

## Music Study, Mobility, and Accountability Project

### **Overview of Accountability and Quality Assurance Systems for Schools of Music in Europe**

In Europe, quality assurance, evaluation, and accreditation are usually organized on the national level and the methods used differ as much as the education systems. In federal states like Germany, education and quality assurance are managed on the level of the 'Bundesländer', the German equivalent of a state or province. Neither the European Union nor the wider Europe makes use of a formal general framework for quality assurance at this moment.

Since 1999, however, the European concept of the quality of higher education has been strongly influenced by the follow-up process of the Bologna Declaration (see [www.aecinfo.org/bologna/bolognaprocess](http://www.aecinfo.org/bologna/bolognaprocess)) in which the European Ministers of Education called for more visibility, transparency, and comparability of quality in higher education. Two years later in Prague, the ministers called upon the universities, other higher education institutions, national agencies, and ENQA (European network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) to collaborate in establishing a common framework of reference and to disseminate good practice, thus ensuring a credible European quality-assurance environment. During the 2003 Berlin Conference, the ministers committed themselves to supporting further development of quality assurance at institutional, national and European level. They stressed the need to develop mutually shared criteria and methodologies on quality assurance and agreed that by 2005 national quality assurance systems should include:

- A definition of the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved
- Evaluation of programmes of institutions, including internal assessment, external review, participation of student and the publication of results
- A system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures
- International participation, cooperation and networking

The ministers invited ENQA to develop an agreed set of standards, procedure and guidelines on quality assurance, to be presented at the next ministerial meeting in Bergen in May 2005.

Although the European Union has no direct powers in the field of education, it has called on the member states to introduce quality assessment and quality-assurance mechanisms into their higher education systems and to promote practice between the authorities responsible for quality assurance in higher education. The European Council recommendation of 1998<sup>1</sup> envisages the introduction of quality-assurance methods in higher education and the promotion of European cooperation in this field. It recommends that the Member States establish transparent quality-assessment and quality-assurance systems, which should be based on a number of common principles, mainly relating to the autonomy of the institutions responsible for quality assurance, the respect of the autonomy of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Council Recommendation of 24 September 1998 on European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education (98/561/EC) OJ L 270/56 of 07.10.1998

higher education institutions, the various stages in the assessment procedure, and the publication of quality-assessment reports. Also, member states are recommended to take follow-up measures to enable higher education institutions to implement their plans for quality improvement, which may be the result of a quality assessment procedure. In a further recommendation of the Council and of the European Parliament<sup>2</sup> developed by the European Commission in 2004, five steps are proposed to achieve mutual recognition of quality assurance systems and assessments across Europe:

1. Require all higher education institutions active within their territory to introduce or develop rigorous internal quality assurance mechanisms.
2. Require all quality assurance or accreditation agencies active within their territory to be independent in their assessments, to apply the features of quality assurance laid down in the Council Recommendation of September 1998 and to apply a common set of standards, procedures and guidelines, for assessment purposes.
3. Encourage quality assurance and accreditation agencies, together with organisations representing higher education, to set up a “European Register of Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agencies”, and to define the conditions for registration.
4. Enable higher education institutions active within their territory to choose among quality assurance or accreditation agencies in the European Register, an agency which meets their needs and profile.
5. Accept the assessments made by all quality assurance and accreditation agencies listed in the European Register as a basis for decisions on licensing or funding of higher education institutions, including as regards such matters as eligibility for student grants and loans.

Since 1998, (semi-)autonomous ‘quality assurance agencies’ have been increasingly established on national or regional levels in most European countries. The phenomenon is most common in the university sector, but the non-university sector in higher education is involved as well. Some agencies cover both sectors; other agencies cover one sector or the other. This difference in organization is typically explained by the variety of structures of national higher educational systems. Quality assurance is both the main function of the agencies as well as the predominant objective of the performed evaluation activities. To an increasing degree, the agencies provide expert opinions and advise both government and higher education institutions. Approximately one-half of the agencies are involved in accreditation. The appearance of accreditation agencies, and hence the performance of accreditation activities, go hand in hand with an increased focus on accountability as the objective of the performed activities. The national governments are the main source of funding of the evaluation activities, but higher education institutions are often also required to contribute to funding these activities.

European quality assurance can be identified as based on eight main types of evaluation, and most agencies carry out several types of evaluation. These are evaluation, accreditation, auditing and benchmarking, combined with one of the following categories of focus: subject, programme, institution or theme. The most common remains programme evaluation, but programme accreditation comes close and institutional audit is the third most popular type. More recent is the interest in programme or subject benchmarking. Accreditation is most used in the new EU member states and in the Dutch- and German-speaking countries. The ‘institutional’ audit is primarily used in the English-

---

<sup>2</sup> Proposal of 12 October 2004 for a recommendation of the Council and of the European Parliament on further European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education, COM(2004) 642 final

speaking countries. There are, however, significant variations in the procedures and methods of accreditation. Several agencies experiment with benchmarking—often combined or integrated with other methods. Notwithstanding the great variety in evaluation types and methods, European quality assurance has common features, such as the so-called four-stage model, which has also been mentioned in the 1998 European Council recommendation. All agencies make use of *external experts*, who can have varying functions and responsibilities but have a core function to carry out site visits. *Self-evaluation*, as well as *site visits*, is part of almost all evaluation processes and most accreditations. Nearly all cases of evaluation result in *reports*, which typically contain conclusions and recommendations. The evaluated institutions are usually consulted on matters of factual accuracy before these reports are published. For more and detailed information on quality assurance in Europe, please see the ENQA survey ‘Quality Procedures in European Higher Education’<sup>3</sup> (2003).

### **Quality Assurance Systems in Professional Music Training in Europe**

In its effort to collect information about national systems for professional music training with the aim to formulate descriptions of such systems in all European countries, the AEC has collected information about the quality assurance systems used in professional music training in the various European countries. Below you will find an overview per country of the existing quality assurance systems; please note that, as the developments in relation to quality assurance in the framework of the Bologna Process are very dynamic, the national situations as described below are currently subject to change. The AEC will make an effort to keep the information up-to-date as much as possible, as well as continue to collect more detailed information about countries that are still missing or have sent incomplete or very concise information.

#### **Austria**

Under the 2002 University Act universities are under an obligation to install quality management systems for quality and performance assurance. The entire performance spectrum of the university is subject to evaluation, the area of evaluation is determined in performance agreements. The performance of the scientific and artistic university staff must be evaluated at 5-year intervals at minimum. Evaluation must be subject-oriented, consistent with international standards and the university charter. The university bodies must base themselves in their decision-making on the outcome of these evaluations.

The Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance (AQA) was established at the beginning of 2004. AQA aims at assisting higher education institutions in implementing quality assurance procedures, in coordinating evaluations and in elaborating quality assurance standards. A law on the accreditation of private universities has been in force since 1999. Post-secondary studies and private educational establishments of a quasi-university character may be officially recognised as private universities. For this purpose, an independent Accreditation Council was set up in the year 2000. Universities are accredited for a maximum period of 5 years. The Accreditation Council is moreover responsible for ensuring continuous and concomitant quality control of the accredited private universities. Music institutions in Austria are currently – due to the well known problems in evaluating artistic/music training – not yet subject to regular quality reviews or accreditation procedures. At the moment appropriate methods according the evaluation of music training are developed.

---

<sup>3</sup> European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), ‘Quality Procedures in European Higher Education’, ENQA Occasional Papers 5, Helsinki 2003. Available at <http://www.enqa.net/files/procedures.pdf>

## **Belgium (Flanders)**

All Flemish institutions that offer music training were reviewed by the government in the first half of 2003. The Inspection has studied the self-evaluation reports and has visited the four Conservatoires. They will report shortly.

Accreditation will start with the introduction of the Structuurdecreet in 2004-2005. The Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO) establishes the accreditation framework for existing study programmes, in conformity with the provisions in the 'structuurdecreet' which regulates the introduction of the bachelor-master structure in Flanders. The NVAO was set up by the Dutch and the Flemish government. VLHORA, the association of Flemish 'hogescholen' (colleges), and VLIR, the association of Flemish universities, jointly organise the inspection of academic study programmes (in Flanders, 'academic bachelors' and 'masters' are granted in higher education) according to a common protocol which is approved by the NVAO. All institutions offering the same study programme are obliged to take part in the inspection, which is organised for that programme. The process will start from January 2005. The institution can use the inspection report to get its inspected programme accredited by the NVAO. The process makes use of a self-evaluation report, visitations by peers and an education expert is part of the inspection commission. External evaluators do not receive special training. The quality assurance process takes place every 8 years and is obligatory and public. It is organised regionally.

The decree on 'hogescholen' and universities prescribes that each institution is on the one hand responsible for its quality (internal quality assurance) itself and on the other hand has to participate in external quality assurance (e.g. through peer review) for its education and for its research (separately). Accreditation of study programmes is a condition to be allowed to issue diplomas (bachelor or master) and to receive government funding for a study programme. The quality of the inspection report depends highly on the qualities of the inspection commission and specifically its chair. In the future they will be assisted by experienced secretaries (mostly employed by VLIR or VLHORA) that will guard the quality of the inspection process but cannot influence its course.

## **Belgium (Wallonia)**

The institutions are from 2004 submitted to quality assurance organised by the quality control agency for superior education in the French-speaking community in Belgium, according to European norms (self-evaluation, external evaluation by a panel of international experts). The first evaluations however are not to be expected before 2006-2007, because of the many organisational changes in 2001-2004.

## **Croatia**

Croatia has a new Law on Research Work and Higher Education, which has been approved in Parliament by the end of 2003. The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport still has an important role in the higher education, although many responsibilities have been attributed to the universities (financing, study programs, the election of teaching staff, etc.). The National Council for the Higher Education is a body of experts responsible for the development and quality of the complete system of higher education in Croatia. In addition, there is the National Council for Science, a parallel body. The two organisations have some common tasks. Another body, which belongs to both councils, is the Council for Financing Scientific Work and Higher Education.

The Agency for Science and Higher Education is a new, specialized institution, responsible for evaluation of the institutions of higher education – university and college level (the latter are called High Schools). The Agency will be established by the Government of the Republic of Croatia,

while the organization and the modality of its work will be determined by the act of its establishment. The Agency will establish the National Network for Quality Assurance of the Higher Education, which will in future be included in the ENQA (European Network for Quality Assurance). The Agency carries out the evaluation process, which includes study programs and curricula, a system of improvement and control of quality established on institutions of higher education, as well as the process of recognition of degrees. The Agency engages domestic and foreign experts for specific fields of higher education.

Public institutions (financed by state) are to be evaluated at least once in five years. Private institutions are evaluated only for the part which is financed by the state. The Agency reports to the National Council for Higher Education on the proceedings and the outcome. On the basis of the results of the evaluation, the National Council advises the Minister to:

- issue the permission for the study program
- send a letter of expectation
- deny a permission for the study program

The Music Academy has been evaluated (according to the previous Law), only once, in 1999 by a team of international experts, upon which Academy received an accreditation from the Ministry.

### **Czech Republic**

The external quality assurance process in the Czech Republic is organised through evaluation questionnaires, student evaluation, Internet and questionnaires for former students. The process makes use of a self-evaluation report, but not of a visitation system. The quality assurance process is organised by the Ministry of Education. The process is obligatory and public, it can be institutional or discipline specific. Accreditation is done every 5 years by Ministry of Education, based on self-evaluation of the institutions. Brno has accredited its music courses as whole; the Prague Academy has accredited all the courses (violin, tuba, piano, etc.) separately.

### **Denmark**

Higher music education institutions in Denmark are currently not subject to any regular external quality assurance process.

### **Estonia**

The quality assurance process involves an accreditation process, which is necessary for all public state universities according to the University Law of Estonia. The same requirements are applied to all curricula taught in the public state university. The requirements for the accreditation committee and rules are stated by the Minister of Science and Education. For this reason a special committee was created in 1999 by the Ministry of Science and Education, which had as task to create the evaluation process for accreditation for all Estonian universities. The act is created in 14.12.1998, No. 34, 'Rules for the accreditation of the universities and their curricula'.

The process makes use of a visitation by experienced peers, who do not receive any specific training for this purpose. It is organised by the Ministry of Education and Science. The process has to take place once in a period of seven years after the acceptance of the above mentioned law. In case of a negative accreditation decision, a new opportunity is given after some time, which is negotiated between the institution and the Ministry. If accreditation fails for the second time, the Ministry has right to terminate the schools permission to teach. The process of quality assurance and accreditation is organised nationally and on institutional basis. For all government funded

universities, accreditation of the institution and curricula are obligatory. Private universities have no such obligation, but they are also not supported by government. The standards used for accreditation are set by the Ministry of Education and Science, by the accreditation committee. The whole text is available from the Ministry upon request.

## **Finland**

There is currently no external quality assurance system in use in Finland, but the Ministry of Education has released in February 2004 a report on the Quality Assurance of Higher Education. In the report the committee recommends that quality assurance will be constituted of three elements: national higher education policy, national evaluation, and the higher education institutions' own quality assurance. The committee furthermore recommends that:

1. Universities and polytechnics develop quality assurance systems, which comprise all spheres of operation in the higher education institution. The quality assurance systems should
  - a) meet the developing quality assurance criteria of the European Higher Education Area,
  - b) be part of the operational steering and management system,
  - c) cover the entire operation of the higher education institution,
  - d) be interrelated as part of the normal operations of the higher education institution,
  - e) be continuous,
  - f) be documented, and
  - g) enable the participation of all members of the higher education community in quality work. The higher education institutions have the principle responsibility for the development and quality of the education they provide.
2. In response to the objectives set in the Berlin Communiqué, auditing of the quality assurance systems of universities and polytechnics will be taken into use in Finland. The development and pilot phase of the auditing is realized during 2004–2005 through the collaboration between the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council and the higher education institutions. The objective is that the audits will be carried out periodically (e.g. in 5–6 year intervals) and that all quality assurance systems of the higher education institutions are audited once by the year 2010.
3. The Ministry of Education develops methods and criteria for the decisions on starting new programmes, ending programmes and evaluating existing programmes in special cases. The process will make use of a self-evaluation report, and of visitation by and international expert committee. Members of this committee will receive special training.

The Ministry of Education, Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council and universities or polytechnics will together be responsible for the organisation of the quality assurance process; audits will be carried out periodically (e.g. in 5-6 year intervals). The process will be obligatory a public and organised institutionally.

The connection between quality assurance and funding exists as follows. Higher education is funded by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education requires that universities develop quality assurance systems. The standards which are to be used in the process will be ready in 2005; they will be discipline-specific and will be developed by the institutions themselves. There is no system of accreditation in use. Legislation defines the roles and responsibilities of the higher education institutions. The Ministry of Education supervises the national higher education policy.

In European discussions, Finland has spoken for national quality assurance systems, which encourages trust and mutual understanding between institutions. The aim of the Finnish quality assurance culture has been to increase the institution's own awareness of its strengths and weaknesses.

## **France**

### CNSMD

An external commission validates the certification of the national conservatoire diplomas. The diploma attributed by the Conservatoire is inscribed in the national registry of professional certifications, and approval (validation) is made relative to university level diplomas (in France, either level II, which signifies those employed in positions requiring training at a level comparable to that of a Bachelor or 'Maîtrise' and/or level I, which means those employed in positions requiring training at levels above the 'Maîtrise'). The process makes use of a self-evaluation report which is sent to a commission of outside experts. The outside experts do not receive any special training. The CNCP, or Commission Nationale de la Certification Professionnelle (National Commission for Professional Certification) is responsible for the organisation of the quality assurance process. The Commission is linked to the Ministry of Employment and Work. The process is voluntary and public and takes place every 3 years. It evaluates the institution as a whole. The quality assurance process is not related to government funding or accreditation. The quality assurance standards relate to the professions to which the national Conservatoires prepares its students and the knowledge and skills needed to exercise these professions. Standards evaluate how the various aspects of the diploma correspond to this knowledge and these skills and how they are validated, in other words the ways in which the national Conservatoires evaluate the competencies of the student's knowledge and skills in a particular discipline. Finally, the Conservatoire must prove, in practical terms, that those who have been awarded diplomas are in fact exercising this knowledge and these skills within the music profession through a study which involves contacting all those having completed their studies within the last 3 years.

On an administrative level, approximately every ten years the Cour des Comptes (the French national Audit Office) verifies the good usage of public funds in a two-fold manner:

- a) The Office does an audit of accounts (to determine that spending of public funds is in conformity with the law). This is a juridical process and concerns the institution's chief accountant.
- b) The Audit Office evaluates the institution's administrative management: how and for what public funds have been used, and with what results. The Office makes 'observations' which are included in a preliminary report to which the institution responds. The final observations made by the Audit Office are, depending on the situation, provided to the institution via a letter of observation, to the Ministry via a ruling of the Audit Office's First President, or to the public at large via a public report.

In no way is a report from the National Audit Office considered to be a certification or a guarantee of quality assurance.

### CNR

External quality assurance is organised by the Ministry of Culture, through verification by inspectors and an annual report. The process also makes use of a self-evaluation report. The inspectors from the Ministry of Culture evaluate the organisation and results from afar and are empowered to organise a full or partial inspection of the institution. They do not receive any special training. The regional administration of the Ministry of Culture via the Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles (DRAC) is responsible for the organisation of the process. The process

takes place seldom; about every 10 years. It is quite a loosely-based system and not always totally objective.

### **Germany**

The external quality assurance process in Germany is organised with external expert groups for evaluation. The process makes use of a self-evaluation report and of visitations by peers, who do not receive any special training for this purpose. The process is obligatory and public, and it is organised discipline-specific. At the moment there is no relation between quality assurance and accreditation but this is to be developed soon. Standards that are used in the process are set by the individual institution.

### **Greece**

Higher education institutions in Greece are not subject to any formal external quality assurance processes.

### **Hungary**

Pursuant to the 1993 Higher Education Act, the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC) reviews all higher education institutions and all their study programmes in Hungary every 8 years. The HAC informs the institution of the upcoming accreditation procedure, the institution prepares a self-evaluation report. Institutions are also required by law to submit to the HAC an annual report about changes in their institution and programmes. The HAC expert committees for the relevant discipline to which the programmes in the annual report belong review the annual reports. In the case of art universities or colleges this is generally the HAC Expert Committee for Arts, Media and Communications Studies. Based on reports of the expert committee as well as the institution's self-evaluation report, the HAC's visiting team evaluates the institution and submits a report to the HAC. The HAC issues a final report and publishes it. The evaluation covers the institutional level, faculty level and all programmes, and results in an accreditation decision by the HAC. The decision is forwarded to the Minister of Education, who has the final decision on accreditation of the institutions and its individual programmes.

Visiting teams may include non-academics who are experts in a particular area or applied field if called for by the profile of the evaluated institution or some of its programmes, e.g. artists, musicians. The visiting team members are given a briefing on the procedure prior to the visit.

The Hungarian Accreditation Committee is responsible for the organisation of the quality assurance process, which is obligatory and takes place every 8 years. It is by law an independent body regarding decisions on quality, but the Minister of Education makes the final decision based on the HAC's opinion. The minister has to publish his/her reasons for passing a different decision than the HAC's. There is no relation between quality assurance, accreditation and government funding.

There are several levels of standards used in the process: The Higher Education Act defines a college or university, so-called National Qualification Requirements define the level and minimum content of study programmes on the level of a government decree (they are submitted by an applying institution and reviewed by HAC), and the HAC itself has its By-Laws which define the accreditation procedure and has Accreditation Requirements which set the quality standards for study programmes in particular disciplines on the college and university level. Please see [www.mab.hu](http://www.mab.hu).

Benefits of the system are: the quality of higher education in Hungary is under constant review in a comparable manner. Problems with the system are: within the 8-year cycle, quality may not be judged consistently due to different visiting teams and changes in the system during this time; standards are general and require individual and subjective judgement on the part of visiting teams and HAC members, which would require more extensive training for them than is currently the case.

## **Iceland**

The Ministry of Education organises external assessment with regard to the administrative and financial elements as well as the general accountability of the institution.

The quality assurance process makes use of a self evaluation report and visitations by experts (not peers): IMG (a company that cooperates internationally with (amongst others) Deloitte, Gallup international, AC Nielsen, SHL and Corporate Lifecycle International). They are a research and consulting company specialised in knowledge creation – that includes shaping, reviewing and evaluating institutions. The assessment has taken place only once, because the Academy is only five years old, and its Music Department is only three years old. The process will take place about every three years. The Icelandic Ministry of Education is responsible for the organisation of the process, which is obligatory and public. It is organised nationally and addresses the institution as a whole.

The Academy operates on a contract with the government. Funding for the Academy is contingent upon the Academy performing at a certain standard and providing all information. If not, the government can cancel all funding to the Academy. The Ministry of Education sets the standards, by comparison with the other universities in Iceland and art/music institutions in Europe and America.

There is a legal frame for higher education in the Icelandic universities, where for example basic entry requirements and education of teachers are specified (also see the website of the ministry of education [www.mrn.is](http://www.mrn.is)).

## **Ireland**

Most, if not all, institutions are subject to an external quality review and/or accreditation procedure by the government.

## **Italy**

There is currently no system of external quality assurance for professional music training in Italy. The whole organisation of the Italian conservatories is at present in the middle of a process of 'reform', according to which the former 'conservatories' will become principally 'institutions of advanced music education' at university level. The general (vague) guidelines of the reform were voted in parliament in 1999 and are now being put into effect by the Italian Ministry of Education. The following answers are necessarily cautious because many aspects of the reform have not yet been explained. Among the unexplained matters is Quality Assurance.

The former organisation of the conservatories, which was instituted back in 1930 and will still be operative for the next few years, is destined to be phased out. That system contemplated only one form of quality assurance: that of specifying very precisely the programmes of the various examinations at the conservatories (indicating even which pieces must be played at exams; e.g. organists must play Franck's Pièce Heroique in the 8th year, etc.).

It is not yet clear how the new process will be organised, but there is a National University Evaluation Committee (instituted for the universities in 2000), which will apparently now extend its functions to the conservatories. It would seem that a 'nucleus of evaluation' within each institution will send a report to the external government Committee. It is not clarified whether the evaluators will receive special training, but the law states that the Committee (formed by 9 members) consists of 'experts of proven qualification and experience in the field of evaluation'. They are mainly university professors, but not all (at present two would seem to be political figures). Since none of them are musicians, 'up to 5' further experts (presumably in musical matters) can be added to the Committee. These experts will again be nominated by the Ministry.

The 'Comitato nazionale per la valutazione del sistema universitaria' (National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System) is responsible for the organisation of the process. The organisation is nominated by the Ministry, yet supposedly 'independent'. The nine members of the Committee remain in office for four years.

The law states that every year the Committee must make a report on the 'realization of the programming' of the institutions (on the basis of reports made by the 'nuclei of evaluation' of each institution). Every three years the Committee is expected to make a report on the state of music education. The quality assurance process will be obligatory and public, and it will be organised institutionally and nationally.

Regarding the relation between quality assurance, accreditation and government funding: There are obviously 'rumours' that QA may be used as a tool for justifying the future closure of certain conservatories (there are apparently too many in Italy), but this may be just a case of panic or paranoia! Specific worries there are in working with this system: The first main worry is that so little has been clarified so far. In addition, it is a notorious fact that there is considerable friction between the universities and the conservatories (over a series of matters not least that of which of the two institutions should be responsible for training future music teachers). So it is not comforting to know that evaluation is in the hands of an organisation principally formed by university professors and politicians (with a few music experts 'added'). Furthermore, from a (very rapid) glance at the results of the reports of the 'nuclei of evaluation' (published on the internet at [www.cnvsu.it/](http://www.cnvsu.it/)), it would seem that the whole process is a kind of huge questionnaire (how many students do this or that? how many projects have been financed? etc.). i.e. it is not clear if the Committee members ever set foot in any of the institutions that they are evaluating – it seems to be all done on-line.

## **Latvia**

Institutions in Latvia are subject to external quality procedures. In 2002 the Music Academy has undergone international evaluation; all study programmes were assessed and accredited for the next 6 years.

## **Lithuania**

According to the Lithuanian National Law of higher education, each university in Lithuania must undergo an assessment of each existing study programme once per 5 years. The external assessment is organised in two levels: self-assessment and assessment by external experts from the Lithuanian National Centre of Quality Assurance. The quality assurance process makes use of a self evaluation report, of visitations by peers and of visitation by a group of experts from the national Centre of Quality Assurance. According to the national law for assessment of education institutions, groups of experts are formed from the representatives of higher education institutions, ministries, professional organisations, cultural organisations, and high-level professionals. They are

instructed by providing information on general rules of assessment, national system and stages of assessment, methods and other materials (self-assessment material, national law documents, etc.). The national quality assurance process is organised by the Lithuanian National Centre of Quality Assessment (<http://www.skvc.lt>). It takes place once every 5 years per each study programme offered by the higher education institution. The process is organised nationally and per institution but also discipline specific, it is obligatory and confidential. If the study programme does not receive national accreditation, the higher education institution is asked to improve the programme within two years according to the recommendations of experts. If the study programme was not improved according to those recommendations during the two-year period, the institution is not permitted to offer it any longer. It means that the budget of this institution will be reduced accordingly (less students, less teachers, etc.).

Documents on standards used for accreditation are available on the web page of the National Centre of Quality Assessment. The web page has been renewed recently and currently the information is available only in the Lithuanian language. An English version will be online soon.

## **Netherlands**

In The Netherlands at present the old ‘visitation system’ is being replaced by the new ‘accreditation system’. The old system was organised by the institutions themselves and geared towards identifying aspects for further development of the institutions. Only if the quality of the institution would be much below average, a formal warning by the National Inspection could be given and eventually a programme could be shut down (i.e. withheld government funding – this has never happened). The former process can be summarised as follows:

- the institution writes a self-evaluation report;
- a visitation committee consisting of musicians and educationalists visits the institution for two days;
- the visitation committee offers a visitation report which summarises the findings and suggests aspects for further development to the Ministry of Education;
- the institution writes a formal reaction to the visitation committee including plans for the future;
- the National Inspection of Education (linked to the Ministry) checks the validity of the process of visitation;
- (after two years) the inspection evaluates the progress made by the institution.

The new system is geared towards a ‘go/no go’-decision by an accrediting body (Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatie Organisatie NVAO) which operates independently from both the institutions and the Ministry of Education. Programmes have to be accredited once every six years by the NVAO on the basis of the NVAO Accreditation Framework. If they are not accredited they lose degree-awarding power and government funding and have to close. The steps in this process are:

- the institution chooses a Visiting and Validating Institution (VVI);
- the institution sends the VVI a self evaluation report;
- the VVI sends a visitation committee (musicians and educationalists) to the institution;
- the VVI writes a report, which is sent to the institution. The institution offers the report to the NVAO with a request for accreditation;
- if positive, the NVAO grants the accreditation.

The process makes use of a self-evaluation report by the institution, a visitation by peers and a visitation by other experts: in the old system the visitation committee would consist of experts in the field, educational experts and independent chairs and secretaries. In the new system the panel will probably consist of the same mixture. In the old system some training was given to the experts. In the new system this depends of the policy of the VVI chosen.

The Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatie Organisatie (NVAO at [www.nvao.net](http://www.nvao.net)) is responsible for the organisation of the process. The organisation is appointed by the Ministry of Education but operates independently.

In the old system the process took place approximately once every five years. In the new system a programme has to be validated every six years but may be offered for accreditation earlier if the institution decides so. The process is organised discipline-specific and nationally. Institutions are obliged to participate; the accreditation is public but the VVI-report is confidential.

Accreditation is the final statement in the process of external quality assurance and may lead to a decision by the Ministry to withheld funding. The Accreditation Framework also leads to a further fine-tuning of the systems for internal quality assurance by the various institutions.

The NVAO formulates general standards on six aspects: objectives, programme, staff, facilities, internal quality assurance and outcomes (to be found at [www.nvao.net](http://www.nvao.net)). Dutch institutions for higher music education will base the lay-out of their objectives and programmes on (rather global) national specifications of the level of professional musicians, formulated by institutions and music organisations (to be obtained via HBO-Raad, Sectoraal Advies College Kunstonderwijs, [www.hbo-raad.nl](http://www.hbo-raad.nl)).

The NVAO asks the VVI's to compare the institution which is visited with other (inter)national institutions. There are no further formal requirements concerning this benchmark.

## **Norway**

The quality assurance process in Norway is based on an evaluation of the institutions own quality system and the reports this quality system generates. The process makes use of a self-evaluation report and of visitations by experts; these experts receive special training by the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education. This Agency, which acts independently inside a given framework of law and a ministerial regulation, is responsible for the organisation of the process.

The institutions own quality system requires a continuous process, with a composite annual report to the institution's board. The assessment by the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education takes place every four or five years. The quality assurance process is public and organised institutionally and nationally. Institutions are obliged to participate.

Accreditation is necessary for institutions to receive government funding. The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education is also responsible for accreditation in Norway; has the power to suspend or withdraw accreditation.

There are no fixed standards, as the system is based on each individual institutions own quality system. There are, however, some criteria the quality system has to meet. The criteria focus on the following features:

- that the QA system is linked to institutional steering and management and made an integral part of the institution's strategic work.
- that quality work is organised in routines and measures that ensure broad participation throughout the institution, with defined distribution of responsibility and authority.

- that documentation from all study units (including franchised provision) is sufficient, and that it always includes the students' assessment of the programmes they attend.
- that documentation is analysed, summed up and reported.
- that quality assurance and quality work is accounted for in annual reports to the institution's board.

More information is available at: <http://www.nokut.no/sw455.asp>, with links to more specific criteria.

## **Poland**

Higher music education institutions in Poland are currently not subject to any formal external quality assurance processes.

## **Portugal**

External quality assurance in Portugal is organised as follows: After consulting the self-evaluation report made by the institution, an Expert Panel visits the institution, interviews representatives of the different bodies and then makes its own report, which is sent to the institution for further comments or corrections. The Expert Panel may include teachers and lecturers from other Polytechnic Institutions or from universities and also leaders of musical organisations, such as the Opera House. The experts receive a 'light' training, through seminars and workshops.

The responsible (independent) organisations for the quality assurance process are:

- for the public polytechnic institutions: the ADISPOR (Associação dos Institutos Politécnicos Portugueses);
- for the public universities: the FUP (Fundação das Universidades Portuguesas);
- for the private higher institutions: the APESP (Associação Portuguesa do Ensino Superior Privado).

The process is voluntary and public; it is organised institutionally and nationally. There is no legal requirement on the frequency of the process; it depends on the funding available. The process can have implications for the continuity of a programme though. There are currently no standards used in the quality assurance process.

One of the benefits in working with this system of quality assurance is that it provides an opportunity to have a deeper knowledge of what the institution is doing and to exchange ideas with colleagues. Specific worries however are: the system involves too much paper work and in addition fear exists regarding the real purpose of the Government on asking this 'voluntary' activity (it is written that it is voluntary, but sanctions are stipulated for those who do not 'volunteer'...).

## **Romania**

Each new-established or already accredited university structure (specialization, department or faculty) is periodically assessed by the CNEAA, taking into account a large number of quality indicators.

## **Slovakia**

In Slovakia, the external quality assurance process is organised as follows: the Ministry of Education appoints an Accreditation Committee, which consists of experts from all educational fields. The Committee controls the quality of study programs approximately once in 5 years. The process is

obligatory and public and it is organised institutionally and nationally. The standards used in the process are set by the Accreditation Committee. Every single university must go through this process in order to get its programs accredited; otherwise it will not be considered as a 'real and complete educational institution'.

### **Slovenia**

Higher education institutions in Slovenia are not subject to any formal external quality assurance processes.

### **Spain**

Higher music education institutions in Spain are currently not subject to any formal external quality assurance processes.

### **Sweden**

**The National Agency for Higher Education (Högskoleverket) exercises supervision over universities and university colleges either on behalf of the Government, on its own initiative or on the initiative of individuals. It also checks whether the rules adopted by universities and university colleges themselves appear clear and consistent to the individual and are compatible with legislation and administrative rules. The aim of the Agency's supervisory activities is to ensure that the rules are obeyed and the needs of the public and private individuals – mainly the students at universities and university colleges – are met.**

The Agency of Higher Education supervises, promotes and assesses the quality of institutions of higher education in various ways. The aim of assessments of the right to award degrees – Masters and Bachelors degrees, as well as vocational qualifications – is to assess an institution's quality and its standard of education and research. Such assessments are made in response to requests from the institutions of higher education themselves.

### **Switzerland**

All music schools having or wishing to obtain university status are subject to external quality review and accreditation procedures. These procedures make use of self evaluation reports and of visitations by peers. There are different procedures in use:

- a. EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management, <http://www.efqm.org/>): a network with scientific supervision. This process is voluntary, confidential, discipline-specific and organised internationally. External evaluators receive special training.
- b. Expert commission following the University Law of the Canton (Region). Organised by the institution. The process is obligatory, confidential and organised regionally.

There is no connection between quality assurance, accreditation and funding in Switzerland. In future, the Swiss Music Academies are going to develop a common system on an EFQM-base (probably from 2005 onwards). Actually the choice of QM-measures depends on the regional 'Fachhochschulen' and laws and on the objectives of singular schools.

### **Turkey**

The quality review for the universities is organised by the Council of Higher Education each year on a professional level.

## United Kingdom

The external quality assurance process in the UK takes about 36 weeks (an academic year) although the audit visit is usually about 1 week long. Preliminary meetings takes place with students and staff, the self-evaluation document has to be produced along with any other document the auditors may require (and they can request anything). A draft report appears 8 weeks after the audit visit for comment and 20 weeks after the audit the report is published.

The process makes use of a self evaluation report, of visitation by peers and occasionally also by visitations by other types of experts (only used if the Agency during the audit deems it necessary).

External evaluators receive special training; the purpose of the training is to ensure that all auditors understand the aims and objectives of the processes, are acquainted with the procedures involved, understand their own roles and tasks and the rules of conduct governing the process and that they have an opportunity to practice the techniques of the process, the forming of judgements and statements and the preparation of reports.

Quality Assurance is required by the Government, but the process is organised by the Quality Assurance Agency as intermediary. It takes place on a 6-year cycle. Quality assurance is obligatory and public, and it is organised institutional and national.

There is no relation between quality assurance, accreditation and funding in the UK.

The standards of awards are set by the institution (or validating institution), identified in their Self Evaluation Document and the purpose of the audit is to test what is stated in the Self Evaluation Document.

While the audit itself may be a stressful time for everyone, it does ensure that an institution has 'its house in order'. It is not meant to be confrontational and experiences were courteous, friendly, and supportive despite containing some criticism and recommendation. For further information on any of the above points, see the UK Handbook for Institutional Audit, available at: [http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/institutionalAudit/handbook/audit\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/institutionalAudit/handbook/audit_handbook.pdf).