

BMus Review: Conservatoire Response

The BMus Programme Committee welcomes the very helpful feedback from the Review Panel. Our plan is to update the relevant documents (Handbooks and Programme Overview) over the next couple of weeks to reflect our responses to the Conditions and Recommendations. These will be sent to the Quality Assurance Office. We have also separately attached the 'combined' History of Music module descriptors.

Conditions

1. The programme learning outcomes require revision so that they align to the relevant National Framework of Qualifications award-type descriptor headings (knowledge, know-how and skills, and competence and associated sub-headings).

Response: We have revised the PLOs to align with the NFQ Level 8 outcome descriptors as requested and have updated the ordering/numbering (of the PLOs) to match the order of the NFQ headings.

On successful completion of the programme, the learner will be able to:

Area	BMus Learning Outcomes	NFQ Level 8 Outcomes
Knowledge: breadth	1. Demonstrate the practical knowledge and strategies and the underlying theoretical concepts necessary to participate effectively in the music profession as a multi-skilled artist with a breadth of musical knowledge and experience.	An understanding of the theory, concepts and methods pertaining to a field (or fields) of learning
Knowledge: kind	2. Display detailed knowledge and understanding across a range of specialised areas in a wide variety of music contexts.	Detailed knowledge and understanding in one or more specialised areas, some of it at the current boundaries of the field(s)
Know-how and skill: range	3. Demonstrate and articulate detailed knowledge and mastery within chosen areas of specialism as performer, teacher, composer or academic.	Demonstrate mastery of a complex and specialised area of skills and tools; use and modify advanced skills and tools to conduct closely guided research, professional or advanced technical activity
Know-how and skill: selectivity	4. Apply appropriate musical judgement in the integration of practical skills and theoretical concepts across a range of musical activities and outcomes.	Exercise appropriate judgement in a number of complex planning, design, technical and/or management functions related to products, services, operations or processes, including resourcing

Competence: context	5. Employ advanced creative and critical skills as a musician to produce high level performances, composition portfolios, research projects/theses.	Use advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity, accepting accountability for all related decision making; transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills in a range of contexts
Competence: role	6. Demonstrate, develop and maintain collaborative skills leading to successful participation in teamwork, both in professional contexts and in everyday life as a global citizen.	Act effectively under guidance in a peer relationship with qualified practitioners; lead multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups
Competence: learning to learn	7. Demonstrate self-motivation and self-management skills to develop successful portfolio or traditional careers and to work in an entrepreneurial, ever-changing, competitive industry. 8. Draw upon the skills, knowledge and expertise necessary for further study and lifelong professional development as a reflective practitioner.	Learn to act in variable and unfamiliar learning contexts; learn to manage learning tasks independently, professionally and ethically
Competence: insight	9. Demonstrate individual musical artistry within chosen areas of the music profession and communicate/work with peers to promote music as an art form and contribute to its function within society.	Express a comprehensive, internalised, personal world view, manifesting solidarity with others

2. The Panel endorses the proposal that Stages 3 and 4 each contribute 50% to the final award classification. However, it needs to be clear within the Student Handbooks how this will be managed for students undertaking the Erasmus study abroad programme in year three, specifically whether and how this will impact on the award classification. This should be equitable across streams and between those who do and who do not undertake the Erasmus study abroad option. If it is the case that marks/grades obtained abroad shall contribute to the award, care should be taken to ensure that this process is verifiable and transparent and is taken into account when learning agreements for study abroad are being drafted.

Response: The Conservatoire already has an assigned Erasmus co-ordinator who, along with the Head of Academic Studies, signs off the Learning Agreement. The following policies specifically apply to a Stage 3 or Stage 4 student.

- 1) As part of the Learning Agreement, the Conservatoire will ensure that results from the partner institution can be converted to the TU Dublin marking rubrics (if not in a similar format) and that an agreed marking scheme is in place before studies commence.
- 2) A student's results from the partner institution will count towards a student's degree classification (if Erasmus is taken in Stage 3 or 4), based on the credits and marks awarded in the partner institution. The student will receive an overall mark for the Stage from the Conservatoire. In the event that some non-core modules in the partner institution are assessed as pass/fail, these credits will be excluded from the degree classification.
- 3) If a Stage 3 or 4 student takes an Erasmus year (or semester) in a partner institution, the modules chosen must be on a par with the standard of the specialisms in Stages 3 and 4 of the BMus degree.
- 4) In terms of ensuring equity, all Erasmus students must take Performance Studies (or its equivalent in the other institution) at a level comparable to that of Stage 3 of the BMus programme. For example, if a student is on the Performance Major, the Learning Agreement should, as closely as possible, include 50% Performance (30 out of 60 ECTS credits); a pro-rata level applies to a student taking Performance at 20 ECTS credits or if the period of study is for one semester.

Recommendations

1. The differentiation between the Conservatoire and its competitors has been clearly expressed by staff and students in terms of the holistic approach to the development of graduates and the choice of specialist majors available, however, this was not discernible in the documentation. This approach should be clearly articulated in programme documentation and promotional materials.

Response: The BMus programme at TU Dublin Conservatoire differs from counterparts across the international Conservatoire environment. (Most focus on performance exclusively, and some with the addition of one other cognate area, as part of the traditional Conservatoire model). In response to the particular needs of our incoming students and the ever-changing demands of the profession, this programme offers students a wide degree of flexibility in designing their own path through the programme. No other undergraduate programme in Ireland offers six exit paths, allowing students to play to their strengths, whilst also including options that ensure the healthy development of a portfolio career. The presence of the various Majors ensures that students are able to access a range of modules that will widen their educational experience, increase their transferable skills and ultimately provide them with more options for further study and employment. In addition, the provision of a second instrument for study allows students to develop a separate but complementary set of skills, a fact often commented upon by our graduates. The inclusion of a new Major in Church Music is also a unique selling point.

In Ireland, the Conservatoires do not generally compete with the University music departments but TU Dublin Conservatoire has garnered a reputation for matching the academic education provided by the University sector here. Indeed, whilst retaining performance as the core praxis, the holistic approach which underpins the programme ensures that graduates are well-rounded and capable of competing with graduates from all music education institutions.

In addition, as the only Irish Conservatoire which is physically part of a larger university campus, students have the potential to access knowledge from other disciplines and to interact with a much larger student body which, in itself, fosters important social and cultural influences that might not otherwise have been experienced.

2. There is a need for a student recruitment strategy, for both national and international student recruitment, that includes clear targets, timelines and action plans.

Response: The Conservatoire welcomes and is in agreement with this recommendation and a comprehensive recruitment strategy will be developed over the course of the next year which will draw on sector experts, management strategic planning days and upskilling of school communications and staff members in this area.

The current Conservatoire Student Recruitment Strategy involves several strands which are described below.

- Facilities Upgrade

Having successfully completed the move to Grangegorman in Spring 2021, the Conservatoire now has facilities that can match national and international Conservatoire education. The facilities have already made an impact on students auditioning for the upcoming academic year during their onsite auditions and the Conservatoire's extensive social media work over 2020-2021; this has included the creation of videos on the new facilities in Grangegorman, which have highlighted this new addition to our offering. The school management will continue to work with university leaders to ensure that all performance venues are adequately staffed and that as student numbers increase, plans to increase the numbers of practice rooms are included in the further development of the TU Dublin City Campus at Grangegorman.

- Marketing

Website: TU Dublin paused all website development as part of the current organisational design project; however, since the Conservatoire, as a school structure, will remain the same in the organisational design process, the PR office has now agreed with the school that its website is next in line for redesign.

The action plan for this project includes three phases:

- 1) The Conservatoire engages a Digital Marketing consultant to work with the Events Manager and Head of Conservatoire to produce a Digital Marketing Strategy for the school

- 2) The Conservatoire hires Information Architects approved by the PR Office website design staff who will use the Digital Marketing Strategy to create the design plan for the Conservatoire website
- 3) Both the Digital Marketing Strategy and the Information Architect report will then be given to the PR Office website design team who will use it to create a new website for the Conservatoire

Step 1 of the action plan will be completed at the end of May 2021; step 2 will take place in June-July 2021; and step 3 will take place from September 2021 until completed.

Social Media: With the hire of the part-time Events and Social Media manager in 2020 there has been a noticeable increase in the Conservatoire's brand and visibility online. This, in addition to the school's investment in promotional videos (which have been created about every programme in the Conservatoire and our new facilities) and multiple online series of staff interviews and online masterclasses/lectures, has raised the Conservatoire profile both at home and abroad. The school has received permission to hire a temporary fulltime Social Media manager to take on this important work, which will allow the Events Manager to focus on managing events going forward with the new performance venues. The Digital Media Strategy will inform the school in terms of further development in this area, including the creation of new social media accounts specifically aimed at each new generation of students in order to communicate with them about the Conservatoire and what we offer. This strategy will be reviewed annually and amended as appropriate.

Communications Plan: A Conservatoire Communications Strategy was developed in Winter 2019 to address recruitment in light of the move across the city. While some elements of this strategy were activated, the pandemic prevented others from taking place. Now that we are approaching a more manageable phase of the pandemic in terms of delivery, Conservatoire Management will revisit this Communications Strategy and update it in support of recruitment objectives.

- Scholarships

The Conservatoire has been successful in working with the TU Dublin Foundation to secure some scholarship funding in the past but further work needs to be done in this area in order to be truly competitive nationally and internationally. The Head of Conservatoire has spoken with the Head of the Foundation about next steps in this area and about having the school included in the next capital campaign of the university. Having now achieved the move to Grangegorman, the school management can look towards developing a scholarship-building strategy which will include different areas of scholarship recruitment involving our alumni, fundraising events, university capital campaigns and so forth. The Conservatoire will include Scholarship Funding as a major part of the school strategy over the next 5 years, beginning with an analysis of the sector competition in this area both at home and abroad, and the development of a working group in the school to develop a considered Scholarship Funding Strategy in 2021-2022.

- International and National Recruitment

International strategies will focus on Asia where the school has been active over the last few years and the USA where recruitment activity has been paused until after the move to Grangegorman completed. The school is targeting international countries for

recruitment where the cost of attending university is far higher than the cost of being an international student in Ireland, with the intention that until such time as more scholarship funding is in place, this targeted recruitment should result in a higher level of international acceptances. National recruitment will focus on the communication and clarification of what TU Dublin Conservatoire offers with the revised Bachelor of Music programme, specifically its flexibility and the specialisms available, which are a standout offering in third-level music in Ireland. This will begin immediately as our post-audition CAO change of mind contact tree is ongoing. The Conservatoire will also put a Recruitment working group in place from September 2021 to address further improvement in this area and will also address this as part of the Management Strategic Planning Days in Summer 2021.

Over the next few years the Conservatoire will specifically highlight our Irish Traditional Music and Church Music specialisms, as there is an opportunity to bring in a larger number of new students in both of these areas, both nationally and internationally (specifically the USA). This will include identifying staff members who can be given leadership roles in developing these areas with a view to recruitment and building the specialties.

Target Student Numbers: The Conservatoire goal is to increase incoming BMus student numbers by between 15%-20% every year for five years from 2022-2023 onwards. This time period, following the completion of the new website, some targeted staff training on recruitment and the development of a thorough recruitment strategy for the school, should allow the Conservatoire to double student numbers within five years on the programme.

3. In light of recommendation 2 above, there is a need for a management plan for an increased international student intake that will address how these students will be supported and integrated within the programme.

Response: Now that the programme is validated and we have moved into the new facilities on the City Campus, we have made contact with the TU Foundation to develop a strategic plan to secure more scholarship funding, as the next step in our recruitment of international students. In addition, Conservatoire management will engage with the TU Dublin International Office in recruiting and integrating such students into the programme. The Conservatoire is confident that once international students are in Dublin, they are fully supported in their studies and, as with all our students, they have the added benefit of a personal tutor in the form of their Principal Study lecturer.

4. The Panel notes the large number of modules and assessments that the students have to pass in order to progress/graduate. However, the Panel understands and accepts the Programme Team's rationale for the inclusion of 2.5 ECTS in many cases. However, the Panel considers that there are opportunities to amalgamate some modules whilst maintaining the modular structure, in order to decrease the number of 2.5 ECTS e.g. History of Music 2 and 3, to make the programme less granular. The Panel considers that this will help to manage/reduce student workload.

Response: We welcome the panel's support for this and have amalgamated two modules in Stage 1 (Contemporary Music and History of Music 1) and two modules in Stage 2 (History of Music 2 and History of Music 3). These are attached as separate documents. Once the programme is rolled out, we will monitor how well the options are managed and see if further amalgamations would not adversely affect this.

5. The Programme Team should ensure that second year assessment activities, particularly for non-performance assessments, are appropriate and manageable for students. In particular, attention should be paid to ensuring an appropriate balance between written work and performance.

Response: On the basis of student and staff feedback, we were cognisant of the particularly heavy academic assessment workload in Stage 2 of the current programme and are confident that this has been addressed in the revised programme; for example: the reduction in composition modules from two to one; a new practice-based approach to assessing Aural; practice-based assessments for Conducting, Improvisation and Music Technology. We will, of course, continue to monitor this issue with students and staff once the programme has been rolled out.

6. The provision of workshops and visiting artists/masterclasses is greatly valued by students and the Conservatoire should work to increase such opportunities as much as possible.

Response: Pre-covid pandemic times, the Conservatoire offering of masterclasses was regular and equitable across departments. During the covid lockdowns, digital masterclasses series' were developed to address the lack of in-person masterclasses as a result of the global pandemic. These digital series were very successful and in the future a hybrid of both in-person and online offerings will be explored. The digital series' in particular had a broad global reach which was rewarding and the school was able to have artists/lecturers contribute to the series who would not have been able to take the time to visit the country/school in person, so this was a positive experience. In addition, the Conservatoire has secured four Visiting Artists whose career/performance profiles will be attractive and valuable for the students. As we establish the Professional Studies modules, there will be further opportunities to offer specialist workshops across a range of areas including health/well-being.

7. The new facilities in the East Quad in Grangegorman will be of great benefit to students, including offering greater student opportunities to collaborate with others and the Conservatoire should explore future opportunities that co-location with other disciplines will offer.

Response: In the past, the Conservatoire has collaborated with the Schools of Culinary Arts, Creative Arts, Architecture, Languages and Media. The school looks forward to exploring further collaborative synergies (now that we are located on the City Campus alongside so many disciplines) and the potential for students to take specific collaborative modules as options on the revised programme. This will happen both informally, as staff

and students become acquainted with what each other/each school does, and formally, through the East Quad Academic Management Group.

8. The Programme Team is encouraged to continue working with the Brightspace Team in the Learning, Teaching and Technology Centre to enhance the functionality which is required for music. The Team are encouraged also to keep abreast of music technologies for online performance and learning and to make these available to students as appropriate.

Response: The Conservatoire welcomes this recommendation, and will continue its efforts to resolve this issue with the LTTC. The Conservatoire is also investigating other technology platforms for delivering and recording performance modules, but there are budgetary constraints with respect to some of these. The Brightspace VLE platform has been positively integrated within the programme (particularly in academic subjects), with many lecturers and students engaging with this. We envisage further developments and, as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, are also exploring blended learning.