teacher, and attention drawn to the effect this might have in 'censoring' other panel members, particularly in the context of one of the performances which received a 5 / 'fail' grade from all of the groups. On the other hand, the positive contribution that can be made by the teacher who has in depth knowledge of the student's abilities and progress was noted. The importance of having a strong chair of the jury was stressed, as was the inclusion of external examiners on panels which was seen to have a positive impact on the process. [5] The written reflections referred to all of these aspects as illustrated in the following comments: *'... (a) combination of assessment by self (student), internal and external examiners (latter from the working life), peers, and the main teacher...'; 'We use a fixed jury pool of external experts and a specified group of well-informed*

[4] Guidelines on how to organise Training Seminars are provided in Appendix 1

[5] Chapter 4 discusses the role of external examiners

jury presidents who are also members of the artistic board of the music department'.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

As the survey had shown, the use of criteria is not common practice in HME in many European countries. In the general discussion around the use of criteria there appeared to be agreement that it can be helpful in avoiding a purely *'emotional'* response, in providing a starting point for discussions, in keeping the panel focused and in communicating about standards of achievement. The more general criteria used were deemed to be more helpful than the more prescriptive criterion statements. However, it was apparent that language can be an issue and the point was made that criteria need to be kept simple and clear, particularly in the international context, as using criteria can be difficult for assessors who are not proficient in the language. The importance of students knowing on what basis they are being assessed was also raised in these discussions. One of the advantages of having clear criteria that are linked to appropriate well formulated Learning Outcomes, and of having them both publicly available and accessible, is that the rights of the student are acknowledged and assessment systems are seen to be more transparent, reliable and fair.

PANEL DYNAMICS AND PROCESS

The observers had noted the group dynamic as being an influential factor in the assessment process at the Vienna seminar and in the general discussion it was suggested that the Chair has an important role in managing interpersonal relations, monitoring 'dominant voices', dealing with 'tenacious' personalities, ensuring that all voices are heard and keeping the focus on student performance. While there were no negative comments regarding the group dynamics within the exercise, a number of colleagues expressed concern regarding assessments within their own institutions where 'not all voices are heard' and there can be problems with departmental/ institutional politics and an element of 'fighting' amongst colleagues. One of the written reflections from the Palermo seminar presents an ideal scenario for panel processes:

> *'This is carried out in the form of discussion and dialogue, is student centred, and both the individual progress of the student and the level of the performance in relation to the demands of the working life must be equally evaluated. The discussion is either recorded or a written summary is given to the student after the assessment is completed.'*

GRADING PROCEDURES

It was also pointed out that a panel 'tunes itself while working together over time' and that this can have an impact on grades awarded depending on the order of candidates, the speaking order of panel members and voting routines. There were many comments on the issue of how panels decide on a grade with reference made to the 'majority rules' approach, the mathematical processes whereby the student can receive a grade that none of the assessors chose, and negotiation towards consensus. There was quite a lot of discussion on problems arising from different levels of marking/grading between instrumental/vocal departments within an institution and the issue of inflated grades was also mentioned. One of the written reflections commented on the *'tendency toward grade inflation in performances classes – especially in applied instruction'*, referring to a *'hesitation on the part of applied instructors to offer a 'real world' assessment of a student's level'*. There was some discussion around the five point grading scale 1-5 (1-excellent / 5-unsatisfactory) which was described as a limitation by two of the groups. Some participants also found it difficult to change from their own familiar system (1-20) in a short space of time. There was also quite a lot of discussion around the role of grades/marks and how they are used in HME generally. One participant reported as follows: *'We have ended up using pass/fail completed with*

evaluative discussions wherever possible, but some of our partner schools require numeric grading when transferring credits, which is somewhat conflicting'. The non-recognition of grades awarded by other institutions was another issue that arose in this context.

FEEDBACK FOR STUDENTS

The issue of feedback for students was also addressed at the seminars. There was some discussion around assessors having the knowledge and expertise to make judgements, but lacking the ability to articulate the reasons behind their assessment decisions and to link them to criteria. It was also noted that the depth of the discussions amongst the panel members was not reflected in the feedback reports. One Head of Department reflected as follows: *'How to describe the scales for the criteria in practical exams? How to formulate when, for example, the student's tuning is just sufficient, or good, or very good? It is intrinsic knowledge for the expert jury member, but remains hard to phrase towards a student or an inspection team'*. Attention was drawn also to the relationship between learning outcomes, assessment criteria and feedback, with one member of the management team of an institution observing: *'We have found that our teachers must improve their ways of substantiating their judgements, in more objective terms, in relation to their own curriculum and module descriptions, based on clear criteria and standards.'* This links in to the quality of the written feedback provided and the importance of providing good reasons for the judgements made and the grade awarded – *'it must be clear, in writing, what the result of an exam is based on'*.

As was pointed out above, the observers at the seminars noted that language may have been an issue in relation to the quality of the written feedback provided by the assessors, so it was interesting to observe that there was energetic discussion around the role of oral feedback. Participants seemed to be particularly interested in the practice described by two colleagues (from different institutions and countries) whereby students receive oral feedback from each panel member immediately after their performance. During the panel exercise at the Palermo seminar, the 'fail' grade awarded to one of the performances generated some discussion around how feedback should be delivered when the student is unsuccessful, with a general consensus that initially the student should be informed in person of their failure with detailed written feedback, intended as a supportive tool, provided later.

'STANDARDS'

The discussions reflected the results of the survey in relation to the diversity to be found across assessment processes and policies in European HME institutions. In discussing the issue of standards in the European context the point was made that 'standardisation' is not the issue but shared values and understandings on issues such as learning outcomes, assessment procedures and grading systems. This was highlighted by one participant, whose institution is currently dealing with changes in national legislation around assessment issues, who observed *'the challenge for my conservatory...is to adapt to the new rules, bearing in mind standards used in other European countries'*.

TRAINING ISSUES

The discussions around the assessment exercise also brought up issues relating to the need for assessment training. Participants at both seminars gave positive feedback on their experience of the practical assessment exercises and welcomed the opportunity to discuss issues around assessment which, it was suggested, can be an area we take for granted within our own institutions. One participant at the Palermo seminar reflected on the need *'to improve the internal communication about the implementation of institutional policies'*, observing that this can be difficult given the large number of part-time teachers involved. It was suggested that 'a bank of examples', similar to the recorded examples used during the exercise could be useful for training purposes and would facilitate further discussion at the institutional level. There was general agreement on the need for more provision for training and professional development in this area, suggesting that

information on assessment issues can have an impact on the 'culture' within an institution, but noting also that for some institutions there is often a lack of time and resources to explore such issues with part-time staff and that assessment is seen primarily as the responsibility of those in management roles. One Head of Academics attending the Palermo seminar, whose institution had recently introduced a completely new assessment system, drew attention to both these issues:

> *Implementing new procedures takes time and effort and a lot of patience. This means that we have to spend a lot of time on coaching our teachers to work with the new rules and procedures on assessment. This is not only about knowing what these new rules and procedures are, but mainly changing the teachers' attitudes towards assessment.*

3.3 SEMINAR OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS

In relation to the objectives of the WG, these seminars can be seen as the start of a process of exploring the possibilities of 'consensus moderation' (even if only on a small scale as yet), as a means of working towards shared understandings of 'standards' in the European context. There was evidence that the seminars achieved their purpose in facilitating the exchange of views on standards and that such an approach, could, over time, lead to shared understandings amongst European colleagues, within institutions, across institutions and from country to country. The need to repeat the exercise or engage in similar exercises over a period of time was identified to *'unpack the way we think'* and *'make explicit shared values'*. This would be a characteristic of the consensus moderation approach as defined by Sadler. The WG were of the view that similar type training sessions could be developed for use at institutional/inter-institutional level and also identified the role that external examiners might have in the calibration of standards for the awarding of grades. [6] The seminars also provided valuable insight into the reality of participants' experiences of assessment practice in a range of institutions and, along with the survey, highlighted the need for consistency and reliability in assessment policy and practice, and in aligning assessment processes and procedures. The following chapters will address these issues.

3.4 SUMMARY POINTS AND CONCLUSIONS

In discussing the theoretical concepts underpinning the seminars along with the issues emerging from the practical exercises and discussions, the WG identified the following key points that may be useful for HME institutions in reflecting on their own institutional policies and practices.

- **Benchmarking**: Benchmarking is defined by the WG as an attempt to map out and contextualize the diversity of assessment approaches within European HME institutions in ways that work toward a shared understanding of current practices and standards.

- **Standards**: In considering the concept of 'standards', the WG have focused on both academic achievement standards and on standards relating to assessment processes and procedures, in an effort to provide information and reference points that might be useful for individual institutions to consider as they seek to refine and improve their own programmes.

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[6] See Appendix 1

- **'Consensus moderation'**: 'Consensus moderation', as defined by Royce Sadler involves assessors coming together to consider their individual assessments of students' work and, through a process of discussion and comparison, coming to agreement on the grades to be awarded and on appropriate academic achievement 'standards' on which to base future assessments. The WG put forward Sadler's concept of 'consensus moderation' as a means of promoting shared understandings on standards within HME in Europe. This concept underpinned the Training Seminars that focused on moderation policies and procedures and the calibration of standards for the awarding of grades. It also points to the role which external examiners can play in relation to the calibration of standards across institutions. [7]

- **Panel assessment processes**: The Training Seminars focused in particular on the panel assessment process commonly used in evaluating music performance in HME. Issues which need to be considered in this context include: the assessment context and the need for clarity and transparency regarding requirements and procedures; the composition of the panel and the roles assumed by the various internal and external assessors [8], the panel dynamics and procedures including the use of criteria, the process of reaching consensus on grading and the provision of feedback for students.

  Other issues to consider regarding feedback relate to whether feedback is provided in written or oral form and to the question of who delivers the oral feedback to the student.

- **Assessment Training Seminars**: The seminars highlighted the need for assessment training for staff in HME. While acknowledging issues of funding and resources, the WG recommend that HME institutions provide ongoing professional development in this area. It was also suggested that a bank of recorded examples of student performances, (similar to those used in the Vienna and Palermo Training Seminars), be built up within the AEC community and be used as a means of explorisng 'consensus moderation' and building towards shared understandings of standards within and across HME institutions. [9]

[7] See Chapter 4.3

[8] See Chapter 4.2

[9] See Appendix 1

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4.1 RATIONALE

During the final stages of a HME study cycle, students typically present themselves for evaluation on various aspects of their musical competencies in front of an assessment panel. The final form of this assessment often has more weight in the final grade awarded than other forms of evaluation that have been undertaken throughout the course of study and, in some institutions, is based solely on the final assessment. As the WG has learnt from the questionnaire data and the seminars there is a wide range of practices to be found in relation to the conditions and regulations under which these panels operate. The composition of the panel in relation to the number and roles of its assessors can have an influence on the result of the assessment. Therefore, it is important that institutions make these roles transparent and carefully reflect on the composition of such panels.

Jeremy Cox has discussed several important aspects of the final summative assessments (e.g. p. 55-60) [1] and there are various other sources, such as the PALATINE project [2] in the UK that provides an overview of many of the issues that were discussed by the WG. We chose not to repeat these here, but encourage readers to seek out these other important sources. The focus of our work was on the practical aspect of selecting assessors for panels and what follows has to be seen in this light.

The diversity of practices within European HME institutions made it impossible for our WG to define the *'perfect'* composition of assessment panels. We recognise that each institution will have its own practices for grading/marking each level of competence and that decisions are often influenced by the resources (financial and human) that are available and the assessment practices within the institution.

4.2 ROLES OF ASSESSORS

An assessment panel usually includes different types of examiners fulfilling different functions. Examiners can be internal or external to the institution. The main roles of assessors identified by the WG are the following:

The **specialist** in the discipline being assessed. The main task of the specialist is to ensure that the artistry and technical competence in the subject area assessed is being evaluated adequately. In some institutions the student's own teacher, a specialist in the discipline being assessed, is a member of the panel. As a specialist assessor and a person with in depth knowledge of the student the teacher is able to assess the student's examination performance and also provide an assessment of the student's development over time. Some might argue however, that it is not appropriate to consider the student's progress in a final summative examination. Also, it can be difficult for the student's teacher to be completely objective in an examination situation. It is therefore of crucial importance to clearly define the teacher's role on the panel and to link this role to the assessment criteria. In an intermediate exam with a more formative aspect, perhaps the teacher can contribute with an evaluation of the student's learning progress and achievement.

The **non-specialist** in the discipline being assessed. Coming mostly from another department in the HME institution, the non-specialist can bring a broader musical perspective on the performance which goes beyond the specifics of individual instruments, voices or genres. The non-specialist in the discipline assessed can also help to ensure parity across disciplines and ensure that all assessed qualities are adequately considered.

The two roles mentioned above can also include a moderating role, often as a Chair of the panel, in which case this person may hear and assess all students in one discipline OR a sample of students of different disciplines across the particular year level. The main task of a moderator is to ensure that similar standards are being applied and that comparable artistic

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[1] Cox, J. (2010) 'Admission and Assessment in Higher Music Education', Utrecht: Association Européenne des Conservatoires
[2] http://78.158.56.101/archive/palatine/resources/assessment-feedback

judgments are formed across all instrumental/vocal categories within the same institution.

From a table that was produced for the handbook on 'Admission and Assessment in Higher Music Education' (J. Cox, p. 58) the WG developed from its own findings a more extensive version on the possible roles of assessors and aspects to be considered when selecting them for panels. It also took a slightly different approach to classifying the roles:

Role	Strengths	Issues to consider
Specialist panel member*		
Internal	Institutional knowledge in specialist area	Close to fellow teachers and students
Student's own teacher	• Personal knowledge of the student's learning experience	• Possibly subject to bias based on knowledge of student's previous performance
External *(e.g. specialist teacher from another HMEI or member of the music profession)*	• Complementary knowledge in specialist area, less influenced by local loyalties	• Less familiar with institutional procedures and sometimes less equipped with pedagogical background or academic knowledge
Non-specialist panel member*		
Internal *(e.g. teacher from another department within the institution)*	• Institutional knowledge across a range of specialisms • Ability to focus on holistic musical qualities rather than instrument specific qualities	• Not expert in the particular instrument/voice being examined • Unable to focus on idiomatic qualities of performance on particular voice/instrument
External	*this role is typically not fulfilled by an external expert*	
*each of these roles could also have a moderating role. Typically a moderator in a panel has deep (institutional) knowledge across a range of specialisms, awareness of standards and procedures across subject areas, experience in leadership and interpersonal moderation of assessment panels. A moderator may or may not be a voting member of the panel		

4.2.1 EXAMPLES FOR COMPOSITION OF PANELS

From the survey that was undertaken by the WG it shows that the compositions of panels in institutions vary significantly as already explained in 1.2.3. Here follow 4 examples from different European HME institutions:

Type of assessment	Total members on panel	Internal members	External members	Senior administrative staff/ management	students own teacher	Specialist assessor	Non-specialist assessor	Students
Final recital (strings) German institution	5	4	1		yes	4		
Final recital (Instrument) Portuguese institution	3	3			yes	2		
Final recital (Instrument) Estonian institution	5	4	1	1	yes	2		
Final recital (Instrument) Irish institution	3	2	1	1	no		1	

Reflections on the composition of panels of the WG and the participants of the seminars organised by the WG are discussed in chapter 3.2.2.1 (Assessment panels). This section highlights the importance of ensuring that the composition of the panel facilitates fruitful discussions about a student's achievement.

4.2.2 NUMBER OF PANEL MEMBERS

In general, the findings of the WG suggest that the absolute minimum for a panel is 3 members. The practical exercises undertaken as part of the seminars indicate that a panel of 5 members seems an ideal number to facilitate productive discussion and exchange of ideas on standards.

4.3 EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

Current debate in European HME suggests that it is important that institutions include an external perspective to final assessments to ensure a broader view on the academic achievement of graduates. At a basic level, External Examiners offer the potential for enhancing the validity of an institution's assessment practices by providing an independent perspective

or insight that thereby adds value to the reputation of the institution. At the same time this constitutes a possible link to benchmarking. As discussed before in chapter 1, the method of 'consensus moderation' consists of discussing standards between peers, always on the basis of the concrete example of student work. Assessments therefore provide an opportunity to discuss the standards an assessor measures a student's work against. This can be done by colleagues within the same institution and helps to calibrate inter-subjectively the marks and grades awarded. If external assessors are involved in this process it offers the possibility to benchmark the standards in question against those of the same discipline from an outside perspective, be it from another institution or the professional field. In some traditions a person who is referred to as the 'overall external examiner' [1] from an outside institution is invited to observe assessment procedures and standards within one institution. This is an instrument of quality assurance and not connected to actually assessing single students. An overall external examiner may participate on panels but will not usually be involved in voting or grading.

In institutions that are small it is often necessary to invite external examiners in order to build panels of suitable sizes. It is important to note however, that rare instruments constitute a challenge for assessment practices in another way. To develop a shared understanding of standards in panels that assess rare instruments is difficult as the panel is usually never the same and time between the exams may be several years. It can also be difficult to find panel members at all, especially ones that have any knowledge of the institutional practices and the curriculum in question.

The WG identified the following main purposes of external examining:

- to verify that academic achievement standards are appropriate for the subject area and the level in question as well as in line with international standards;

- to help institutions ensure and maintain academic achievement standards across higher education programmes;

- to learn from other assessment approaches;

- to help institutions ensure that their assessment processes are objective, transparent and in line with the institution's policies and regulations.

It is therefore recommended by the WG that there be further discussion around the feasibility of including external examiners in institutional assessment processes, especially in light of the benefits of developing shared understandings of standards of academic achievement.

4.3.1 POSSIBLE PROFILE FOR EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

Naturally, examiners build up experience and gain in experience over time, but only when they reflect on their current level of expertise and make concerted attempts to improve their work. However, in the area of external examining some previous experience is important as is an open-minded approach and the willingness to engage in unfamiliar assessment practices. The selection of external examiners is often based on personal networks and trust. In quality assurance matters this is often insufficient, as a too friendly connection between the institution and the external examiner can raise the possibility of bias. This is one of the reasons why, over time, it becomes more important for institutions to invite external experts who have no previous connection to the institution. The WG proposed to the AEC to add to its database on external experts for institutional reviews information on possible external examiners. At the same time, the WG defined an ideal profile for external examiners, which could help individual institutions with the selection of trusted experts.

Ideally, external examiners should be:

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[1] 'Polifonia working group 5 is mentioning overall external examiners in its report. The 'moderator' is a more general role and not only referring to external personnel.

- **Experienced**: in the techniques and manner of ensuring informed, evidence based assessments. This is enhanced when assessors have had sufficient previous experience to make informed, evidence based decisions that can then be used as the basis for providing feedback to students.

- **Respected**: as an eminent musician and expert in a particular aspect of professional musical activity. Respect ensures that others – especially peers and students – will value the assessor's judgments as authentic, because they are considered to have been made from a respected individual who has something of substance to say about the assessment task.

- **Authoritative**: as a well-known leader in his or her field who is conversant with the artistic practices and assessment approaches used in other institutions (nationally and internationally). An assessor should be sufficiently skilled to work within the cultural and artistic traditions of the environment in which the assessment takes place, in ways that add value to the form and context of such assessment practices.

Institutions may want to consider one other area in relation to the external examiner profile and that is the international background and experience of the external examiner. 'Polifonia' Working Group 5 has studied this profile in detail and published a document entitled 'International external examiners in higher music education: role, purpose and case studies' [2]. In this document, the working group lists many benefits of inviting external examiners from abroad, such as increased objectivity, continuing professional development possibilities for teaching staff, the promotion of student mobility and the opportunity to benchmark students' achievement towards international performance standards. In its report, the group also suggests ways how to organise the involvement of international external examiners from a practical and financial point of view, e.g. through the use of the ERASMUS+ staff mobility opportunities.

Nevertheless, as already stressed above and as discussed also in the Working Group 5 report, it is an indispensable prerequisite for external examining (international or not) that assessment procedures within an institution are transparent and well defined, preferably laid out in a written policy document for both assessors and students.

4.3.2 EXTERNAL EXAMINERS IN EUROPEAN HME INSTITUTIONS

Concerning the involvement of external examiners in assessment procedures and especially in panels assessing final performances of a degree, the WG issued a second questionnaire that was distributed to the participants at the AEC Congress 2013. Sixty-four answers were received. A brief overview of the results is given here. A detailed account of the results can be found in the appendix.

The results show that 75% of these institutions include external examiners on a final assessment panel while 25% of these institutions do not use external examiners. It is also revealed that almost all of the respondents indicated that they use external examiners, and engage external specialists who are mostly local/national. Only a minority of institutions answering the questionnaire use international external specialists [3]. In most cases these external experts do not act as chairs but are typically allowed to vote.

External examiners are not used everywhere and can have different roles in assessment procedures in European HME institutions. As mentioned above, Working Group 5 of the 'Polifonia' project has investigated the possible benefits and modalities to operate with international external examiners. From the perspective of the WG on assessment and standards, external examiners help institutions reflect on their assessment procedures and standards in addition to making

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[2] Prchal, M. & 'Polifonia' Working Group 5 members (2014) 'International external examiners in higher music education: role, purpose and case studies'. This document can be found at www.aec-music.eu/about-aec/work--policies/mobility-and-recognition#International exchange

[3] External examiners who come from another country are defined as 'international external examiners' by WG 5 of the 'Polifonia' project (see also 'Polifonia' Glossary at www.polifonia.eu)

assessment more reliable and providing external measures against which to measure standards of student achievement. As mentioned before, the method of consensus moderation aims at the exchange of views on standards from different perspectives. Involving an external examiner in assessment procedures in an institution triggers such discussions and can definitely contribute to the development of a shared understanding of standards.

4.4 TRAINING OF ASSESSORS

It is crucial for assessors to be aware of their role in the process, of the educational aims and the professional standards they are assessing students against. They should also be familiar with assessment procedures in the institution. In a nutshell, assessors should be able to ensure informed, evidence based and reliable assessment. Reliable assessments are best achieved in situations where individual assessors have engaged in various types of practice to refine their skills. For this reason, training can improve assessors' skills and ensure they are conversant with the agreed evaluative criteria to be used for assessing the particular musical activities. In addition, giving feedback to students is a skill that needs experience and contextualisation. Feedback should include both constructive comments on strengths and weaknesses of a performance and provide evidence on how the student has been assessed.

As the WG discovered from the questionnaire data and during the seminars, in a majority of HME institutions, assessors are not specifically trained to undertake assessment. When talking to different assessors in different institutions it became evident, that there is often a lack of transparency surrounding assessment procedures. We are not talking about the lack of competence of the single assessor, as they are perfectly capable to form artistic judgements, but rather of the need to exchange views on standards and to understand the impact that operational procedures and group dynamics within panels can have on assessment outcomes.

It can be concluded that this is an area where dialogue and discussion on assessment policies and practices within and across institutions can provide a form of professional development and training for teachers involved in panel assessments. On the other hand, the WG would like to highlight the importance of providing quality feedback to students who are being assessed. Here the group found that training could enhance the quality of the feedback given to the students. More information on assessment feedback was discussed in Chapter 2, Section 'Feedback for students'.

4.5 ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING: STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN ASSESSMENT PROCESSES

Across HME institutions, it is rare to find students participating in the assessment process. Nevertheless it is worthwhile mentioning their participation in some European evaluation processes when assessing music performances. Involving students in assessment procedures can have benefits for the institution and the students, as assessing, when applied in a sensitive way, is a tool for learners in itself. Some thoughts in this matter are elaborated on the following pages.

> 'If the modern conservatorium is to prosper in a rapidly changing cultural and economic landscape, it will need to provide a learning experience that produces multi-skilled and adaptable graduates who are self-monitoring and self-directing'. (Lebler) [4]

With a rapidly changing global music landscape, music education institutions need to provide learning experiences that effectively prepare graduates who are independent and take responsibility for their own learning process. By implication, teaching and assessment practices that actively engage students in reflecting on their own learning processes and on their

[4] Student-as-master? Reflections on a learning innovation in popular music pedagogy (Don Lebler, 2009)

own performance have a major contribution to make in producing graduates who are self-aware and well prepared for a changed and changing environment.

While assessment is often associated primarily with issues of grading and accreditation in the context of assessment of learning, it can also be viewed from the perspective of assessment for learning. In the context of formal summative assessment practices in HME institutions, the importance of providing detailed written and/or oral feedback on students' performances has been stressed above and is generally accepted as an important aspect of ongoing formative assessment practices. Such feedback can inform students' learning and provide material to help them reflect on their performance. However, the concept of assessment for learning goes beyond the provision of feedback. Research suggests that learning can be enhanced by actively engaging students in various types of assessment practices that involve them in assessing performance, both their own performance and the performance of their peers. By actively engaging in self-reflection and self-assessment, and in peer-review and peer-assessment in a range of assessment contexts, student learning can be enhanced in a variety of ways.

A distinction can be made between self-assessment and peer-assessment used primarily as pedagogical strategies in the learning-teaching transaction involving students and their teachers and self-assessment and peer-assessment which involves grading in formal assessment contexts. Examples of both kinds of practice can be found in the literature [5] and were also identified by the WG during the seminars. Examples from the seminars indicate how students can have different roles in relation to both self-assessment and peer-assessment. Within the Piano Department of the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, Pedagogy students are invited to act as observers on panels of teachers assessing piano students' performance examinations. This is done with a view to enhancing students' critical and analytical skills and preparing them for their future roles as teachers for whom assessment will be an important aspect of their work. Another example, relating to student self-assessment, came from Cefedem Rhone Alpes in Lyons, France. In this institution students are involved in defining the exact nature of their assessment, in outlining the learning outcomes and describing the criteria by which their work will be assessed. The students then provide self-assessments of their own work according to the criteria previously agreed. The practice in the Royal Conservatoire Stockholm of including students on assessment panels for entrance examinations illustrates a different aspect of student involvement in assessment processes. For these examinations, senior students act as full panel members with voting rights. Including students in this way is seen as an opportunity for students to reflect on their own performance as they assess the applicants' performances. It is also seen as having the potential to increase students' understanding of the assessment process, to lead to greater openness and transparency around assessment generally and to promote a stronger sense of collegiality between staff and students.

Of particular interest to the WG, given the focus of this project, was the role that students can have as members of assessment panels involved in assessing and grading their peers and the possible educational value which can be gained from this process.

4.5.1 STUDENTS ON ASSESSMENT PANELS: POTENTIAL LEARNING OUTCOMES

Research on peer assessment in music performance suggests that it can be a valuable educational experience for students and can lead to a range of positive outcomes which can enhance student learning. [6] These include the development of a range of knowledge, skills and understanding. Potential outcomes include:

- critical thinking skills
- assessment and evaluation skills

[5] For articles about the topic, please consider the bibliography

[6] See references in bibliography. The article by Hunter and Russ deals specifically with peer assessment involving students as members of performance assessment panels where there is formal grading involved. The other articles all refer to the work of Hunter and Russ but focus on a variety of peer assessment contexts.

- critical listening skills

- negotiation skills

- communication skills

- skills in teamwork

Students can learn about their own performance through the process of assessing others, as having to think critically about the performances of other students encourages them to reflect on the effectiveness of their own performance. They also learn about performance and about assessment through working with experienced teachers and assessors, as well as through discussion and debate on panels that include their own peers. Students gain insight into the assessment system within an institution which can lead to greater understanding of the process and, in particular, of the criteria that will be used in grading their own performances. Increased confidence can also be an outcome, as students develop a greater sense of ownership of the assessment process along with teachers and other assessors, rather than all of the power residing with such authority figures. The potential for the involvement of students on assessment panels leading to more openness and transparency around assessment and creating a more interactive and collaborative learning environment is also supported in the literature.

4.5.2 STUDENTS ON ASSESSMENT PANELS: POTENTIAL PITFALLS

Some potential problems relating to student involvement in assessment processes have also been identified in the literature, such as:

- students finding it difficult to assess their colleagues and, in particular, to award a 'fail' grade to their peers

- some students objecting to having peer-assessment contribute to their final grade

- the potential for differences between staff and student grading, with students being seen to award inflated grades in some instances

- issues around validity in instances where students lack the necessary skills to make appropriate judgements, do not have detailed knowledge of the process or do not engage fully with the process

- possible staff domination on panels and instances of staff over-riding students' opinions

- extra workload for staff in training students in assessment procedures and processes

4.5.3 STUDENTS ON ASSESSMENT PANELS: STUDENT PERSPECTIVES AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

Including students on assessment panels can help make institutions more aware of student perspectives. As core stakeholders in the educational process, students need to know how HME institutions' assessment procedures operate. Students have the right to know what is being assessed, on what grounds the assessments are based, when the assessments will take place and how the assessment process operates. Even if details of assessment systems are accessible and publicly available to students, involving students in formal assessment processes can create even greater understanding and transparency which can enhance institutional quality assurance systems and allow assessment become embedded in the institutional artistic culture.

These types of issues are directly connected to the curriculum and learning outcomes. To look at the curriculum as a contract between the institution and the student is helpful both for the teacher as well as for the student. Concrete and measurable learning outcomes are crucial in order to create transparency and shared understanding between the student

and the teacher. To write a curriculum with concrete learning outcomes which are clearly linked to assessment criteria and are accessible to and understandable for all stakeholders is challenging. [7] However, explicit learning outcomes can enhance transparency, improve quality assurance systems and enable student engagement in assessments.

4.5.4 STUDENTS ON ASSESSMENT PANELS: A NEED FOR PROCEDURES AND PROTOCOLS

It is important that the process of involving students on formal assessment panels, which grade student performances, is carefully introduced and monitored and includes the following:

- consultation with students prior to the introduction of peer-assessment
- an explanation for students of the rationale behind the approach
- gaining agreement from students that they will take on this responsibility
- adequate preparation of students and a clear explanation of assessment processes and protocols
- an appreciation of the ethical issues involved
- the development of appropriate assessment criteria based on clearly defined learning outcomes
- transparency and shared understandings between students and teachers
- respect for student opinions
- clearly defined procedures for reaching consensus on a final grade
- clearly defined procedures regarding the manner in which oral/written feedback will be produced by the panel

Despite some problematic issues and the need for considered and careful implementation, the practice of involving students in assessment processes is perceived as having real educational value, as discussed above. By including students as assessors in some of the vast variety of assessment processes that are undertaken in HME, institutions can enhance their preparation of students for a wide range of professional careers within music performance, music education and the wider music industry.

4.6 SUMMARY POINTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- **External examiners:** From the perspective of the WG on assessment and standards, external examiners help institutions reflect on their assessment procedures and standards in addition to making assessment more reliable and providing external measures against which to measure standards of student achievement. Involving experts from outside the institution makes it also necessary to explain assessment practices, criteria and standards to make sure the external examiner can fulfil their job properly. A side effect is that by making processes and standards explicit to the external examiner, transparency of assessment procedures and standards is enhanced generally in the institution. Another dimension to be considered when using external examiners is the international background of the examiner, as has been researched in further detail by WG5.

- **International dialogue and professional development**: The WG found in its work that the

[7] www.hivolda.no/neted/upload/attachment/site/group36/learning_outcomes.pdf and
www.aec-music.eu/userfiles/File/goslingmoon-learningoutcomesassessmentcriteria(4).pdf

community of HME institutions would gain from an international dialogue around assessment. Interactive seminars with examples of student work like the ones organised within the 'Polifonia' project could enhance awareness and lead to better practices in individual institutions as each institution learns from each other and adopts good ideas from other contexts. The AEC could be a platform for this exchange. A seminar model has been created by the WG that has been tested in the two seminars discussed in chapter 3. The model can be found in Appendix 1. More material is available in the seminars' report[8].

- **Student involvement in assessing:** Assessment is a powerful tool. When used appropriately in the teaching and learning process, it can cater to the student's development. Feedback by assessors on a given performance in an assessment can inform students' learning and provide material to help them reflect on their performance. Beyond this, research suggests that learning can be enhanced by actively engaging students in various types of assessment practices which involve them in assessing performance, both their own performance and the performance of their peers. Furthermore, including students on assessment panels can help make institutions more aware of student perspectives. Finally, by including students as assessors in some of the vast variety of assessment processes that are undertaken in HME, institutions can enhance their preparation of students for a wide range of professional careers within music performance, music education and the wider music industry.

- **Core elements for effective assessment practices:** As a conclusion of the chapter on roles, contexts and challenges for examiners and assessors, some core elements for effective assessment practices can be proposed:

  1. Panels should comprise and/or draw on the range of expertise that best represents the skills, knowledge and understandings required for the particular form of musical competence

  2. Roles of panel members should be clear

  3. Assessment regulations, criteria and standards should be transparent and, as far as possible, available in written form for all stakeholders

  4. Assessment can enhance learning when students receive constructive feedback on their performance, and also when they are actively involved in the assessment process as assessors

  5. Assessment is complex, so those who assess need to practice their craft

[8] www.aec-music.eu/polifonia/project-events/seminars-and-conferences/seminar-vienna-26-27-april-2013

polifonia

5. CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

5.1 OVERVIEW

There has been much previous work on assessment that has been undertaken during the 'Polifonia' project [1] and a wealth of literature and ongoing research on assessment issues in HME. For this reason, rather than reiterate general assessment principles or generate new modes or methods of assessment, this project has focused on the reality of assessment practices and standards in HME in Europe with a view to stimulating discussion and facilitating the development of shared understandings of standards across institutions and countries through the promotion of a consensus moderation approach. For reasons outlined in Chapter 1, the project has focused on the area of music performance with a particular emphasis on the practices associated with assessments by panels of examiners.

The questionnaire data discussed in Chapter 1 revealed a diverse range of assessment practices within the participant institutions and confirmed the WG's collective view that assessment of music performance in HME in Europe appears to be a complex subject which is by no means standardised and is affected by institutional, local and national contexts. This chapter highlights issues emerging with regard to matters relating to the role of learning outcomes and assessment criteria, the composition and operation of assessment panels and the use of grading scales.

In Chapter 2, the report pointed to the difficulty of benchmarking standards of academic achievement, given the widely varying practices and traditions and the lack of consistency to be found in relation to assessment processes and procedures across institutions and countries. A working definition of benchmarking was presented that focused on the development of shared understandings of current practices and standards, and the provision of information and reference points that individual institutions might consider as they seek to refine and improve their own assessment systems.

Chapter 2 also reported on the two seminars organised by the WG in an attempt to achieve this objective. Issues that emerged during practical panel exercises in assessment designed around the concept of consensus moderation, (as defined by Royce Sadler) are discussed, along with the outcomes of the open forum sessions which were also part of the seminars. The seminars were identified as having fulfilled their purpose in facilitating an international exchange of views on standards and, if pursued further over a period of time, appeared to have the potential to facilitate the development of shared understandings within and across institutions and countries. The potential role that external examiners might have in the calibration of standards for the awarding of grades was also highlighted.

Chapter 3 focused on the topic of examiners, exploring issues relating to roles, contexts and perceived challenges. It highlights the importance of transparency of assessment processes for all stakeholders, thus discussing areas that - coming from a tradition of master-apprentice relationship in music teaching in HME institutions – have been given less attention over the past decades. Roles of assessors in panels are identified alongside with their respective strengths and issues to consider. The chapter also provides further justification for including external examiners in assessment routines and elaborates on the potential of involving students in these procedures. Chapter 3 concludes with a list of core elements for effective assessment practice.

5.2 REFLECTING ON ASSESSMENT IN HME INSTITUTIONS

Focusing on assessment within the context of the student learning process allows an institution to design, manage and deliver its courses and helps to ensure that it will implement effective assessment practices. The reflective material which follows is structured under Why? When? What? Who? and How?; questions which emerged during the course of the project. They can be linked to previous parts of the report and address fundamental issues relating to assessment

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[1] More information on the previous 'Polifonia' cycles can be found on the website www.polifonia.eu; Relevant publications are: Cox, J. (2007) 'Curriculum Design and Development in Higher Music Education', Utrecht: Association Européenne des Conservatoires and Cox, J. (2010) 'Admission and Assessment in Higher Music Education', Utrecht: Association Européenne des Conservatoires

practices in HME institutions. The questions can be used to reflect on an institution's overall assessment system or assessment within a specific programme or subject, but have been designed with particular reference to the area of music performance. The focus is on both specific processes and overall procedures and protocols.

5.2.1 WHY ASSESS? STUDENT LEARNING, ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT, QUALIFICATIONS AND STANDARDS

From the student's perspective, assessment stimulates learning and musical development by defining what students will regard as important, how they will spend their time during the learning process, and how they will come to see themselves as future musicians.

From an institution's perspective, assessment plays a central role in the work of a music institution and is essential to both accrediting qualifications and defining an institution's standards. In this way, assessment provides the benchmark upon which an institution can ensure standards that are in line with professional practices.

Reflective Questions:

- What is the role of assessment in your institution?

- Is this role clearly understood by teachers and students?

- Are your assessment processes and procedures dictated/influenced by the demands of institutional qualifications frameworks and/or national qualifications frameworks?

- Do the degrees your students graduate with qualify them to enter the profession and/or to pursue further study in the field?

- Is assessment seen as an integral part of curriculum development within your institution?

- Do your assessment systems impact on learning and teaching practices within your institution?

- How would you compare academic standards within your institution to those of other HME institutions in Europe?

5.2.2 WHEN DO WE ASSESS? SUMMATIVE, FORMATIVE AND/OR CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

Summative assessment is normally undertaken at the end of a program cycle (Bachelor, Masters, Doctoral), at the end of a course year, at the end of a course module or project, according to an institution's examination schedule. Formative evaluation is normally undertaken during the process of learning, such as by giving feedback on what has been learned and what needs to be achieved in the future. In the form of continuous assessment, formative assessment can also contribute to the final grade. The timing of the various assessments impacts on the student's learning process and the assessment outcomes and feedback given to students inform future learning.

Reflective Questions:

- When do you assess your students' academic achievement?

- Does your assessment system include both formative and summative assessments?

- Is continuous assessment a feature of your assessment process?

- Which assessments contribute to the award of an overall grade for a subject or programme?

- Is there an examination schedule with which students must comply or is there flexibility for students and their teachers to choose the timing of an assessment?

• How regularly are students formally assessed?

5.2.3 WHAT TO ASSESS?: LEARNING OUTCOMES AND STANDARDS OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Assessment is most effective when it is focused on the Learning Outcomes for the skills, knowledge or understandings being developed. On another level, assessment can also be described as the means by which both a student's and an institution's standards of academic achievement are measured. On the basis of such assessments, qualifications are awarded that are in line with international qualifications (such as the European Qualification Framework or, more specific to music, the AEC Learning Outcomes), or a national qualification system, or the institution's own qualification system. In addition, on the basis of student assessment results, an institution's academic achievement standards are put under further scrutiny as part of academic quality assurance processes.

Reflective Questions:

• Do you have stated learning outcomes in writing for each programme/subject?

• Are the learning outcomes clearly formulated and publicly available and accessible?

• In how many assessments do you assess each specific learning outcome?

• Do you assess all learning outcomes for specific programmes/subjects in the course of the study?

• If you do not assess all promised outcomes, which ones are left out and why?

• Do you have written assessment criteria referring to the learning outcomes?

• Do you have written grading criteria that incorporate the learning outcomes?

• Are the assessment criteria / grading criteria (if used) clearly formulated and publicly accessible and available?

• Are the learning outcomes and assessment criteria understood by students, teachers and examiners within the institution?

• Are external examiners provided with copies of learning outcomes and assessment criteria in advance of examinations?

• Are the learning outcomes linked to any institutional, national or international qualifications framework?

• Are the learning outcomes linked to any national or international music qualifications framework?

• Are the modes and methods of assessment included in syllabus (module?) descriptors and programme documents?

• Are the learning outcomes and assessment criteria required to meet any internal quality assurance processes?

• Are the modes and methods of assessment fit for purpose and do you use a variety of methods?

5.2.4 WHO ASSESSES? EXAMINERS/ASSESSORS - ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Performance assessments in HME institutions are usually undertaken by panels of examiners, members of whom might be some combination of: internal or external specialists; the student's own teacher(s); Heads of Departments or other managerial representatives; representatives from other disciplines/departments; overall external examiners and student representatives. Various roles, such as those of Chair and Moderator, are often assigned to specific panel members. An

institution will often have protocols which are followed in relation to the number of examiners and type of representation on the panel, the responsibilities assigned to those taking on roles such as Chairs and Moderators, and the voting rights of each member in determining a mark or grade. [2]

Reflective Questions:

- Who is involved in assessing student performance?

- If panels of examiners are used, what is the constitution of the panel?

- What are the criteria used in selecting internal and external examiners?

- Are there any specific roles allocated to panel members?

- If there is a panel Chair or Moderator, what are their roles and responsibilities?

- If there is an overall external examiner on the panel, what is his/her function?

- Is there a specialist on the instrument/voice being assessed on the panel?

- Is there a representative from another discipline within the institution on the panel? What is his/her function?

- If the student's teacher is on the panel, what is his/her function? Is he/she involved in the marking/grading process?

- If there is a student representative on the panel, what is his/her function? Is he/she involved in the marking/grading process?

- Does the student being assessed have any input into the panel discussions?

- If there is a written report, who is responsible for writing the report?

- If feedback is given to students, who is responsible for providing and delivering written/oral feedback?

- Is there any training provided for examiners?

- Is there any written protocol outlining the basis on which panels are constituted and the roles and functions assigned to the various members?

5.2.5 HOW DO WE ASSESS? ASSESSMENT PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

Assessment outcomes can be affected by the manner in which the assessment is conducted and the way the panel operates. Often there is an assessment protocol, which includes regulations pertaining to the procedures for voting or allocating a grade, the criteria to be used to assess the performance examination, and the procedures for how the information resulting from the examination is relayed to the student in the form of constructive feedback. The assessment conditions and environment also need to be considered as they can undoubtedly influence the performer and affect the quality of the performance. It is advisable that all those being assessed have similar assessment conditions which include a venue which is fit for purpose and provides any other resources deemed necessary.

Reflective Questions:

- Where do assessments take place and are the venues and any other resources needed appropriate and fit for purpose?

[2] An example of procedures that are laid out in a written document is provided in Appendix 3.

- Do all students on the programme have similar assessment conditions? (e.g. 'warm up' opportunities, rehearsal time with an accompanist, duration of examinations, venue)

- Is the effect of the quality of the acoustic, the instrument or of the accompanist taken into consideration when assessing the performance?

- Is the student provided with feedback and, if so, is the feedback in oral and /or written form?

- If feedback is provided, when and how does the student receive feedback?

- Is contextual information on the student to be assessed available and taken into consideration?

- Are there assessment criteria/ grading criteria used and, if so, how are they used? (e.g. in focusing the discussions, as a checklist)

- Is the performance of the student being assessed compared to those of his/her peers on the same instrument/across a range of instruments/voice?

- Does your institution take any action to ensure common standards across disciplines within the institution?

- Are your students awarded a grade or is the examination conducted on a pass/fail basis?

- Do you feel your grading system reflects students' achievement adequately?

- Does the grade have meaning for other institutions and within the profession?

- Is there an assessment protocol for how the panel should operate?

- If there is an assessment protocol for how the panel should operate, does this protocol include procedures/guidelines relating to:

  1. the process of voting, giving a mark/grade

  2. order of speaking

  3. use of assessment criteria

  4. mechanisms for recording the result and producing a written report (if required)

  5. mechanisms for delivering feedback to students

5.3 FINAL REMARKS

Assessment plays an important role in HME. Giving it careful consideration, within the curriculum and the institution as a whole, enhances its value for all who participate in the process. For students, assessors and the institution it can be genuinely helpful to work with explicit procedures, criteria and shared values when it comes to assessment. The WG believes that a transparent and collectively supported assessment culture is best developed over time through reflection and continuous ongoing review. The WG therefore provides this final report in the hope that it will serve as a resource on relevant topics that helps HMEI's individually and collectively enhance the quality of music assessment processes.

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- The Assessment and Feedback archive of the website of Palatine (Performing Arts Learning and Teaching Innovation Network), the Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Dance, Drama and Music in the UK http://78.158.56.101/archive/palatine/resources/assessment-feedback

- The 'Polifonia' project website www.polifonia.eu

- The website of the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC) www.aec-music.eu

- The Innovative Conservatoire is an international collaboration to stimulate knowledge exchange, innovation and reflective practice in Conservatoires. The 2012 conference was dedicated to the theme of assessment: www.innovativeconservatoire.com/

polifonia

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The 'Polifonia' WG on Assessment and Standards has organised two seminars in the course of its project period. These seminars were meant to engage AEC colleagues in higher music education institutions who are involved in assessing and policy making in dialogue around the principles and processes of assessment in music, and to explore specific issues in relation to the use of assessment such as criteria for assessment, the role of external examiners, the issue of grading, and the understanding of the concept of 'standards' across institutions. The seminar incorporated practical exercises in assessment along with keynote presentations, opportunities for participants to present examples of innovative practice in assessment and time for group reflection and discussion. The focus of the seminars was on instrumental studies and in the first seminar also on instrumental and vocal teacher training.

The seminars were well received by the participants and served as an important source of information for the WG deliberations. The WG would like to suggest a workshop model to be used as a tool by institutions interested in reflecting on their own assessment procedures and standards.

7.2 THE WORKSHOP MODEL

What you need for it:

- A maximum of 25 participants (panels of 5 people are feasible)
- A skilled facilitator who moderates the process
- 3 performances of students at the same level (e.g. Bachelor final year recital or similar) on DVD or other student works that are relevant for your subject area
- Scores for the pieces performed
- Learning outcomes or competence descriptions, assessment criteria and/or grading criteria connected to the students' works in question
- A grading scale
- A moderation kit with coloured paper clips, markers, pin-boards etc.
- A conference room that allows small groups some privacy for discussions while at the same time offering space for everybody to follow the plenary presentations and performances (DVD)

Optionally:

- depending on the context: some colleagues who are willing to act as observers or simply as a reporter for each panel,
- keynote presentation on some aspect(s) of assessment

The workshop has been designed as a 1 day event. Ideally, it includes one or two opening keynotes about assessment issues, and is immediately followed by a practical exercise. In this exercise the participants:

1. are grouped in panels of 3-5,
2. select a chair,

3. watch a (recorded) student performance or other assessment situation and make individual notes as assessors,

4. discuss the performance/student work according to the criteria at hand,

5. reach a decision on a mark/grade,

6. repeat the exercise for the other two assessment samples,

7. are then given time to sum their decision up and write feedback on the student performance(s),

8. attach their results (grades/marks) along with the feedback for each student on a pin board,

9. present their results and the main points of their discussion to the other groups.

In the second part of the workshop, time for plenary discussion on the main points that came up during the first part of the day is given. The facilitators can optionally prepare questions of interest for the institution as a basis for discussion.

For more information on the seminars held by the 'Polifonia' WG on assessment and standards, please refer to the seminars' report [1] , which includes programmes, assessment sheets etc.

7.3 STRENGTHS OF THE FORMAT

From our experience the strengths of this model are:

- Practical exercises that derive directly from each session ensure that the material covered is viewed by participants as appropriate and interesting in order to provide long lasting effects

- Examples of assessment situations on DVD or other recorded media provided by an institution that is not present at the workshop provides a stimulus for discussion and allows participants to talk openly about their own standards without the fear of discrediting or undervaluing anybody who is present

- By varying the material provided for marking, grading or simply commenting on the level of student work, assessment or grading criteria can be introduced, tested or evaluated by the peer group who uses them or will be using them

- While doing the exercise, the peer group can start to calibrate standards within their own subject area and their institution

- The format offers an efficient and structured way for participants to reflect on assessment procedures and standards and can be used on a small or larger scale

7.4 FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Be careful that the performances you use are appropriate to the aims of the seminar (e.g. piano performances for a piano department).

- Be careful to spread specialists evenly when different disciplines are undertaking the exercise together.

- Be aware to define the role of the chair and the voting procedures beforehand to save time.

- Be aware that group dynamics can be a sensitive issue in institutions.

- Give some consideration as to the ways in which students could be involved.

[1] www.aec-music.eu/polifonia/project-events/seminars-and-conferences/seminar-vienna-26-27-april-2013

7.5 HOW CAN THE AEC HELP IN REALISING SUCH A WORKSHOP?

The AEC offers the possibility to connect interested institutions to the members of the WG on assessment and standards for further advice. If institutions are interested in inviting a WG member to such a seminar/workshop, please contact the AEC office. There is also a possibility to lend student presentations on recorded media files via the AEC office.

8. APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE ON EXTERNAL EXAMINERS 2013

8.1 RESULTS

The questionnaire was handed out at the AEC Congress in November 2013 to all participants. 85 participants, representing 28 countries, completed the questionnaire. The findings are presented below.. One respondent did not identify the country he belonged to.

Question 1. *'In your institution, do your assessment procedures include external examiners on an assessment panel?'*

The results were as follows:

- **75%** of institutions' assessment procedures include external examiners on an assessment panel.

- **25%** of institutions' assessment procedures do not include external examiners on an assessment panel.

Participants' comments on the practice of including external examiners on assessment panels within their institutions included the following:

- *Sometimes, not systematically*

- *3rd cycle + Berufungskommissionen [JP: an appeal procedure. ET: this comment shows that the term assessment panels can and perhaps has been interpreted in a very broad sense]*

- *Sometimes.*

- *We used to do it in the traditional diploma programme; we can't do it in the new programmes. Although there could be an interest in inviting persons from abroad, I don't think it could be possible in the present.*

- *Not mandatory*

From the small amount of additional comments we can see some similarities emerging across institutions. External examiners are 'sometimes' utilised in an assessment procedure within the institutions who completed the survey. This could indicate that the use of external examiners is not formalised, but – as one of our working group members pointed out – could also indicate that the term 'external examiner' may be interpreted in different ways. For example, a guest teacher who also plays in an orchestra could be regarded as 'external' because he or she is not a regular member of teaching staff and is mainly employed in the professional field (orchestra). Whether this person, who knows the institution well, is actually 'external' can be questioned if an external examiner is regarded as a person with no other contact to the institution than as external examiner for a short term or even only for a single exam period.

The fourth point above refers to external examiners in Italy. This remark arises more often throughout the results of the questionnaire. After having talked to representatives of an Italian Conservatoire at the AEC Congress in Palermo in November 2014, the WG learned that, since Italian Conservatoires have introduced the Bachelor/Master system, external examining is indeed no longer allowed. It seems that Conservatoires are now regarded as universities and need to follow the same rules, which implies 'no external examining'. Before the introduction of the BA/MA system, external examining was common, so the new situation poses a problem. Incidentally, externals are used, but this is considered 'illegal'.

> **Question 2.** *'If you answered Q1. with yes, please specify types and roles of external examiners in your institution.'*
>
> Two categories are offered: moderators or specialists. Each category then offers six options (tick boxes) that are presented as equal (instead of giving and/or options). The categories are local/national, international, from other institution, from professional field, acting as chair, have a vote.

8.1.1 EXTERNAL EXAMINERS AS MODERATORS

Out of the 64 institutions that have indicated that their institution uses external examiners, 27 have ticked one (or both) of the first two boxes (local/national, international). It could be argued that if participants didn't tick either one of these first two boxes, they are likely not to have moderators at all and may have misunderstood the question. It is also possible that they did not know the nationality of their moderators. Only 3 respondents ticked other boxes without specifying local/national or international. If these respondents are included, this would bring the number of institutions that use external examiners as moderators to 30. So, it can be concluded that roughly just under half of the respondents that have indicated that they have external examiners use them as moderators. (From here on, those 3 institutions are included, which brings the total number of respondents to 30.)

Out of the 30 institutions that use external examiners as moderators:

- 26 use local/national external examiners as moderators

- 15 have indicated that they use **international** external examiners. [Out of those 15, only 1 institution exclusively uses international external moderators (Singapore). Including the information above, it means that 14 institutions use both local/national and international external moderators.]

- 22 have moderators from other institutions and 15 also have moderators from the professional field (there are no institutions that only use moderators from the professional field). This seems to suggest that the majority of institutions that use external examiners as moderators, use moderators from other intuitions, and half of them also use moderators from the professional field.

- 9 have indicated that these moderators act as chairs. So, about a third of these institutions have moderators acting as chairs.

- 17 have indicated that these moderators have a vote. So, more than half of these institutions allow moderators to vote.

The respondents provided the following comments regarding 'Moderators':

- *Only [at] entrance examinations*

- *I filled this out with also a 3rd type of external examiner in mind: an external generalist in the examination board installed by Dutch Law.*

- *Overall program examiners, one for each program/level of study*

- *We draw a distinction between moderators as Overall External Examiners and chairs of panels that are always internal.*

- *The outside (external) examiners invitations are issued at the discretion of our Deans of Faculties.*

- *At the moment, our Q.A. Group has 3 members: 1 from AFAM-Miun; 1 national expert, 1 international moderator.*

- *We could find a new way to have external examiners. Qualified friends who help each institution to grow up together.*

- *It exists only for the exams of the old system. The new one (with Bachelor and Master) doesn't foresee any external examiner, either local/national or international. [Italy]*

- *We have external examiners only for the old programs, for new programs we have not external examiners, actually we have both old and new programs, but in few years, we will have only new. [Italy]*

- *This mainly applies to the final examinations.*

- *The boxes marked above relate only to music. All other disciplines (drama, dance, screen production) have no moderators. They have specialist external examiners.*

- *This work on the 3rd and 4th year and post-graduate diploma exams*

- *Hardly international, sometimes (not often)*

Comments regarding ' Moderators; local/national':

- *always*

- *In the old system (before Bologna Process) it is normal to have external specialist examiner that has a vote.*

Comments regarding ' Moderators; international':

- *In the new system (after B.P.) [B.P. = Bologna Process] only very few times an external examiner was called.*

- *Sometimes, mostly from The Netherlands*

- *International moderators are very rare though there is a small, albeit unknown, budget for that.*

Comments regarding ' Moderators; have a vote':

- *Overall externs have final say though it is usually after some consultation if there is a difference of opinion.*

The additional comments seem to suggest that having a moderator depends upon the program in question and also the corresponding national legislations upon the institutions at that date.

Furthermore, there are similarities amongst the participants regarding the utilisation of international external examiners. The comments highlight the 'rare' usage of international external examiners. The reasons behind this could relate to finance and legislation; both which have been a recurring issue throughout the questionnaire.

Lastly, the comments seem to indicate that institutions may use various types of external examiners as moderators ('an external generalist', 'Overall External Examiners').

8.1.2 EXTERNAL EXAMINERS AS SPECIALISTS

Out of the 64 institutions that have indicated that they have external examiners, 58 have ticked one (or both) of the first two boxes (local/national, international) regarding specialists. We suggest that if participants did not tick either one of these first two boxes, then they are likely not to have specialist external examiners at all, and may have misunderstood the question. It is also possible they did not know the nationality of their external examiners. Only 3 respondents ticked other boxes without specifying local/national or international. If these respondents are included, this would bring the number of institutions that use external examiners as specialists to 56. So, it can be concluded that almost all of the respondents that have indicated that they use external examiners engage specialists. (From here on, those 3 institutions are included, which brings the total number of respondents to 61).

Out of the 61 institutions that use external examiners as specialists:

- 53 ticked the box local/national. Thus, it can be concluded that the majority of institutions that engage specialists as external examiners use local/national specialists.

- 34 use international specialists. Out of those 34, 5 institutions only use international specialists. Thus, it can be concluded that roughly just over half of the institutions that engage specialists as external examiners use international specialists. Roughly half of these institutions use both local/national and international specialists.

- 54 use specialists from other institutions. 42 respondents have indicated that they use specialists from the professional field. 40 respondents use specialists from both other institutions as well as the professional field. It can be concluded that the majority of institutions that use specialists as external examiners use specialists from other institutions. About two third of institutions use both, specialists from other institutions as well as from the professional field.

- 8 have indicated that these specialists act as chairs. So, a minority of these institutions have specialists acting as chairs.

- 49 have indicated that these specialists have a vote. So, around 80 percent of institutions allow specialists to vote.

Question 3. *'Other comments; about AEC providing an information pool regarding individuals with experience of external examining.'*
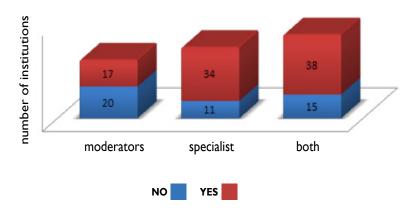

Figure 2. (see below) illustrates the degree to which respondents would find it useful for the AEC to provide an information pool regarding individuals with experience of external examining. The manner in which the question was posed caused slight confusion, therefore the results are contradictory. The issue was that three options were given: moderators, specialist and both. Instead the question should have been asked differently as giving respondents a choice between moderators, specialist or both. Taking this into consideration, what we can identify, is that respondents consider it useful if AEC provided a list of both moderators and specialist. However, it also highlights that having information regarding specialists is of higher importance than having a pool of moderators.

Comments by respondents on usefulness of pool of external examiners:

- *At the moment, an AEC pool of international moderators is of great interest. We will, however, be interested in an international pool of specialists at a later date.*

FIGURE 2: EXTERNAL EXAMINING: PROPOSED INFORMATION TOOL

PROVIDING MEMBERS WITH A LIST OF INDIVIDUALSWITH EXPERIENCE OF EXTERNAL EXAMINING

QUESTIONNAIRE
ON EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

Assessment practices vary substantially between institutions in Higher Music Education. WG1 of the 'Polifonia' Project is investigating various aspects of assessment systems in conservatoires. One of these is the use of external examiners when assessing final performances of a degree (Bachelor or Master level).

The main purposes of external examining are:

- to help institutions to ensure that their assessment processes are sound, fairly operated and in line with the institution's policies and regulations;
- to verify that academic achievement standards are appropriate for the subject area and the level in question as well as in line with international standards;
- to help institutions to assure and maintain academic achievement standards across higher education awards;
- to learn from other assessment approaches.

Two main types of external examiners emerge:

- The *moderator* (who may also serve as Chair of the Panel) who may hear and assess all students OR a sample of students across the particular year level. The main task of the moderator is to ensure that similar standards and artistic judgments are formed across all instrumental/vocal categories. An example of a moderator might be an external examiner who is highly regarded as an expert performer on a particular instrument or voice, but who is also capable of making judgments across all other instruments or voice types.
- The *specialist* on the instrument or voice that is being assessed. An example of a specialist would be an independent specialist on the instrument or voice being examined and who is therefore appointed from another institution or from the professional field, eg an orchestral musician.

Both types of external examiner can be chosen from *within* the country or *internationally.*

> **Having read the text on this page, we ask you to please answer the questions on the following page and to hand the sheet back to the AEC staff when you leave the hall after the session.**

Institution_____

Country_____

Q1. In your institution, do your assessment procedures include external examiners on assessment panels?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Q2. If you answered Q1. with yes, please specify types and roles of external examiners in your institution:

	Local/National	International	From other institution	From Professional Field	Acting as chair	Have a vote
Moderators						
Specialists						
Other, please specify:						

Q3. For the purpose of finding suitable external examiners, would your institution be inclined to use an AEC register offering a pool of individuals with experience of external examining

a. … as moderators   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

b. … as specialists   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

c. … both   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

Additional comments_____

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

poli*f*onia

9.1 INTRODUCTION

A site visit was undertaken by WG 5 member Maarten Weyler in order to observe examination procedures in a HME Institution involving external examiners. Originally meant to serve as a case study for WG 5 it is included in the present report as it touches procedures, standards and panel composition as well as roles of panel members, all topics discussed in the final report of WG 1 on Assessment and Standards. It is not presented in order to illustrate 'best practice', but simply to show a complete set of procedures and a report on an actual examination involving an external examiner who is a specialist in the subject being assessed. [1]

9.2 REPORT

Site Visit: Recital Exam Post-Graduate Singing Student, June 2014, Leeds College of Music

Report: Maarten Weyler

Panel: Chair of the Panel, Head of the Postgraduate Programme, External Examiner (teacher at Guildhall School of Music & Drama)

Documentation of assessment procedures Leeds College of Music (Documents following from p. 62 as "Material"):

1.   1. HE Performance Assessment Procedure 2010-2014

In this internal document, rules of assessment are laid out. Its aim is to ensure fairness and consistency across all HE performance assessments. It includes pre-examination timetabling and organisation of equipment and resources, panel-membership rules (including Training/briefing of examination panels, Appointment of External Instrumental Assessors), regulation on the Examination Process (including resources available, timing, note-taking, discussion and marking) and instructions on the post-examination process.

2.   L7 Performance

This document contains assessment criteria for Postgraduate Performance Assessment and is used during assessment.

3.   Performance – Specialist Study 2

This document gives information on the module the assessment is connected to (excerpt of a course catalogue) including relevant learning outcomes, contact time, method of assessment and reading list.

Personal impressions and reflections about the site visit by Maarten Weyler:

•   *The performance was held at 'the Venue', a recently refurbished performance room at the Leeds College of*

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[1] For more case studies including international external examiners please consult the document of WG 5 "International external examiners in higher music education: role, purpose and case studies", Martin Prchal, Royal Conservatoire The Hague.

Music. The room has excellent acoustics for this kind of recital.

- *There were approximately 30 people in the audience.*

- *Before the concert, I was introduced to the panel and was given some preliminary information on the process. It was explained to me that also in the UK, which uses the same system, things can be different. At another institute only the comments of the external examiner are used to score and a copy of the original handwritten report are given to the students for feedback. So the scoring and debate only takes some 10 minutes. At Leeds College of Music, it takes some 30 minutes for the recital and 30 minutes in combining all comments and writing the final report. The recital is recorded on video.*

- *After the performance first a general impression was given by the external examiner and was written down by the chair of the panel. It was clear, that the external examiner's words were prevalent. The external examiner was responsible for providing her remarks on the performance and for providing feedback for the student to improve her presentation. After the general remarks were given, a detailed examination of every composition was given with regards to technique, performance, presentation, musical awareness, etc. as stated in the competences to be achieved. Comments provided by the other panel members were mainly underlining or fine-tuning the thoughts of the external examiner.*

- *At the end, both the chairman and the external examiner went through the text, verified the sense of the text ('Is there enough positive in it') and then agreed both upon the final version. Then this was printed out, undersigned and also a copy was taken of the original handwritten remarks of the external examiner.*

- *The student will receive all of these documents and can use the information for improving his studies.*

Comments:

By not having the teacher as part of the assessment, the comments provided by the external examiner were communicated through a direct, objective process. In addition, the external's comments provided valuable feedback to the students that informed continuous learning. It should be noted this procedure was recently adopted after the National Student Council requested greater transparency.

However, the process observed was specific to this institution and may not be transferable with equal results into another assessment context.

Document 1

HE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE 2010-2014

Revision number	3
Author/policyholder	Head of Registry
Approved by	Academic Council
Approval date	14 December 2010
Date of next review	2014

Linked external codes/regulations
QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter A6 Assessment of intended learning outcomes & Chapter B6: Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning
Linked documents/references
HE Academic Appeals Policy
Equality Impact Assessment information
Impact assessment to be completed
Scope of policy (audience)
Leeds College of Music staff, External Instrumental Assessors
Alternative Formats
Audio, Large font available on request

Policy statement
This Procedure is designed to ensure fairness and consistency across all HE performance assessments. The Procedure will be used for all summative performance assessments. Summative performance assessments are differentiated as follows: • Pre-final stage assessments, i.e. BA (Hons) levels 4 and 5; PGCert, PGDip (where registered on a Master's award); • Final stage assessments, i.e. BA (Hons) level 6; PGDip (where standalone qualification); Master's.
Background/vision (if applicable)

Supersedes Procedure for External Instrumental Assessment 2007-10

This revision in response to recommendations in Report on Conduct of Undergraduate Performance Assessments 2009-10 (AcB/10-11.1/9).

Terminology updated March 2014.

Policy

Procedure only.

Procedure

1.   Pre-Examination

Timetabling

The Head of Undergraduate Studies and the Head of Postgraduate Studies are responsible for the compilation and publication of the performance assessment timetable, assisted by the Exams team.

Assessment timetables will be published no later than three months before the first assessment date.

Each timetable must build in:

- Panel membership, as appropriate (see below), to include an identified Deputy Chair in case of the absence of the Chair;
- Briefing time for the External Assessor, as appropriate;
- Setup time for each recital;
- Warm-up time for each student/ensemble;
- Recital time of the correct length for each student/ensemble;
- Discussion and marking time for the panel;
- Rest breaks for the panel, as appropriate.

Organisation of equipment and resources

The Heads of UG/PG Studies are responsible for the organisation of equipment and resources for performance assessments, assisted by the Exams team and representatives of other College departments, e.g. Facilities, as required.

Organisation of equipment and resources must include:

- Booking of assessment room and necessary equipment;
- Booking of warm-up room (if different to assessment room);
- Room/place for discussion and marking, with appropriate access to IT connections and equipment;
- Staff rota to ensure oversight of equipment/setup by someone other than the examination panel;
- Staff rota to ensure a 'runner' is available to undertake any emergency organisational or setup tasks;

- Booking of accompanist time as appropriate;

- Arrangement of public access to assessment room as appropriate, e.g. The Venue/The Wardrobe;

- Recording equipment and technical services staff for setup/operation;

- All recital paperwork, including marks and feedback sheets;

- Arrangement of any examination adjustments to be made for students with Learning Difficulties or Disabilities.

Panel Membership

End of stage assessments

End of stage assessments will be examined by a 2-person panel, comprising the Chair and the Internal Examiner.

In case of disagreement between panel members, the panel will refer the assessment to the Board of Examiners. The Chair of the Board of Examiners may instruct the Board, or a subgroup, to consider the assessment. The Board of Examiners' decision will be final.

The Chair of the Panel:

- Will be appointed by the Head of UG/PG Studies;

- Will take part in staff development which explains their responsibilities, whether or not they have previously acted as a Panel Chair;

- Will not examine students whom they have taught (on the instrument/voice being examined) during that academic year;

- Will begin each performance assessment and have responsibility for ensuring that the assessment runs to time;

- Will lead the discussion following each assessment and be responsible for drawing up a feedback report.

The Deputy Chair of the Panel:

- Will perform the duties of the Chair in the event of the Chair's absence.

The Internal Examiner:

- Will be appropriate to the genre to be examined;

- May be a specialist in the instrument/voice being examined;

- May examine students whom they have taught during that academic year.

Final stage assessments

Final stage assessments will be examined by a 3-person panel, comprising the Chair, the Internal Examiner and an External Instrumental Assessor.

The External Examiner for the course may also be present to oversee the examination process and confirm the

standard of marking; they will not be involved in the marking process unless there is a disagreement.

In cases of disagreement between panel members, a majority decision will stand.

Where a majority decision has been reached and an External Assessor disagrees with the decision of internal examiners, the External Assessor may refer a 'minority report' to the Board of Examiners for consideration.

In the case of three-way disagreement between panel members, the panel will refer the assessment to the Board of Examiners. The Chair of the Board of Examiners may instruct the Board, or a subgroup, to consider the assessment. The Board of Examiners' decision will be final.

The Chair of the Panel:

- Will normally be the Head of UG/PG Studies or Pathway Leader;

- Will be consistent across all assessment panels for that course, if possible. If this is not possible, all panel chairs will meet prior to the first examination to ensure the consistent application of examination procedures;

- Will take part in staff development which explains their responsibilities, whether or not they have previously acted as a Panel Chair;

- Will not examine students whom they have taught during that academic year;

- Will have responsibility for briefing each new External Instrumental Assessor prior to their first recital;

- Will begin each performance assessment and have responsibility for ensuring that the assessment runs to time;

- Will lead the discussion following each assessment and be responsible for drawing up a feedback report.

The Deputy Chair of the Panel:

- Will perform the duties of the Chair in the event of the Chair's absence.

The Internal Examiner:

- Will be appropriate to the genre being examined;

- Will not necessarily be a specialist in the instrument/voice being examined;

- Will not examine students whom they have taught during that academic year.

The External Instrumental Assessor:

- Will be a specialist in the instrument/voice and genre being examined;

- Will have experience of internal and/or external examining in UK higher education;

- Will be appointed according to the process outlined below;

- Will advise on comparative standards during the marking discussion;

- Will have equal weight of opinion to other examiners during the marking discussion (notwithstanding the final decision of the Board of Examiners in the case of disagreement);

- Will report to the External Examiner for the course on the examination process and comparative standards of performance.

Training/briefing of examination panels

Panel Chairs, Deputy Chairs and Internal Examiners will undertake a training session prior to the first assessment, to include familiarisation with this Procedure and standardisation of marking and feedback using DVD recordings of previous recitals.

External Instrumental Assessors will be briefed in writing about the assessment context and process. They will receive a briefing of at least half an hour on their first day of examining, to include observation of a recital if possible.

Appointment of External Instrumental Assessors

External Instrumental Assessors will be appointed no later than three months before the first assessment date.

The Pathway Leader/Head of UG/PG Studies will identify potential External Instrumental Assessors. There will be one External Instrumental Assessor for each instrument/voice and each genre. External Instrumental Assessors will normally be appointed for three years.

The Exams team will approach potential External Instrumental Assessors and, with their agreement, nominations (including CVs) will be considered by the Quality Project Group.

Following approval, the Exams team will provide External Instrumental Assessors with the following information:

- Letter of engagement, including fees information;
- Assessment timetable, including briefing information;
- HE Performance Assessment Procedure;
- Assessment criteria;
- External Instrumental Assessor report template;
- Claim form for fees and travel expenses.

2. Examination Process

Resources available to the Panel

During the assessment, the Panel will have access to:

- The assessment timetable, with specified assessment lengths;
- Generic assessment criteria and genre-specific assessment guidance;
- Repertoire lists, as appropriate;
- Details of penalties to be applied for assessments under/over length;
- Examiners' notes sheets, for note-taking during the assessment;
- Proforma for recording marks and feedback.

Starting the assessment

The Chair is responsible for starting the assessment, making sure that:

- The Panel is in place;

- The student/ensemble has had sufficient time to set up/warm up (unless the student/ensemble was late arriving);

- The student/ensemble is kept informed if there is a delay in starting the recital;

- The audio/visual recording equipment is set to record the performance.

- Before starting the assessment, the Chair must:

- Introduce the Panel to the student/ensemble and explain their role;

- Explain the procedure for stopping the recital if it is likely to over-run (see below).

Timing the assessment

The Chair is responsible for timing the assessment, and may delegate this to another member of the Panel.

The length of the assessment is specified on the assessment timetable. If the student/ensemble is likely to over-run this time period, the Chair should give a clear signal to the student/ensemble one minute before the end of the time period, and again at the end of the time period.

Resources available to the Panel during the assessment include the penalties to be applied for assessments under/over the specified length. Both the original mark and the revised mark following the application of time penalties should be recorded on the proformance.

Note-taking during the assessment

Each Examiner should take notes during the assessment. Examiners must be aware that their notes will be retained along with marks and feedback sheets, and that students have the right to view the notes sheets on request.

Each Examiner should note an indicative mark based on their own observations, and the assessment criteria, prior to any marking discussion.

Discussion and marking

Following each assessment, the Panel will move to the area set aside for discussion and marking.

The Chair will lead the discussion, which will take into account:

- Each Examiner's observations and notes;

- Each Examiner's indicative mark;

- The generic assessment criteria and genre-specific assessment guidance;

- The application of penalties for assessments under/over length.

The Panel will agree a mark and feedback on the assessment.

In the event of a disagreement:

- In a 2-person panel, the Chair's decision will be final;

- In a 3-person panel, a majority agreement will apply, unless there is 3-way disagreement, in which case the Chair's decision will be final.

The Chair will complete the preform a report sheet with the agreed mark and feedback, either handwritten or word-processed and printed immediately. All Examiners will sign off the mark and feedback in hard copy.

3.   Post-Examination

Assessment records

The Chair of each panel will be responsible for returning all assessment paperwork to the Exams team no later than one working day after each assessment.

This will include:

- Signed marks and feedback sheets;

- Examiners' notes sheets;

- Any electronic records that have been generated (these will be deleted from temporary storage on PCs/ laptops/removable storage and kept in a password-protected area on the College network by Exams).

All marks and feedback will be kept strictly confidential until the marks have been confirmed by the Board of Examiners. No marks will be released to staff or students before this time.

External Instrumental Assessor report

The External Instrumental Assessor will complete their report on the College template and submit it to Exams no later than three weeks after the date of each assessment. Reports will be submitted to the External Examiner for consideration as part of the external examining process.

Following submission of their report, the External Instrumental Assessor may claim fees and expenses using the appropriate claim form. Fees will be calculated according to the duration of the Assessor's attendance at College.

Responsibilities

Head of Undergraduate Studies / Head of Postgraduate Studies

- Compile and publish assessment timetable; appoint Chairs, Deputy Chairs and panels

- Oversee organisation of equipment and staff

- Exams team

- Assist with publication of assessment timetable

- Prepare assessment paperwork

- Collect and retain marks and feedback

Facilities, IT, other College departments

Assist with organisation of equipment and resources for assessments

Chairs of Panels

- Brief External Instrumental Assessors as appropriate

- Begin and time performance assessments

- Lead discussion following assessment and agree marks and feedback

- Make final decision in cases of disagreement (2-person panels) or in cases of three-way disagreement (3-person panels)

- Return signed marks and feedback sheets, along with any electronic records, to Exams

Deputy Chairs

- Undertake duties of Chair of Panel in the event of the Chair's absence

- All Panel members

- Attend training/standardisation meetings as required

External Instrumental Assessors

- Attend briefing as required

- Advise on comparative performance standards during assessments and participate in marking and feedback process

- Report on assessment process and performance standards to External Examiner

Procedure flowchart

To be completed

Breach of policy (if applicable)

If the Procedure is not followed:

- The student(s) should make a report to the Head of UG/PG Studies. Refer to the procedure for Notification of Procedural Irregularity in the HE Academic Appeals Policy;

- Panel members should make a report to the Head of UG/PG Studies or to the Chair of the Board of Examiners as appropriate;

- The External Instrumental Assessor should report the circumstances to the External Examiner via their report.

Document 2

Postgraduate Assessment Criteria: Performance

	Performance Technique	Style and interpretation	Musicianship	Presentation	Improvisation
Scope	*Indicators of instrumental/vocal facility*	*Factors consistent with stylistic performance*	*Factors consistent with realising a musical concept through performance*	*Factors consistent with making an impression on the audience*	*Indicators of generative musical facility*
Distinction 80-100 **Outstanding**	Performance demonstrates outstanding technical command and instrumental fluency throughout.	Performance displays an outstanding level of stylistic flair and sophistication. Evidence of critical engagement with advanced scholarship/practice resulting in an outstanding understanding of the music being performed and wholly appropriate interpretation of the music for the style and genre.	Performance displays an excellent level of intelligence and imagination in the expression of musical idea, structure and dynamic form. Excellent levels of musicianship and ensemble interaction.	Performance displays outstanding levels of musical authority and confidence, stage presence and engagement with the audience	Improvisation demonstrates an outstanding level of coherence and invention, displaying a highly distinctive and original voice. Evidence of outstanding critical engagement with advanced scholarship/practice.
Distinction 70-79 **Excellent**	Performance demonstrates excellent technical command and instrumental fluency throughout.	Performance displays an excellent level of stylistic flair and sophistication. Excellent critical engagement with advanced scholarship/practice resulting in an excellent understanding of the music being performed.	Performance displays an excellent level of intelligence and imagination in the expression of musical idea, structure and dynamic form. Excellent levels of musicianship and ensemble interaction.	Performance displays excellent levels of musical authority and confidence, and engagement with the audience	Improvisation demonstrates an excellent level of coherence and invention, displaying a distinctive voice and some originality. Evidence of excellent critical engagement with advanced scholarship/practice
Merit 60-69 **Assured**	Performance demonstrates assured technical control and instrumental fluency.	Performance displays an assured level of stylistic flair. Evidence of assured engagement with scholarship/practice resulting in an assured interpretation of the music for the style and genre.	Performance displays an assured level of intelligence and imagination in the expression of musical idea, structure and dynamic form. Assured levels of musicianship and ensemble interaction.	Performance displays assured levels of musical authority and confidence, and engagement with the audience	Improvisation demonstrates an assured level of coherence and invention, displaying an individual voice. Evidence of assured engagement with scholarship/practice.
Pass 50-59 **Effective**	Performance demonstrates effective technical control and instrumental fluency, though some weaknesses are apparent.	Performance displays an effective sense of style. Evidence of effective engagement with scholarship/practice resulting in workable interpretation of the music for the style and genre.	Performance displays a grasp of the expression of musical idea, structure and dynamic form. Effective levels of musicianship and ensemble interaction.	Performance displays effective levels of musical authority and confidence, and engagement with the audience	Improvisation demonstrates a effective level of coherence and invention, with some evidence of an individual voice. Evidence of effective engagement with scholarship/practice.

	Performance Technique	Style and interpretation	Musicianship	Presentation	Improvisation
Scope	*Indicators of instrumental/vocal facility*	*Factors consistent with stylistic performance*	*Factors consistent with realising a musical concept through performance*	*Factors consistent with making an impression on the audience*	*Indicators of generative musical facility*
Pass 40-49 **Satisfactory**	Performance demonstrates satisfactory technical control and instrumental fluency, though significant weaknesses are apparent.	Performance displays a satisfactory sense of style. Evidence of engagement with scholarship/practice showing understanding of the style and genre.	Performance displays some grasp of the expression of musical idea, structure and dynamic form. Satisfactory levels of musicianship and ensemble interaction.	Performance displays satisfactory levels of musical authority and confidence, and engagement with the audience.	Improvisation demonstrates a satisfactory level of coherence and invention, with some evidence of an individual voice. Some evidence of engagement with scholarship/practice.
Fail 30-39 **Unsatisfactory**	An unsatisfactory level of instrumental/vocal technique, with slips and lack of consistent control.	Minimal engagement with scholarship/practice, and lacks critical awareness resulting in a misunderstanding of the music being performed. Eccentric approach to stylistic interpretation.	Very little evidence of the grasp of musical idea, structure and dynamic form or its expression. Poor musicianship and ensemble interaction.	Unconfident performance lacking authority and engagement with the audience	Improvisation demonstrates an almost complete lack of coherence and invention. Little evidence of performance informed by scholarship/practice.
Fail 0-29 **Unacceptable**	An unacceptable level of instrumental/vocal technique with serious errors and lack of control.	No evidence of scholarship/practice and critical awareness resulting in a misunderstanding of the music being performed. No stylistic interpretation.	No evidence of the grasp of musical idea, structure and dynamic form or its expression. Very poor musicianship and ensemble interaction.	Extremely uneasy performance, or behaviour suggesting a non-serious attempt.	Improvisation demonstrates a complete lack of coherence and invention. No evidence of performance informed by scholarship/practice.

Document 3

a	Module title	Specialist Study 2 (Performance) - PG-Dip
b	Module code (enter code or 'NEW')	NEW
c	Module Leader	Senior Lecturer: Research and
d	Credits	40
e	Level	PG: 7
f	Semester	Full-time (Trimester 2) Part-time (Trimester 1 & 2 year 2)
g	Pass/fail	N/A
h	Pre-requisites	Specialist Study 1 (Performance)
i	Concurrent modules	Creative Practice in Context 2
j	Post-requisites	Specialist Study 3 (Performance) if progressing to masters
k	Mandatory constraints	N/A
l	Advisory constraints	N/A
m	Rationale	This module will enable students to build on performance practice that was undertaken in the Specialist Study 1 (Performance) module.
n	Aims and distinctive features	The aim is to establish and further the student's musical and professional direction by assigning each student a creative practitioner.
o	Learning outcomes	**Knowledge & Understanding:** 1. Apply appropriate presentation to their performance and repertoire of appropriately challenging music for a public performance. **Intellectual Skills:** 2. Engage in advanced personal development through performance practice. **Practical/Professional:** 3. Present a personal and coherent musical language. 4. Employ highly accomplished technical command and musicianship for the realisation of a well-balanced concert programme **Transferable Skills:** 5. Accept accountability of all time management, co-ordination of human and physical resources and musical achievements.

p	Learning and teaching strategy	Students will continue to engage with a specialist instrumental supervisor in pursuit of the module's learning outcomes. Students will also undertake 1:1 supervisions with a creative practitioner and work towards refining their professional understanding with respect to presentation, professionalism, audience expectation and interpretation of their chosen repertoire. The specific content of the module will vary between candidates who as a collective encompass a broad range of styles and idioms. The student will be expected to further develop his or her own distinct musical direction/identity, and be suitably challenged in that they undertake a performance of a greater duration. **Table:** | Type	Length	Frequency	Total
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1:1	1 hour	Per week (10)	10 hours*
1:1	Variable[1]	Variable[1]	Up to 10 hours[2]
Directed	31.6	Per week (12)	380
		Total Hours	**400**	 *Part-time students spread their tuition over two trimesters (Frequency x 2).* [1] Length of sessions can vary, but would not normally be less than 1 hour. Students will have different needs that may warrant fewer but longer sessions. [2] Entitlement is up to 10 hours and is dependent on the creative practitioner. The PSRC ensure that contact time is between 6 and 10 hours. Part-time students can take their allocation over two semesters.
q	Arrangements for revision and private study	Students have access to a range of practice, ensemble and band rooms along with recording studios and specialist music computer environments. All postgraduate students have access to the Postgraduate Studies & Research Centre (PSRC) for quiet study which is situated within the conservatoire's library. Directed study hours can be undertaken within the above resources as appropriate.
r	Methods of assessement	Public recital (30-35 minutes) and agreed documentation.
s	Methods of reassessment (if different to r)	Same as 'r'
t	Identify any ethical issues that relate to this module's teaching and assessment (supporting material may be monitored from time to time)	

u	Programme - module learning outcomes - assessment mapping			
Programme outcomes	Module outcomes	Assessment method 1	Assessment method 2	Assessment method 3
Ia, IIb, IIc, Id, IId	1,2,3,4,5.	Public recital (30-35 minutes) - 100%	N/A	N/A
v	Estimated number attending module		Although all students choosing the performance pathway will attend this module, it is delivered as a staff student ration of 1:1.	
w	Indicative content			

This module enables students to prepare for a substantial performance. All students, whatever their chosen idiom, will be expected to demonstrate an advanced musicality that is in keeping with their chosen discipline. Students will continue to develop their technical skills that are appropriate to their idiom by working with their 1:1 supervisors. In addition students will be assigned a creative practitioner who will give guidance on interpretation, presentation and professionalism. As with Specialist Study 1, focus of technical proficiency will be appropriate to the chosen discipline.

x	Indicative reading (please list as a bibliography)

Bibliography:

- Carson, M (1996) Performance, a critical introduction (Routledge)

- Godøy, R: Leman, M (2009) Musical Gestures: sound, movement and meaning (Routledge)

- Kramer, L (2010) Interpreting Music (University of California Press)

- Pierce, A (2010) Deepening Musical Performance Through Movement: The Theory and Practice of Embodied Interpretation (Musical Meaning & Interpretation) Indiana University Press.

- Rink, J. (1995) The practice of performance: studies in musical interpretation Cambridge University Press).

- Rink, J. (2002) Musical Performance: a guide to understanding (Cambridge University Press).

- Solis, G and Nettl, B (2009) Musical Improvisation: Art, Education, and Society (University of Illinois Press)

The breadth of student engagement is significant due to each student's individualised programme of study. Specific recommended reading and repertoire will be provided by specialist study supervisors to accommodate each student's intended direction.

The ERASMUS Network for Music 'POLIFONIA' promotes innovation in European Higher Music Education (HME) and aims to assist institutions in enhancing the quality and relevance of HME through cooperation at the European level.

This report describes assessment practices in HME in Europe with a view to developing a shared understanding of 'standards', reference points, roles, contexts and challenges for examiners and assessors.

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