

**Development Dialogue Master of Music
Prins Claus Conservatorium**
English version

Background

The Development Dialogue regarding our Master of Music PCC took place on February 26, 2024. This dialogue is part of the 2019 accreditation process. Typically, a Development Dialogue occurs shortly after the visitation. However, the COVID-19 period has caused delays in the scheduling of this dialogue.

In a Development Dialogue, the programme discusses the outcomes of the accreditation process with the chair and a member of the accreditation committee. The focus of the dialogue is development-oriented, and there is no assessment attached to it.

The conversation with the committee members was conducted by the PCC management and the programme team. Prior to the dialogue, we sent a brief context description and issues to our conversation partners. Our main question related to how we have structured the integral assessments and what is needed to make it more manageable and effective.

Report

Introduction by the programme

Starting from the academic year 23-24, the development and organization of the Master of Music are overseen by a programme team consisting of four course leaders, a programme manager, and a member of the support staff. This restructuring of the organization aims to enhance control over development and implementation of the educational concept of the programme. At the time of the previous accreditation (2019), the organization and structure were much more complex.

The programme has achieved excellent results, and we are still pleased with the concept of its mission and the student's plan being the guiding principles. Additionally, the integral approach to performance, research, and entrepreneurship forms the foundation of the curriculum. However, the concept of 'integral' and its application appears to be confusing, especially during assessments. We aim to create clarity by reducing the frequency of assessments and being more precise about what is assessed and when. The balance between the integral assessment of all competencies and the assessment of individual components - such as performance, research, and entrepreneurship- is a matter of concern.

Furthermore, we find that the numerous roles teachers can assume while guiding students (instructor, coach, mentor, assessor) can be confusing for both the student and the teacher involved.

Feedback from the panel:

The concept of the programme is appreciated. The engaged profile and the educational goals are 'spot on' for the context in which musicians operate today, increasingly transcending genres and with aspects such as technology and co-creation becoming more and more important. Education that places the student ('the learner') at the centre is key, a challenging concept in settings where the traditional master-apprentice dynamic prevails.

A panel member questions the origin of our dilemma, wondering why there are so many assessments, it appears to resemble 'old-fashioned thinking'. The assessment plan should align more with the goals of the programme rather than its components (the courses).

The programme indicates that students often have varying levels of (prior) knowledge regarding entrepreneurship and/or research, and that we aim to ensure the level of these components through assessment. There is tension between being able to develop a professional practice and acquiring the necessary skills for it. A panel member mentions that many programmes maintain the level without extensive testing, partly by firmly anchoring the study plan in education and assessment. The panellists observe that the dilemma we present stems from the desire for control by teachers, rather than focusing on the needs of the learners. But they do recognize the dilemma. It's a significant paradigm shift, moving from teacher-centred education to student-centred education. However, going back to the 'old familiar' way is not the solution according to one panel member.

Regarding the various roles we ask of teachers, the panellists indicate that not every teacher is a coach, not every teacher is a mentor. The role and competencies of the mentor should be clear. A mentor assists the student in executing the study plan. This requires that a mentor thoroughly understands the concept of our master's programme. A panel member suggests that we, as conservatoires, should develop this ourselves, preferably collaboratively. This also means that we need to examine our current mentoring concept.

Returning to our question about reducing assessments, the panel suggests that we could work with a small group of assessors to conduct the integral assessment, incorporating input from (main subject) teachers. This input is important for the assessment but is not a judgment. Here lies our challenge: We claim to formatively assess the courses, but in reality, we assess the courses summatively each semester. A panel member adds: Introducing peer assessments could be a valuable addition and outcome in reducing assessment pressure in the organization and strengthening students' learning ability. In one of our conversation partner's institutions, they mainly use this form for entrepreneurship, but it can also replace other assessments. Additionally, A digital portfolio could also eliminate a lot of ambiguity.

The panellists emphasize that the study plan should be the guiding principle for admission. Many arts programmes explicitly do this. During the admission procedure the study plan is key and we have to determine whether the student is sufficiently competent in every component to be able to successfully develop that plan and start the programme. If the level of proficiency in any of the components is inadequate, students may be referred to preparatory programmes or other courses. The information provided to candidates must clearly outline the requirements they need to meet in order to minimize differences in proficiency levels among admitted students.

In conclusion, the panel members leave us with the following advice: You must collectively figure out how student-centred education operates and can be organized. In doing so, practice what you preach and make choices accordingly.