

CORK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

PROGRAMMATIC REVIEW  
OF THE  
CIT CORK SCHOOL OF MUSIC

PHASE1: STRATEGIC REVIEW  
(DECEMBER 2015)

REPORT OF THE  
EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW GROUP

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## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Programmatic Review at Cork Institute of Technology

Programmatic Review is a statutory, five-yearly quality process in which peer evaluators analyse the effectiveness of the suite of programmes of a CIT faculty, college or school, with an emphasis on quality and flexibility of response to changing needs.

Under the CIT quality system, Programmatic Review is conducted in two phases. While Phase 1 looks at strategic and high-level issues, Phase 2 is devoted to a detailed programme review. Each phase is built on a self-study by the unit under review, supplemented by meetings of the Peer Review Group with staff, students and other stakeholders.

The overall aims of the 2015 CSM Programmatic Review were to ensure

- that the programmes offered in the CSM remain relevant to learners, employers and other stakeholders;
- that the strategy, resources and systems of the CSM are sufficient to support and develop the academic activities;
- that there is demand for the graduate profile produced by CSM programmes;
- that the Programme Outcomes correctly describe the desired graduate profile; and
- that the CIT Cork School of Music programmes deliver the Programme Outcomes.

The two review phases address these aims, with different emphases and to a different extent.

Externally, Programmatic Review contributes to the enhancement of public confidence in the Institute and its awards. Internally, it is an important 'way stage' in a continuous quality improvement cycle which affords the opportunity to step back from the ongoing business of programme delivery to reflect on the current status and future direction of a faculty, college or school and its programme portfolio.

## 1.2. CIT Cork School of Music: Institutional Context

The Cork School of Music is a Constituent College of CIT, located in the centre of Cork City. Its building provides c. 12,000 m<sup>2</sup> of space, over six floors. It accommodates a 400-seat auditorium, a 100-seater “black box” theatre, more than 40 specialist studios (for teaching and practice), flat-floor classrooms (11), a drama suite (including a movement room), raked lecture theatres (2), piano/labs (2), a Recording Suite and Electronic Music Centre, an Audio/lab, a MusicIT/lab, a substantial library, Boardroom and meeting rooms, a staff open-access administration area, a reprographics room, and common rooms for both staff and students. The IT provision is Apple-based, with c. 165 computers currently available.

The building opened in 2007 and was provided by way of a Public Private Partnership. The Facility Management Company runs the *offquay bistro* within the building.

The brand name of Cork School of Music has become renowned as a centre of excellence locally and internationally. It is one of three conservatories in the country (the other two both being located in Dublin: the Royal Irish Academy of Music and the DIT Conservatory of Music & Drama). What distinguishes the educational provision of a conservatory is the formation of musicians and actors based on intensive study from an early age in a conducive environment. Although a significant number of graduates go into the directly-related professions, others pursue different careers while keeping music and drama as a key motivating force in their lives.

CIT Cork School of Music’s current structure is based on four departments:

- Department of Keyboard Studies
- Department of String Studies
- Department of Wind, Percussion, Voice & Drama Studies
- Department of Musicianship & Academic Studies

CSM currently has 322 full-time students, registered for one of three Level 8 courses, or one of two Level 9 taught courses, or for an MA (Research). It also has over 3,530 part-time student enrolments for over 290 courses of study – with a typical part-time student studying

in the CSM for at least 10 years. Staff working in CSM number 141 – 132 academic, 5.5 administrative staff, 1.32 library assistant, 1 A-V Technician, and 1 IT Technician (out-sourced). Most members of staff teach students across 1<sup>st</sup>- to 3<sup>rd</sup> levels. Only the full-time courses were subject to this review, but it is acknowledged that the mutually beneficial interface between part-time students and the full-time students is very significant and extensive.

### 1.3 2015 Programmatic Review of the CSM

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 2015, CSM completed Phase 1 of the current Programmatic Review. Over the two days of the site visit the Peer Review Group met several groups of CSM and CIT academic management, staff, students and members of industry at the Cork School of Music on Union Quay.

The sequence of Phase 1 panel meetings is provided in Appendix 2. In line with developmental strategies for the Institute as a whole, all meetings focused on the three strands of teaching & learning, research and engagement.

Phase 2 of the 2015 CSM PR is scheduled to take place during March 2016.

This report contains the interim findings and recommendations of the Peer Review Group based on the desk-review of the CSM Phase 1 Self-Study and the meetings held during the site visit.

## MEMBERSHIP OF THE PHASE 1 PEER REVIEW GROUP

*Mr Michel Camatte*

Recently retired Director of the Conservatoire Darius-Milhaud d'Aix-en-Provence

*Ms Elizabeth Csibi, RIAM*

Head of String Faculty & Professor of Viola, Royal Irish Academy of Music, Dublin

*Ms Carol Daly*

Principal of Cork ETB School of Music

*Dr David Mooney, DIT*

Head of the Department of Keyboard Studies, DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama

*Dr Barry O'Connor, CIT*

Registrar and Vice-President for Academic Affairs

Cork Institute of Technology

## PRINCIPAL PHASE 1 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1.4 Summary of the Strategic Phase of Programmatic Review

Note: This report should be read in conjunction with the comprehensive Self-Study produced by CSM

Panel visit: 2-3/12/2015

### 1.5 Phase 1 Commendations

#### 1.5.1 Review documentation

The Programmatic Review Self Study was thorough, professionally presented, and provided a sound platform for the Panel to review the Strategic Phase of the process. It is also a clear template against which Phase 2, the modules and programmes phase, may be tested. All relevant supporting documentation was available to the Panel.

#### 1.5.2 Response to the previous Programmatic Review

CSM has responded well to the previous Programmatic Review and relevant evidence was presented in the Self Study and supported in discussions with staff, students and stakeholders.

#### 1.5.3 Funding model

CSM was commended on joining forces with the DIT Conservatory of Music & Drama and the Royal Irish Academy of Music to make common cause, as Conservatoires Ireland, in interacting with the funding agencies, the Department of Education and Skills and the HEA, to establish adequate resourcing and funding structures for the Conservatoire model of music education. CSM regards Conservatory Music as an integral part of the School and the necessary foundation and platform for delivering music and drama education in Cork.

#### 1.5.4 New programme development

CSM was commended on the success and quality of the two new Honours Degree programmes, Theatre & Drama Studies and Popular Music, which have now completed their respective full cycles with inaugural graduation cohorts currently completing their final semesters.

The staff were further commended for the ambition shown in proposing to develop four new courses:

BA in Musical Theatre

BA in Music and Maths

MA in Theatre and Drama Studies

## Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA)

The proposed programmes are strategically in line with the development of CSM's degree portfolio and represent a response to industry needs and the needs of potential students and graduates. The importance of the DMA was recognised by the Panel and CSM was encouraged to continue to advance this proposal in conjunction with the CIT School of Graduate Studies.

### 1.6 Phase 1 Recommendations:

#### 1.6.1 Resources

The Panel recognises the requirement for additional resources in respect of Events Management, PR, and Administration – particularly because of the significant increase in workload arising from the two new Level 8 programmes - both now reaching their full complement of delivery - and the consequent increased demands on staff and School resources. It notes the need for Institute policy, based on national agreement, in respect of timetable allowances for responsibilities such as Course Co-ordination and Work Placement.

The Panel understands and supports the case CSM made in 10.2.2.3 and 10.2.2.4 of its Self-Study for flexible contract arrangements to be developed for productions and tailored delivery by international artists.

#### 1.6.2 Performance modules

The Panel endorses the premise that module design and credit weighting needs explicitly to acknowledge the workload involved with music and drama performance.

#### 1.6.3 Research



CSM should open a dialogue within the traditional research parameters with a view to cataloguing performance as research practice output.

CSM should make common cause with others in the creative academic world to establish creative/professional practice as valued research output as there is a widespread national desire for such recognition to be accorded to creative practice. Such recognition will be hard to obtain - be it for Music, Fine Art, or Creative Design. The Panel recognises the desire of CSM staff to engage continuously in creative research, including structured academic research, in the context of the proposed structure of the DMA.

#### 1.6.4 Student engagement

The formal student partnership structures/fora that are already in place should continue to be nurtured and supported. The CIT Students' Union is to be encouraged further to develop an active CSM class representative structure, both within the CSM and as part of the wider CIT Students' Union - particularly for engagement and feedback purposes.

#### 1.6.5 Student support

There is a clear demand, as requested by staff as well as students, for additional and more accessible Student Counselling support, with – if possible – a more focused form of counselling available to students engaged with music and drama performance-based programmes.

The CSM website needs to be supported so that it can facilitate greater communication between the School, its students, its graduates and the music industry.

Career-focused guidance, possibly through specialist lectures, could be used to make graduates more industry-ready.

### 1.7 Institute governance

The Panel recommends that, given the unique nature of CSM, the School should continue to have membership of the Institute Executive Board following the imminent retirement of its Director.