

RIAM

Royal Irish
Academy of Music

INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT 2024 - **ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY OF MUSIC**

REPORT OF THE REVIEW PANEL

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FOREWORD

This institutional quality review of The Royal Irish Academy of Music (hereafter RIAM) was undertaken by the University of Dublin, Trinity College (hereafter 'Trinity') in its capacity as the Designated Awarding Body (DAB) for the degree awards attaching to RIAM's higher education and training programmes. Under the terms of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012), Trinity is responsible for the periodic review of the quality assurance procedures and processes of RIAM as a Linked Provider, that being an institution which provides programmes of education and training leading to awards made by Trinity.

The review process evaluates the effectiveness of the quality assurance processes of the Linked Provider and assesses that institution's compliance with European standards for quality assurance as set out in the Qualifications and Quality Ireland (QQI) Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. Adherence to other relevant QQI policies and procedures is also evaluated. The review also looks at how the Linked Provider institution has enhanced its teaching, learning and research, and how well aligned its approach to quality assurance is to institutional mission, quality indicators and benchmarks.

Reviews of Linked Providers are required to be conducted at least every seven years by an independent team of subject experts. The review process is in keeping with Parts 2 and 3 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) and is based on the internationally accepted and recognised approach to institutional reviews, including:

- the publication of the Terms of Reference;
- a process of self-evaluation leading to the production of an institutional Self-Assessment Report (SAR);
- an external assessment and site visit by a team of reviewers;
- the publication of a Review Report including findings and recommendations;
- and
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken.

This is the first review of RIAM as a Trinity Linked Provider. What follows is the Review Panel's Report on their findings and recommendations. Also included is RIAM'S response to the Report.

THE REVIEW PANEL

The review of quality assurance at the Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM) was carried out by a panel of independent experts and peers appointed by Trinity College Dublin.

In preparation for the review the Review Panel attended an on-line planning meeting on 12 March 2024 with senior staff and officers of Trinity and RIAM.

The site visit took place on 23-25 April 2024, during which the Review Panel met with RIAM students, members of staff and external stakeholders. The timetable for the visit is appended to this report (see Appendix B).

The efficacy of the review process was confirmed by the Review Panel in the oral feedback report provided to the RIAM Director and staff and to Trinity's Vice-Provost and Academic Secretary on the final day of the site visit.

The Review Panel acknowledges the commitment shown by the RIAM Director and executive team in preparing the review, and the detailed work undertaken by the Trinity Quality Office in planning, preparing for and supporting the review process. During their site visit, the Review Panel was ably supported by note-taker Iseult Thornley. In particular, the reviewers would like to thank the Director and staff of RIAM for their openness in engaging with, and warm hospitality shown to, the Review Panel.

The composition of the Review Panel for the 2024 institutional quality review of the RIAM was as follows.

CHAIR

Professor Helena Gaunt

PROFESSOR Helena Gaunt is a musician, author and thought-leader on music education and professional practice, having been a professional oboist for many years and founding member of the Britten Sinfonia. Principal of the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama (RWCMD), she sits on the Council of the Royal Philharmonic Society, chairs the Advisory Board of the National Music Service in Wales, and has undertaken a leading role for the European Association of Conservatoire's project Strengthening Music in Society. Helena joined RWCMD in 2018 after over 25 years teaching and in leadership roles at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama in London where she initiated and directed the international Reflective Conservatoire Conference, chaired the Innovative Conservatoire (ICON) partnership, and set up the Guildhall Creative Entrepreneurs scheme, incubating over 40 new businesses in the performing arts. She is a National Teaching Fellow (2009) and Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. She lives in Cardiff and has five children, including two sets of twins.

PANEL MEMBERS

Professor Henk Van Der Meulen

Professor Henk Van Der Meulen is a composer within the contemporary music concert practice, as well as having extensive experience in theatre, dance, film and mixed media. From 1995 to 2008 he was Head of Music and Dance programmes at Dutch Public Broadcaster NPS. His functions in an international media context include the chairmanship of the EBU Music Group, the presidency of the IMZ (International

Music and Media Organisation, based in Vienna) and a board membership of the International Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (International Emmy's). From 2008 to 2023 he was the Principal of the Royal Conservatoire in the Hague and member/chair of the Board of the University of the Arts, The Hague. In 2022 he was also the Principal of the Royal Academy of Arts and Design, which, together with the Royal Conservatoire, constitute the University of the Arts, The Hague. In 2017 Henk van der Meulen was awarded an Honorary Fellowship from the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. Currently he combines his return to an active composing practice with work as advisor and board member of various organisations, festivals and ensembles.

Professor Richard Barrett

Professor Richard Barrett is an internationally active composer and performer whose work encompasses a range from free improvisation to intricately-notated scores, and from acoustic chamber music and orchestral composition to innovative uses of digital technology. He has published two books about his work, most recently *Transforming Moments* (Vision Edition) in which his creative activities are interwoven with his involvements in education and research. He is currently Professor of Creative Music Research at Leiden University and teaches composition and electronic music at the Institute of Sonology, Royal Conservatoire of The Hague.

Carlo Mazzini

Carlo Mazzini is an Italian composer, conductor, journalist, and expert in higher musical education. Born in 1997, he graduated with highest honors in Composition from the Nicola Sala Conservatory of Benevento in 2021. He is currently pursuing degrees in Conducting

and Wind Ensemble Composition at the Giuseppe Verdi Conservatory in Milan. From 2019 to 2021, Mazzini served as President of the National Conference of Conservatory Students, advocating for policies benefiting music students. He organized a major conference in Florence in 2020 on "Music and Conservatories", involving national stakeholders and lawmakers. Since 2021, Mazzini has been a student evaluator for Italy's National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes. He writes for publications such as the 'Teatro alla Scala' magazine and serves on the board of the Milan Conservatory. Additionally, he is the editor-in-chief of 'La Magnolia' magazine and has written for the Rome Opera House. Mazzini is also a member of the Education and Orientation Commission of the Italian National Youth Council.

COORDINATING SECRETARY

Ms Alexandra Anderson

Alexandra was deputy Academic Secretary at Trinity College Dublin 2006-2013 with a central role in academic quality processes and inter-institutional collaborations. At Trinity's 'Bologna Desk', she was responsible for supporting the application of the ECTS credit system and learning outcomes in Trinity and the alignment of minor awards with the National Framework of Qualifications. She was Trinity's representative on the Framework Implementation Network (FIN, 2007-2011), a joint initiative of the Irish Universities Association and the former National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, and convened a FIN working group on the design and use of discipline-specific learning outcomes in Irish universities. Alexandra currently works on an independent basis.

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT



INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

The Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM) is an autonomous institution on the international conservatoire model providing comprehensive practice-based music education and training from pre-school to postgraduate level. Its focus is on western art music and the Irish harp. Founded in 1848, the RIAM is a registered charity, and receives an annual Government grant amounting to approximately 40% of baseline operating costs. Consequently, RIAM accounts are subject to audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General. The RIAM occupies historic buildings in Dublin's city centre, adjacent to the main Trinity campus. A major re-development of the RIAM site was completed in 2023, providing significant additional, purpose-built facilities for teaching, practice and performance, including the 300-seat Whyte Recital Hall.

Under its own authority to set standards and award certification, the RIAM offers a broad spectrum of music education and training, encompassing instrumental training for pre-school and school-age pupils (Junior RIAM) and for adults (including music teachers and performance professionals), while its extensive RIAM Exams programme supports the musical formation of upwards of 30,000 students annually at local examination centres nationwide. The Recital Artist and Mentorship programmes (30 enrolments in 2023/24) support young artists preparing for professional performance careers.

In 2013 the RIAM became an Associated College of the University of Dublin, Trinity College, since when its third-level programmes have been validated and accredited by Trinity. Accordingly, under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012), the RIAM is designated a Linked Provider of Trinity.

The focus of this institutional quality review of the RIAM is on the level of compliance with the Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines and other policies and codes that apply to the programmes of education and training accredited by Trinity, and to related provision and the research environment. Currently offered are a Diploma in Music Teaching and Performance (NFQ Level 7), two Bachelor in Music programmes (NFQ Level 8), a Master in Music Performance (NFQ Level 9) and a Doctoral programme in Music Performance (NFQ Level 10).

The Review Panel notes that the past decade has been a period of significant development for the RIAM. With the support of Trinity, it has successfully introduced postgraduate education and training to Doctoral level. The impressive re-development of its Westland Row site offers new opportunities for further growth and development. It is clear to the Panel that the RIAM is a valued institution nationally with talented and motivated students and a dedicated staff.

INSTITUTIONAL SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT (SAR)



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INSTITUTIONAL SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT (SAR)

The Review Panel found the SAR prepared by RIAM for this review to be a thorough and informative document. Extensive supporting documentation was also made available to the Panel, providing a comprehensive overview of RIAM'S institutional policies, quality assurance framework and approaches to ongoing quality enhancement. On the other hand, we noted that the students, alumni, industry professionals and most teachers we met had not been engaged in the SAR development, nor had they read and reflected on its content prior to the review meetings. This was not a problem in terms of the review meetings held on site, all of which were very constructive and

corroborated the information presented in the SAR. We recognise the challenges posed by the formal institutional quality review process, particularly for smaller colleges with a small management team. We also acknowledge that this is the RIAM'S first experience of a statutory institutional review. Nevertheless, we consider that it was perhaps a missed opportunity for RIAM to engage a wide range of stakeholders in a reflective process that can be a formative and developmental experience in itself (as indeed the formulation of the RIAM 175 strategic plan appears to have been) and would also be of value to the next stages of quality enhancement and strategic planning for the institution.



QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY



QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

3.1 OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES

The RIAM Board of Governors is the primary governance entity, responsible for overall governance, strategic direction, and legal compliance. Its membership, processes and areas of competence are set out in the 1889 Constitution entered into legislation under the Educational Endowments (Ireland) Act (1885). The provisions of this historic instrument have been amplified and updated in RIAM's own 2018 Code of Governance, which operates in conformity with the Code of Practice of State Bodies (2016). The Board of Governors numbers 17, including external members, a representative of the Board of Studies and elected staff representatives. It has an external chair, elected by the Board every two years. The RIAM Director is an ex-officio member of the Board. Four principal committees complete the formal governance structure. These are: the Finance Committee, Audit and Risk Committee, Governance and Nominations Committee and the Board of Studies which is the principal academic committee.

The Board of Studies comprises the Heads of Faculties (Keyboard; Strings; Wind, Brass and Percussion; Vocal Studies and Opera), the Head of Department for Programmes, Research and Academics, the Head of Chamber Music, the Director, and representatives of teaching staff and students. The Undergraduate, Postgraduate, and Doctoral Committees are made up of staff and student representation from all Faculties, Heads of Faculty, external experts and the RIAM Director, and these

function as standing committees of the Board of Studies. Exam Boards for the third-level programmes receive and ratify all assessment data and take forward to Trinity recommendations for awards and student progression. They are chaired by the Director and are attended by the relevant External Examiner(s), a Trinity representative and internal examiners.

The Director is supported by a Senior Executive Team comprising the finance, marketing, buildings and facilities, and divisional programme managers.

As a Linked Provider of Trinity, RIAM has a double layer of academic oversight, in that new programmes and modifications to Trinity-accredited programmes are considered first internally, and then subsequently approved through the joint Trinity/RIAM Associated Colleges Degrees Committee (ACDC) before going through the normal academic processes in Trinity for programme and award approval.

The overall governance system for RIAM is complex, probably inevitably slow given the various different responsibilities for overall governance at the Board of Governors and for quality assurance of the degree programmes through Trinity. However, it was clear to the Review Panel that the governance system functions effectively, and we experienced a universal commitment across RIAM governance to quality and to transparent and robust management of quality in compliance with sectoral quality assurance standards.

3.1.1 GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY

The Panel observed the separation between ACDC and the RIAM Board of Governors and noted a heavy reliance on the RIAM Director as the link between these key bodies within the governance structure. This division of roles protects against potential conflicts of interest between RIAM's Board of Governors and Trinity. However, **the Panel recommends reviewing the interface between the Board and the ACDC to ensure maximum effectiveness and to mitigate the risk of over-reliance on the RIAM Director as a single connecting point.** In particular, the Review Panel saw some risk in the relatively light representation of expertise in academic quality processes (both assurance and enhancement) on the Board of Governors.

Equally, the Panel noted that academic representation on the Senior Management Team (SMT) was confined to the Director. We therefore endorse the SAR proposal that the Head of Programmes, Research and Academics should join the SMT. It might also be beneficial to include a Head of Faculty (perhaps on a rolling basis) to ensure further artistic and academic representation. This will need to be considered particularly in the light of an acknowledged wish to develop the strategic focus within the senior teams (both the SMT and Faculty Heads) as agendas and current meeting patterns tend to favour operational matters.

The Panel's discussion with members of the ACDC was vibrant and well-informed. **We particularly commend the commitment of the ACDC to supporting RIAM, the collegiality demonstrated and interest both in sharing relevant expertise and best practice from**

Trinity and in learning from RIAM. The quality of this discussion also confirmed significant further potential for strategic partnership development between the two institutions, especially in connection with the planned RIAM research centre, for which the support and enthusiasm shown by the ACDC was highly convincing and will no doubt turn out to be crucial.

The Panel were delighted to see that RIAM proposes to add a student member to the Board of Governors; this is to be commended. It was clear to us that a number of initiatives have been advanced in recent years to strengthen student representation on committees and to support the student voice in multiple ways. We would encourage RIAM to develop students as partners as an embedded feature throughout their quality culture, with relevant training also provided for students to be able to advocate effectively for their peers and in the various different contexts for the student voice.

We noted that RIAM is considering the appointment of a quality officer. Currently the Director is the quality lead across the institution. We did not see a detailed description of the proposed new role but would highlight potential risks in entrusting the quality agenda to one particular individual rather than ensuring that there is distributed responsibility for assurance and enhancement. If RIAM does decide to appoint a quality officer, we would encourage careful attention to ensuring that the quality agenda remains close to the delivery of the programmes and teaching and becomes further embedded, for example, within the roles of the Heads of Faculty. As an aside to this, we noted that the annual

student experience survey currently receives quite low engagement. There is therefore a tendency for the results to be skewed and to give an unreliable picture. If there is a wish for the survey to be a really useful and reliable part of the quality cycle, RIAM will want to focus on increasing engagement significantly. This is something that could be addressed in partnership with the Students Union (SU).

There can be no doubt that RIAM has undertaken a rigorous process to develop and put in place a comprehensive set of policies over the period since 2018, and this is to be commended. As they now move forwards to embed a transparent cycle of ongoing update and policy evolution, they may want to consider some further areas that pertain specifically to a conservatoire context. For example, a ‘change of teacher’ policy could provide greater transparency for students and staff in what can be a sensitive area, and such a policy could promote consistency in how each Faculty handles such matters. Furthermore, we would encourage RIAM to develop specific and face to face training for staff on some of the key policies relevant to their practice, not least regarding the codes of conduct, managing sensitive disclosures from students, complaints processes and, for example, expectations of record keeping where matters are resolved informally in the first stage of a process.

While we are not specific experts in the Irish legislative context and how policies dealing

with these issues sit within that context, the Review Panel notes particular areas of swift policy development in Higher Education in a number of countries, for example in the area of sexual harassment. RIAM may want to refer to these as they review their relevant policies, considering for example aspects of:

- Safeguarding risk assessments for individuals and student cohorts when allegations are made and at relevant stages of a disciplinary process.
- In what situations specialist expertise may be sourced to support alleged victims and their engagement in an investigation process, or to conduct an investigation.
- Under what conditions allegations of potentially criminal offences are referred to the police (with or without the victim’s consent).
- Under what conditions a student may or may not be accompanied by legal representation to a disciplinary hearing.
- The risks of undertaking a disciplinary investigation while a matter is under police investigation.

Finally, in the light of relatively complex governance of policies between RIAM Board of Governors and Trinity via the ACDC link, it might be helpful to develop a process map to clarify approval lines, and indeed which policies will be priorities for each of these bodies.

3.1.2 PROGRAMMES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

RIAM delivers a relatively small portfolio of third-level programmes, all with a clear focus on western art music.

Table 1: Trinity-accredited programmes with student numbers 2023/24

| In-career programme: | NFQ* Level | Student Nos 2023/24 |
|--|------------|---------------------|
| Diploma in Music Teaching & Performance (Dip.Mus) (1yr FT/2 yr PT) | 7 | 10 |
| Bachelor in Music Performance (B.Mus.) (4 yr FT) | 8 | 114 |
| Bachelor in Music Education** (B.Mus.Ed.) (4 yr FT) (RIAM/TCD/TU) | 8 | |
| Master in Music Performance (M.Mus.Perf.) (2 yr FT) | 9 | 29 |
| Doctor in Music Performance (D.Mus.Perf.) (4 yr FT) | 10 | 10 |

The Review Panel noted that the emphasis in all programmes is on practical musicianship and performance, and students have access to a wide range of performance opportunities including in-house performance, master classes with guest musicians, as well as in external professional settings with RIAM industry partners. It was also noted that research capacity and expertise have been developing steadily over the past decade with the introduction of postgraduate programmes (M.Mus. and D.Mus.) and most recently with the introduction of the ‘Capstone’ project for final year B.Mus. students.

Through the process of this Review, we came to appreciate the rationale for the portfolio profile, and attendant distinctive elements of the programme delivery, including the two hours

per week of one-to-one instrumental tuition, which is more than the one-to-one tuition offered in just about any other conservatoire world-wide. The approach is undoubtedly welcomed by students, teaching staff and alumni – the latter particularly highlighted its importance in terms of how it helps to nurture young Irish talent and support them into professional careers.

While appreciating the importance of this distinctive part of curriculum delivery, there is now also an established research evidence base suggesting that one-to-one tuition can also present challenges, particularly in terms of ensuring that students do not neglect their own learning muscles and experience of self-directed discovery and learning.

As the programme teams continue to evolve

the learning environment for students, they will want to consider how best to balance the strengths of one-to-one tuition with strengths in peer and self-directed learning, and to ensure that students develop their own artistic and professional voice through their studies.

Our discussions with students and alumni also confirmed that many changes have been introduced at RIAM in recent years and these have been warmly welcomed. **It is to be commended that RIAM has been able to respond in agile ways to a range of sector issues and change within the music profession.** Alumni particularly welcome initiatives supporting professional opportunities and employability.

We commend the introduction of the Capstone project and the more diverse opportunities this offers for students, together with the way it aims to integrate research within the students' core artistic development. Although this has only just been introduced, the signs are promising that it will prove to be effective and will also provide an exciting context for students to build and demonstrate their own artistic voice.

Equally, we commend other forward-facing elements of the programmes that reflect the rapidly changing professions and society. The recent introduction of an elective module co-taught with Trinity colleagues in economics and education and available to Trinity undergraduates as well as RIAM students shows the potential for further and deeper collaboration between the two institutions.

Good strides have been made through RIAM's equality, diversity and inclusion roadmap (although there remains plenty to

do). Alongside aspects of self-reflection and research, there appear to be many informal opportunities for student activities, and student-led performances that empower the students to develop their own artistic profiles and projects.

We strongly encourage RIAM to continue such developments that pay close attention to the future of western art music and to the employability of RIAM graduates as plans evolve for curriculum development, new programmes and specialist pathways. Some areas RIAM may want to focus on include:

- How to structure and enable international experience and exchange, in the context of growing financial constraints for students, and some apparent reluctance among students to engage in this process of opening horizons.
- What further potential there may be to offer major and minor pathways in relation to the principal study area, thereby enabling individual development pathways that build skills with related instruments and/or composition, etc.
- How to bring creative practice right into the core of the students' artistic development, for example through engagement in improvisation and/or composition. We note in particular the importance of improvisation in unlocking deep, embodied understanding of music, its elements and structures, which then translates into performance of notated repertoire; the importance of composition to the living future of western art music; and the importance of engagement in interdisciplinary projects and modules.

We feel it is particularly important in a contemporary conservatoire to bring students' attention to the global musical ecosystem in which 'western art music' is embedded, not to de-emphasise that music but rather to better understand how it is situated in history, geography and society. As well as being a matter of deepening students' knowledge of music as a way of enriching their existing practice, it is also important in terms of enhancing their employability at a time when flexibility and creativity are increasingly asked of musicians, and this being a trend which is no doubt set to increase in the future.

Within the Faculty structure, we found it difficult to understand exactly where composition sits within RIAM, how its purpose is understood and the profile that it has as a distinct artistic discipline. We also noted some student dissatisfaction with the organisation of composition activities. **The Panel recommends that the place of, and curriculum approaches to, composition and creative practice within RIAM be reviewed, with a view to contextualising RIAM's focus on western art music by giving a more central role to the creative aspects of music making through composition, improvisation and exposure to the wider music eco-system.** This issue might be addressed, for example, when considering the recruitment of new staff, so that composition isn't regarded so much as a subset of 'academic' studies but as something which all performers should develop insights into, however they end up using these insights in their work. Furthermore, we understand there to be a longstanding tradition in composition at Trinity. We suggest that it could be beneficial for RIAM and Trinity to explore collaboration in this area, so that composition as a discipline as well as being part of reflection on western art music

(among others) can realise its full position and potential. Development of composition is also likely to include participation in the proposed RIAM research centre.

Similarly, we see potential in developing ties between RIAM and the School of Creative Arts at Trinity to create space for interdisciplinary work and forms of cross-disciplinary collaborations.

We would also encourage the RIAM to consider how best to support cultural entrepreneurship and professional skills, again integrated with students' core development rather than as a separate discipline or set of competencies.

3.1.3 LEARNER ADMISSION, PROGRESSION AND RECOGNITION

The admissions process has a clear design that aligns with conservatoire practices more widely. As development of the programmes includes, for example, greater attention to research and/or elements of creative practice, RIAM will want to consider how the admissions processes should adapt to reflect these parts of the study programme that students will undertake.

The decision to reduce the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) requirements for the B.Mus and M.Mus degree programmes is noted, and we suggest student progress should continue to be monitored carefully, particularly in relation to growing engagement in research across the programmes.

We understood that RIAM plans to increase student numbers, consonant with the expanded physical space and performance/rehearsal resources now available. We also noted, however, that one of the great, and much appreciated distinctive elements of RIAM is the small number of degree students and the close

community this affords. We would encourage RIAM to assess the tension between these competing priorities and consider the optimum balance for RIAM as they deliver on the plans.

We noted that most recently RIAM has seen a very high proportion of first-class degrees awarded. In the context of wider concerns in higher education about grade inflation, we would recommend that RIAM monitor this issue carefully, and ensure that relevant data are presented and analysed by the course committees and Board of Studies. In addition, there appeared to be a possibly unusual pattern of high first-class achievements in BMus 1 and 2, falling off in year 3 and then recovering in year 4. RIAM may want to understand more about the reasons behind this and possible implications.

3.1.4 STAFF RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

According to the SAR, the total number of staff members currently stands at 134 (72.9 full-time equivalents) including 120 teaching staff across the junior, adult and tertiary divisions. The balance between full-time and part-time teachers is in line with other conservatoires internationally.

The potential to increase the staffing base at RIAM in line with proposed student number increases is undoubtedly exciting, including the ways in which this can open up delivery of particular specialist study pathways, such as historical performance.

As part of staff planning, we strongly commend the growing work that was evident to make both research opportunities and continuing professional development available to staff, and to encourage staff

members to avail of these opportunities.

Equally we strongly endorse the Director's aim to redirect 10% of staff costs to staff development, intervision processes and exchange across departments, and engagement in research and innovation.

We recommend that RIAM continues to evaluate its staff planning, evolving and refining actions as appropriate in relation to the fast-changing context and exploring options for incorporating engagement in staff development initiatives and research for teaching staff in existing and new appointments linked to the tertiary programmes. The Panel also observed that there is no requirement for teaching staff to have formal pedagogical training. **We recommend that RIAM develops a course designed specifically for teaching faculty in music in higher education, such as The Artist as Teacher.** Completion of such a course could serve as a reference point in the recruitment and staff appraisal processes and could be incorporated into the proposed new staff development provision and engagement of teaching staff beyond the 30-week teaching year.

We noted also that the Heads of Faculty play pivotal roles within RIAM. The Heads of Faculty have overall leadership of the subject-specific content of programmes, and are responsible for the standards, quality, and enhancement of learning opportunities and for ensuring that there are appropriate structures to consider quality and enhancement issues. They are also the line managers for teaching staff who work in the tertiary programmes. Students reported that they have good access to their Head of Faculty and expressed confidence in the capacity of the Faculty Heads to effect change. **We commend their dedication to**

their students. It was also good to see the level of autonomy they have to shape curriculum delivery to the particular needs of their disciplines. At the same time, in the context of ongoing quality enhancement, we would encourage further teamwork within this group (and similarly for the Senior Management Team) to allow for more collective development of RIAM's work, the ability to share expertise and best practices, devise collaborative initiatives, and evolve greater consistency in relevant elements of delivery. Both Faculty Heads and Senior Managers have exciting roles to play within RIAM's strategic development, and there seems to be scope to empower this more individually and particularly collectively, alongside the importance of attending to operational matters and individual departments.

3.1.5 TEACHING AND LEARNING

It was clear to the Review Panel that the RIAM has a very dedicated teaching staff, and that the amount of one-on-one instrumental tuition is highly valued by students and the alumni that we met during our site visit.

We were pleased to see some initiatives towards greater student-centred learning and teaching practices, including student-led performance opportunities, and equally we acknowledge that these initiatives are in relatively early stages of development and will therefore require ongoing support. **The Panel recommends that RIAM continues to evolve student-centred learning and teaching, and considers the potential for an institutional assessment and feedback framework, explicitly aligning assessment and feedback to learning outcomes and a universal design**

approach, and ensuring parity of experience for students in different disciplines.

We particularly welcome the introduction of the ChamberFest, providing a focused lens and set of opportunities for students in chamber music. We were able to attend some student performances during the site visit. We noted that the programming across the week of this year's ChamberFest was relatively conservative, and not so clearly reflecting programming developments overall in RIAM and the commitments made institutionally, for example to the Keychange Pledge for greater gender equality. We also missed the inclusion of student compositions in ChamberFest.

We saw that research capacities amongst staff are growing, and commend initiatives being taken to bring teachers' research into the heart of their teaching rather than this sitting as a separate part of their professional practice. We would encourage greater visibility of this work, building on the new Research Amplification Day and the encouragement to make full use of the Research Catalogue, together with ongoing discussion about the nature of 'research' for musicians, the multiple facets of artistic research, practice-led research, action research and their connections to professional and reflective practice, in order to support an increasingly embedded research culture.

As the learning, teaching, assessment and feedback practices at RIAM evolve, we would also encourage consideration of the opportunities to develop the outreach RIAM Exams system in ways that clearly align them with the ethos and practices of RIAM's approaches in the degree programmes.



3.1.6 LEARNER ENVIRONMENT

RIAM's new building is an extraordinary achievement, to be highly commended, and the new facilities it provides have garnered praise and excitement from students, staff, supporters, alumni and the industry alike.

It significantly increases the number and quality of spaces for teaching, practice and performance. We were very pleased to be able to hear some student recitals in the Whyte concert hall. As well as having a vital educational role, the new building presents RIAM with the wonderful opportunity (and challenge) to offer a new public music venue for Dublin.

In this respect, we recommend that RIAM develop an integrated artistic vision and audience development strategy along with relevant business planning in relation to the Whyte Hall, capitalising on the potential for further artistic and community partners, and interface with RIAM Connect outreach activities. There is potential to do this in ways that also meaningfully enable the students to develop relevant professional skills and be part of attracting a wider community of support for RIAM, as well as opening access to diverse groups in society.

The undergraduate and postgraduate students we met expressed a high level of satisfaction with the personalised support they received from teachers and other professional staff, as well as with the teaching and practice facilities provided. The Asimut room booking system appears to be working satisfactorily, allowing students to book practice rooms up to ten days in advance. It was clear to the Review Panel that students across the various tertiary-level courses were very appreciative of the wide range of performance opportunities available

to RIAM students and of the experience and dedication of their teachers in helping them to avail of these opportunities.

In our meetings with both undergraduate and postgraduate groups, students pointed to the need for improved communication between the Faculties and Departments, particularly in relation to the timing of submission deadlines and performance assessments.

The new Library provides expanded desk and shelf space, and houses mainly musical scores including some historic collections. The students we met reported it to be an excellent resource and they expressed appreciation for the helpfulness and responsiveness of library staff, for example, in arranging inter-library loans. The Review Panel did, however, perceive the need for clarification for staff and the different student groups as to what level of access each has to the Trinity library. We also highlight the importance of planning to extend and diversify the RIAM library collection as the research environment develops.

3.1.7 ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

The Review Panel commends the assessment roadmap that RIAM has developed to clarify the patterns of assessment for students and to enable more efficient and timely scheduling for students across academic and performance assessment components.

We commend recent reductions in the assessment burden for students and would encourage further developments in this direction.

We also commend the inclusion of audition practices that reflect the professional world, for example using screened orchestral auditions.

We also noted the value of autonomy across Faculties to develop tailored approaches to assessment and feedback. **Nevertheless, at this point in RIAM's process of quality enhancement and assurance, the Panel recommends that RIAM continues to evolve student-centred learning and teaching, and develops an institutional assessment and feedback strategy or framework that draws on best practices from across the institution and externally, that ensures appropriate alignment of assessment and feedback to learning outcomes and the universal design approach, and that supports parity of experience for students in different disciplines.**

The Panel also noted that student assessments are submitted via Turnitin, enabling staff to screen written assessments for plagiarism. There appears to be a good level of awareness among ICT staff at RIAM of the challenges in this area arising from developments in AI. In formulating institutional policy in relation to plagiarism, there would be benefit to RIAM to engage with sectoral networks nationally and internationally to identify best practice in this area. The full engagement of teaching staff will also be important.

3.1.8 SUPPORTS FOR LEARNERS

The Panel noted that the RIAM offers a comprehensive range of supports for its tertiary students.

An orientation week is held at the beginning of each academic year, including meetings with the support staff in the Tertiary Office, with the Director, general Faculty meetings, opportunities for incoming students to meet personally with their Head of Faculty, as well as social events. The Panel welcomes the proposals to extend the orientation support

from 2024/25 to provide separate focussed sessions for undergraduate and postgraduate students, continuing with weekly orientation sessions across the first term and again at the start of the second term.

RIAM has a service-level agreement with the Trinity Disability Office to assess and recommend appropriate supports and accommodations for students who notify RIAM of any additional needs. RIAM has a designated member of staff to engage with individual students and to liaise on their behalf with the Trinity Disability Office and RIAM teaching staff. RIAM also provides an on-site professional Counselling service. Tertiary students also have free access to the Trinity Health Centre, and to all the student societies and sports facilities in Trinity.

Weekly English language conversation sessions are provided for international students.

The Panel noted that musical instruments and second-hand IT devices are provided for students who can't afford their own. The administration also provides a printing service for students.

The Panel commends the positive attitude and dedication of the support staff for students, across all the services, and their willingness to go the extra mile and to be on site to meet students in person. We also commend the opportunities for counselling both within RIAM and at Trinity.

At the same time, we clearly noted students' concerns about their ability to raise problems with teachers or Faculty Heads without worrying about potentially compromising their educational experience and/or their professional possibilities. This issue is by no

means unique to RIAM and is felt across much of the international conservatoire sector. In this context, we fully understood the wish to appoint an independent advisor to support students in raising and working through concerns and complaints, although we also felt that there was a lack of clarity amongst staff about the detailed remit and powers to be inscribed in this role.

We would therefore encourage RIAM to give further thought to how best to achieve their aims in this complex area. There will be a particular need to ensure clear separation between aspects of advocacy and support for students and roles within formal processes of complaints investigations. They may want to consider a wider range of ways forward that could contribute to this work, for example:

- The potential of digital systems such as Report and Support, used by a number of universities, to enable reporting of concerns/complaints, including anonymously, and signposting of support and options for pathways towards resolution.
- Drawing on experience within Trinity and other conservatoires: for example, a personal tutor system as a first point of call for students; ability to draw on trained experts within Trinity in undertaking formal investigations; and/or agency expertise in handling cases where there are allegations of sexual harassment or racism.

We greatly enjoyed meeting members of the Students' Union and were impressed by their commitment and efforts to support the student body. At the same time, we got the feeling that there was a relatively low level of engagement

in the Union amongst the students and rather little administrative support from RIAM, for example in relation to provision of office space, or areas of partnership to develop the student voice and an agenda of students as partners. **We recommend that RIAM further develops the student voice and the principles of students as partners within the institution's quality processes, including extending automatic membership of the Students' Union for all tertiary students upon first enrolment, working more closely with the Students' Union and providing more structured supports for the Union's legitimate activities.** This could prove to be a powerful area of development, and we wondered whether there could be opportunities to connect further with the Trinity Students' Union as part of this process.

3.1.9 RESEARCH

The Review Panel noted the efforts made by RIAM to develop research capacity and expertise over the past decade, including the introduction of postgraduate programmes (M.Mus. and D.Mus.) and most recently the introduction of the 'Capstone' individual research project for final year B.Mus. students. It was also noted that a number of RIAM staff members have themselves successfully completed the D.Mus. programme. Given that having a doctoral qualification is not a requirement for teaching appointments, this potentially can be an important element in research capacity-building in the RIAM.

The Panel commends the directions being taken with research and the attempts to embed this along with reflective practice across RIAM's degree programmes, including research training seminars.

We also commend RIAM's recent participation in the Research Catalogue which holds much potential for engaging in an international research community and making RIAM research more visible.

We commend the ambition to develop a RIAM Research Centre. This clearly has significant and meaningful support from Trinity.

We recommend that RIAM continue its ambitious planning for a research centre. This should be underpinned by an articulated research strategy and professional development plan. It will be important to ensure that this is focused and avoids an attempt to be 'all things to all people'. Taking a thematic approach may prove to be beneficial, and RIAM may also want to consider relevant partnerships to help develop critical mass, and where there will be particular potential to attract research grants.

We also encourage RIAM to focus on developing a strong sense of research community that engages both students and core teaching staff, through in-person interactions and events connected to the artistic programme. Some reliance on online research sessions may be practical and widen access, but the development of a research community, particularly in the early stages of exploring the nature and purposes of research in a conservatoire context, will surely benefit from live, in-person engagement.

3.1.10 INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT

The Panel commends the very significant programme of change that has been undertaken in information and data

management since 2015. Engagement with HEAnet (Ireland's national education and research network) has enabled RIAM to introduce a robust IT infrastructure based on high-speed internet connectivity, data back-up on cloud, software licencing, ICT security and a user-friendly sign-on system, in line with norms across the Irish higher education sector. The Panel noted that the ICT Steering Committee will be undertaking a full review of the IT Strategy in 2024 and will update the document to ensure that it meets current best practice and aligns with RIAM's new digital learning programme. We would encourage RIAM to think broadly about the ways in which the next IT strategy can engage proactively with major digital areas of development relevant for musicians, considering creative potential as well as ethical practice and compliance. Key areas include approaches to digital learning, but also aspects relating to performance, artistic practices and engagement with audiences, including AI, streaming and immersive performance technologies. The planned expansion of recording facilities for RIAM students is to be welcomed. Students should be trained in the use of these facilities to equip them with the skills they need to produce audition videos that orchestras and HE institutions might request and to learn how to create material for digital platforms.

The HEAnet Store also provides a wide range of educational discounts on ICT hardware, software and other services for students and staff. Having a VLE (Moodle) in place enabled teaching on the tertiary programmes to continue during the Covid 19 pandemic. Teaching staff were supported with training and detailed guidelines on using the VLE in online teaching.

However, the Panel noted that Faculties and managers are tending to organise their own data in local databases and in different ways, making it relatively difficult to share data collectively or to integrate management and student data from the learner information system (Classter). Effective data management supports organisational efficiency, operational decision-making, policy development and strategic planning.

We would therefore recommend that RIAM further develops collaboration with key senior management teams, with a particular focus on empowering strategic thinking and development. We recommend development of a data management plan to help prioritise an effective and streamlined approach to data management that will support operations, policy development and strategic decision-making, as well as structured periodic data monitoring by these teams and RIAM's committees to routinely monitor data trends in student progression, for example in relation to EDI objectives, English language admission requirements, and degree results.

3.1.11 PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

The Panel commends the accessibility and comprehensive nature of information about the RIAM and its activities on the institutional website and the clarity of communication about the different programmes for prospective students and members of the public.

We also commend the direction being taken towards more video and audio content and student-led material across RIAM's digital channels. RIAM clearly recognises the potential of this approach for student recruitment

generally and especially for marketing RIAM courses internationally. We would encourage RIAM to consider how original dynamic content such as video and audio could also be employed to engage key stakeholder groups beyond prospective students, for example external partnerships, audience development and philanthropy, and how this might be directed in support of broader institutional strategy.

The size and disparate nature of Junior RIAM and the Adult Division add volume and complexity to RIAM's communications. We would encourage RIAM to explore ways of transmitting information and managing communications with parents and students in a more streamlined and effective way.

3.1.12 OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Review Panel was very pleased to have the opportunity to meet with representatives of the music profession providing formative performance opportunities for RIAM students and valuable employment opportunities in Ireland for graduates.

We commend the range and positivity of these partnerships which are clearly valued by all parties, and the significant opportunities students have through these for professional projects, internships, side-by-sides etc. We heard consistently from alumni and students that they have received more of these opportunities, and at an earlier stage of their development than they would have done in many other conservatoires, and this is clearly a great strength for RIAM. It would be beneficial for RIAM to deepen such relationships and explore further industry partnerships, perhaps with smaller organisations as well as the

obvious ones with national reach, and across disciplines. We also encourage RIAM to consider developing partnerships with organisations beyond the music industry to offer students a broader range of formative opportunities reflecting the changing working practice of musicians within society as a whole.

We also commend the excellent collegiate relationships established between some RIAM staff and Trinity colleagues. There is clearly further exciting potential for collaborations between the institutions, not least on modules and potentially even new joint courses together with the School of Creative Arts and other Faculties. The example of the conjoint Bachelor in Music Education (B.Mus.Ed.) clearly demonstrates the power of such collaborations to deliver interdisciplinary excellence and foster music education in a societal context.

3.1.13 SELF-EVALUATION AND REVIEW

It is clear to the Review Panel that RIAM is committed to embedding a quality culture at its heart and across the range of its activities, fostered through its relationship with Trinity. External examiners provide appropriate scrutiny of standards on the degree programmes, and their reports feed into the process of annual review of curriculum and assessment. This annual review also looks at the outcomes of regular surveys of the student experience, monitoring of application and admission data, and benchmarking against other conservatoires. Resulting proposals for modifications to module content, assessment, etc. are considered by the RIAM Undergraduate and Postgraduate Committees and Governing Body, and then submitted to the ACDC for final approval in relation to awards made by Trinity. The conjoint RIAM/TUD/Trinity B.Mus. Ed. programme is accredited by the Teaching

Council of Ireland and is regularly reviewed in that context.

Since the RIAM formal institutional quality procedures were approved by Trinity in 2018 the following external reviews of RIAM activity have been conducted.

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| Level 7 and 8 Programmes | April 2022 |
| Finance Office | May 2022 |
| ICT Services | October 2023 |
| Level 9 Programme review | December 2023 |

External reviews of the Human Resources function and the Doctor in Music Performance are planned to take place in 2025, followed by Junior RIAM and the Marketing and Communications function in 2026.

The formulation of the RIAM 175 strategic plan appears to have been a thorough and iterative exercise in self-reflection and articulation of shared purpose and ambition involving extensive consultation internally and with external stakeholders. It is clear to this Panel that there is a process in place to evaluate progress and to re-scope or adjust timelines based on evidence. In observing that the SAR for this review appeared to have been more of a top-down process (see Section 4 above), the Panel acknowledges that the format for HE Linked Provider reviews makes it difficult to capture the full scope and individuality of the RIAM. **However, we recommend that RIAM reflects on stakeholder engagement in the SAR and this review process and considers the future potential to use this cyclical review as a developmental and reflective process for the RIAM community.** We believe that aligning with MusiQue (the European Music Quality

Enhancement framework, also aligned with the ESG) standards could be invaluable for the RIAM in making it easier to recognise itself in the established national QA landscape and enabling a powerful sense of international benchmarking with other European conservatoires.

3.1.14 INTERNATIONAL LEARNERS

The Panel noted a growing number of international applications to RIAM and of international students within the community, particularly at the postgraduate level. As is the case for all conservatoires, an increasingly international student body brings with it important implications for approaches to supporting diverse cultures and prior learning experiences such that all students are able to access the learning and teaching and develop positive and sustaining relationships across the student community. **The positive environment and targeted supports at RIAM for international student is commended, and the RIAM intention to apply for the QQI International Quality Mark is also commended.**

The Panel noted the close attention at RIAM and Trinity's ACDC to the progress of international students admitted with lower IELTS (International English Language Testing System) requirements. Outcomes over the next few years will undoubtedly inform institutional approaches in this area. In addition, it will clearly be important for RIAM to balance its priorities for international recruitment with ensuring that it continues to support young talent from Ireland at the postgraduate level.



CONCLUSIONS



CONCLUSIONS

The Review Panel is clear that RIAM meets the quality standards as set out in the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. These include a comprehensive range of policies, structures for the governance and management of quality assurance processes, and procedures for enhancing academic standards and learning opportunities, which are closely aligned with RIAM's mission and values. It is evident that sustained and determined efforts have been made by RIAM over recent years to embed a quality culture in line with HE sectoral norms and consonant with work at the postgraduate level and the developing research focus. In our report, the Panel has commended many examples of the good practice in teaching and learning and musical practice which we found. These support our view of RIAM as a music academy with an explicit commitment to quality, with a dedicated staff and a strong sense of institutional identity and purpose.

It is clear to this Panel that the educational and physical developments of the past decade have been transformative for the RIAM, presenting new and exciting opportunities, and challenges too. The current strategic plan (RIAM 175, 2001-2005) identifies four strategic goals: extending

access and inclusion, embedding reflective practice across all its learner groups, leveraging the benefits of the new campus, and designing a new organisational model. Evidence presented to the Panel shows that RIAM is actively working towards achieving these goals. We suggest that, in reviewing progress, consideration might be given to how to identify and achieve the optimum balance for RIAM in terms of current strengths and future change, between preserving valued aspects of current provision on one hand and the financial and/or educational benefits of further development or expansion on the other.

Questions around strategic institutional priorities as well as wider discussions about how to reflect the evolving contemporary and future music profession in programmes of music education can most meaningfully be addressed in the context of an ongoing institutional dialogue, with input from key stakeholders. Keeping the creative aspects of performance front and foremost will help to inform curriculum development, teaching practice and career preparation for students.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This Review Panel makes the following recommendations.

1. We recommend that the governance interface between the RIAM Board and ACDC be reviewed to ensure maximum effectiveness and mitigate the risk of over-reliance on the Director as a single connecting point. Linked to this, we recommend further articulation of RIAM governance policy, particularly in terms of a regular cycle of updates and governance oversight of this through the Board and ACDC.

2. We recommend that RIAM reconsider the next objectives of, and therefore the best approaches to, further embedding a quality culture at RIAM. As part of this, we recommend:

(i) that RIAM continues to develop structures for enabling students to raise concerns and complaints, with particular attention to the value and place of external expertise and/or independent support.

(ii) that RIAM further develops the student voice and the principles of students as partners within the institution's quality processes, including extending automatic membership of the Students' Union for all tertiary students upon first enrolment, working more closely with the Students' Union and providing more structured supports for the Union's legitimate activities.

(iii) that RIAM strengthens the use of data-based analysis to inform quality assurance and enhancement, for example in relation to admissions processes and student progression.

(iv) that RIAM reflects on stakeholder engagement in the SAR and this review process and considers the future potential to use this cyclical review as a developmental and reflective process for the RIAM community.

3. The Panel recommends that the place of, and curriculum approaches to, composition and creative practice within RIAM be reviewed, with a view to contextualising RIAM's focus on western art music by giving a more central role to the creative aspects of music making through composition, improvisation, and exposure to the wider music eco-system.

4. We recommend that RIAM continues to evolve student-centred learning and teaching and develops an institutional assessment and feedback strategy or framework that draws on best practices from across the institution and externally, that ensures appropriate alignment of assessment and feedback to learning outcomes and the universal design approach, and that supports parity of experience for students in different disciplines.

5. In this respect, we recommend that RIAM develop an integrated artistic vision and audience development strategy along with relevant business planning in relation to the Whyte Hall, capitalising on the potential for further artistic and community partners, and interface with RIAM Connect outreach activities.

6. We recommend that RIAM continues its ambitious planning for a research centre. This should be underpinned by a focused research strategy and professional development plan.

7. We recommend that RIAM further develops collaboration with key senior management teams, with a particular focus on empowering strategic thinking and development.

We recommend development of a data management plan to help prioritise an effective and streamlined approach to data management that will support operations, policy development and strategic decision-making, as well as structured periodic data monitoring by these teams and RIAM's committees to routinely monitor data trends in student progression, for example in relation to EDI objectives, English language admission requirements, and degree results.

8. We recommend that RIAM continues to evaluate its staff planning, evolving and refining actions as appropriate in relation to the fast-changing context and exploring options for incorporating engagement in staff development initiatives and research for teaching staff in existing and new appointments linked to the tertiary programmes.

9. We recommend that RIAM develops a course designed specifically for teaching faculty in music in higher education, such as The Artist as Teacher. Completion of such a course could serve as a reference point in the recruitment and staff appraisal processes and be incorporated into the proposed new staff development provision.





RIAM RESPONSE TO THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT



RIAM RESPONSE TO THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT

I would like to begin by thanking the Review Panel, Professors Helena Gaunt, Henk van der Meulen, and Richard Barrett, Carlo Mazzini and Recording Secretary Alexandra Anderson for the care and collegiality with which they produced this institutional review.

I welcome the conclusion from the Review Panel, that RIAM meets the quality standards as set out in the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines. They note our comprehensive range of policies, structures for the governance and management of quality assurances processes, and procedures for enhancing academic standards and learning opportunities, which are closely aligned with RIAM's mission and values.

I am further delighted to see acknowledged our sustained and determined efforts over recent years to embed a quality culture in line with HE sectoral norms and consonant with work at the postgraduate level and in developing research focus. The Panel has commended many examples of good practice in teaching and learning and musical practice across the institution, which will give our valued staff and students confidence and reassurance.

Their overall assessment of RIAM as a music academy with an explicit commitment to quality, with a dedicated staff and a strong sense of institutional identity and purpose is extremely encouraging as we continue our efforts to improve across a range of areas.

This was the first institutional quality review of the RIAM undertaken by Trinity in its capacity as the Designated Awarding Body (DAB) for the degree awards attaching to RIAM's higher education and training programmes. It was also the first such review undertaken by RIAM in its 176 year history, although programme and support area reviews in the past few years and RIAM's strategic planning cycles are of a similar type. However, this review was different in one key aspect, in that we asked ourselves all questions from a quality focus throughout, considering how we might embed a deeper quality culture across all academic and operational aspects of our mission.

I want to address some key points as an overview in this formal response, notably on the Self-Assessment Report (SAR), Governance system within RIAM, Curriculum, and Student engagement.

The Review Panel found the SAR prepared by RIAM for this review to be a thorough and informative document with extensive supporting documentation, providing a comprehensive overview of RIAM'S institutional policies, quality assurance framework and approaches to ongoing quality enhancement. I wish to thank all contributors to this document, as it required an investment of time outside their busy work commitments. On the other hand, the panel noted that the students, alumni, industry professionals and most teachers had not been engaged in the

SAR development. While was not a problem in terms of the review meetings held on site, all of which were very constructive and corroborated the information presented in the SAR, the panel recommend that RIAM engage a wide range of stakeholders in a reflective process that can be a formative and developmental experience in itself when developing the next SAR. This SAR was circulated for discussion across a range of RIAM Committees which meant there was engagement from representatives from all of the sectors noted above, but did not have the 'bottom up' process of development which would, for instance, be part of the strategic planning cycle, with larger focus groups.

We will consider this approach in the next SAR.

The Panel noted that the overall governance system for RIAM is complex, probably inevitably slow given the various different responsibilities for overall governance at the Board of Governors and for quality assurance of the degree programmes through Trinity. However, it was clear to the Review Panel that the governance system functions effectively, with a universal commitment across RIAM governance to quality and to transparent and robust management of quality in compliance with sectoral quality assurance standards. In many areas of the SAR, the Panel noted the collegiality between Trinity's ACDC, leadership and Schools and RIAM. It is RIAM's view that the governance systems in place are fit for purpose and, while complex, have also enabled us to develop meaningful partnerships between ourselves and Trinity.

The Panel found much to commend in RIAM's Curriculum and Assessment, while highlighting some important areas for us to reflect on. We will review, for instance, recommendations that the place of, and curriculum approaches to, composition and creative practice within RIAM be reviewed, with a view to contextualising RIAM's focus on western art music by giving a more central role to the creative aspects of music making through composition, improvisation and exposure to the wider music eco-system. This is an area RIAM has been looking at and our rate of development is hampered somewhat by financial and recruitment constraints – essentially the lack of ability to hire core staff in some new areas. Nonetheless, we will be looking at this in detail in the coming years.

The Panel also commended RIAM in its efforts to bring the student voice more centrally into RIAM decision making, and recommends that RIAM continues to evolve student-centred learning and teaching and wider supports. I am particularly grateful for the range of suggestions in this area, which is a complex and vital one to get right, and the time taken by the Panel in offering constructive approaches based on their experiences.



Professor Deborah Kelleher
Director, Royal Irish Academy of Music
President, European Association of
Conservatoires (AEC)



GLOSSARY



| | |
|--------------|---|
| ACDC | Associated Colleges Degrees Committee (Trinity/RIAM) |
| AI | Artificial Intelligence |
| B.Mus. | Bachelor in Music |
| B.Mus.Ed | Bachelor in Music Education |
| CAO | Central Applications Office |
| DARE | Disability Access Route to Education |
| D.Mus.Perf. | Doctor in Music Performance |
| EDI | Equality, diversity and inclusivity |
| ESG | European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area |
| HEAR | Higher Education Access Route |
| ICT | Information and communications technology |
| IELTS | International English Language Testing System |
| LPQAWG | Linked Providers Quality Assurance Working Group (Trinity) |
| M.Mus.Perf. | Master in Music Performance |
| NFQ | National Framework of Qualifications |
| PG | Postgraduate |
| QA | Quality Assurance |
| QQI | Qualifications and Quality Ireland |
| RIAM | Royal Irish Academy of Music |
| RIAM Connect | Access and inclusion outreach |
| SAR | Self-Assessment Report |
| SU | Students Union |
| Trinity | University of Dublin, Trinity College |
| UG | Undergraduate |

APPENDIX A



APPENDIX A:

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR QUALITY REVIEW OF A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION SEEKING OR RECEIVING VALIDATION FROM TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN, THE UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN.

Purpose:

The purpose of the quality review is to:

1. To provide a structured opportunity for the Linked Provider to critically reflect on its strategies in relation to its education, training, research provision in the national and international context and in terms of its relationship with Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin.
2. To benefit from a constructive commentary by external reviewers that are experts in their field at a senior academic level and to benchmark against peer HEIs with respect to their education, training, and research provision.
3. To assure compliance with the QQI Act 2012, the European Standards Guidelines (2015), QQI Core Quality Assurance Guidelines and relevant QQI topic quality assurance guidelines, policies and codes and other legal instruments that govern the operation of its functions as a legal entity in Ireland and in other jurisdictions.

Terms of Reference

The Review Panel is asked to provide a report that includes an assessment of the following gained from documentary evidence received in advance of the review and through its observations and schedule of meetings during the on-site visit.

1. The level of compliance by the Linked Provider with QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines and relevant topic specific quality assurance guidelines, QQI policies and/or codes that apply to its programmes of education, training, research and related provision.
2. The governance of the Linked Provider assures compliance with other legal and regulatory frameworks that apply to its operations in Ireland and in other jurisdictions in which it operates, i.e., legal, financial, contractual, professional and statutory body accreditation standards.
3. The standard of programmes of education and research provision meet the level of the relevant Award on the National Framework of Qualifications.

4. The effectiveness of implementation of Quality Assurance Procedures as approved by Trinity College Dublin.

5. The standard of the learning environment provided by the Linked Provider and its agents (including infrastructure and equipment, Library and IT learning resources, supports to students and staff in professional placement contexts) will normally be on par with Trinity's and meet a minimum education standard to be verified by the external review panel through their tour of educational facilities and observations during the site visit.

6. Key areas of strength or innovation that meet or have the potential to meet national and international best practice.

7. Key areas for improvement, in particular any areas of compliance that pose a risk to the sustainability of education provision in Ireland or overseas; to the reputation of the Linked Provider or to Trinity as the Designated Awarding Body and which may need to inform directions under §38(1) of the Act and associated quality assurance guidelines.



APPENDIX B: SCHEDULE OF SITE VISIT TO RIAM 23-25 APRIL 2024.

| DAY 1 – TUESDAY 23RD APRIL 2024 | | |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
| Time | Group (working session) | Purpose of Meeting |
| 08.45- 09.15 | Review Panel preparatory meeting and coffee | |
| 09.15 -10.00 | Review Team with RIAM Director | Introductory meeting |
| 10.00-10.45 | Tour of RIAM campus | Review of the facilities (studios, concert venues, practice facilities, libraries etc.) |
| 10.45-11.00 | Review Team break for coffee and discussion | |
| 11.00- 11.45 | Meeting 1 Senior Management Team | To discuss institutional mission, strategic planning, roles and responsibilities for QA/QE, self-evaluation |
| 11.50 -12.30 | Meeting 2 Undergraduate students (including members of RIAM Students Union) | To discuss student experience, engagement & student role in QA and decision-making processes |
| 12.30-13.30 | Review team lunch | |
| 13.30-14.10 | Meeting 3 Postgraduate students (including members of RIAM Students Union) | To discuss student experience, engagement & student role in QA and decision-making processes |
| 14.20-15.00 | Meeting 4 Members of the teaching staff (3rd level programmes) | To discuss Quality management processes at Dept level & how effectiveness is ensured |
| 15.00-15.15 | Review Team break for coffee and discussion | |
| 15.15-16.00 | Meeting 5 Members of RIAM Governing Body and sub-committees | To discuss mechanisms for monitoring QA, strategic planning and institutional effectiveness |
| 16.10-16.50 | Meeting 6 Administrative staff and Support Services | To discuss QA/QE of student support services |
| 16.50-17.00 | Review Team break for coffee and discussion | |
| 18:30 | Working dinner with Trinity College Senior Officers | |

DAY 2 – WEDNESDAY 24TH APRIL 2024

| Time | Group | Purpose |
|--------------|---|--|
| 09:00-09.45 | Meeting 7 Corporate Support Services managers | To discuss QA/QE processes & effectiveness |
| 09.50-10.30 | Meeting 8 Alumni/Graduates of the RIAM | To discuss student experience, effectiveness of performance opportunities & career preparation |
| 10.30-11.15 | Review Team break for coffee and discussion | |
| 11.15-12.00 | Meeting 9 Chair and members of the Associated Colleges Degrees Committee | To discuss the role of ACDC in monitoring QA and enhancement |
| 12.00-12.50 | Review Team lunch | |
| 13:00-14.00 | Lunchtime student recitals in Whyte Hall (ChamberFest) | |
| 14.00-14.45 | Meeting 10 External stakeholders & RIAM partners (music industry) | To discuss engagement with RIAM, monitoring of performance opportunities for students & career preparation |
| 14.50-15.30 | Meeting 11 Heads of Faculty | To discuss QA/QE processes at Faculty level, roles & responsibilities, implementation |
| 15.30- 16.15 | Meeting 12 Staff leading on Research | To discuss QA/QE processes in the area of research |
| 16.15-17.00 | Review Team break for coffee and discussion | |
| 17.00-18.00 | Afternoon student recitals in Whyte Hall (ChamberFest) | |
| 18.30 | Review Team Private Dinner | |

DAY 3 – THURSDAY 25TH APRIL 2024

| Time | Meeting (working session) |
|--------------|--|
| 9:00-11.45 | Review Team meeting to review meetings and recommendations |
| 11.45-12.00 | Review Team break for coffee and discussion |
| 12.00- 12.30 | Exit meeting with RIAM Director |
| 12.30-13.00 | Exit meeting with Trinity Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer & Academic Secretary |
| 13.00- 13.30 | Exit meeting with all staff who participated in the review |
| 13.30 | Review Team lunch and finish |



RIAM

Royal Irish
Academy of Music

