

# Decision of the Accreditation Commission of AQAS

## on the study programme

### “Music and Musicology” (B.A.)

### offered by the Sultan Qaboos University (Sultanate of Oman)

Based on the report of the expert panel and the discussions of the Accreditation Commission in its 67. meeting on 22/23 May 2017, the Accreditation Commission decides:

1. The study programme “Music and Musicology” (**Bachelor of Arts**) offered by **Sultan Qaboos University (Sultanate of Oman)** is accredited according to the AQAS criteria for Programme Accreditation.

The accreditation is **conditional**.

The study programme essentially complies with the requirements defined by the criteria and thus the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in their current version. The required adjustments can be implemented within a time period of nine months.

2. The condition has to be fulfilled. The fulfilment of the condition has to be documented and reported to AQAS no later than **28 February 2018**.
3. The accreditation is given for the period of **five years** and is valid until **30 September 2022**.

#### Condition:

1. The fields of work for which music graduates are trained and educated have to be made more explicit.
2. The Department must outline how it addresses the reality of students and graduates becoming teachers without changing the main idea of the programme nor the total hours, for instance by providing a suitable number of elective courses for future teachers.
3. DMM must make more explicit its understanding of Musicology and the role it plays for the students in the curriculum.

The following **recommendations** are given for further improvement of the programme:

1. The programme should strive for a more balanced approach between Arab and Western music. DMM's idea of the role and function of the Arabic music in this programme should be clarified in a concept.
2. CASS should check if it is possible to give student representatives who have been nominated a more significant role.
3. CASS should take measures to enhance the general mobility of their students such as international conferences or concerts, exchanges as well as networking with other music universities.

4. The university should develop a medium term time schedule showing how the teaching staff positions are filled in the future, especially concerning the position of the Head of Department and the lecturers for Arabic music (e.g. denomination in case of vacancies).
5. Collaboration with external partners (universities, institutes and the labour market) should be strengthened with the target to provide more opportunities for students in the future.

With regard to the reasons for this decision the Accreditation Commission refers to the attached assessment report.



## Experts' Report

on the degree programme:

### Music and Musicology, B.A.

offered by the Sultan Qaboos University, Oman

Visit to the University: 7 - 9 March 2017

#### Panel of Experts:

**Prof. Dr. Thomas Seedorf** University of Music, Karlsruhe, Germany (Chairman)

**Prof. Dr. Amer Didi** American University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates (UAE)

**Andrea Hoever** University of Music, Munster, Germany  
(student expert)

#### Coordinator:

Doris Herrmann / Ronny Heintze AQAS e.V., Cologne, Germany

## **1. Introduction**

This report results from the external review of the Bachelor programme “Music and Musicology” offered by the College of Arts and Social Sciences (CASS) at Sultan Qaboos University, Oman.

The University produced a Self Evaluation Report (SER). The accreditation procedure was officially initialized by a decision of the AQAS Accreditation Commission on 20./21.02.2017. The Accreditation Commission nominated the before mentioned expert panel and the University did not raise concerns against the composition of the panel. Shortly before the site visit in Oman one of the panel members, the representative of the labour market from the UAE, became ill and was not able to come to Muscat.

After a review of the Self Evaluation Report, from 7 - 9 March 2017 a site visit to the University in Muscat took place. On site, the experts interviewed different stakeholders in separate discussions and consulted additional documentation as well as student work. The visit concluded with the presentation of the preliminary findings by the group of experts to the University representatives.

## **2. General Information on the University**

Sultan Qaboos University is **the largest higher education institution** in the Sultanate of Oman. It aims to take a direct and effective role in the social and economic development plans for the Omani society by contributing to the development of its productive capabilities and the best use of its resources.

The **education system in Oman** is divided into three main levels: preschool, school and higher education. School education consists of twelve years of formal study. After completing grade twelve in the school level, a student can join one of the higher education institutions by applying on-line to the Higher Education Admission Centre (HEAC) which is responsible for ensuring that students receive fair treatment and are given the best available opportunities, based on their preferences and achievement in high school.

While the construction of **Sultan Qaboos University** (SQU) started in 1982, the first students were enrolled in 1986. The University commenced with five colleges: Medicine, Engineering, Agriculture, Education and Science. Furthermore, the College of Arts and Social Sciences was established in 1987. Today the nine university colleges offer 63 undergraduate programs, 62 Master and 34 PhD programmes. Sultan Qaboos University is an independent institution with the Minister of Higher Education (MoHE) as the chairman of its council.

Sultan Qaboos **University facilities** include teaching classrooms, lecture theatres, conference halls, libraries, staff and student residences with separate male and female sports facilities, accommodation for students with special needs, staff and student recreational facilities, SQU Hospital, and a mosque. A newly established SQU Cultural Centre houses the University's main library, the Omani Studies Centre, Al-Faham lecture hall and the Grand Hall with a seating capacity of 5,000 people.

Sultan Qaboos University follows a **credit system** whereby students' progress towards graduation in their College/Major through studying a specific number of credits in each semester that count toward the total number of credits required for graduation in their particular College.

Altogether, CASS currently offers eleven Bachelor, ten Master and three PhD **programmes**.

### **3. General Information on the Department and the Programmes**

The SER states that Sultan Qaboos University intends to contribute to the dissemination, promotion, and appreciation of music culture in the Omani society through its Department of Music and Musicology (DMM) at the College of Arts and Social Sciences. The Department offers a “BA in Music and Musicology” with an aim to graduate qualified musicians capable of working in different music related areas including in the field of education in the school system.

The Department was established in accordance with the perceived educational and economic needs of the country in parallel with social and cultural developments throughout the Sultanate. This includes:

- Educating and training Omani music students to serve in the education system after graduation
- Providing music students with knowledge and skills to work in different music related careers after graduation
- Contributing to the cultural renaissance in the country by expanding the musical space within society
- Contributing to the changing image of music and musicians in society
- Investing in music as a potential economic force in the future.

The duration of the programme “Music and Musicology” is eight semesters and it is a full-time programme. With 20-30 students in an academic year it is a relatively small programme.

### **4. Policy and Procedures for Quality Assurance**

*The programme is subject to the Higher Education Institution's policy and associated procedures for quality assurance, including procedures for the design, approval, monitoring, and revision of the programmes.*

*A quality-oriented culture, focusing on continuous quality enhancement, is in place. This includes regular feedback mechanisms involving both internal and external stakeholders.*

*The strategy, policies, and procedures have a formal status and are made available in published form to all those concerned. They also include roles for students and other stakeholders.*

Following the information provided in the Self Evaluation Report the **College of Arts and Social Sciences** developed quality indicators and practices to address its unique institutional needs and relevance within the Omani's higher education context. In October 2011, the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee (QAAC) was formed. QAAC comprises representatives from all academic programmes in CASS under the direct supervision of the Dean and Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Studies and Dean of CASS. The QAAC has a permanent office, rapporteur and staff to execute duties and follow-up administrative tasks. The committee was charged with developing quality indicators, practices and procedures. Their first assignment was to develop a road map for institutional and programme accreditation in CASS.

**On the departmental level**, DMM established a Department Accreditation and Quality Assurance Committee which is tasked to promote quality culture in the department, manage the accreditation procedures and monitor the adherence to quality standards and practices.

Objectives as well as **learning outcomes** have been defined, which are assessed regularly according to the DMM. The results of the assessment are used as feedback to further develop the programme. The department outlines that it runs **several activities** to assure its programme's quality, among them periodic activities and tools such as regular course evaluations as well as the definition and monitoring of Key Performance Indicators (KPI). During the site visit the representa-

tives of the department pointed out that due to the face-to face-teaching, informal feedback is also given during the lectures.

The department has defined internal and external stakeholders who are involved in different ways in the quality assurance procedures of the university. **Students' involvement** is implemented, among others, by their participation in the Student Advisory Council and the Student Liaison Committee. Furthermore, the number of students successfully completing the programme each year and the number of students per cohort who started the programme in addition to the programme completion rates are monitored closely.

During the site visit the student representative on the departmental level had a discussion with the panel of experts. She explained that she was elected by the other students and had already participated in one departmental meeting. But these regulations are quite new in the College.

Representatives of the DMM staff explained that there is a database of **alumni**, which is yearly updated by contacting them to see how they perceive the programmes' usefulness for their current job. One staff member reported that for a research project she had two hour interviews with almost every graduate.

On a **central level**, the QA office has developed several policies and one of them is how to review programmes. The central level discusses the programmes in different committees with the colleges. The strategy and policies of SQU have a formal status and are published by the university.

One of the annual KPI is the number of accredited programmes in the College. Twice a year the Dean's Forum takes place where all topics on the agenda are related to the quality of the programmes.

Also, the College can approach the central QA office if there is an issue and ask for data. If problems occur the smallest possible entity should address the issue, e.g. if students have problems they should go to the section first, If that doesn't work complaints can then be addressed to the Department or even to the College.

### **Experts' Evaluation**

**Quality assurance** at SQU is carried out with great engagement and considerable organisational effort. SQU assesses study programmes as well as individual modules, students' work behaviour, aspects of social life at the university (esp. taking account of students with special needs) and the equipment. There is no doubt that SQU pursues a culture of quality, focussing on continually improving its course offerings.

During the on-site visit the central facility in charge of quality assurance could impressively demonstrate that policies and procedures are in place for quality assurance of the programmes, including the design, monitoring and revision of the programme.

**Teaching evaluations** are performed in a transparent manner. Details regarding the process of the teaching evaluation and the timescale by which students have to submit their evaluation forms are discussed, and, if needed, improved. Opinions and hints by students are listened to and taken into consideration by responsible staff if student feedback is perceived to be reasonable.

The **responsibilities and aims of the study programme** for the Bachelor of Music and Musicology have been specified and described for students in a transparent manner. The curriculum is comprehensively brought up to date and is made available in its most up-to-date version.

The panel of experts were informed during the site visit that the career progression of graduates from the study programme is followed up and data on alumni experiences are considered during the further development of the study programme.

In 2014 the DMM commissioned an external professor to work out **recommendations for a restructuring** of the Department of Music and Musicology. The resulting recommendations were discussed but have only been partly implemented. During the on-site visit the DMM explained that some recommendations were considered very helpful (introduction of a research course/ reduction of theoretical courses / introduction of a collection of books and recordings), so adaptations have already been processed. Others (e.g. combining musicology with theatre/drama programme) were discussed but then found to be unsuitable.

There are differing views regarding the alignment of the study programme with the **needs and requirements of the labour market**. The discussion with University Management gave the impression that the education mainly focusses on the requirements of the school system in Oman. Due to the music teacher shortage in the Oman music is one of the areas that has been given a priority on the national level. 100% of graduates of the first two years are employed by schools in the Oman. In other discussion rounds during the on-site visit the idea was stressed that the graduates can be active in a much broader field of the labour market, e.g. as an employee at the Oman Center of Traditional Music or at the Royal Opera House. There is a requirement of reaching out to society in the field of music.

Although the experts have no doubts that SQU pursues a policy of taking account of the requirements of the labour market in the design of its study programmes, there needs to be a much clearer definition of the fields of work for which music graduates can be trained and educated (**Finding**).

## 5. Quality of the Curriculum

*The intended learning outcomes of the programme are defined and available in published form. They reflect both academic and labour-market requirements and are up-to-date with relation to the relevant field. The design of the programme supports achievement of the intended learning outcomes.*

*The academic level of graduates corresponds to the requirements of the appropriate level of the European Qualifications Framework.*

*The curriculum's design is readily available and transparently formulated.*

According to the SER, the Bachelor programme provides students with theoretical and historical knowledge as well as performance training in the field of music and musicology that enables them to acquire the technical and professional skills needed to become school teachers and performers. The outlined curriculum is bi-musical (Western classical and Eastern Arabic) and bi-lingual (English and Arabic) and covers a compulsory training on the piano in addition to a mandatory second choice of a Western or Eastern Arabic instrument.

The **programme's objectives** are defined by the department as follows:

- develop knowledge and skills of aural perception and sight singing including harmony and part writing techniques from a variety of periods;
- develop skills and an understanding of analysis and composition of music in a variety of styles, periods, and genres in both eastern Arabic and European and Western cultures;
- develop a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of Arabic and Western musical history as well as other world music systems;
- develop knowledge and skills on a major instrument in addition to piano which includes performance of a cross-section of the music from the repertory of instruments, the devel-

- opment of appropriate technical skills necessary for artistic self-expression and the development of the ability of sight-reading;
- develop performance communication skills and experience the meaning of leadership in both small and large ensembles;
- prepare students for a wide range of further educational and vocational activities.

In addition to these core subject-related goals the programme aims at fostering aesthetic values based on artistic, intellectual, and academic principles which constitute the basis for creating a culture of appreciation of the arts and music in society at large. The Head of Department explained during the site visit that graduates “have to be ambassadors of music”.

Due to internal and external reasons the **curriculum underwent some changes** since its implementation in 2008. The programme now covers 126 credit hours and is designed to be studied within eight semesters. Students are expected to take courses in six categories: University Requirements (6 CH), University Electives (6CH), College Requirements (11 CH), College Electives (3 CH), Departmental Requirements (94 CH) and Departmental Electives (6 CH). The university uses a Credit Hour (CH) system that can be transferred into ECTS.

Representatives of the DMM explained the structure of the curriculum to the experts. Besides, courses required by the SQU and the College of Arts and Social Sciences the programme combines Western music (70%) with Arabic music (30%). The Head of Department pointed out that music sound cannot be achieved without the other pillars: Theory and History (Arabic and Western). Besides, the practical part there are still 70 hours of musicology courses.

In 2006 there was a call from the Ministry of Education (MoE) asking for 1,300 music teachers for Omani schools and there is still the problem that the MoE has to hire mainly foreigners due to a lack of Omani graduates. During the design of the BA programme the music curriculum at schools was studied intensively. In 2010 the length of the programme was changed to 4 years. Before the current curriculum was approved it underwent a review by the MoE and other external stakeholders. Nevertheless the DMM pointed out during the site visit that the programme should not only focus on schools but also prepare the students for other fields of the labour market. Students of music who want to become teachers need to add another year in the Faculty of Education. It was a university wide decision to locate the educational training for all disciplines in the College of Education.

The Department of Music and Musicology defines **two types of musical teaching methods** or systems used within the programme. In terms of the theory courses in Western classical music, the Western system of tonality with the use of solfège method with French vocabulary is used. Students also get familiar with the English vocabulary that corresponds to the Sol-Fa system. For beginner students, particularly, in theory classes the Western method of solfège (particularly the fixed Do) with French vocabulary is used before students develop their knowledge of other systems such as the American A, B, C, D. In Eastern Arabic courses, music is explained and analysed through the use of the modal system of maqam.

Furthermore, according to DMM, students benefit from the **department's research** in various subjects and languages: they benefit directly as in the case of published papers used in lectures and hand-outs to students as well as indirectly as these studies are part of the development of their instructors.

DMM is **governed by a Head of Department (HoD)**, who is supported by academic and administrative staff. Academic staff is organized in a Department Committee, administrative staff includes a Department Coordinator and a Music Instruments Supervisor.

## **Experts' Evaluation**

The desired qualifications to be achieved during the programme are presented as **Intended Learning Outcomes** (ILO) in the SER and are related to the targets of the university and the College of Arts and Sciences. They are both subject-specific and interdisciplinary in nature. The Intended Learning Outcomes were updated according to current developments in the academic field. It is obvious that DMM spend quite some effort on defining the ILO and the experts appreciate the transparency created by describing the Learning Outcomes for the students and stakeholders.

All curricular elements (courses) and their functions are documented. The curriculum defines which elements are compulsory and which are electives. There is a standard course plan available for students. The experts have no doubt that the order of curricular elements supports the learner's progression. Curricular modifications which took place at DMM are documented in a transparent manner and contributed to an improvement in programme quality.

During the site visit the panel of experts got the impression that the programme faces the challenge to serve different interests, expectations and targets of several stakeholders which makes it difficult to provide a focussed and consistent **concept for Music and Musicology**.

The meeting with the labour-market representatives and that with the students revealed some discrepancies between the vision of the DMM through its actual curriculum, and what the stakeholders and students expect from the programme. Some representatives of the both aforementioned parties asked for having (requested a stronger concentration on Music Education in the programme) a **Music Education** concentration in the programme, while other representatives focussed more on the aspect of becoming practitioners in the field of music. The panel of experts felt that the attempt to combine the heterogeneous expectations within one BA programme is too ambitious. It seems that DMM does not have a clear and sustainable solution for these different needs and targets. Without changing the main idea of the programme nor the total hours some adjustments should be made in order to allow different pathways through the programme depending on the different aims and objectives. The Department should outline how it addresses the reality of students and graduates becoming teachers. (**Finding**)

The SQU-DMM programme provides the students with a good foundation in classical Western music theory and piano, an instrument that is mandatory for all students. Some stakeholders and students explicitly expressed their urgent need for more emphasis regarding the **Arabic Music** component in the programme. More balance between Western and Arabic music was requested from the concerned parties as the Arabic and especially Omani music play a minor role in the programme. Even when regional music is represented, the Westernization is obvious in the method of teaching and dealing with textures, modal and rhythmic system of the Arabic music. The concern of the students was that they learn a lot about Western music but have to deal with Omani music once they work as school teachers. Therefore they do not feel well prepared for their tasks. The other argument discussed with the students was that every musician should be aware of its own national tradition of music. The panel of experts agrees with both arguments and recommends that the programme should strive for a more balanced approach between Arab and Western music. DMM's idea of the role and function of the Arabic music in this programme should be clarified in a concept. (**Finding**)

When teaching Arab music it is highly advised to teach it in its classical form and to avoid hybridism, mixing Central Asian with Western with some Arabic Music elements as the outcome can cause the problem that the requirements of a professional musician are not fulfilled. This may result in a deficit of the practical abilities of a musician. On the other hand the written tests and exams presented to the panel of experts showed that the intended level of qualification was achieved after completing the programme.

The DMM should develop a clearer philosophy regarding its programme in its two facets: Music Education and Musicology. The former should be totally dedicated to studying the extremely rich heritage of Oman under a clear vision that one can play the music of the four corners of the planet but should have one music to teach at schools, one's native music. The Musicology section should help the former, but before being able to do so, it might take a good time for the department to strengthen the basis for a more effective Musicology. The European approach of Musicology is different from the Omani one which is acceptable; however, DMM must describe in a transparent manner the role of Musicology in the curriculum and the students' qualifications (**Finding**).

Several faculty members explained their research projects during the site visit and this could become a nucleus for a stronger research profile.

The Musicology section of the DMM could become a hub for the Gulf region in the Khaliji (regional) Arabian Peninsula Music. Collaboration with peer research centres (OCTM and other institutions in the Gulf) is recommendable and vital for a serious musical environment at DMM.

During the discussion with the panel of experts the students suggested several options for the improvement of their study programme such as a stronger common basis in theory and practice for all students and the development of different pathways for students, depending on their interest either to become a teacher or a professional musician. The students mentioned some repetitive elements in the courses (e.g. history) which could be replaced by more teaching hours, e.g. practice.

The panel of experts does not want to be prescriptive in the way the study programme has to be profiled but it has to become more focussed in order to be attractive to students, the labour market and international partners. Students should have a clear idea on what they are getting at the end of their studies at DMM.

## 6. Learning, Teaching and Assessment of Students

*The delivery of material encourages students to take an active role in the learning process.*

*Students are assessed using accessible criteria, regulations, and procedures, which are made readily available to all participants and which are applied consistently.*

*Assessment procedures are designed to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.*

The department provided a detailed chart outlining which Intended Learning Outcomes of the programme is covered by which course of the curriculum. Courses are documented in a Course Handbook available to students. According to the information in the Self Evaluation Report, several different teaching methods and media are used. During the site visit staff outlined the different software they use and how they teach students to use them.

A university-wide Center of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) supports the colleges in promoting excellence in higher education teaching and learning.

Representatives of DMM explained to the experts that syllabi are discussed amongst the different instructors in order to compare and add courses, where necessary. Courses are adjusted so that a greater comparability can be reached between different teaching staff members. Although different teachers are involved in the programme this kind of exchange and the "course files" which collect all information on a course (content, assessment etc.) serve the target of comparability.

Students are expected to reach a predefined level every semester. Teachers are faced with the challenge that many students are beginners in the field of Music at the time they start their studies at SQU. Teaching staff explained during the site visit that they try to motivate students to take part in performances. At the end of every semester small performances take place.

The **university academic regulations** require that each course at SQU, with some exceptions, has at least these components with regard to assessment methods: quizzes, in-term tests, assignments, seminars, including a mandatory final exam. The exam requirements are the same for all students independent from the instructors.

The SQU Undergraduate Academic Regulations organizes the **examination process**. The College Examination Committee is responsible for supervising the university and college requirements examinations and ensuring these examinations are conducted properly and in accordance with SQU regulations. The Head of Department and the Department representative in the College Examination Committee are responsible for monitoring the examination process on the departmental level.

### **Experts' Evaluation**

The panel of experts acknowledges that the Department of Music and Musicology cares for the needs of its students and values their interests and opinions. Students are an important part in the QA system and their voice is heard if they have complaints. Since last year student representatives have been chosen and were welcomed in meetings. It is recommended that **student representatives** who have been nominated are given a more significant role i.e. they should have the possibility to attend most of the departmental meetings and have a voice if important decisions are being made (**Finding**).

Methods of teaching and learning are appropriate to and correspond to the Intended Learning Outcomes. The panel of experts got the impression during the discussions with the university that the methods of teaching and learning respect and take into account the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths. Due to the motivated staff and teacher-student ratio which is one of the lowest at the university staff can react individually to each student to react individually to each student with its didactic methods and to stimulate student motivation and engagement in the learning process. The face-to-face teaching method is an ideal way to cater to the different needs, expectations and learning paths of students. The experts experienced a very positive atmosphere between students and teaching staff contributing to high levels of motivation on both sides.

All courses of the curriculum are assigned a certain **number of credits** directly related to the expected workload. The workload in the music programme seems to be high but suitable. SQU states that the credits provided for the courses can be transferred into ECTS. For future exchange with Europe it would be helpful for the students if the ratio between credits at SQU and ECTS would be described in a transparent manner.

SQU regularly evaluates the adequacy and appropriateness of the teaching and learning methods and results can be disclosed to students at any time.

Regarding the **assessment processes** of the student requirements for the examinations the procedures are transparent and made known to students. Students seem to be well informed about all the different possibilities they have. Owing to the good student support, students are regularly informed about their progress, duties and responsibilities. Assessment regulations and procedures are defined by SQU and are available in published form. Criteria for methods of assessment as well as criteria for marking are published in advance. The timing of exams is organised appropriately and examination dates are announced. Suitable opportunities to re-sit an exam are offered.

The undergraduate regulations are transparent and published and include regulations to compensate for **disadvantages**, illness, absence, or other mitigating circumstances that may affect a student. SQU has a strong awareness of students with special needs and supports them in differ-

ent aspects of their studies. A special brochure for students with disabilities which includes a wide range of information is provided.

The institution offers to all its students the opportunity to **borrow an instrument** while they study at the University. The panel of experts was impressed by the high quality of the instruments which are provided to the students. The University gives every student an equal opportunity for developing their skills on their instrument.

Overall the programme exposes students to a great **variety of teaching methods**, learning and assessment support in order to be able to combine theoretical and practical aspects. Students of music have the option to carry out an internship outside the university.

## 7. Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

*Consistently applied, pre-defined, published regulations are in place which cover student admission, progression, recognition, and certification.*

**Criteria relevant for admission** are student interests, the availability of study places in the programme, the minimum grade in Core Arabic, Core English, Music Skills from the student's secondary school diploma as well as passing the Music Audition and Entrance Exam. In the audition each candidate's music potentials are examined. After careful examination of all candidates' auditions, only the top scorers are selected to join the programme.

Before entering the Bachelor programme all students undergo the so-called **Foundation Programme**. This year is required for all students studying at SQU. The Foundation Program (FP) at Sultan Qaboos University became a mandatory introduction for study in all the university's colleges as of the academic year 2010/2011. The programme has been designed to prepare undergraduate students who have been accepted in the university to achieve the required educational goal outputs in accordance with the Omani academic standards. The programme qualifies the student in English language, mathematics, and information technology, and the study and learning skills.

At the department one person from the teaching staff is in charge to be the **Academic Advisor** for one student. His/her task is to consult the students and to monitor their achievements. Beside this Students' performances are also monitored by the course instructor, department administration, Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Studies and Deanship of Admission and Registration.

SQU applies general transfer criteria for students' mobility. The university generally supports **student international exchanges**.

### Experts' Evaluation

The **admission process** is clearly defined and transparent. Criteria for the entrance exam are very clear and comprehensible. Admission requirements are shown to support the objectives of the study programme. Data on the admission procedures is available. For new students the SQU offers an introduction within the first days of study at the beginning of the semester.

Regulations for recognition of Higher Education Qualifications, previous periods of study, and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are in place. These regulations are documented in legally binding form and are available to students.

**Student progression** is well monitored. The student advisor has an eye on each student and monitors their progress and has the duty to get in touch with the student if something is going wrong. The institution has a large data set and key indicators such as completion rate and course

assessment. There is a central QA-office at SQU that takes care of the developments in each department. The college also has an established system for tracking class attendance.

**Qualitative and quantitative data** is available on the admission procedures of past cohorts. Frequent communication between graduates and current students are supported by the university/department. The experiences of alumni are used to further develop the study programme and this practice should be carried on.

The experts appreciate that SQU is very supportive to students in joining **international activities** but got conflicting information on how many students went abroad and took part in conferences, Master classes or performances. However, it is recommendable that students should have more opportunities to transfer their knowledge to situations outside the university context. Therefore the department should monitor this aspect and take measures to strengthen the general mobility of their students such as international conferences or concerts, exchanges as well as networking with other music universities (**Finding**). This would give students the chance to get in touch with other approaches of learning and perhaps it would support them in the lifelong task to broaden their horizon as artists and future researchers.

As soon as the student finishes all the classes and finishes his/her degree a **transcript of records** is handed out upon graduation. SQU explains the qualifications that were obtained, including achieved learning outcomes and the classes that have been pursued and successfully completed. It is planned that Graduates will receive a documentation explaining the qualification gained, including context, level, and status of the studies (Diploma Supplement).

## 8. Teaching Staff

*The composition (quantity, qualifications, professional and international experience, etc.) of the staff is appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.*

*Staff involved with teaching is qualified and competent to do so.*

*Transparent procedures are in place for the recruitment and development of the staff.*

The Department of Music and Musicology is composed of 22 faculty members from **various backgrounds, cultures, and nationalities** who are specialized in various areas of music and musicology including ethnomusicology, history, theory, analysis, and performance (Piano, Violin, Viola, Cello, Flute, Ud, Qanun). This diverse faculty is seen in the SER as an advantage due to the contrasted yet rich musico-cultural experiences and contexts. A full list of staff members including their profiles is made available for review as part of the documentation. All Department members hold a PhD, Master or Bachelor degree from a variety of international institutions based in e. g. the US, Russia, Germany and Hungary as well as from institutions in Oman. Teaching staff is complemented by external guest lecturers and performers.

In the SER it is stated that besides the two professors there is also a DMA holder (following the American system). In terms of instruments the trainers are required to be excellent with the instrument, even without holding the position of a Professor. Staff-student ratio is one of the lowest in the University, lower than e.g. in medicine. Therefore it is the most costly programme.

The **recruitment policy** for Omani staff follows the idea that the best graduates of the university are appointed as Demonstrators and sent abroad for their Master and PhD studies before their appointment as Assistant Professors. Beyond this, SQU outlines that it actively recruits international staff members to complete the academic staff portfolio. During the site visit the process of recruitment was described in all its steps: positions are advertised nationally and internationally, the College Board recommends and submits to the university level which signs the contracts with the staff members. In the first two weeks the dean meets all new teaching staff, i.a. to inform them about the objectives of the department and outcomes for students.

Promotion follows defined paths and is possible every five years.

The University supports research with a significant fund and all colleges/departments can apply in a competitive procedure for it.

Staff members can apply to travel to international conferences and the transportation plus additional costs are paid by SQU. Also there is paid leave if staff from SQU presents a paper on conferences. When the programme started (2008) the trainers were not part of this support system but that was adapted and from time to time even trainers attend conferences.

### **Experts' Evaluation**

The Department has committed staff members whose employment pre-requisites, qualifications and integration into the teaching operations are documented with the required level of detail. Transparent recruitment procedures for teaching staff are in place. Opportunities for further training are also documented. Required resources are checked by SQU with regard to the capacity of the institution. Beside the professors lecturers for different instruments are involved in the programme and procedures are in place to ensure the qualifications of these lecturers. Lecturers are to be made familiar with the requirements of the programme.

Although on a general level the panel of experts has no concerns that the ratio between teaching staff and students is good they formulated some concerns if you look closer into detail. There is a qualitative problem because teaching staff only partly matches the formulated requirements of the curriculum. This is due to structural problems: a vacancy for a professorship has not been filled for a long time because of a lack of qualified candidates. At present, the only qualified staff member cannot fill the gap in teaching musicology as he is mainly occupied with administrative tasks being the Head of Department. Therefore the university should develop a continuity plan showing how the teaching staff positions can be filled in the future, especially concerning the position of the Head of Department who is due to retire (**Finding**).

During the site visit the experts also got to know that the lecturers for Arabic music will leave SQU. The experts see the urgent need to replace the staff as it is important and reasonable to strengthen this particular area of the curriculum (**Finding**).

The panel of experts appreciate that the Center of Excellence in Teaching and Learning offers workshops related to teaching and learning and thus provides opportunities to advance didactic qualities.

## **9. Learning Resources and Student Support**

*Appropriate facilities and resources are available for learning and teaching activities.*

*Guidance and support is available for students to advise on achieving successful completion of their studies.*

SQU does not charge **tuition fees** for undergraduate studies. All students receive a monthly financial allowance to ensure their ability to focus on education without any financial constraints. Students receive furthermore daily meals as well as in-campus transportation. Female students as well as male students with special needs are allowed to live inside the campus where five residential complexes are available.

The university offers **advising and counselling services**, among them the assignment of academic advisors who offer counselling in academic as well as personal matters. Students start their studies with an orientation week and may contact the student counselling centre throughout their studies.

The university ensures that it provides attention to the needs and welfare of **students with special needs**.

DMM is located at the SQU **campus** in Muscat, where offices, classrooms and computer laboratories are available. The classrooms that the department uses vary in size. According to the university, all of them are equipped with a whiteboard, overhead projector, LCD projector and computer. Some classes are also equipped with a TV and a DVD player.

For maintenance of instruments there is a special fund up to 200 Rial on which the College can decide, if the costs are higher the University decides on it and pays for it.

The course files also document what is expected in the courses over time so that students can check every information they are looking for. Auditions are recorded so they can be compared.

Students are allowed to use the college library and the main library. Both libraries provide collections of the programme's areas. The library systems allow students to borrow five books for three weeks (books are renewable).

At SQU there exists a great theatre which allows performances in front of a larger audience and which also could also be used for charity concerts.

The DMM cooperates with external stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education and music institutions in Oman.

### **Experts' Evaluation**

Due to the **transparent description** of the course and the Undergraduate Regulations the students are well informed about the Intended Learning Outcomes, the methods of learning and teaching, assessment methods, and the expected workload.

The panel of experts has no doubt that efficient strategies are defined to ensure that **course offerings are coordinated** on both content and organizational levels. The programme is implemented in such a way that students are able to complete their studies within the expected period of time as defined in the curriculum.

Access is provided to an appropriate **amount of literature, journals, and academic sources** to enable the achievement of the learning outcomes. SQU main library is affiliated to main databases such as JSTOR and Springer. Articles in Music Education and Musicology are abundantly available online. Physical references are available and in different languages, mainly Arabic and English. Students have remote access and off-campus access to the library databases. Audio resources rely on online websites. It would be good to set up a Multimedia Library (Mediatheque) which includes music scores and CDs. If this could be located in the DMM building it would be more accessible and practical for students. During the site visit students expressed the wish to have a specialized library for notes.

Appropriate **material resources** (finance, computer workplaces, laboratories etc.) are available for the study programme as necessary to achieve the Intended Learning Outcomes. Sufficient facilities are available with regard to room and space required for the number of students in the programme. The equipment in laboratories and dedicated workspaces reflects current professional standards and is appropriate for the Intended Learning Outcomes.

The **introductory service** that is offered for every new and potential student is excellent. Already in the first few days before the first semester starts students are being informed about the university and their programme and are familiarised with all important aspects of their study. Every student has their own supervisor, specialized in the field of music who must be visited at the beginning of every semester. Throughout the year office hours are also offered by staff members on a regular basic. All these services are offered consistently and information on these services is

made available to students in an adequate way. Specific offerings are available for exchange students / incoming students.

The experts perceived a strong and trustful **relationship between students and teaching staff**. Members of the teaching staff are always available on any issues regarding the degree programme and offer academic advice. Students are well informed about the services available to them.

The experts pointed out that practical phases such as **internships** should be made more significant during students' studies. It would be wishful that each student gets an opportunity for an internship as part of their study programme. Students are given support in finding practical placements.

**Student diversity** is considered when allocating, planning, and providing learning resources and student support.

Collaboration with external partners (national, international) should be strengthened with the target to provide more opportunities for students in the future. (**Finding**) Any material that students might need in their research on Arab music is actually held at Oman Center of Traditional Music OCTM, therefore also a closer cooperation with this institution is recommended. Representatives of both institutions (SQU and OCTM) have already expressed their willingness for cooperation

## 10. Information

*Data is collected from relevant sources and stakeholders, analysed, and used for the effective management and continuous enhancement of the programme.*

*Impartial and objective, up-to-date information regarding the programme and its qualifications is published regularly. This published information is appropriate for and available to relevant stakeholders.*

In the SER the Department outlines that information is collected from different sources and stakeholders including the following:

- Teaching (Course and Teaching Survey);
- Students (Academic Advising, Students' Liaison Committee);
- The Department Board Meetings and Department Committees;
- The College Board Meetings and related College Committees;
- Department of Music and Musicology Alumni

Many information on the study programme and Undergraduate regulations are available on the website of SQU. DMM informs students and labour market about changes in the programme via its website. If there are updates these are posted in the bulletin board or sent via mailing list to all students.

### Experts' Evaluation:

The experts got the impression during the discussions with the central QA office of SQU, with the management of the College of Arts and Social Sciences and with DMM that a wide range of information and data is collected for a professional management of the programme and for well organized processes for the students. Information on the composition of the student body of the study programme is available. Due to the small number of students the teaching staff is well

aware how many students do not complete their studies and also the reasons for non-completion are known.

DMM collects information in which sectors graduates are employed and on how many students continue their studies at the educational department of SQU or are immediately integrated in the labour market.

There is also no doubt that DMM is connected with the labour market and that exchange with (potential) employers exist via personal contacts and a board. Nevertheless this existing exchange could be strengthened to get more or more precise information on the labour market requirements which allow a clear description of potential employment fields for graduates (see Finding above).

Information on the duration of studies is available and there are no concerns from the panel of experts that students exceed the number of semesters foreseen in the programme.

If the public is interested all core information on the programme, the Intended Learning Outcomes, the application procedure, qualifications awarded, and assessment procedures are available.

## **11. Findings:**

1. The fields of work for which music graduates are trained and educated have to be defined much clearer.
2. Without changing the main idea of the programme nor the total hours some adjustments should be made in order to allow different pathways through the programme depending on the different aims and objectives. The Department should outline how it addresses the reality of students and graduates becoming teachers.
3. The programme should strive for a more balanced approach between Arab and Western music. DMM's idea of the role and function of the Arabic music in this programme should be clarified in a concept.
4. DMM should transparently define its understanding of Musicology and the role it plays for the students in the curriculum.
5. CASS should check if it is possible to give student representatives who have been nominated a more significant role, i.e. they should have the possibility to attend most of the departmental meetings and have a voice if important decisions are being made.
6. CASS should take measures to strengthen the general mobility of their students such as international conferences or concerts, exchanges as well as networking with other music universities.
7. The university should develop a continuity plan showing how the teaching staff positions can be filled in the future, especially concerning the position of the Head of Department and the lecturers for Arabic music.
8. Collaboration with external partners (universities, institutes and the labour market) should be strengthened with the target to provide more opportunities for students in the future.