



## **Report**

### **Development Dialogue**

**in the context of the limited programme review of the**

### **Master of Music**

**Conservatorium Maastricht  
(Maastricht, The Netherlands)**

**Site-visit: 27 – 29 November 2019**

**Table of contents**

Introduction..... 3

Key data on the programme ..... 3

Organisation and structure of the Development Dialogue ..... 4

Overview of the elements discussed ..... 4

Closing ..... 5

## Introduction

The present report results from the Development Dialogue took place in the context of the site visit for the assessment the Master of Music degree programme offered by Conservatorium Maastricht (below: CM) of the Zuyd University of Applied Sciences. The Development Dialogue took place on 29 November 2019.

In addition to the site visit, which included a sequence of meetings with various stakeholders, the programme organised the Development Dialogue with the panel, a separate session focused on discussing potential improvements from a development perspective.

The Development Dialogue was conducted between stakeholders of the programme and the audit panel. The panel was compiled by MusiQuE – Music Quality Enhancement (MusiQuE) as commissioned by CM. Prior to the assessment process the audit panel was approved by NVAO. The panel presented its findings concerning the accreditation of the programme in a separate report.

The review panel consisted of:

- Mr. Georg Schulz – Panel Chair, Former Rector and Associate Professor at the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz (Kunstuniversität Graz), Austria.
- Mr. Jeffrey Sharkey – Panel Member, Principal of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Glasgow, United Kingdom.
- Mr. Thomas De Baets – Panel Member, Professor of Music Education at LUCA School of Arts and KU Leuven, Head of Music and Group Head of Performing Arts at LUCA, Leuven, Belgium.
- Mr. Thomas Zoller – Panel Member, Professor of Composition / Arranging and Director of the HFMDJ Jazz Orchestra at the Academy of Music Carl Maria von Weber in Dresden, Germany.
- Mrs. Joyce Vanderhoydonck – Student Member, trained in classical and jazz piano, currently enrolled in the Master Programme in Jazz Singing of the Royal Conservatory in Ghent, Belgium.
- Mrs. Katrien Goossens - NVAO Certified Secretary, former Teaching Assistant at Ghent University, author and content developer at Van In Publishing House, Antwerp, Belgium.

## Key data on the programme

1. Nomenclature of the programmes in CROHO [central register of higher education programmes]: Master of Music
2. Orientation and level of the programme: Master of Music (professional orientation)
3. Number of credits: 120 EC
4. Location(s): Maastricht Conservatorium
5. Mode(s) of study: full time
6. CROHO registration number: 44739 (25JX)
7. Number of students 2018-2019: 170
8. Name of the institution: Conservatorium Maastricht
9. Status of the institution: publicly funded institution providing higher education
10. Outcome of the institutional quality assurance assessment: granted 2014

## Organisation and structure of the Development Dialogue

The dialogue session took place after the first feedback session which was attended by the Programme's internal stakeholders – i.e. the management team, students and key staff members, both among the teaching staff and the senior support-staff.

The dialogue session was organized in an informal setting, which provided the possibility to have more individual and in-depth meetings between panel members and institutional representatives and stakeholders.

The Development Dialogue started with a session in which the review panel laid out the key findings of the site visit. The Programme then took the initiative to discuss the outcomes of the audit and to clarify all misunderstandings that may have occurred during the various meetings organised during the site visit. The discussion was facilitated by the Chair of the panel. The Chair complimented the Programme for the transparent and open way in which they facilitated all discussions during the site visit.

## Overview of the elements discussed

On the initiative of the review panel, the following topics were addressed:

**1. The transition towards a new management structure that would support the fulfilment of the CM's ambitious mission:** it was clear for the review team that the Programme has solid foundations and has a proven success track record in ensuring a continuous flow of international students and teachers. Likewise, it benefits from a highly motivated management team and extremely capable teaching and support staff, with a pro-active attitude and determination to tackle the challenges inherent to the institutional re-organisation that the CM's currently undertaking. The panel shared its concern that setting ambitious goals may add additional pressure on existing mechanisms and procedures and advised the Programme to calibrate their priorities in relation to existing resources, and to complement their goals with specific objectives, measurable, attainable, relevant and time bound.

**2. Several student-specific topics were addressed:** among the most important topics related to the students' progress towards a professional career, the panel highlighted as essential for the Programme to strike a balance between the need for guidance and the need for autonomy in the students' learning path, on a case by case basis. In the view of the panel, determining and maintaining this individual balance is key for effectively stimulating students to experiment and develop their artistic identity at equal pace with their technical craftsmanship. Noting the remarkable progress in this regard for some of the Programme's study paths, the panel advised that the Programme engage in a broad discussion on the meaning and relevance of the notion of "artistic identity", in order to ensure that the meaning is shared across all its constituencies, and that the most effective ways to implement the concept, both in teaching and learning, as well as in assessment procedures, are collectively identified and agreed upon across all Programme's study tracks. Subsequently, the review panel encouraged the Programme to equally consider how "artistic identity" is assessed, and how feedback on that might be formally made explicit by assessors during examinations in a coherent, consistent and structured way.

**3. Other student-specific challenges** which were addressed mainly included issues around:

- integrating interdisciplinary projects curriculum wise and building on existing foundation to expand the intra- and cross-faculty collaborations;
- ensuring extended practice hours;
- streamlining the communication channels and prioritising the ones deemed most relevant by both students and teaching staff;
- expanding the visibility and, where the case, the capacity of the student support-services to recognise and address the complex challenges that foreign students encounter.

**4. Research activities:** the panel endorsed the Programme's choice for the practice-oriented and practice-relevant research methodologies that students are encouraged to implement in their research project, and commended its

attention to creating a research attitude and teaching students to recognise what research can mean as a part of the practice. As such, the panel suggested to the CM that the research component of the Master of Music might be more appropriately profiled as, for example, *informed, reflective artistic practice* in order to maintain its curricular correspondence with similar programmes in conservatoires across the world.

**5. Internationalisation:** the review panel commended the Programme for its internationalisation policy and the extraordinary attention it pays to continuously expanding its international dimension by successfully attracting students and teachers from across the world. In this context, the panel invited the Programme to reflect further upon the meaning and relevance of “internationalisation” in the CM’s particular context. As such, the panel invited the Programme to consider investing equal effort in strengthening its existing partnerships, in fully exploring all available pathways for practicing internationalisation at home, and in strategically pursuing benchmarking exercises with relevant institutions, thus consolidating its leadership position at regional level.

## Closing

The Programme embraced the conclusions and advices of the review panel. They openly shared the challenges of transition phase they are currently undertaking, and they agreed on the tension between guidance and freedom with regard to the students’ individual progress and development path. It was highlighted that the Programme’s mission is a work in progress and is not yet reflected strongly in the learning outcomes, as a change of culture needs more time for change. CM acknowledged the openness of the Jazz department towards improvisation and experimentation and, consequently, the progress they achieved in stimulating their students to develop an artistic identity. They made clear that the Classical department is willing and ready to embrace change in this regard, even though they are aware that breaking with tradition is not easy to implement in terms of the students’ classical training. The Programme openly recognised that communication issues and the amount of practice time for students are recurrent topics highlighted both by previous assessments and the Student Council. Consequently, CM is actively investigating both the sources of distress and the most effective ways to improve communication across the Programme’s constituencies. As such, a new digital environment was designed and implemented, and currently the teething problems related to this change are being monitored and fixed. With regard to international students’ difficulties to adapt, the Programme clarified that a transition programme was introduced to help them prepare for the Master programme and to give them extra help to improve their own skills for proficiently communicating in English. To create more space for students, the Programme highlighted its transition towards paperless desks and a new booking system recently installed. Lastly, the Programme made clear to the review panel that they are aware of the necessity for artists to adapt to new conditions, and they are determined to continue in training them for the future art.

