

The logo for AeQui, featuring the letters 'AeQui' in a purple, sans-serif font. A light blue, brush-stroke-like line loops around the letters, starting from the 'A', passing under the 'e', looping around the 'Q', and ending under the 'i'.

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**Bachelor of Music
Prins Claus Conservatoire Groningen
Hanze University of Applied Sciences**

*Report of the limited programme assessment
13-14 June 2023*

Utrecht, The Netherlands

October 2023

www.AeQui.nl

Assessment Agency for Higher Education

Colophon

Programme

Bachelor of Music

Prince Claus Conservatoire - Hanze University of Applied Sciences

Specialisations (Majors):

- Composition and Music Production
- Jazz
- Classical Music
- Conducting (Wind band and Choir)

Location: Groningen

Mode of study: fulltime

CROHO: 34739

Result of institutional assessment: positive (February 2018)

Committee

Raoul van Aalst, chair

Jeffrey Sharkey, domain expert

Inge Simoens, domain expert

Allerd van den Bremen, domain expert

Lars Bon, student

Mark Delmartino, secretary

The committee was presented to the NVAO for approval.

The assessment was conducted under responsibility of

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Summary

On 13 and 14 June 2023 an assessment committee of AeQui has visited the Bachelor of Music at the Prince Claus Conservatoire in Groningen. The four-year full-time 240 ECTS programme consists of four majors: Classical Music, Conducting, Composition & Music Production, and Jazz. Each major has its own subject-based curriculum. The Classical Music and Jazz programmes are taught in both Dutch and English; the Conducting and Composition & Music Production majors are offered in Dutch. At the conservatoire, Bachelor of Music students develop into socially engaged musicians with a personal artistic profile. The assessment committee has established that the programme meets all four standards of the 2018 NVAO framework for limited programme assessment. As a result, the committee's overall assessment of the quality of the Bachelor of Music programme at the Prins Claus Conservatoire in Groningen is **positive**.

Intended learning outcomes

The profile of the programme aligns with the mission and vision of the conservatoire and reflects the new strategic goals of the Hanze University of Applied Sciences. The Bachelor of Music in Groningen distinguishes itself from similar programmes in the Netherlands: it has a distinctly regional dimension yet is international in outlook and prepares engaged students for a career in the music profession. The learning outcomes reflect the national professional profile for music and the Dutch and European qualification frameworks. Their formulation is adequate in terms of substance, level, and orientation. However, the set of learning outcomes could be communicated more clearly in terms of what competencies need to be achieved per major and at what level. The number and variety of external partners and professional / academic contacts is impressive. The dedicated Work Field Advisory Committee is a strength but can be used even more to advise the programme on current and future curriculum developments. The assessment committee judges that the programme **meets this standard**.

Teaching-learning environment

The Bachelor of Music programme offers a strong teaching and learning environment. The programme set-up is clear in all majors. The many small adjustments to the curricula reflect the profile of the university, the conservatoire, and the programme. Over the years, the curricula have been further enhanced by instilling an inquisitive attitude among students and by allowing them to

take up credit-based modules beyond the boundaries of their own major. Overall, the objectives and contents of the modules enable students to acquire and demonstrate the programme learning outcomes. The conservatoire creates an international, inclusive, diverse, and safe place for students and staff. The composition and diversity of staff and students reflect both the local embedding of the programme and its international atmosphere. The committee therefore endorses the decision of the conservatoire and the programme to offer parts of the programme in both English and Dutch. The enthusiastic and committed teaching staff have good disciplinary expertise and didactical skills. Although their individual assignments are small, the lecturers make good use of the professionalisation opportunities offered by the conservatoire and the university. The assessment committee judges that the programme **meets this standard**.

Assessment

The system of assessment in the Bachelor of Music programme is generally accurate. While many changes have been made to course and final examination assessments following the previous accreditation visit, some recommendations could have been implemented more swiftly and monitored more attentively. The discussions with programme management and quality assurance bodies, however, have convinced the committee that assessment is being taken seriously and that assuring the quality of assessment is in competent hands with the Examination Board and the

Assessment Committee. The assessment committee judges that the programme **meets this standard**.

Achieved learning outcomes

In order to establish whether the intended learning outcomes have been achieved, the committee has studied the quality of a sample of graduation projects and looked at the professional whereabouts of alumni. Students who pass their graduation programme have effectively reached the learning outcomes and deserve their bachelor's degree in Music. The sample of final works overall reflects a solid bachelor's level. The professional field is satisfied with the quality and professional versatility of the graduates. Almost all alumni remain in the music sector pursuing a master's degree and/or joining the labour market in a relevant position. The conservatoire and the university are effective in retaining Bachelor of Music graduates in the Northern part of the Netherlands. The programme actively surveys its alumni and started involving them in its activities. The latter efforts could be stepped up with regard to recent graduates who are still in need of connections and employment opportunities. The assessment committee judges that the programme **meets this standard**.

Recommendations

The assessment committee has issued a positive judgement on the Bachelor of Music programme

In view of its positive assessment of the programme quality as a whole and its judgement on each of the four accreditation standards, the committee issues a **positive advice** to NVAO regarding the accreditation of the Bachelor of Music programme at the Prins Claus Conservatoire of the Hanze University of Applied Science in Groningen.

On behalf of the entire assessment committee,

Utrecht, October 2023

Raoul van Aalst
Chair

and on the quality of each individual accreditation standard.

During the visit, the plans for a new curriculum have been discussed. Endorsing the principles underlying the envisaged change from training a more traditional musician to delivering an engaged artist / maker in society, the committee considers that the programme roll-out is not yet sufficiently developed nor thoroughly owned by the respective stakeholders.

In view of the programme's future development, and in particular the envisaged curriculum overhaul, the committee advises the Bachelor of Music to not only adjust the learning outcomes but also have the new learning outcomes reflected in the content of the graduation programme, in its assessment and in the criteria on the evaluation forms. These new assessment criteria should take into account the new goals of the curriculum. After all, if the programme wants to deliver Makers in Society, then this should be part of the learning outcomes and students should be tested and assessed not only on their musical performance but also as engaged artists.

Mark Delmartino
Secretary

Introduction

The external assessment of the Bachelor of Music programme in Groningen is part of the cluster assessment HBO Bachelor Muziek. The programme at the Prince Claus Conservatoire (PCC) consists of four majors: Classical Music, Conducting (subdivided in Choir and Wind Band), Composition & Music Production, and Jazz. Each major has its own subject-based curriculum. The PCC profiles itself as a conservatoire where students develop into socially engaged musicians with a personal artistic profile. It is one of 16 schools that together form the Hanze University of Applied Sciences. Embedded in the Hanze and the conservatoire, the bachelor of music programme strives to create a small-scale learning environment that takes up a central role within the region, is internationally recognized, and maintains a strong link to society.

Institution

The origins of the Prince Claus Conservatoire (PCC) lay in the mid-19th century. Initially established as a regional music school, it was awarded the status of conservatoire in 1964. At the end of the 20th century, the conservatoire became part of the Hanze University of Applied Sciences. The PCC took its current name in 2005. At the time of the site visit, the PCC is offering three degree programmes – Bachelor of Music, Master of Music and Bachelor Docent Muziek – to around 300 students from over 30 countries. Together with around 130 lecturers, researchers and staff members, the conservatoire in Groningen forms a tight-knit and diverse learning community. The PCC's overall ambition is to strengthen its profile as an engaged conservatoire: it strives to create a small-scale learning environment that takes up a central role within the region, is internationally recognized, and maintains a strong link to society. Students at the PCC benefit from the conservatoire's network in the Northern provinces of the Netherlands and the vibrant student city of Groningen.

The PCC is one of 16 schools that together form the Hanze University of Applied Sciences (UAS) featuring more than 31000 students and over 3800 employees. Hanze is a multidisciplinary UAS which assists in the development of its individual students while increasing the strength of the region. It is an engaged university where inquiry-based learning and innovation takes place in

communities of learners. Students use their learning environments to work on real, relevant, practice-oriented issues together with lecturers, researchers, professionals from the occupational practice, and students from other disciplines. The PCC participates in two UAS learning communities: the interdisciplinary Living Lab (in collaboration with the Minerva Art Academy) and the Arts Education Living Lab (featuring the Docent Muziek programme). These learning communities rely among others on the input of two PCC-based professorships on Music in Context and Arts Education.

Programme

At the time of the site visit, at the end of the academic year 2022-2023, the Bachelor of Music programme is a four-year full-time 240 ECTS programme. The programme consists of four majors, which share (with some specifics) the same learning outcomes: Classical Music, Conducting (subdivided in Choir and Wind Band), Composition & Music Production (C&M) and Jazz. Each major has its own subject-based curriculum. The Classical Music and Jazz programmes are taught in both Dutch and English, while the Conducting and C&M majors are offered in Dutch.

At the PCC, students develop into socially engaged musicians with a personal artistic profile. In the Bachelor of Music programme, third and fourth-year students have some autonomy in structuring their course of study in order to develop in a particular direction and in a learning

style that best suits them. Over the years, programme support becomes increasingly tailored to students' personal learning needs within the context of professional practice.

At the previous accreditation visit in 2016, the Bachelor of Music programme was assessed as 'good'. The then panel indicated a few pathways for further enhancement, which have been taken to heart and were incrementally incorporated in the programme. Developments at the level of the university and within the conservatoire, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, have influenced the programme in terms of profile, objectives, curriculum and assessment. Hence, the current assessment visit takes place at an important moment in the development of the Bachelor of Music programme, because the PCC and the programme team are in the middle of adjusting the curriculum. While some new features – flexibility and personalisation – are being tested in the current programme, there are concrete plans to start a newly designed Bachelor of Music programme in September 2023, or soon after.

Assessment

The external assessment of the Bachelor of Music programme at PCC is part of the cluster assessment HBO Bachelor Muziek Groep 2, which comprises programmes at three institutions. The cluster has assigned AeQui to perform the assessment. In close co-operation with the PCC and the Hanze UAS, AeQui convened an independent and competent assessment committee, which is presented in Attachment 1.

A preparatory meeting with representatives of the programme was held to exchange information and plan the date and programme of the site-visit. The visit of the Bachelor of Music programme was organised in conjunction with the assessment of the Bachelor Docent Muziek at PCC. Both visits with a partly overlapping assessment committee took place on 13, 14 and 15 June 2023 according to the programme in Attachment 2. The assessment committee also organised an Open Consultation for students, tutors and staff; nobody signed up to speak confidentially with the committee.

Preparing the site visit, the committee studied the self-evaluation report of the programme, as well as a sample of 15 graduation projects which students submitted during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. An overview of the materials reviewed is available in Attachment 3.

The committee has assessed the Bachelor of Music programme in an independent manner; at the end of the visit, the chair of the assessment committee presented the initial findings of the committee to representatives of the programme and the institution. A draft version of this report was sent to the programme management at the end of August 2023; its reactions have led to this final version of the report.

In autumn 2023, the programme will organise a Development Dialogue with the members of the assessment committee. The results of this dialogue have no influence on the assessment of the Bachelor of Music programme as presented in this report.

1. Intended learning outcomes

The profile of the programme aligns with the mission and vision of the conservatoire and reflects the new strategic goals of the Hanze University of Applied Sciences. The Bachelor of Music in Groningen distinguishes itself from similar programmes in the Netherlands: it has a distinctly regional dimension yet is international in outlook and prepares engaged students for a career in the music profession. The learning outcomes reflect the national professional profile for music and the Dutch and European qualification frameworks. Their formulation is adequate in terms of substance, level, and orientation. However, the set of learning outcomes could be communicated more clearly in terms of what competencies need to be achieved per major and at what level. The number and variety of external partners and professional / academic contacts is impressive. The dedicated Work Field Advisory Committee is a strength but can be used even more to advise the programme on current and future curriculum developments. The assessment committee judges that the Bachelor of Music programme **meets this standard**.

Findings

Profile

The assessment committee gathered from the written materials and the discussions on site that the profile of the Bachelor of Music programme aligns neatly with the ambitions of the conservatoire and the strategic goals of the university. These goals and ambitions have been adjusted since the previous accreditation visit and are finding their way into the programme. As a multidisciplinary UAS, Hanze's goal is to assist in the development of its individual students while increasing the strength of the region. To achieve this goal, it has formulated four societal missions which converge in its motto "share your talent, move the world".

Along these lines, the overall ambition of the PCC is to strengthen its profile as an Engaged Conservatoire: it strives to create a small-scale learning environment that takes up a central role in the region, is internationally recognised and maintains a strong link to society. This ambition is reflected in the conservatoire's mission, which was renewed in 2019: 'The PCC trains talented musicians from all over the world as Makers in Society: socially engaged music professionals who participate in international professional practice at the highest level. To this end, we offer a diverse, inclusive, and international learning community with an outstanding teaching team and a wealth

of inspirational real-life contexts, projects and settings in which learning is provided by, with, and from students. We also regard it as our mission to foster a vibrant and robust cultural climate by acting as a two-way link between talent of all ages, our students, the region, and national/international professional practice.'

In so far as the Bachelor of Music is concerned, the conservatoire management and the programme team have been developing the curriculum since 2019 for three reasons: (i) to elaborate and strengthen the profile as Engaged Conservatoire; (ii) to eliminate boundaries between the majors and further implement the 2017 Dutch National Training Profile for Music; and (iii) to increase the flexibility of the curriculum in line with the university's strategic ambitions. The conservatoire and the programme want to create a learning environment in which Bachelor of Music students have more space to develop their own professional practice as musicians and makers in society, using the knowledge, expertise, and networks that the conservatoire and its partners have to offer. These ambitions are spelled out in the vision of the conservatoire: "Global trends demand professional musicians who dare to go off the beaten track. At PCC, students will develop into musicians as Makers in Society: entrepreneurial music professionals who are curious about the world around them. The programme provides

experience in a range of professional settings: at festivals, with orchestras, in educational or care institutions, or in the music industry.”

Combining its long-standing experience with the above-mentioned goals and ambitions, the Bachelor of Music programme currently offers students a strong foundation in one of the majors, thereby gradually allowing for flexibility to provide personalised learning pathways in consultation with staff. Bachelor of Music students receive individual and group lessons, participate in masterclasses, workshops and special focus weeks, complete internships and take part in or organise projects within their own discipline or in conjunction with other disciplines, in the arts or elsewhere.

Until now, these developments have found their way into the curriculum through various teaching development pilots. To fundamentally incorporate the mission, vision and strategy in the Bachelor of Music programme, the team is currently developing a new curriculum that will enable students to follow more personalised routes in developing their own artistic profile, based on updated learning outcomes. The idea is to eventually step away from the four majors and instead offer three profiles: creator, facilitator, or performer. These profiles were formulated based on the future industry roles of musicians and will allow students to develop a vision of, and to grow into, their individual roles in society. Students will develop a strong foundation in their profile during the initial years and individualise their study plan in the latter years based on their own motivations and ambitions towards a more specialist or a more versatile profile.

In all sessions of the site visit, the assessment committee discussed the new curriculum plans, which have been designed involving all stakeholders, including students and the professional field. The committee gathered from the discussions that there is a common understanding among all stakeholders that the principles and

ambitions underlying the new curriculum – flexibility, individualised learning pathways, preparing engaged (student/graduate) musicians for a constantly evolving professional world – are relevant and are overall broadly shared. However, the implementation of the curriculum and the changes this will bring to the majors / profiles and their respective course components are not yet ‘owned’ by all staff and students. In fact, the envisaged curriculum brings not only new courses but also a new vision on and approach to what future musicians should acquire during their studies at the Prince Claus Conservatoire. Moreover, the committee noted that the storyline, i.e. the communication about the vision, mission and their link to the new curriculum with dedicated profiles (instead of the long-standing majors), requires more clarity and one tone of voice. Hence, the committee agrees with the management of the conservatoire and the programme that it is a wise decision not to start implementing the new curriculum right away. Because the existing Bachelor of Music programme is of good quality, the committee sees no reason to hurry such a fundamental curriculum overhaul that will impact the learning outcomes, the delivery and the assessment of the programme; instead, the team is advised to manage - and communicate - the change carefully.

Intended learning outcomes

The Bachelor of Music programme consists of nine competencies: vision and creativity, ability to cooperate, the craft, environmental focus, methodical/reflective approach, communication, entrepreneurship, and innovation. These competencies are based on the previous national professional profile for Music (2003). The way the learning outcomes are operationalised in the current curriculum also reflect the provisions of the new profile (2017), which features seven competencies. In their formulation, the learning outcomes take into account the five Dublin Descriptors as well as the Dutch Qualification Framework at bachelor level 6.

The committee gathered from the written materials and the discussions on site that the nine overarching competencies are common to all majors of the Bachelor of Music programme. The operationalisation of these competencies in indicators differ between the C&M major on the one hand and the Classical, Conducting and Jazz majors on the other hand. Moreover, C&M students should demonstrate all competencies at end level, while other students focus in their graduation programme on the first five above-mentioned competencies. According to the committee, the competencies and their translation in learning outcomes are adequate in terms of substance (music), level (bachelor) and orientation (professional). During the visit, the programme team provided a reasonable motivation why there is a discrepancy in the end-level competencies of the respective majors. While acknowledging this motivation, the committee advises the programme to communicate more explicitly in the programme materials and the Education and Examination Regulations the entire set of learning outcomes thereby indicating per major what is tested throughout the curriculum and what forms part of the graduation programme.

The new curriculum will feature an updated set of intended learning outcomes which is common to the three envisaged profiles and based on the most recent National Training Profile for Music (2017). While this training profile features seven competencies (technical skills, creative skills, contextual focus, research and development skills, organisational skills, communication skills, and teaching skills), the new Bachelor of Music programme will also include an eighth – entrepreneurial – ability. The assessment committee has looked into the definitions of the eight learning outcomes. While acknowledging their relevance and adherence to the national profile, the committee advises the programme to formulate meticulously the indicators that underpin the respective learning outcomes. In this way, the programme will be able to showcase – and test students on their achievement of – the distinctive features that are prominent in the mission, vision

and strategy of the university, the conservatoire, and the Bachelor of Music programme.

Professional Field

The committee gathered from the written materials and the discussions on site that the programme is well connected to the professional field, both in the region and far beyond. In addition to offering students and graduates opportunities for development and employment, the professional field also advises the conservatoire and the programme on developments in the music sector that are worth taking up in the Bachelor of Music curriculum.

The conservatoire currently has two advisory bodies featuring external members. The Advisory Board at the level of the PCC consists of four permanent members who meet twice per year and advise on strategic matters. In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the long-standing programme specific Work Field Advisory Committees were merged into one joint committee that initially met online. At its latest meeting in spring 2023, the Work Field Advisory Committee provided concrete tips and recommendations on matters such as the organisation of alumni and industry contacts, the administration of minor appointments, and the balance in the curriculum between a strong foundation and a broad perspective.

The – very informative – discussion on site with alumni and representatives of the professional field showed that Bachelor of Music graduates end up in different places (music ensembles, education, public and private organisations, ...) and in different positions (artists, teachers, entrepreneurs, advisers, ...). These sectors, moreover, all maintain links with the programme through dedicated professionals, alumni, and others, who recognise the need for close and sometimes structural links with the conservatoire. As one work field representative indicated, “we can only underestimate the importance of the conservatoire and the programme for the Northern region of

the Netherlands; without PCC we would be living in the desert.”

Furthermore, the committee gathered that the lecturers on the programme and the two professors in the conservatoire play an important role in maintaining and expanding the network of like-minded professionals in the Netherlands and internationally. In this regard, the contacts with the Network Music and with the Association of European Conservatoires ensure that the learning outcomes of the programme align with international developments in the field and in society. As concrete outcomes of these contacts, the programme has enhanced its curriculum work on research and entrepreneurship, intensified cooperation with regional and social institutions, and paid more attention to diversity, inclusion, and social resilience.

Considerations

Based on the above-mentioned findings, the committee considers that the profile of the Bachelor of Music programme is in full alignment with the mission and vision of the conservatoire. Moreover, the programme has been adjusted over the past few years to also reflect the new strategic goals of the Hanze UAS. By incorporating this strategy, vision and mission, the programme distinguishes itself from similar programmes in the Netherlands: it has a distinctly regional dimension yet at the same time is international in outlook and prepares engaged students for a local, regional, national or international career in the ever-changing music profession.

The programme’s intended learning outcomes reflect both the national professional profile for music and the Dutch and European qualification frameworks. Hence, the committee considers that

their formulation is adequate in terms of substance, level, and orientation. To ensure full transparency, the programme may want to communicate more clearly the entire set of learning outcomes across all majors and be more specific as to what competencies need to be achieved and at what level in the respective majors.

The committee thinks highly of the way in which the various professional domains where programme graduates end up, are connected with the conservatoire and involved in the Bachelor of Music programme. This eco-system of external partners and professional / academic contacts in the region, but also nationally and internationally, is impressive. The existence of a dedicated Work Field Advisory Committee is clearly a strength, which according to the committee can be used even better/more to advise the Bachelor of Music programme on current and future curriculum developments.

Following the extensive discussions on site, the committee endorses the plans of the programme for a curriculum overhaul. According to the committee, the principles underlying the new curriculum are relevant. However, the concrete roll-out of the curriculum is not sufficiently developed nor thoroughly owned by all stakeholders yet. Instead of hurrying its launch, the programme may want to do some more substantive and communication work to ensure that all stakeholders are on the same page and that the new curriculum fully reflects the distinguishing features of the Bachelor of Music programme at the PCC.

In view of the above findings and considerations, the assessment committee judges that the Bachelor of Music programme **meets this standard**.

2. Teaching-learning environment

The Bachelor of Music programme offers a strong teaching and learning environment. The programme set-up is clear in all majors. Recent adjustments to the curricula reflect the profile of the university, the conservatoire, and the programme. Over the years, the curricula have been further enhanced by instilling an inquisitive attitude among students and by allowing them to take up credit-based modules beyond the boundaries of their own major. Overall, the objectives and contents of the modules enable students to acquire and demonstrate the programme learning outcomes. The conservatoire creates an international, inclusive, diverse, and safe place for students and staff. The composition and diversity of staff and students reflect both the local embedding of the programme and its international atmosphere. The committee therefore endorses the decision of the conservatoire and the programme to offer parts of the programme in both English and Dutch. The enthusiastic and committed teaching staff have good disciplinary expertise and didactical skills. Although their individual assignments are small, the lecturers make good use of the professionalisation opportunities offered by the conservatoire and the university. The assessment committee judges that the Bachelor of Music programme **meets this standard**.

Findings

Programme

The Bachelor of Music is a four-year full-time 240 ECTS programme. Each academic year is divided in two semesters of twenty weeks. The study load is equally divided per semester. Students apply and enrol for one of four majors: Classical Music, Conducting, Composition & Music Production (C&M), or Jazz. Each major has its own subject-based curriculum in which students follow a personalised main subject study path. This personalised path is conceived together by students and lecturers in the academic counselling component of the curriculum and is based on the individual ambitions of each student and the overall competences and learning outcomes to be achieved by the end of the programme.

Each curriculum comprises a first-year phase and a main phase: the first-year phase is about orientation, selection, and referral. The results of the entrance examination are used to determine customised study paths to work on the required competences and learning outcomes. During the first year, students orient themselves further on the profession that the major is training for; upon completion of this phase students demonstrate their development in an advancement examination. During the main phase, students expand

their knowledge in the domain of their major and increasingly personalise their programme. The second and third year are concluded with an advancement examination in which the development of their competences is tested and assessed. Students conclude the main phase with a performance exam for their main subject once all the other components of the degree programme have been completed.

The committee has studied the respective programme curricula for the academic year 2022-2023 and noticed that most programmes distinguish between artistic, theory, professional practice, and open/elective modules. The number of credits allocated to the respective modules differs per major. To customise their programme, Bachelor of Music students can take electives at the PCC, Off Courses at the Minerva Art Academy, or propose their own initiatives. In their third year, students can also take a minor from outside the PCC or choose an elective in the Hanze Education Academy. Furthermore, the extra-curricular Honours Talent Programme allows ambitious students to graduate as inspiring Makers with a vision of where they fit into the professional work field and society. The description of the individual modules in the study guide showed that there is

a clear connection between the module objectives and contents on the one hand, and the overall competences and learning outcomes at programme level on the other hand. This connection ensures that by the end of their study, each student – irrespective of their major – has effectively been trained and tested in the competences that together constitute the intended learning outcomes.

During the visit, the committee discussed at several sessions the role and impact of research in the Bachelor of Music programme. Already in 2016, the previous assessment panel was pleased with the programme's approach to research and the opportunities the research group offers students and teachers of the conservatoire. In the meantime, the Bachelor of Music programme has strengthened the relationship between research and education and encourages an inquisitive attitude among students. In fact, research forms an integral part of the learning process and conceived as a way of learning. Each programme major seeks the connection between developing research competency and developing students as innovative professional musicians. The current assessment committee was informed that until now, research is still fragmented with each major having a different approach; practice-based research is prominent in the PCC-wide Engaged Art Conversations sessions. These lessons are meant for students to develop their musicianship in line with the concept of 'maker in society', and are therefore an important vehicle in carrying out the PCC mission. While Engaged Art Conversations is only a small part of the current curriculum, the new curriculum will allow students to expand and broaden their research attitude and skills in all kinds of contexts, both on and off the stage. The committee welcomes the increasing attention to research in the curriculum and endorses the plans for the future. In this regard, it notices the important role of the Conservatoire-based Music in Context and Arts Education professorships in supporting, inspiring, and strengthening the Engaged Conservatoire profile, and in offering research opportunities for lecturers and students.

Furthermore, the committee gathered from the written materials and the discussions on site that the current programme curricula reflect both the adjustments made following the recommendations of the previous accreditation visit and the more recent changes to the vision, mission and strategy of the university and the conservatoire as described in the Profile section of previous standard. While these adjustments have led to incremental changes, the programme team has also been working on a more comprehensive curriculum overhaul that should be launched in September 2023 or soon after. Further to what was mentioned in the previous section, the committee noticed that the internal discussion on how the new curriculum should look like is not yet entirely finished. One element that requires further clarification and agreement is the way craftsmanship and so-called supporting competencies will be offered in an intertwined way in the curriculum. Moreover, the committee did not get a concrete answer on the current curriculum elements that are likely to disappear in the new curriculum.

Language of instruction

The Classical Music and Jazz programmes are taught in both Dutch and English. The Jazz major is entirely bilingual due to the international student population and programming. The Classical Music major is taught in Dutch, with some modules being offered in English if international students are participating in them. The committee was informed that the choice to offer some majors and modules in English is based on the rationale that in a number of sectors the work of a professional musician is by definition international in nature and that there is a growing international focus in most other sectors. Hence, Classical Music and Jazz students should be able to follow and engage in discourse at international level. The Conducting and C&M programmes are taught entirely in Dutch. Students in the Conducting major can specialise in wind band or choir conducting, two tracks with reasonable employability perspectives in the Northern part of the Netherlands where several municipalities have

their own choir or wind band ensembles. After their studies, C&M students pursue a variety of professional pathways in the Dutch music scene.

The discussions on site have demonstrated, according to the committee, that the PCC has taken well-motivated and adequate decisions with regard to the languages of its programme majors. While the PCC is clearly a Dutch institution with an ambition to serve the needs of the Northern region of the Netherlands, the international atmosphere in the conservatoire is tangible in the building, as well as among students and staff. Both Dutch and international students and staff were invariably positive about the way the Bachelor of Music programme is addressing the co-existence of English and Dutch as languages of instruction.

Learning environment

According to the self-evaluation report, the Bachelor of Music programme at PCC provides its students with an international, versatile, and inclusive learning community in which they can thrive and reach the intended learning outcomes. At the conservatoire students join a small-scale and friendly community where there is respect and support for each other as human beings and as (emerging) professionals, who are connected through a passion for music. The committee gathered from the discussions and from informal contacts during its visit, e.g., during the guided tour and the final presentations, that these features really apply to the conservatoire, the programme and its students and teachers. Several students indicated to the committee that they explicitly chose for the Bachelor of Music programme at PCC because of its small-scale character and its community atmosphere.

At PCC, Bachelor of Music students have a certain freedom to organise their studies in a personal way. This freedom is facilitated by teachers who guide the educational development of the individual student. Each major organises this academic counselling (*studieloopbaanbegeleiding* in Dutch) as an explicit part of its curriculum.

Through one-on-one and group sessions, students approach their studies in an informed way, based on their own personal motives and ambitions, and learn to make choices in their development as music professionals. Following the previous accreditation visit, the programme has strengthened this component among others by having students acquire and consolidate foundational skills and by enhancing the career guidance capacity of the teachers involved in academic counselling. Current students indicated both in the written materials and during the site visit that they were highly satisfied with both the degree of flexibility in setting their own study plan and the level and quality of counselling provided by the teachers. Several students were very positive about the opportunities offered by the programme to enlarge their professional perspective by cooperating with fellow students from other majors, by joining courses organised by e.g. the Minerva Art Academy or by proposing their own artistic activities as part of the curriculum. A few students, however, mentioned that they would like this flexibility to allow them to opt for more main subject training including additional (one-on-one) sessions with their instrument teacher. After all these students joined the bachelor programme at PCC first and foremost to enhance their craftsmanship as (future) musicians.

Students

The performance figures in the self-evaluation report indicate that over the past six years, the Bachelor of Music student intake has fluctuated between 39 and 65 students, while the drop-out rate varied from 6% to 18%. The lowest intake figure and the highest drop-out rate can be linked to the period of the COVID-19 pandemic. In September 2022, 56 new students joined the programme; a total of 199 students are currently enrolled in the Bachelor of Music. The Jazz and Classical Music programmes attract most students, and in these majors the international students outnumber the Dutch. Across the entire programme there is an almost perfect balance between Dutch and international students.

To get admitted, students should have a secondary school degree; they should also display an adequate level of English if they want to enrol for the Classical Music or Jazz major. Moreover, all students pass an entrance examination, which is organised separately by each major. The committee gathered from the written materials and the discussions that the entry requirements are communicated in a transparent way to potential applicants. Moreover, the programme tends to attract the 'right' students, i.e. students who eventually enrol tend to blend well in the respective programme majors. In view of the future, the committee thinks that the curriculum overhaul featuring a change from programme majors to programme profiles should be clearly communicated to potential applicants. In this regard, the programme may want to adjust its entrance procedure paying more attention during the selection to the motivation of candidate students to become not only a musical craftsman but also an engaged artist/maker in society.

Staff

Overall, 110 staff are involved in the Bachelor of Music programme: most have very small appointments, as the programme is delivered by a total of 16.5 full-time staff equivalents. Several lecturers top-up their appointment in the programme with other (teaching) functions in the conservatoire. According to the self-evaluation report, the staff student ratio is 1:12. The committee gathered from the discussions with staff and students that this ratio is sufficient to deliver the programme in its current size.

The committee was informed that some lecturers use teaching methods that are based on the long-standing tried-and-tested master-apprentice philosophy, while others are adopting a more contemporary, learner-centred, and coaching approach. According to the programme team, the full spectrum of methods and approaches are needed as the programme is moving towards a learning system that increasingly focuses on what fits the learning style and personal needs of the individual student. The committee agrees with

the programme management that to reach its long-term goals as expressed in the envisaged curriculum, it is important to both value the knowledge and experience of the current staff and develop the team by attracting more innovative lecturers.

The committee also noticed the efforts of the programme to enhance the educational skills of the staff. Since 2018, most lecturers took the Basic Examiner Qualification course (BKE) to comply with the requirements for assessors set by Hanze UAS and underlined by the Examination Board of the PCC. As a result, the majority of programme staff is now appointed as qualified assessors by the Examination Board. Furthermore, the programme has invested in the professionalisation of the lecturers providing academic counselling.

Students and alumni indicated to the committee that they are/were satisfied with the quality of the teachers, in terms of both disciplinary expertise and didactical skills. In fact, several (international) students decided to apply at PCC because of the well-known disciplinary expertise of individual teachers at the conservatoire or because they were recommended to do so by their teachers at home who had often studied at PCC before. Furthermore, students pointed to the positive – and safe – atmosphere in the conservatoire. Staff is contributing to this atmosphere by being committed to the programme, enthusiastic in their teaching, and genuinely interested in the (ambitions of the) students.

Considerations

Based on the above-mentioned findings, the committee considers that the Bachelor of Music programme offers a strong teaching and learning environment. This appreciation applies to the curriculum structure and contents, the staff, the composition of the student cohorts and the overall atmosphere in the conservatoire.

The programme set-up with four majors each featuring a dedicated subject-based curriculum is

clear. The committee welcomes the many small adjustments that have been made to these curricula over the past six years; by including these changes the current curricula reflect the mission, vision and strategy of the university, the conservatoire and the programme. The quality of the curricula has been further enhanced by paying even more attention to instilling an inquisitive attitude among students and by offering students the opportunity to take up credit-based modules that go beyond the boundaries of their own major. The committee is convinced that at the end of the four-year programme, the objectives and contents of the modules allow students to acquire and demonstrate the programme learning outcomes.

The committee thinks highly of the way in which the conservatoire creates an international, inclusive, diverse, and safe place for students and staff. The positive comments from students and alumni on the enthusiasm and commitment of the staff and on the small-scale and personalised formats of education make the PCC a nice place to be and the Bachelor of Music an attractive and student-centred programme to study.

The committee considers that the current student cohorts match with the number of staff and the size of the facilities at PCC. The composition and diversity of both staff and students reflect both the local embedding of the programme and its international atmosphere. In this regard, the committee endorses the decision of the conservatoire and the programme to offer parts of the programme in both English and Dutch.

Apart from their enthusiasm, the teaching staff also bring a lot of disciplinary expertise and didactical skills. In this regard, the professionalisation policy of the conservatoire and the efforts of

its staff to engage in assessment and/or career development training are laudable.

In sum, the Bachelor of Music programme in its current outlook is of good quality in so far as the different components of its teaching and learning environment are concerned. In view of the programme's future development, and in particular the envisaged curriculum overhaul, the committee sees room for translating the distinctive features of the programme even more explicitly in the curriculum contents, the admission procedure and the graduation programme. When doing so, the programme should ensure that the competencies to be achieved are offered as much as possible in an integrated way in the curricula. After all, the committee agrees with the programme team that the ambition to deliver technically proficient and engaged artists is not mutually exclusive but goes hand in hand. Furthermore, the transition from current to future curriculum may require dropping some of the current modules to be replaced by new modules in order to maintain the feasibility of the programme. During the site visit, the committee was quite impressed by the programme objectives and curriculum goals of the current C&M major, which could serve as the "spider in the web" in the transfer to the new profile-based curriculum.

In view of the above findings and considerations, the assessment committee judges that the Bachelor of Music programme **meets this standard**.

3. Assessment

The system of assessment in the Bachelor of Music programme is generally accurate. While many changes have been made to course and final examination assessments following the previous accreditation visit, some recommendations could have been implemented more swiftly and monitored more attentively. The discussions with programme management and quality assurance bodies, however, have convinced the committee that assessment is being taken seriously and that assuring the quality of assessment is in competent hands with the Examination Board and the Assessment Committee. The assessment committee judges that the Bachelor of Music programme **meets this standard**.

Findings

Assessment system

The system of assessment for the Bachelor of Music programme is based on the assessment policy of the PCC, which in turn follows the assessment framework set by Hanze UAS. The programme team confirmed during the visit that the most recent version of the conservatoire's assessment policy dates back to early 2016 and is based on the November 2015 provisions at university level. The committee was informed that Hanze UAS is currently developing a new assessment policy, which is due next (academic) year and will then form the basis for an updated assessment framework at the level of the PCC.

The core policy documents show that assessment at PCC is built around four principles: (i) the quality of assessment is such that it is possible to control if students have acquired the general and professional competencies; (ii) the format and substance of the assessment reflect the educational content; (iii) assessment is transparent and forms a part of the learning process; and (iv) every programme has its own assessment policy.

In so far as the Bachelor of Music programme is concerned, the course components are summaratively assessed every semester using different testing methods that match the necessary competencies and learning outcomes. The testing methods for each unit of study are outlined in the study guides. Students receive regular feedback and formative testing during lessons. As the study progresses, the complexity and independence of

the learning outcomes increase, and students are assessed on multiple competences during the semester exams and the final exam that concludes the programme. Before each assessment period, lecturers who are also examiners are briefed by the management and by experienced colleagues during intervision sessions and information meetings.

Course assessment

All modules are concluded with one or more exams. The programme uses a large variety of tests, ranging from the strict skills testing in areas like solfège to more holistic assessments of the student graduation performance. During regular course assessments there are always two or more lecturers present to safeguard inter-subjectivity. Semesters are concluded with an advancement examination if all exams of the semester modules have been passed. The committee looked at the module description in the study guide to find out what the assessment formats and assessment moments are for each module.

The previous assessment panel noted that some of the assessment forms did not contain explicit assessment criteria, while in other assessments the criteria were not always reflected properly in the judgement. The current assessment committee was informed on the one hand that these flaws have been addressed by the programme in different ways, among others by adjusting the assessment forms, by informing the assessors and by training teachers before they become examiners. On the other hand, the committee found that

students sometimes still report a gap between the design of the assessment system and the way it works in practice. The committee gathered from the discussions with management, staff, and students that the programme is taking the issue seriously and that further progress had been made in the current academic year. In this regard, the committee welcomes the efforts of the programme team to be more explicit about assessment policy and procedures and to create more ownership of the system by actively informing both students and teachers.

Assessment of graduation works

Each programme major has its own graduation programme that represents between 21 ECTS (choir conducting) and 58 ECTS (composition & music production). Through the components of their respective graduation programmes, students demonstrate their mastery of the intended learning outcomes at end level. Each competency is assessed separately: C&M students are assessed on all nine competencies, while other Bachelor of Music students are assessed at end level on five competencies.

As part of its external review, the committee studied a representative sample of 15 graduation projects and their assessment, across all majors. While the quality of the projects will be discussed in the next section, the committee found that the assessment of the projects was in most cases in line with their own appreciation. In one case, the committee found the score too high and the motivation of the performance not in line with the quality as perceived by the committee members. In addition, the committee found that not all assessment forms contained a full set of assessment criteria nor did assessors always include a dedicated appreciation per competency. These findings seem to concur with the results of an internal review of exam files, which was shared with the committee in the self-evaluation report. The programme emphasised during the site visit that it is taking these findings seriously and has urged assessors and exam committees to act accordingly. As both internal and committee findings referred

to final assessments from previous academic years, the team hopes – and expects – that the final examination round that was taking place around the time of the site visit will result in more accurate and informative assessments.

Quality assurance

The quality of assessments is assured by the Examination Board. This Board operates at the level of the conservatoire and monitors all three PCC programmes. Its activities include among others the periodic observation of semester and final examinations, the appointment of qualified assessors, and the provision of information and instructions to assessors. In addition, an Assessment Committee screens samples of course assessments, observes examinations and advises teachers on assessment matters. Both Examination Board and Assessment Committee hold frequent meetings and together set a yearly 'assurance agenda' with recurring and one-off topics.

Currently, the Examination Board and Assessment Committee are monitoring the developments in the assessment process: a greater focus on students defining their own profile will impact on the final examination and on ensuring that all students can demonstrate all learning outcomes by the time they arrive at the graduation programme. Moreover, the final exam is a recurring topic on the assurance agenda. While members screen final exams and compare notes on the final score, the committee was informed that the quality of the written part of the final exams has received less attention in recent years and is on the agenda of the quality assurance bodies for next year.

The committee gathered from the discussion with representatives of both assurance bodies that the members have adequate expertise to fulfil their duties. Moreover, the individual members are appointed in such a way that their combined disciplinary and quality assurance expertise matches with the different programmes at the PCC and with the different tasks they oversee as commit-

tee. While the members did not report any particular assessment quality assurance issue regarding the Bachelor of Music programme, they are aware that there is room for examiners to make better use of the course and final examination assessment forms that have been enhanced over the past few years.

Considerations

Based on the above-mentioned findings, the committee considers that the system of assessment in the Bachelor of Music programme is generally accurate. Acknowledging the many changes that have been made to course and final examination assessment following the previous accreditation visit, the current committee nonetheless thinks that some recommendations could have been implemented more swiftly and monitored more attentively. In that way, the recent findings from both the internal review and the committee's external review could have been avoided.

The discussions with programme management and quality assurance bodies, however, have convinced the committee that assessment is being

taken seriously and that assuring the quality of assessment is in competent hands with the Examination Board and the Assessment Committee.

In view of the programme's future development, and in particular the envisaged curriculum overhaul, the committee advises the Bachelor of Music to not only adjust the learning outcomes but also have the new learning outcomes reflected in the content of the graduation programme, in its assessment and in the criteria on the evaluation forms. These new assessment criteria should take into account the new goals of the curriculum. After all, if the programme wants to deliver Makers in Society, then this should be part of the learning outcomes and students should be tested and assessed not only on their musical performance but also as engaged artists.

In view of the above findings and considerations, the assessment committee judges that the Bachelor of Music programme **meets this standard**.

4. Achieved learning outcomes

In order to establish whether the intended learning outcomes have been achieved, the committee has studied the quality of a sample of graduation projects and looked at the professional whereabouts of alumni. Students who pass their graduation programme have effectively reached the learning outcomes and deserve their bachelor's degree in music. The sample of final works overall reflects a solid bachelor's level. The professional field is satisfied with the quality and professional versatility of the graduates. Almost all alumni remain in the music sector pursuing a master's degree and/or joining the labour market in a relevant position. The conservatoire and the university are effective in retaining Bachelor of Music graduates in the Northern part of the Netherlands. The programme actively surveys its alumni and started involving them in its activities. The latter efforts could be stepped up with regard to recent graduates who are still in need of connections and employment opportunities. The assessment committee judges that the Bachelor of Music programme **meets this standard**.

Findings

There are two ways to establish whether the intended learning outcomes have been achieved: by reviewing the quality of the graduation projects and by looking at the professional whereabouts of the alumni after their graduation. The committee has looked at both elements when assessing the quality of the Bachelor of Music programme.

Quality of graduation projects

Students graduate with a final presentation/performance of their main subject and a portfolio presentation of the performer/lecturer profile or – for conductors – a defence of their thesis and instrumentations. The final presentation is a public concert, recital, or presentation of their work, which integrates their research and entrepreneurial findings.

As part of its external review, the assessment committee reviewed a sample of 15 graduation programmes which had been selected among the students who graduated the programme in 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. In each individual case, the committee thought that the final performance works were of sufficient quality to pass. This finding also applied to the written pieces of work it reviewed.

Overall, the committee thought the final works reflected a solid bachelor's level. This impression was furthermore confirmed in the two individual presentations which the committee attended during the site visit. Based on this sample review, it is fair to state that Bachelor of Music students who successfully conclude the graduation programme deserve to obtain their bachelor's degree in music as they have effectively demonstrated all learning outcomes that are assessed at end level.

Performance of graduates

The self-evaluation report contained an elaborate and very informative section with alumni data covering seven academic years between 2015-2016 and 2021-2022. In this period a total of 255 Bachelor of Music students graduated the programme: 113 students majored in Classical Music, 105 in Jazz, 22 in C&M and 15 in Conducting. Just over 40% of the graduates were Dutch, and 18% was from beyond the EU. After their bachelor's degree 39% of the graduates continue studying, in one third of the cases they stayed at PCC for the Master of Music.

The committee noticed that the survey which provided these data gives an accurate picture of the professional reality of the Bachelor of Music graduates at PCC. Many of them work as freelance musicians – Classical and Jazz alumni in particular have a 'portfolio career' in which they combine

various music-related activities as independent professionals. Several have orchestral positions from which they earn a salary. Independent C&M research has shown that nearly half of the alumni obtain the majority of their income from their own musical practice. Roughly one third of the alumni live and work in the Northern Netherlands, and thus make a significant contribution to the cultural climate. Many Jazz alumni, however, leave for the Randstad region, return to their home country, or go abroad. Internationally, Jazz and C&M musicians do very well. They go on to further study, and receive composition awards and commissions. The opportunities for classical musicians in the three Northern provinces seem to be much better, resulting in a higher percentage of them staying in the area. Although the data sample is small, almost half of the Conducting graduates stay in the Northern part of the Netherlands and pursue a mixed career as conductor, school teacher and/or freelance musician.

Furthermore, the discussion with alumni and professional field representatives revealed the importance of the network that PCC staff put at disposition of their students. They also indicated that the level of Bachelor of Music graduates has increased over the years. Some of the younger representatives and former alumni emphasised that the entrepreneurship modules were very relevant. In addition to acquiring the basics of a business plan, the programme also helped in creating a market for the future graduate-entrepreneur. Finally, several interviewees indicated that the programme does not only train for top-level positions as e.g. orchestra musician but also prepare students e.g. in conducting to be employable as conductor of amateur wind band ensembles in and around Groningen.

Both professional field representatives and (recent) alumni concurred in applauding the quality of the programme and the relevance of its curriculum as a preparation for the music profession. If anything, the programme could do more in supporting its students who have recently graduated and need network connections and employment

opportunities. Similarly, alumni could be invited more regularly to the PCC for continuous education activities and for networking events with students.

Considerations

Based on the above-mentioned findings, the committee considers that students who pass their graduation programme have effectively reached the learning outcomes and deserve their bachelor's degree in music. The committee arrives at this conclusion based on its review and on-site attendance of final works, which overall reflect a solid bachelor's level.

A similar conclusion is drawn by the professional field, which is satisfied with the (growing) quality and professional versatility of the Bachelor of Music graduates. Furthermore, the committee welcomes the fact that Bachelor of Music graduates remain within the music sector by pursuing a master's degree and/or entering the labour market in a position that is commensurate with the discipline and level of their studies. The committee also concludes from the data that the conservatoire and the university are effective in retaining Bachelor of Music graduates in the Northern part of the Netherlands where they maintain/develop the cultural scene.

In addition to applauding the efforts of the programme to survey its graduates, the committee welcomes the recent efforts of the programme to involve alumni. It invites the programme to step up its alumni efforts in particular with regard to recent graduates who are still in need of connections and employment opportunities. Furthermore, the programme / conservatoire may want to combine networking events with continuous education activities for its graduates.

In view of the above findings and considerations, the assessment committee judges that the Bachelor of Music programme **meets this standard**.

Attachments

Attachment 1 Assessment committee

Raoul van Aalst

Raoul studied Business Economics at Groningen University. Since his student period he is involved in education quality as student representative and as part-time teaching staff. Raoul has extensive experience in chairing accreditation panels.

Jeffrey Sharkey

Jeff is Principal of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in Glasgow. He has been involved in other accreditation exercises in the Netherlands before.

Inge Simoens

Inge is a trained pianist and a piano teacher with broad expertise in the large cultural field. Currently, she is Head of Classical Music at the Royal Conservatoire in Antwerp.

Lars Bon

Lars graduated in June 2023 as Docent Muziek at the Conservatoire of Utrecht. He chairs the VLS student panel and was involved in accreditation panels reviewing similar Docent Muziek programmes.

The panel was supported by **Mark Delmartino**, external secretary and certified by NVAO.

All committee members and the secretary have signed a declaration of independence. The assessment committee has been submitted to, and validated by, NVAO prior to the site visit.

Attachment 2 Site visit programme

During the visit, two assessment committees – with partial overlap in composition – have assessed both the Bachelor of Music programme and the Bachelor programme Docent Muziek.

Location: Prince Claus Conservatoire, Groningen

Tuesday 13 June 2023

Joint programme Bachelor of Music and Bachelor Docent Muziek

- 09.00 Arrival committee
- 09.15 Guided tour in het Prins Claus Conservatoire
- 10.00 Internal committee meeting
- 11.30 Session with institution and programme management
- 12.15 Lunch and internal meeting
- 13.15 Session with Exam-, Assessment- and Programme Committees

Programme Bachelor of Music

- 14.15 Introduction and presentation of Bachelor of Music
- 14.45 Session with students
- 15.45 Internal committee meeting
- 19.30 Individual final presentation – vocal Jazz
- 20.30 Individual final presentation – piano Classical

Wednesday 14 June 2023

Programme Bachelor of Music

- 10.00 Session with teachers
- 11.15 Session with work field and alumni
- 12.00 Meeting with management
- 12.30 Lunch and internal committee meeting
- 14.00 Preliminary feedback
- 14.30 End of site visit programme Bachelor of Music

Afternoon and evening sessions - Bachelor Docent Muziek

Thursday 15 June 2023

Morning and afternoon sessions - Bachelor Docent Muziek

Attachment 3 Overview of materials

Music Moves. Self-evaluation report 2023 Bachelor of Music

Annexes to the self-evaluation report

- Teaching and Education Regulations Bachelor of Music 2022-2023
- Study Manuals Bachelor of Music 2022-2023
- Assessment Policy (NL)
- Overview of staff Bachelor of Music (NL)
- Annual Report Exam committee and Assessment Committee 2021-2022 (NL)
- Hanze UAS Strategic Plan Engaged and Versatile 2021-2026
- PCC Year Plan 2022-2023 (NL)
- Academic Counselling Bachelor of Music 2023 (NL)
- Dutch National Training Profile for Music

Graduation work of 22 students who graduated in 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 (8 Classical, 3 Conducting, 3 Composition & Music Production, and 8 Jazz)

- Information on graduation trajectory and graduation works
- Overview of graduates Bachelor of Music 2020-2022
- Graduation manual Bachelor of Music 2022-2023 (NL)
- Assessment Composition & Music Production 2020-2021