

HOW TO PREPARE FOR AN
INSTITUTIONAL OR PROGRAMME
REVIEW IN HIGHER MUSIC EDUCATION:
GUIDANCE FOR PARTICIPATING IN AN AEC
QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PROCESS

POLIFONIA ACCREDITATION
WORKING GROUP



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Association Européenne
des Conservatoires,
Académies de Musique
et Musikhochschulen (AEC)

ERASMUS NETWORK FOR MUSIC

polifonia

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A free electronic version of this handbook is available through www.polifonia-tn.org.



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INTRODUCTION

The *Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen* (AEC)¹ has developed a framework for reviews of European higher music education institutions and programmes in music. This framework is outlined in the AEC Framework Document *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Music Education: Characteristics, Criteria and Procedures*².

The AEC offers services in quality assurance and accreditation based on this framework in the following contexts:

- **Informal:** the AEC Quality Enhancement Process for Institutions and Programmes is a European music-specific peer review system, engaged in voluntarily and consisting of visits carried out by panels of experts.
- **Formal:** the AEC has established several types of bilateral cooperation with national quality assurance and accreditation agencies in Europe and is involved in joint formal reviews of higher music education institutions or programmes conducted collaboratively with such agencies.

This handbook focuses on the first of these two contexts, the AEC Quality Enhancement Process for Institutions and Programmes. It contains all the necessary information and descriptions of procedures with respect to this process and outlines an indicative time schedule for it (from the point where an institution applies for a visit until the production of the final report). It also provides a programme template for the visit itself. As such, much of the information it contains could be useful for reviews of institutions and programmes in music regardless of their status and context; therefore, the general terms of 'review' and 'AEC review' are used at points within the handbook, along with the more specific title of 'AEC Quality Enhancement Process'.

The main aim of the AEC Quality Enhancement Process for Institutions and Programmes is to provide valuable experience and a frame of reference to assist AEC member institutions in their quality assurance and enhancement activities, whether as part of preparations for formal review or as a more general tool for institutional development. As the AEC does not currently have recognised legal status as a national or other official quality assurance and accreditation agency, reviews conducted under the AEC Quality Enhancement Process are informal in legal terms, but rigorous in nature, providing institutions with detailed, well-informed scrutiny and impartial advice from 'critical friends'.

The AEC Framework Document *Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Music Education: Characteristics, Criteria and Procedures* addresses European developments in the field of quality assurance and accreditation, sets out the principles governing the AEC framework for reviews in music and outlines the distinction between internal quality assurance systems³ (set up and operated by the institution itself) and external quality assurance and accreditation systems (operated by agencies such as governments and accreditation agencies).

¹ See for more information about the AEC www.aecinfo.org.

² The AEC Framework Document can be found at www.bologna-and-music.org/reviewscheme.

³ See 'Handbook for Internal Quality Assurance in Higher Music Education', Evert Bisschop Boele, August 2007 at www.bologna-and-music.org/internalqa.

Please note that the AEC Framework Document should be considered as the principal formal document of reference for the AEC Quality Enhancement Process for Institutions and Programmes. The present handbook is designed as a supplement to clarify practical aspects of the review process set out in the AEC Framework Document. It is not a substitute for the Framework Document but a complement to it.