



Decentering Curricula: Questions for Re-Evaluating Diversity and Inclusiveness in HMEIs

Section 1: What do we study? What do we teach?

This section focuses on the curriculum and what is taught at our institutions. This touches upon the learning outcomes defined in the course modules and how that is linked to the future career of our students. It also touches upon the (non-)linearity of the degree programs and how open or rigid they are: Can a multi-talented student study several main subjects? What happens if a student is injured and cannot play her / his instrument anymore - can s/he switch?

A central aspect here which makes Higher Music Education (HME) unique compared to other non-artistic degree programs is the concept of artistic standards. Artistic standards can be understood as the set of (predefined) criteria used to evaluate an artistic practice against a perceived aesthetic norm drawing both on technical as well as interpretational skills. While central to the idea of what the institutions perceive as how a future artist should be, these also function as the entry barriers to the institution as well as the 'rules' defining a student's artistic progression. Hence these questions also touch upon this area.

1.1 Plurality of artistic paradigms

Questions to be considered when self-evaluating within this sub-domain:

- **What does your institution define and articulate as high artistic standards in the context of music?**
 - a. What criteria are included in these artistic standards?
- **Do different departments have their own approach to artistic standards?**
 - a. If yes, why do they differ? Is it due to different genre or department traditions?
 - b. How are these standards reflected / assessed in the admission exam(s)?
 - c. How are these standards reflected / assessed in the (main instrument) exam(s)?
 - d. How often do you challenge / discuss these standards yourself / with your teachers / with your students?
- **What genres of music are taught at degree level in your institution?**
 - a. How are they organised in relation to each other (e.g. separate departments by instrument or genre; separate degree programmes; etc)?



1.2 Choice and mobility of study

Questions to be considered when self-evaluating within this sub-domain:

- **How does your curriculum or academic framework provide a study path tailored to the aspirations and artistic ideas of the individual student?**
- **How does the institution provide formal arrangements for students to receive academic, career and personal guidance?**
- **What links do you have between different departments inside your institution?**
- **What bridges have been taken by some of your students that help them to build their own artistic identity?**

1.3 Canon

Questions to be considered when self-evaluating within this sub-domain:

- **How is the repertoire selected for the artistic classes / main instrument lessons?**
 - a. What considerations are made to reflect diversity in gender, race / ethnicity, life experience, and geographical balance?
- **How is critical reflection on issues of gender, race / ethnicity, geographical balance, etc embedded in our academic and artistic courses?**
- **How is critical reflection on issues of gender, race / ethnicity, geographical balance etc. embedded in extracurricular activities and within the student union?**
- **How are students trained in questioning the canon and exploring artists beyond those taught in the institution or seen as part of the institutional / national canon?**
- **How are students trained to question prevailing artistic standards?**
- **How regularly is the academic and artistic syllabus reassessed?**
 - a. What criteria are used for reassessing the syllabi?
 - b. What feedback loops exist?
- **What role do students, faculty, alumni and external (music) professionals play in the process of re-assessing the curriculum?**



1.4 Research

Questions to be considered when self-evaluating within this sub-domain:

- **What role does research in all its forms play throughout the programmes offered?**
- **How are both students and staff engaged in discovering and communicating new knowledge at any level?**

1.5 Employability

Questions to be considered when self-evaluating within this sub-domain:

- **How is employability embedded in your curricula?**
- **How does your institution or programme address the development of vocational and collaborative skills as well as social entrepreneurship?**
- **How do the employability skills relate to national or European contexts?**
 - a. What scope is there for transferability of these skills outside the country of study to a transnational / global context?
- **How do your students reflect on their future professionalization?**

We hope that this catalogue of questions will help you to start a process of consideration and change at your institution. These questions have been at the base of change already undertaken by several HME institutions across Europe and beyond. In the first publication of the AEC-SMS Diversity, Identity, Inclusiveness Working Group, *How are 'diverse cultures' integrated in the education of musicians across Europe?*, you can find many examples and case studies that might inspire you to consider new paths within your own institution.

Should you have any question, please do not hesitate to contact us via the AEC office or SMS contact form [here](#).



What do we study? What do we teach?

Link to:

- [Section 2: How do we study? How do we teach?](#)
- [Section 3: Where do we study? Where do we teach?](#)
- [Section 4: Who is the student? Who is the teacher?](#)

Publications:

- [Decentering Curricula: Questions for Re-evaluating Diversity and Inclusiveness in HMEIs](#)
- [How are 'diverse cultures' integrated in the education of musicians across Europe?](#)

Please note this document is part of ***Decentering Curricula: Questions for Re-evaluating Diversity and Inclusiveness in HMEIs***, written by the [members of the Diversity, Identity, Inclusiveness Working Group](#) of the AEC - Strengthening Music in Society (SMS) project.

More information is available on www.sms.aec-music.eu