



**External Quality Evaluation Process of
the "Gheorghe Dima" Music Academy in Cluj-Napoca
26-28 May 2010**

Logo of the Conservatoire

Foreign External evaluators:

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Introduction and schedule of the Visit

The first session started with the meeting of the evaluation team with the leadership and curricula managers of the Music Academy "Gheorghe Dima" Cluj-Napoca. After each member was introduced, the mission coordinator outlined the ARACIS framework of evaluation, which would ultimately result in the award of quality of standard in one of four categories in the institutional review area, and one of three categories in the area of programmatic review, ranging from the negative one of a 'lack of confidence' to 'limited confidence' to 'confidence' (and 'high confidence' in the case of institutional review).

The Institutional Expert described the current funding climate and legislative changes to come as a result of a national process which will result in a hierarchy for education programmes in higher education. This will have a different funding model for budget allocations and will take into account the excellence of teaching as well as assessing the research performance of each programme in similar institutions.

The Rector outlined the history and proud tradition of the Academy, which was founded in 1919, and gave a brief introduction of the faculties, programmes and relevant curricula managers. Later on, in response to a question about budgets, he also explained the challenges experienced by the academy in trying to begin to generate some revenue through concerts, events and a new printing press to balance recent cuts to the institutional contract budget received from the state. The new cutting-edge department of Distance Learning, where students pay full fees, was flagged as a dynamic innovation at the same time as having the potential of becoming a more significant source of additional income for the Academy. It was also pointed out that the financing of artistic activity by staff and students is also run outside the state supported budget, and that many members have been successful in securing benefits from sponsorships for these activities.

A closed session for all the assessors followed, where the objectives and procedures for the conduct of the evaluation were determined. The ARACIS Director of Mission further explained the process of the Institutional and various programme reports by different members of the panel, the Foreign Expert Evaluators (AEC) report, and the student prospective report feeding into the ARACIS evaluation. This process, which started a few months ago with the consideration of submitted material, will continue after the visit with further scrutiny of the documents by members of the ARACIS agency, and will culminate in a final report which ARACIS will compile and recommend to their Council, resulting in awarding a standards grade and publication of the final report.

Here it was stressed that members should freely share information and request meetings with any member of staff to clarify questions at any point during the visit.

Following this session, a visit of the institution was conducted, which was informative and allowed us to see many of the Academy activities in action. The Academy was able to secure significant purchases of excellent instruments, particularly superior quality wind instruments and as many as 11 Steinway pianos which are strategically placed in larger rooms to facilitate performances for staff and students. The President of the Academy explained the Institution's difficulties in respect

of facilities and a legal dispute following the reclaiming of property by pre-Communist era owners. A potential move to a new location is at the planning stage.

The morning concluded with a session with the students, who conveyed a very clear sense of contentedness with the programme and were very frank in response to questions posed.

After lunch the team of assessors began their work in evaluating the documentation. During this day and the following morning, the Foreign Expert Evaluators (FEE) were invited to discuss any questions with relevant staff members.

During the second day, the team of assessors continued to examine materials and details of documentation provided. The FEE had informative sessions with the several members of the team, including the Prorector, the leaders of International Relations and Research as well as personnel from Human Resources and the Library. In the afternoon, the team of assessors held a technical meeting where every member gave a short overview of their preliminary findings, outlining strong points, concerns and recommendations. This was followed by two constructive sessions, one with the employers and the other with alumni. Both of these meetings conveyed, from different points of view, the high quality of the graduates and their strong employment prospects following graduation, both on the national and international markets. A common thread of concern was the state of the facilities and the team of assessors decided that a strong message should be sent to the Minister of Education concerning this untenable situation. All members of the assessing team agreed to sign a letter to this effect the following day.

The third day was dedicated to further work and discussions, culminating with a meeting with the management and academic leaders of the Academy, where again, each of the team members gave a short overview of their findings.

The Foreign External Evaluators were asked to produce and sign a short summary report at the end of the evaluation visit, which focused on preliminary findings in respect of strong points and recommendations. This was filed both as a hard copy and in electronic format with Mr. Florin Sgardea, Scientific Secretary of the ARACIS evaluation team for the "Gheorghe Dima" Academy of Music and a copy was forwarded by email to the AEC.

1. Mission and vision

1-a. What is the statutory context in which the institution operates?

The AMGD is a state institution that was established in 1919 as the Conservatoire of Music and Dramatic Art. It went under several reforms over the years and operates since 1991 under its current denomination (Academia de Muzica "Gheorghe Dima" Cluj-Napoca) having been promoted, in 1931, to a university status, then becoming one of the 14 certified higher education institutions (SER: 5). It encompasses, since 1990-1991, 3 Faculties: the Faculty of Theory, the Faculty of Music Performance and the Faculty of Scenic Art. In 1998, the Music College of Piatra Neamt became the fourth faculty of the Music Academy of Cluj.

The AMGD is governed by the University Charter, whose provisions comply with the national and European legislation (SER: 57). The University Charter defines the institution as having inaugurated the modern period of Music Higher Education in Transilvania in 1919 (Carta Academiei de Muzică "Gheorghe Dima" Cluj-Napoca, art.1), states its principles (academic liberty and university,

organizational, self-governmental, administrative and judiciary autonomies: id, art.7-14) and its responsibilities as an academic, a professional and a social community (id, art.21). It also defines the organization of the institution in what regards the human resources, the teaching and learning and the research activities, the finances and the management of the Academy. The Charter is complemented by several regulation documents.

The Foreign External Evaluators (FEEs) found that the Charter and its complementary appendices give a clear and informative picture of the ways in which the Academy is organized and operates and welcomes the efforts of its continuous updating, that were mentioned during the visit.

1-b. What is the Institution's mission, aim or goal and how are they being reviewed?

The AMGD states its mission as "to provide its students with a higher qualification in the field of "Arts-Music". It achieves this through the delivery of its programmes of study (Bachelor's degree studies, Master's degree studies and scientific and professional doctoral studies (SER: 9). These programmes are meant to prepare professionals for a wide range of occupations, defined according to the *National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education*.

The AMGD also puts a great emphasis on its research activities, which are developed according to the Research Plan included in the institution's Strategic Plan and pursuing the objectives of the National Strategy in Research, Development and Innovation, established by the Ministry of Education and Research and by the National Authority for Scientific Research (SER: 10).

The FEEs feel that the mission statement may be too generic (since it's the goal of every Music Higher Education Institutions to "provide its students with a higher qualification in the field of Arts- Music") and could be expanded to reflect the actual diversified and innovative approaches of the academy. The AMGD might wish to consider reviewing its mission statement in a way that allows it to reveal its distinctive educational characteristics within Romania and in Europe.

1-c. What are the goals of its educational programmes?

The goal of the educational programmes of the AMGD is mainly to prepare the students for a professional career on diversified occupations in Music, Theatre or Dance. The SED mentions some of these: teacher, orchestra player, instrument soloist, musicologist, music reviewer, music secretary, rehearsal pianist, stage manager, scriptwriter, choreographer, ballet dancer and some others (SER: 10).

This goal is achieved through a student-centred education based on formative and informative learning objectives and focused on learning outcomes that correspond to the qualifications that the students need in terms of the labour market needs (SER: 10). AMGD states that its teaching activities are closely linked and highly integrated with its research activities (SER: 10).

The FEEs welcome the diversity of the pedagogical offer, as well as (i) the search for innovation (Distance Learning Programme including Performance), (ii) the concern about linking the

educational and research activities and (iii) the designing of the educational programmes in connection with the professional careers.

1-d. How do the curricula/ programmes address the institutional mission?

AMGD's programmes address its mission by:

- Offering all levels of Music Higher Education;
- Offering continuous professional training through the Department for Continuing Education and Distance Learning
- Offering Teaching Staff Training programmes at Initial and Continuing levels
- Reviewing its programmes regularly

AMGD's programmes cover the training of professionals at the 1st, 2nd and 3rd level of Higher Education, thus formally addressing the goal of providing its students with a "higher qualification". There are 10 programmes for the 1st cycle (Bachelor's programme) and 4 for the Master's programme (2nd cycle), all designed for the acquisition of qualifications that correspond to the occupations described on the COR (Classification of Occupations in Romania) (SER: 14) At 3rd cycle level, AMGD offers the two types of doctoral programmes provided by Romanian law: the scientific doctorate and the professional doctorate.

The FEEs acknowledges the depth (all 3 cycles) and the breadth (Bachelor's, Master's, PhDs in Music and Scenic Art, Teacher Training programmes at Initial and Continuing levels, Continuing Education and Distance Learning) of the Academy's activities and encourages its efforts for the continuous enhancement of these activities by the appropriate structures.

1-e. Does the institution have a long-term strategy?

AMGD has a 4 years Strategic plan, approved by the Senate and divided in the following chapters (Planul Strategic Dezvoltare 2008-2011):

- A – Organizational and Structural Management
- B – Management of the Educational Activities
- C – Management of the Research Activities
- D – Quality Management
- E – Interuniversity Cooperation at National Level
- F – International Relations
- G – Students' support services
- H – Resource Management and Sustainability
- I – Human Resources Management
- J – Competitivity, social inclusion and university marketing

Each chapter states long-, medium- and short-term objectives. This Plan is updated annually and the annual operational plans are drawn up according to the strategic plan principles (SER: 58)

The FEEs welcomes the clear organization of the Strategic Plan and the fact that it is annually updated, so that it can take into account the actual situation of the Academy and respond to it.

2. Educational processes

2.1 Programmes

2.1-a. Do the programmes take into account the various aspects of the 'Polifonia/Dublin Descriptors' (PDDs) and/or the AEC learning outcomes?

The self evaluation document states that PDD and AEC learning outcomes have been taken into account "at an informal, procedural level". (SER 77)

The Academy's programmes have moved to a 'competence' based approach and

The SER states that "teaching, learning and evaluation processes have been redefined in terms of learning outcomes". (SER 63) However, the course description sheets are organised by subject and include all eight semesters in a single document with the result that the stated competences reflect only the 'exit point' of the student's learning experience, in other words the 'expected competencies' for that unit (SER 13). The Academy has produced Programme Competencies documents for each field and specialist area and has included career options with each profile. The National Agency ACPART is in the process of finalising a more detailed matrix for this area. (SER 12 and discussions.)

2.1-b. Where appropriate, is there a connection/progression between the various cycles?

The connection between the various cycles is clearly outlined, and includes opportunities for additional Pedagogy modules for graduates wishing to come back and avail of this opportunity. Statistics with progression from the first to the second and then to third cycle have been made available.

The FEEs felt that a lot of attention has been given to fitting in with the Bologna model of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd cycles, and that the principle of competencies has been introduced in programme documentation as 'exit points' for each subject at the end of the cycle. Further details on learning outcomes for specific segments of programmes, for example at the end of each year, seem to be dependent on a national matrix being developed by the National Agency ACPART.

2.2 Delivery

2.2-a. How is the institution utilizing different forms of teaching supporting the delivery of curricula/ programmes?

A variety of forms of teaching is used to deliver the programme. Central to its success and tradition is the individual lesson and the relationship of mentor-disciple between the instrumental/ vocal teacher and the student. In the case of musicology, conducting, composition and pedagogy, students are organised by discipline and receive their specialised instruction in small groups rather than on an individual basis.

In the session with the students, it was clear that the students valued this relationship above everything else, and they also singled out the quality of teaching as being the best feature of the course. It was apparent that the instrumental teachers are very generous in giving additional time to their students to help them prepare for competitions and concerts and are seen as the sources for professional career guidance as well.

Other forms of teaching include small groups in specific combinations, work with instrumental sections, large collective group work in orchestras and choirs and class work in theoretical subjects. Some subjects are delivered by year of study, others by discipline and others in a collective crossing the years. The course schedules contain the organisation of each subject as either course, seminar or practical workshop as well as indicating which type of teaching is used in each (individual, sub group, group or collective.)

2.2-b. What role does research play within the curricula/ programmes?

Scientific research in musicology is one of the major areas where students can specialise from the first to the third cycles. In the Masters programme, the students can specialise in one of the following areas: performance, musicology, composition, conducting, pedagogy, and scenic arts. All students have to produce a written work of research in the area of their specialisation. In addition, the Academy follows the Bologna model of the third level cycle in awarding a Doctorate in Music which consists of 60 taught credits in the first year and two subsequent years on work on a thesis with a direct supervisor. The subject matter of the doctoral thesis can be either in the area of musicology or in the area of interpretation and supported by audio visual performance materials. A third option for this doctoral research component is the area of pedagogic applied methodology. As regards practice based research in the performing arts, there has been an ongoing national preoccupation with this issue which has resulted in an equivalency document being created to mirror recognition given to scientific research for the activities of academic staff members.

2.2-c. How are the students offered opportunities to present their work?

Students felt there were many opportunities for them to present their work, including participation in a yearly concert series which receives technical and advertising support from the school. Students collaborate on producing their own programmes, with the musicology students providing programme notes. The Academy organises inter-institutional events such as musicology symposia and conferences, composition and interpretation competitions and covers the costs of students travelling to similar events elsewhere in the country. The Academy has also been able to support students to travel to international performing competitions and considers this to be important in terms of the Academy's international reputation. (SER 79, additional documentation, discussions with students and academic leaders)

2.2-d. Are there formal arrangements for students to receive academic, career and personal guidance?

At the meeting with the students, it was quite clear that the main role in the guidance of students on all fronts rested with their principal teacher, who often would use their own professional network to connect their students to possible employment. A Guidance Centre for Students does exist, but students did not make much use of it. There are a number of clear employment paths open to graduates through partnerships with the performing and teaching organisations from the greater geographic area. Students are also aware of where to look for jobs openings and for internships which can lead to jobs abroad.

The FEEs felt that the programmes and their delivery are informed by a long tradition of excellence and that their effectiveness is highly valued by both current and former students. The specialisation streams are defined from the outset (performer, conductor, composer, pedagogue) and this means that resources are channelled rigorously along these lines. Consequently, individual instrument lessons are geared almost exclusively towards performance students, and conductors and composers wishing to avail of instrumental lessons have to pursue them outside their main programme of study and pay for them separately. While it would be desirable to grant access to instrumental lessons for students that do not specialise in performance, the FEEs understand that this is an expensive resource subject to careful management by the AMGD and national education programme models.

2.3 International perspectives

2.3-a. Does the institution have an international strategy?

The Academy Charter include a 6 page document on the Rules on the organisation of international activities (appendix 84), and this contains a great and commendable level of detail about the legislative context, structure of the Department of External Relations and European Integration and specific objectives as well as specific tasks of its three sections: International Relations Office, (European) Community Programmes Office and Foreign Students Office. (Appendix 84)

2.3-b. To what extent is the international strategy reflected in the curricula/ programmes offered?

The curriculum design aims to develop high levels of performance taking into account the demands of the international market in terms of potential employment. Contact through masterclasses and seminars with international visiting artists as well as revision of relevant repertoire to international standards are other practical ways to promote an international dimension. Students are encouraged to take part in international events, such as competitions, master classes, and international orchestras, and the advertising of these events is clearly posted on a dedicated space. (SER 78)

2.3-c. Is the institution participating in international partnerships?

The Academy is particularly active in the area of visiting lecturers and numbers 14 ERASMUS partnerships. The students were very aware of opportunities for going abroad, but cited financial difficulties and “not knowing which teacher they would get” at the host institution as the main reasons for not choosing to go. However, it was quite clear that some teachers were adamant that this was a good opportunity and persuaded students to avail of it.

The FEEs felt that the international dimension was given a lot of scope by the AMGD, and that both staff and students operate in an environment that takes into account particularly the standards and demands of the international music jobs market.

2.4 Learning assessment

2.4-a. What are the main methods for assessment and how do these methods support teaching and learning?

Continuous assessment plays a major role in the assessment and support the intensive nature of the intensive learning of the individual, one-to-one lesson. Another category of assessment is called ‘Verification’ and includes periodic assessments of course work and practical work as well as tests, informal exams, presentations, portfolios, and others. There are formal terminal examinations which take place twice a year in summer and winter exam sessions. The autumn exam session allow students to re-submit work and sit repeat exams.

The students are informed of the marks received for the totality of their course work previous to the start of the formal exam sessions. A student is given the opportunity to re-sit an examination to improve their mark, even if the original exam was passed, but they must accept the new mark as final if they choose to avail of this opportunity. (Appendix 74)

2.4-b. What kind of grading system is being used in examinations and assessments?

The grading system is based on a range of 1-10 with a single rounded mark being returned for each assessment. The minimum mark needed to pass is 5. However, when the average mark is calculated at the end of each semester, decimal points are allowed. The student receives a mark for their final degree exam as well as an average mark for the totality of their courses during their four years of study. The results of the final degree exam are recorded on the back of the Diploma, and the details of all other courses are recorded on the Diploma supplement. Currently there are no awards of distinction or merit to distinguish between marks between 5 and 10. (Appendix 74 and sample diplomas) One interesting aspect is that the Academy has specific strategies for stimulating students who are high achievers as well as for helping students who are underperforming to recuperate (Appendix 89).

Based on discussions with alumni and employers, it became clear that one area that could be improved on would be that of additional ensemble skills for instrumentalists and singers who aspire to future professional employment in orchestras and choirs. The training focuses on solo performance, and the diverse skills required to ‘fit in’ and adapt to the challenges of ensembles,

would merit further attention. There is scope for a partnership with the Philharmonic to facilitate this development in promoting a 'side-by-side' learning with orchestral professionals. Furthermore, in the current economic climate, where recruitment in full time posts is increasingly difficult, the students could benefit from developing further the potential of the Music management elective, which would encourage graduates to create their own performance and employment opportunities.

3. Student qualifications

3.1 Entrance qualifications

3.1. In what ways do the entrance requirements assess the artistic, technical, academic and mental capacities of the applicants to accomplish the various aspects of the study programmes within the expected timeframe?

The entrance requirements are clearly set out in documents that are available in printed form as well as on the Internet. There are a set number of subsidised places, for which open competition is invited. In addition to the mandatory tests, which include theoretical, aural, practical and written assessments, the Academy takes into consideration previous results obtained by students in their final year of pre-college education. Students have to sit all parts of the entrance test and achieve a minimum pass mark of 5 in each to be considered for admission. Based on the profile of results, the students are guided towards a focus that suits their abilities and this ensures that they can cope with the various aspects of their chosen programme.

3.2 Employability

3.2-a. Is there a policy for data collection on alumni?

No. However, there are continuing links between alumni and the Academy, as many graduates who go into the teaching profession recommend the institution to their own students, and many other graduates who are employed by the city Philharmonic or Opera, receive part time employment as teachers.

3.2-b. Are graduates successful in finding work/building a career in today's highly competitive international music life?

The rate of success seems to be high, but students still see the two main career paths as being that of performer (soloist or orchestral player), or teacher (Instrumental or music history teacher in the case of musicology students). The majority of students acknowledged that they take the pedagogy electives as a back-up plan. Examples of other professions such as Music IT or composing, as well the usefulness of the Music Management elective in securing alternate jobs was flagged.

3.3 Equal opportunities

3.3. To what extent are equal opportunities taken into consideration?

The Academy charter states that the programmes of study are open to Romanian and foreign students, without discrimination, based on appropriate ability. (Art. 15) The national legislation provides for grants based on financial need. All candidates can compete for merit based scholarships.

The FEE felt that the students could benefit from learning some entrepreneurial skills to potentially enable them to consider a wider spectrum of careers as acceptable employment. Examples could include becoming music promoters, organisers of outreach events, producers of music media, or free lance musicians, in other words to create 'portfolio careers' rather than waiting for a permanent position to become available. The creation of an Alumni association was also recommended.

4. Teaching staff

4.1 Artistic and scholarly qualifications

4.1-a. Are members of teaching staff active as artists and/or scholars/researchers?

Most of AMGD's staff is involved in the national cultural life, either as performing artists, conductors, reviewers, etc. Also many of the AMGD's faculty develop research work within the Academy, which "boasts of a Centre of Excellence" (SER: 65).

4.1-b. Is there an institutional policy and practice to support and enhance the teaching staff's artistic and scholarly/research production?

Research is an important part of AMGD's activities and many, if not all of its teaching staff members are involved in these activities, as stated during the visit. This is done without reduction of the teaching hours.

The Academy has no formal institutional policy or practice to support and enhance the artistic and research production of its teaching staff, apparently because there is no need for it, since this production is developed continuously at an individual level, even if the Academy can't even reduce the teaching hours of the staff for this purpose.

The Academy might wish to consider integrating these individual dispersed initiatives in an institutional framework, formalizing them as part of a Teaching Staff Professional Development Programme. In this way, without any further expenses, the Academy would acknowledge that the professional work done by its staff outside the Academy is relevant to their duties within the Academy and could document/certify these activities in a formal way.

When the financial situation allows it, and if such need is signalled by the staff, the Academy could consider establishing forms of supporting these activities, either by providing training modules, marketing services, leaves for artistic activities (like sabbaticals for academic activities), etc.

4.2 Qualifications as educators

4.2-a. Does the institution ensure that all members of the teaching staff have appropriate qualifications as educators?

The teaching staff is recruited by open competition, according to the legislation in force. This includes, as recruitment criteria, qualifications, psycho-pedagogical training, length of service and scientific title (SER: 32). All junior assistants and assistant professors at AMGD have successfully completed a psycho-pedagogical module (SER:32).

The FEEs consider as very significant the fact that AMGD ensures that all teachers have received some training as educators, in addition to their artistic or academic profiles. The formal pedagogical training of Higher Education Teaching Staff is now becoming a concern in most European Higher Education Institutions and AMGD stands therefore in the front line in this field.

4.2-b. Are policies and strategies in place for continuing professional development of teaching staff?

The SER mentions that junior assistants and assistant professors have successfully completed the psycho-pedagogical module (SER: 32).

In Part IV of the SER (Strategic Orientation Plan for the Consolidation of Institutional Management Results) , under "Human Resources management" we can also read that 21 members of the teaching staff have completed specialized courses funded by the Academy (Trainer of Trainers courses, Project Management courses)" (SER:88). The "Consolidation measures" and the "Objectives in course of accomplishment" also mention the continuous professional enhancement of the existing staff and its upgrading through short-term training courses, funded by the institution, "in order to improve the quality of the institution's activities (e.g. artistic management)" (SER: 88).

The FEEs welcome the attention given by the Academy to this issue and strongly supports its efforts to obtain funding for it.

4.3 Size and composition of the teaching staff body

4.3-a. Is the number of teaching staff adequate to cover the teaching volume and curriculum within a frame of acceptable quality?

AMGD has 117 tenured staff members, from which 95 are scientific doctoral degree holders (81,2%), and 57 associated teaching staff members, of whom 16 are doctoral degree holders (28, 07%). This numbers comply with the Quality External Evaluation Guide, that states that at least 70% of the positions in the Teaching Staff Establishment are covered by teaching staff tenured in higher education, of whom at least 25% are professors and associate professors (SER:34).

AMGD has a ratio of 7.38 students/teacher and has had no problems so far on recruiting the necessary staff, on an open competition basis that allows to chose among highly qualified candidates.

However, the Ministry didn't approve the filling of recent vacant positions, and this has made it necessary to reconsider the basic teaching load of the teaching staff tenured in higher education.

4.3-b. Does the composition of the teaching staff allow flexible adaptation to new professional requirements?

The SER considers that the teaching staff is "both large and sufficiently varied" to enable a flexible adaptation to new professional requirements and challenges (SER: 79). These include the use of new technologies, with the teachers initiating students in using computers for producing their papers (SER: 35). However, the recruitment of the teaching staff required to meet the needs of the institution's development and natural growth is jeopardized by the above mentioned freeze on new recruitments, which will lead the Academy to "a careful evaluation of the priorities...with the rebalancing of the workloads with the existing staff, while undertaking due diligences for the lifting of the job freeze" (SER: 88).

The FEEs strongly supports AMGD in its attempts to overcome this problem, which might seriously interfere with the normal developments of the educational, research and artistic activities of the Academy.

5. Facilities, resources and support

5.1 Facilities

5.1-a. Are the building facilities (teaching and practice studios, classrooms, rehearsal places, concert venues, etc.) adequate to support curricula/programmes requirements?

The building facilities of AMGD comprise of a main building (rented space), a Studio Hall (own space) and the building of the Faculty of Music of Platra Neamt. There are also 3 student hostels (two rented and one own space), with a total of 48 rooms and 190 accommodation places.

The FEEs and the rest of the Committee visited only the main building and could testify to its poor conditions, either in terms of space in what concerns dimension and appropriateness or in terms of their conservation. Despite some improvement works that were developed recently, as sanitary works, carpentry works, window sills works, etc (SER: 28), the building is old and it doesn't have the capacity to accommodate as it should the diversity of the Academy's activities and services,

which have all very particular demands, according to their specific purposes (rooms for individual or group lessons, rehearsal rooms, practicing studios, library, etc).

As for the students' hostels, they don't meet the needs of students, often leading to over-crowded sleeping conditions of up to 6 students in a room. Former students mentioned, in a nicely ironic way, that this fact had the advantage of fostering "socialization" among students who are often too individualistic and sometimes isolated as a result of their focus on specialised solo practice.

The AMGS is well aware of these problems. The SER (87) states, as objectives in course of accomplishment, "the organization of a contest for the preparation of the design plan for the construction of AMGD' new headquarters", and then the "procurement of financing solutions for the construction phases of AMGD' headquarters".

It also mentions that the "extension and erection of an additional storey to the existing hostel located at 21, Albac Street" is in course of accomplishment. (SER: 87)

The FEES strongly supports the efforts of the Academy to get appropriate facilities, ones that would provide a suitable physical environment for the relevant pedagogical, scientific and artistic work it develops and fitting to the role that the Academy plays in Romanian music higher education. The FEES, together with the rest of the External Evaluation Committee, signed a letter to the Minister of Education about the urgent need for addressing this issue.

5.1-b. Are the instruments (pianos, organs, percussion, etc.) of a number and standard adequate to support curricula/programmes requirements?

AMGD has managed to acquire instruments and IT and other technological equipment of high quality, of which the greatest investment was on printing equipment (SER: 27). It has also restored the major organ and made quite a significant luthier tools acquisition (SER: 28), as well as investing in 11 Steinway pianos and superior quality wind instruments (SER: 86).

As "Consolidation measures" the SER (87) states "the improvement of the management and use of modern printing facilities in view of the development of the institution's own micro production potential" and, as an objective in course of accomplishment, the "identification of new solutions to enable the continuation of the acquisition programs for musical instruments, printing equipment and computer technology equipment". Mentioned as one of the "Anticipated objectives", the acquisition of musical instruments for Baroque music may prove that the "basic" needs in instruments have already been met, and that the Academy is now moving to a more "specialized" phase on this field.

As far as the FEES could see (and hear from the students and staff) during the visit, the musical and technological equipments of AMGD are satisfying to their users and can be considered up to the standards of any well equipped European Music Higher Education institution. The FEES felt as very positive the attentive concern of the Academy's management to continuously updating these equipments.

5.1-c. Are the computing and other technological facilities adequate to support curricula/programmes requirements?

The SER (87) states that “substantial acquisitions of computer equipment and software programs for didactic and organizational purposes” have been made and anticipates the acquisition of modern equipment for didactic purposes, modern computing equipment and licensed computer software to meet the institution’s specific needs. The Distance Learning Department in particular has the ability not only to print all course materials necessary to its delivery, but also to monitor teaching that is done by their students in other locations thanks to advanced IT equipment.

5.1-d. Is the library, its associated equipment (listening facilities, etc.) and its services adequate to support curricula/programmes requirements?

The Academy’s library has a total of 25300 sqm’s area, with a reading/listening room of 22 sqm/42. The small dimension of the reading/listening room makes it impossible to have a lot of materials there. These are stored on warehouses and the library’s staff go there to get what the students ask for.

According to the Chief Librarian, the acquisitions are made according to the demands of staff and students, and there has always been a great support from the management in order to have enough funding for these acquisitions. The AMGD is tied to national development of interlibrary loan systems, which has not been rolled out yet.

The FEEs consider that the library services support adequately the Academy’s diverse programs.

5.2 Financial resources

5.2-a. What are the institution’s financial resources and are they adequate to support curricula/programmes requirements

The AMGD’s resources originate from the state’s budget (basic financing+ special destination funds + subsidies for hostels and canteens) and from its own income, which is mainly generated by tuition fees and from scientific research design, consultancy and expertise activities. Between 2006 and 2009 the basic financing income increased 23%, the own income derived from tuition fees by 74%, and the one derived from scientific research activities by 227% (SER: 27). This evolution shows the current trend on higher education financing systems in most European countries, where the reductions on state funding have to be counterbalanced by the institutional efforts for raising funds from other sources. The AMGD seems to meet this challenge on a quite successful way, mainly in what regards the scientific research activities. During the first meeting with the Committee, the Rector intensively addressed this issue, stressing the Academy’s efforts in finding alternative financial sources.

Staff-related expenditures represented, in 2009, 78,46% of the total budget (25.028.839 RON). Neither on the report or during the visit financial constraints for the Academy’s short-and medium-term development were mentioned. The SER states that “based on the amount of

financial resources, AMGD has developed a wage policy, an investment policy and a didactic offer to meet the quality and performance criteria" (SER: 37)

5.2-b. Is there long-term financial planning?

The long-term financial plan is approved by the Senate and is annually revised, with the annual income and expenditure budget being also approved by the Senate "and rigorously observed" (SER: 37)

The FEEs feel that the Academy is strongly concerned about the efficient management of its budget, as well as successfully managing to find and explore other financial sources to complement its state budget.

5.3 Support staff

5.3-a. Is the technical and administrative staff adequate to support the teaching, learning and artistic activities?

As stated in the SER (59), the Academy has an effective administration, with regard to its organization, number and qualification of staff and that offers adequate services to the academic community training. The Academy could recently create new positions to cover new requirements: printing technician, translator (SER: 88). Because of the current job freeze, the situation may change.

5.3-b. Are policies and strategies in place for continuing professional development of technical and administrative staff?

The Academy mentions its concern with the in-service training and professional development of its staff, namely through short-term courses, funded by the institution, in order "to improve the quality of the institution's activities" (SER: 88).

Although during the visit the FEEs met only with the Library staff (very adequate in terms of number and qualifications) it did look that there was no shortage of administrative or technical staff, judging by their number at the different departments/rooms the Committee went by. Also there were no complaints by the management about the current situation, only about the job freeze that may prevent the appropriate recruitment for the new requirements that are an almost constant need of today's institutional life.

Therefore, the FEEs strongly support the Academy in its "diligences for the lifting of the job freeze" (SER: 88)

6. Organisation and decision-making processes and internal quality assurance system

6.1 Organisation and decision-making processes

6.1-a. How are the curricula/programmes and the teaching and learning processes supported by:

- the organisational structure of the institution?
- decision-making on curricular affairs?
- decision-making on strategic affairs?

The institutions' charter (Carta) establishes the organizational structure of the AMGD and their different pedagogical, scientific, artistic and organizational responsibilities. The main structure is the Senate, with representatives of the teaching and administrative staff, of the students and of the cultural-scientific local or national sectors (Carta: 26). From the teaching and administrative staff, some representatives seat in the Senate by inherence (because of their functions at the academy): Rector, President, Vice-Rectors, Heads of Department, etc. Others are elected. The SER (85) considers as one of the "Accomplished objectives" the fact that students have an "adequate representation in management structures" and insists on the "actual involvement of students in the institutional analysis and decision-making processes" (SER: 86).

The Senate is therefore representative of all the sectors of the Academy, and decides on its main policies, based on proposals from other "lower" structures, such as the Faculties and its Departments.

All these structures have the responsibility/opportunity of making proposals about academic matters, such as course/programme changes, didactic activities evaluation and quality of the learning and teaching processes (Carta, Capitolul VII).

The FEEs believe that the composition and functions of the above mentioned structures seem to effectively insure that the final main decisions that are taken at a top management structure are informed by a decision-making process that is quite participative at lower levels, allowing the voices of the different sectors to make themselves heard.

6.1-b. Is there a long-term strategy for the improvement of the organisational decision-making structures?

As a state institution, AMGD's structures are defined by the Government, rather than at an institutional level. All its life must comply with the laws and regulations settled for higher education institutions in Romania and the different autonomies mentioned in the Charter must be developed in that legal framework. This is undergoing some changes, and some normative acts, such as the Wage Law and the Education Law, are about to be published (SER: 89). The Academy mentions its continuous review and updating of the existing mechanisms to adjust them to the imposed legislation and "to the evolution of the concrete conditions of activity" (SER: 80)

6.1-c. Is there a risk management strategy?

This issue was not addressed either on the documents or during the visit.

6.1-d. How is information being published and made transparent for students and staff?

The dissemination of relevant information is based mainly on Information and Communication Systems, and AMGD's website contains a lot of useful information, "from legislative documents to schedules of artistic and research activities and events" (SER: 58), both in Romanian and English. This information is geared both to the inside (students and staff) and the outside of the institution, namely to prospective students: admission brochures are published on the website, and this is an important way of recruiting students, along with the advertising in publications of wide circulation. More traditional ways of disseminating information are the boards for posters and other written documents, and the Committee could testify, during the visit, that all these are very well organized, with the information displayed according to themes and subjects, thus enabling an easy "reading" of the information.

The FEEs consider that the information provided by the Academy about its activities is sufficient and of good quality and welcomes its particular care about attracting potential students.

6.2 Internal quality assurance system

6.2-a. What reference is made to national and local legislative requirements with regards to quality assurance (where appropriate)?

As a state institution, AMGD has to comply with the national legal framework set by the Government for QA. The SER, on its Section "Performance Standards and Indicators", C. 8, Operational quality assurance structures, mentions the standard for QA: "The institutional structure for quality education assurance is in accordance with the legal provisions and acts on a permanent basis" (SER: 76).

6.2-b. What quality assurance and enhancement systems are in place for the continuous improvement of curricula/programmes and the learning environment?

AMGD has a Commission for Quality Evaluation and Assurance, at academy and faculty level. At faculty level, the committees include only teaching staff members, but at academy level members are the president and vice-president of the Senate, 2 representatives of the teaching staff, 2 Student representatives, 1 graduate and 1 representative of the employers (Comisia pentru evaluarea si asigurarea calitatii din Academia de Muzika "Gheorghe Dima" Cluj-Napoca).

The pro-rector in charge of the didactic activity is specifically responsible for the development and implementation of QA procedures at faculty and departmental levels (Carta, Art.124) and is in charge of the institutional contacts with ARACIS (Romanian Agency for Higher Education Evaluation).

The Commission for Quality Evaluation and Assurance and its functions have been approved by the Senate, in compliance with "the attributions and principles of education quality evaluation" (SER: 76). The Academy has a Quality Manual, that states the policies, achievement means and deadlines for the QA processes (SER: 76)

6.2-c. How are staff, students and former students involved in these quality assurance and enhancement systems?

As mentioned above, representatives of all these categories seat on the Commission for Quality Evaluation and Assurance. Students are also asked to fill in questionnaires about the different disciplines. Teachers and technical and administrative staff have no formal ways of being heard. Their participation is mostly assured by meetings with the academic or administrative management.

6.2-d. To what extent are these systems:

- used to improve the educational programmes?
- continuously analysed and reviewed?

The Commission for Quality Evaluation and Assurance writes the Quality Assurance Annual Report, with proposals for improvement, and submits it for Senate's approval. These proposals are built on the evaluation of the educational and research programmes that is made at departmental and faculty level. So, it seems that these processes are well embedded in a general institutional culture of quality and do contribute to the systematic analysis and improvement of the educational programmes.

The FEEs have the impression that QA systems implemented at AMGS seem to be clearly designed and to work effectively, assuring the participation of all the internal stakeholders and also the main external ones (former students and employers).

7. Public interaction

7.1 Influence on cultural life

7.1. Is the institution involved in the development of cultural and musical activities internationally, nationally and regionally?

The Academy outlined its commitment to "delivering cultural experience to the wider public through open-access concerts, festivals and educational concerts." (SER 79) There is clear evidence that the range and richness of activities at local, national and international level is the fruit of years of development and passionate involvement from the teaching staff and well supported by the management of the Academy. In addition, each staff member documents their involvement in professional activities in their annual personal job description file. This is reviewed and graded in terms of points at the end of each year, and is taken into consideration for promotions.

The FEEs felt that the richness of the activities of staff and students constitutes a model of good practice at European level.

7.2 Interaction with the profession

7.2-a. How does the institution communicate and interact with various sectors of the music profession in order to keep in touch with their needs?

The Academy has continued to be actively involved with arts and education entities such as philharmonics, festivals, music schools and universities, publishing companies for music and musicology in the form of “long established, formal or informal partnerships”. (SER 77)

This statement was supported by the meeting with prospective employers which took place on the 27 May.

7.2-b. Is there a long-term strategy for the development of the links with the profession?

There are long established links with the profession in the form of formal and informal partnerships with local, regional, national and international institutions as well as cultural centres, associations, societies and foundations concerned with musical activities. Further plans exist for the expansion of these activities, production of promotional materials in English and seeking out of new sponsors for additional musical events.

It was clear from the session with the employers that graduates from the Academy are sought after for their training and qualifications. Employers expressed great respect for the teaching staff at the Academy and the excellent results they have produced for decades. The FEEs felt that access to clear employment paths was a great advantage to the AMGD and its recruitment of excellent students.

7.3 Information to potential students and other stakeholders

7.3-a. Is the published information consistent with what the institution offers in terms of educational programmes?

The information is made available to the public in brochures outlining the content of specialist courses over the course of the programmes. The educational programmes are in line with relevant national legislation outlining programme requirements for specific qualifications. There was a general consensus from employers and alumni that the quality of the educational programmes prepared graduates well for future employment in general. More promotional material is planned.

7.3-b. What are the communication strategies for the publication of information?

The Information about entrance examinations is published on line and sent to potential feeder school approximately eight months before these take place. Teachers are actively involved in recruitment, and nurture links with feeder institutions such as specialist music schools to assure future intake of students. They provide logistical support and professional advice to potential students. In addition, Saturday preparation courses for the entrance examinations are taught by members of staff. These are free of charge to the prospective students and are part of the activities of the staff that are not counted as contact hours on the staff members’ timetables.

The FEEs were impressed with this practice and would like to commend the Academy for this achievement.

The Academy has a rich and varied list of performing and research activities by staff and students, which are quite remarkable. The FEEs were very impressed with the level of public interaction and general enthusiasm of students and staff at the Academy, in spite of the ongoing problem with facilities. The need for urgently addressing the problem of adequate facilities cannot be stressed enough. The FEEs would like to add their voices to those of the other expert evaluators on this visit in support of this excellent institution and its acute plea for resolving this issue.

8. Standards Summary

This summary contains two sections; firstly a list of items which stand out as being very strong relative to the AEC criteria, secondly an outline of some of the areas in which there seems to be potential for further development.

Strong points

- Model of good practice/ Quality of Teaching
- Level of artistic and research activities by staff and students
- Diversity of courses
- Innovation: Department for Continuing Education and Distance Learning/ Centre of excellence
- Teacher training courses well structured: Department of Teaching Staff Training Department
- Excellent investment in instruments, printing press and IT equipment
- Initiative in musical partnerships and revenue generating activities
- Students and alumni satisfaction
- Employers' sense of high confidence/ high prospects of employability for students
- Strong ties with the industry

Potential for development

- Facilities (Teaching and practice facilities, student accommodation, canteen)
- Developing further the potential of the Music management elective to include entrepreneurial skills to prepare graduates for 'portfolio careers'
- Developing short term Continuing Professional Development courses for musicians who graduated over 10 years ago
- More emphasis needed on ensemble skills for future professional orchestral and choir work
- Providing instrumental tuition as part of the first cycle course for pedagogy, musicology, composition and conducting students
- Foster the formal creation of an Alumni Association

Following our review of documentation and evaluation meetings and visit, we would like to recommend the highest category of quality award of **"HIGH CONFIDENCE"** for the Academy of Music "Gheorghe Dima" from Cluj-Napoca.