

RCS QESR (Quality Enhancement and Standards Review) Action Plan 2023

Following conducting a Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) of the Conservatoire in December 2022, the QESR Team made the following formal recommendations for action:

1. **Assessment:** RCS should use this cycle of Curriculum Review to ensure greater consistency in the design and delivery of assessment, building upon the progress made in some areas.
2. **Curriculum Review process:** Curriculum Review should be included in the Quality Assurance Handbook, describing what this process is, ensuring information is reflective of the current approach, and clearly distinguishes Curriculum Review from other quality assurance and enhancement processes.

Formal Recommendations

		Recommendation	Proposed Action	Lead Individual	Deadline	Progress
1.	Assessment	RCS should use this cycle of Curriculum Review to ensure greater consistency in the design and delivery of assessment, building upon the progress made in some areas	<p>BMus review documentation (and reports and minutes) evidences design and delivery of assessment, including for Interdisciplinary and Extended Practice (IXP) modules and in student comments.</p> <p>Examples of the School of Drama, Dance, Performance and Film adopting similar design and delivery would be helpful.</p> <p>Undergraduate Academic Framework to be referenced here – outlines guidance to support consistency.</p>	Deputy Principal	By end of Undergraduate Curriculum Review Process in annual year 2024/25	This is a key focus of Curriculum Review and is already prominent in the BMus programme that has just been through revalidation successfully. In the School of Drama, Dance, Performance and Film programmes, there is an intention to launch a mini festival annually, that will bring all disciplines together (2 nd year students), that has already stimulated significant discussion around assessment. The area with the most inconsistency in assessment loads and types is Options, which will now be Interdisciplinary and Extended Practice from Annual Year 2023-24. This is more consistent, with fewer options, and much more agency for the student in assessment, plus a consistent

						assessment philosophy across the portfolio, centrally managed and moderated, and because modules can progress from year to year in level, a mindfulness of the feed-forward value of well-crafted and timely feedback to students. All of this is commensurate with the principles of the Assessment Strategy.
2.	Curriculum Review	Curriculum Review should be included in the Quality Assurance Handbook, describing what this process is, ensuring information is reflective of the current approach, and clearly distinguishes Curriculum Review from other quality assurance and enhancement processes.	An additional paragraph is to be drafted by the Deputy Principal to be included in the Quality Assurance Handbook section 3 (QAH 3) to explain the relationship between programme review and curriculum review (this is included in the QAH update action plan).	Deputy Principal, Academic Registrar and Secretary to the Board, Quality Enhancement Manager, Assistant Registrar (Secretariat)	As part of Quality Assurance Handbook Review by end of 2022/23 academic session	See additional paragraph for the Quality Assurance Handbook now provided by the Deputy Principal below *

*In addition to annual monitoring of programmes, every taught programme undergoes periodic review (usually every five years, with a maximum six-year cycle). Occasionally the Conservatoire will bring forward a periodic review, in the event of significant staff change, or student numbers change, or if an External Examiner were to raise Major Concerns, for example. The Conservatoire aspires to enable collaboration across all the Performing Arts disciplines. This activity is seeded in a first-year module that all first-year students undertake, irrespective of their primary discipline/programme of study. It makes sense in our small, but complex planning context, to align periodic reviews of programmes, so that for example all undergraduate programmes are reviewed at the same time. All taught postgraduate programmes are also reviewed together. In c. 2010 a significant project of Curriculum Reform was undertaken at the Conservatoire – this represents the first concerted effort to enable collaboration experiences for students, partly because the range of disciplines at the Conservatoire expanded to cover all of the performing and production arts around this time. At that time, all undergraduate programmes went through periodic review, enabling cross-conservatoire discussion and identification of opportunities for sharing provision between programmes, shared modules, and a common academic framework applicable to all programmes of study. Some years later, when the next cycle of periodic review was due, the Conservatoire called this successor process to Curriculum Reform *Curriculum Review*. Thereafter, every cycle of periodic review of programmes at RCS, has been called Curriculum Review, a title we give to a project that is understood internally as an opportunity to review all

programmes at the same time, to maximise the potential for collaboration and sharing. The postgraduate programmes are reviewed together in a process of postgraduate Curriculum Review, and this cycle is normally one to two years after the undergraduate Curriculum Review process. In short, Curriculum Review is the same thing as what is commonly called 'periodic review' in HE (or sometimes, quinquennial review or revalidation), but indicates that at the Conservatoire we align all undergraduate programme periodic reviews at the same time, and all postgraduate periodic reviews at the same time. This enables colleagues leading and working in different programmes of study to engage with each other, support each other and students through periodic review, and to maximise potential for identifying opportunities for shared provision and a common Academic Framework.

Additional Areas for Consideration as Highlighted as Encouragements in the Body of the QESR Report

	Related Paragraph in QESR Outcome Report		Encouragement	Proposed Action	Lead Individual	Deadline	Progress
1.	Paragraph 19	Student Partnership	The QESR team encourages RCS to continue in its efforts to explore how best to support students in representative roles and diversify the student voice.	Hold discussions with the Students' Union President (following appointment after upcoming elections) to explore ways in which to engage students in committees.	Deputy Principal and Students' Union President	Following upcoming Students' Union Elections and appointment of new sabbatical Vice President in annual year 2023/24.	A new sabbatical Students' Union post was authorised by the Conservatoire Senior Management Team in early 2023, and elections were held. For annual year 2023/24 a new sabbatical Vice President will be in post, tasked with ensuring improved student representation throughout the Conservatoire's deliberative structure.
2.	Paragraph 20	Student Partnership	A review of the support and training provided to students in specialist roles (as members of committees etc.) is recommended.	Academic Registrar and UKVI Compliance and International Student Experience Manager to hold discussions with SU President (following appointment after upcoming elections) to explore training required for students.	Deputy Principal, Academic Registrar and Secretary to the Board, and Students' Union President	Following upcoming Students' Union Elections and potentially induction week in September 2023.	Discussion is ongoing, as part of the formulation of the Student Partnership Agreement for 2023-24. It is proposed that the Deputy Principal holds a training session with student representatives, possibly in induction week

3.	Paragraph 22	Student Partnership	Work was recommended to be conducted around an inconsistency of staff understanding of disability support and the implementation of learning agreements.	Communications (and any relevant training sessions) to be developed for staff to provide information and guidance around disability support for students and implementation of learning agreements.	Academic Registrar and Secretary to the Board	For introduction in academic year 2023/24	QR codes are now used around the building to enable fast access to materials and support for students and staff. Managers (programme or department Heads) will receive information about Learning Agreements and be tasked with supporting their team to implement agreed adjustments and to understand the process from the student perspective. Academic Registrar is developing further guidance resources.
4.	Paragraph 31	ELIR 4	A clearer record of the status of actions resulting from the ELIR (Enhancement Led Institutional Review) 4 recommendations would be welcomed.	Review of ELIR 4 action plan, particularly the update column, to be conducted.	Deputy Principal, Academic Registrar and Secretary to the Board	Academic year 2023/24	The ELIR4 action plan is in the process of being updated, more clearly, and aligned with the new Strategic Plan. A number of the recommendations, including in digital, are now driving the development of the Conservatoire's Digital Strategy and learning and Teaching Strategy.
5.	Paragraph 41	Professional Services	RCS is encouraged to reflect on SFC guidance to ensure the institutional approach to reviewing Professional Services meets expectations.	The outcome of the current Admissions and Recruitment audit will form part of this response.	Deputy Principal, Academic Registrar and Secretary to the Board	Commencing in academic year 2023/24	Each year an area of Professional Services will be taken through a review process, which will map onto the Annual Monitoring process of programmes. This will

							demonstrate how support services are supporting student and staff experience in the institution and make recommendations and an action plan for the following session. The first area subject to annual Professional services review will be Student Recruitment and Admissions, following a restructure of the resource and roles in this crucial area
6.	Paragraph 45	Quality Assurance	The QESR Team recommends that further mapping to the guiding principles of the themes within the UK Quality Code (identifying strengths and weaknesses of the institution's approaches) be conducted by RCS on a regular and ongoing basis.	Themes in the Quality Code are to be incorporated into the Annual Monitoring process more explicitly going forward and identifying related themes will be recorded during Quality and Standards Committee discussions around the reports.	Deputy Principal, Academic Registrar and Secretary to the Board, Quality Enhancement Manager, Assistant Registrar (Secretariat)	Commencing in academic year 2023/24	
7.	Paragraph 47	Quality Assurance	An exercise to review the Quality Assurance Handbook is scheduled to be completed by the end of the 2022-23 academic session.	Review of Quality Assurance Handbook to be conducted and actions identified.	Deputy Principal, Academic Registrar and Secretary to the Board, Quality Enhancement Manager, Assistant Registrar (Secretariat)	By end of 2022/23 academic session	A review of the Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) has been conducted and an associated action Plan has been developed. Revisions to sections of the QAH will be considered at the 30 August Quality and

							Standards Committee meeting.
8.	Paragraph 53	Student Partnership	Clarity is requested around the work that was being conducted by the Conservatoire to improve student retention of those with a declared disability.	Monitor our statistics/ Performance Indicators in retention of this protected group, and to work closely with students in all programmes, including the BA Performance in English and BSL (British Sign Language), to improve progression, retention and student achievement.	Deputy Principal, Academic Registrar and Secretary to the Board	Commencing in academic year 2023/24	This is a challenge in our context due to the intensive nature of Conservatoire work. The hiring of a 1FTE (Full Time Equivalent) Student Disability Support Officer, a thoroughgoing review of the learning agreements process, and ongoing support needs have both helped to make clearer the avenues of support available to students. We will continue to monitor our statistics/ Performance Indicators in retention of this protected group, and to work closely with students in all programmes, including the BA Performance in English and BSL (British Sign Language), to improve progression, retention and student achievement.