

Feedback on institutional review done by Inter-artes experts team at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre

Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre is constantly trying to improve quality of its studies and activities by several means. One of the possibilities is participation in international projects and working with broad scope of partners. Experience gained is valued as very important to program changes and encourage improvement of current situation.

Being quite active partner in ELIA and Inter-artes, we were tempted by a possibility to perform an external institutional review according to the methodology developed by the project. Many varying considerations were done at the institution before inviting the experts, however decision was done, and finally the whole process developed into results, which may be considered as highly positive.

To backtrack and comment on steps, which were taken during the process, we provide the following points below. First of all, we comment on a side, which was more troubling:

1. Final decision to invite experts was possibly done too late internally and there were some doubts until the last moment. Most of these were resolved during initial visit of John Butler and Paula Crabtree in January.
2. Because of possibilities of both sides, and also Inter-artes working schedule, possibility to select dates for visits was not very flexible. All problems were resolved finally, but it caused some tension and delays.
3. It was some lack of understanding among some employees of LMTA concerning the process of evaluation, also some complication concerning QAE terms etc. In example, some persons, who have been meeting experts, even after explanation of the evaluation process, were still feeling tense in front of “auditors”. One of the reasons concerning this issue might have been, that it was impossible to do a broad and general project and methodology presentation during the initial visit in January (which was planned into schedule and methodology) due to it was the end of exam session and start of break at LMTA. One other possible reason is, that contemporary understanding of QAE is not common for some of the persons, which are used to more conservative methodologies. Even the term of “quality” was a point of misunderstanding sometimes, despite several explanations. We also consider ourselves that bigger effort on internal side could have been done to clarify abovementioned issues.
4. It was sometimes hard to get the most proper persons to meet the experts due to very tight time schedule. We might also note, that (from our point of view) meeting with smaller groups was more effective (but it is also not always possible because of time). Also, if groups included persons of different subordination levels, usually persons having higher responsibilities were answering almost all queries, and subordinates were more reserved to express their opinions.
5. Active and busy time during year-half when visits were carried out implied some extensive delays on delivering SER. However, even in such conditions we are glad, that we managed not to dropout of the process. We are really thankful for the patience and understanding of expert group

The process and its results generated a lot of positive developments at our institution.

1. Persons, which were involved into developing SER, also, which have been meeting the experts gained a lot of new personal experience and knowledge concerning QAE processes. This experience is surely important for the daily activities.
2. Contemporary experience and understanding of internal and external QAE, as declared in Bergen 2005 and other developments of Bologna process concerning QAE issues, was more widely brought-in into our institution, which we consider as very important to improve the process of quality improvement.
3. The process of institutional review, with the help of experts allowed us to discover areas, which need the most improvement, according to the latest standards in HAE. In example, we understood the importance of formalising some of the QAE processes, which are currently quite informal etc.
4. Institutional review report, its results and recommendations were officially presented to the Senate of LMTA. The QA committee of Senate was also established, together with a working group to develop a clear QAE policy and structure of the institution. Representatives of students are involved in the process.
5. Analysis and investigations of existing QAE systems of institutions of similar scope and profile is being done at the moment to develop a structure, which would be the most convenient in our situation.
6. We analysed the recommendations of evaluation team deeply. We consider all points as relevant and we fully agree with recommendations and advice of international colleagues.
7. Policy for attestation is being reviewed currently.
8. Negotiations with companies and some governmental bodies are underway to develop or purchase integrated study information and organization system, which would base on internal server of LMTA.
9. Possibilities to search for enhanced funding remains one of the most important priorities.
10. Institutional review started or influenced a lot of important processes at LMTA, which are now part of strategic activities of the Academy. We are in process of implementation of recommendations of experts, which is a great help in general, because it clearly outlines the most important matters. We also hope to continue working together and deepen our experience in ArtesNet Europe.

We consider the methodology of evaluation as fully valid for arts schools. To our opinion, its development and official affirmation is very important for the future of European Higher Arts Education. LMTA considers this possibility to contribute to the successful elaboration of this matter as an honour and kind appreciation of ELIA, Inter-artes and ArtesNet Europe community.

Thank you!