

Good governance charter

Introduction

Orpheus Instituut recognises the fundamental importance of good governance in achieving its mission and ensuring the trust of all its stakeholders. As a leading international centre for artistic research in music, we have a special responsibility towards our researchers, students, partners and the wider community. This charter articulates the principles and values that underpin our governance and provides a binding framework for all those involved in our organisation.

For Orpheus Instituut, good governance is not an abstract obligation but an essential condition for maintaining and strengthening our unique position in the international landscape of artistic research. It guarantees the integrity of our research, the quality of our education and the sustainability of our partnerships. This charter provides a clear compass for decision-making at all levels and serves as a transparent frame of reference for everyone who comes into contact with our organisation.

Mission and values

Orpheus Instituut builds bridges between artistic practice and academic research, between tradition and innovation, between local roots and international reach. From our home in Ghent, we facilitate groundbreaking research in which musician-researchers generate new knowledge from their artistic practice. We offer a research environment where excellence in musical performance and scientific rigour reinforce each other.

Our mission is realised through the organisation of a doctoral programme (docARTES), postgraduate courses and research projects that fundamentally question and advance musical thinking and practice. We develop forums for knowledge exchange and artistic cross-fertilisation, with a central focus on the interaction between theoretical deepening and practice-oriented exploration. Orpheus Instituut thus profiles itself not only as a research institute, but also as a catalyst for a fundamental reorientation in thinking about the relationship between music, research and education.

This mission is based on core values that guide our daily actions: the unconditional pursuit of excellence in all our activities; integrity in our research practices and collaborative relationships; transparency in our decision-making and accountability; inclusivity and diversity as a source of enrichment; and sustainability that keeps future generations of musician-researchers in mind.

Governance structure

The governance of Orpheus Instituut is based on the principle of checks and balances, with different bodies fulfilling complementary roles.

The **General Assembly** functions as the highest decision-making body and meets at least twice a year to set the broad outlines of policy and supervise the general course of affairs. Its powers are laid down in the articles of association and include the appointment of directors, the approval of budgets and annual accounts, and strategic decisions about the future of the institute.

The **Board of Directors**, consisting of a minimum of three and a maximum of eleven members, each of them appointed for a term of four years, has operational responsibility for the management of the organisation. This collegial body meets as often as circumstances require. Decisions are taken by qualified majority. The Board delegates specific powers to the director, who is responsible for day-to-day management and reports to the Board. This structure ensures both decisiveness in day-to-day operations and democratic control over strategic decisions.

In addition to these formal bodies, Orpheus Instituut has three advisory structures that monitor and strengthen the quality of our operations. The **Research Advisory Council (RAC)** conducts an annual thorough evaluation of our research activities. The **Editorial Board** and **Steering Committee** contribute their specific expertise to support our publication and research projects.

The composition of the Board of Directors and General Assembly is in accordance with the provisions of the Articles of Association and Internal Regulations of Orpheus Instituut.

Governance principles

The management of our institute is based on five core principles:

Transparency

We guarantee openness and transparency in our operations. Annual reports and policy documents are made publicly available, decision-making processes follow clear procedures and we inform our stakeholders in a timely and comprehensive manner about relevant developments.

Responsibility and accountability

We recognise our mission to the public and the resources entrusted to us, and we act accordingly. Tasks and powers are clearly defined, our administrative functioning is periodically evaluated and we strictly comply with all relevant laws and regulations. Critical self-reflection is essential to us for continuous improvement.

Integrity

We act independently and with integrity. Conflicts of interest are reported proactively. Directors or employees who have a potential conflict of interest refrain from participating in decision-making on the subject in question. All decisions are made exclusively in the interests of the institution and its mission.

Quality

We attach great value to a carefully composed board, representing a wide range of expertise and perspectives. Independent external evaluations, such as the annual RAC evaluation, strengthen our operations, sustain our rigorous focus on quality and stimulate continuous improvement.

Participation

We actively involve employees, partners and other stakeholders in the development of policy and strategy. Good governance can only be fully realised when it is supported by the community we form together. We believe that openness is not only an ethical obligation, but that it also strengthens the quality of our operations by enabling external feedback.

Financial management

Sound financial management is essential for the continuity and credibility of our organisation. The annual budget and financial statements form the core of our cycle of planning, implementation and control. A certified auditor conducts independent audits and reports directly to the General Assembly. This external review is an important guarantee of the reliability of our financial reporting.

In addition to fulfilling our legal obligations, we strive to present financial information in a clear and accessible manner, so that all stakeholders have insight into the use of resources.

Stakeholder relations

As an international research centre, we maintain relationships with various stakeholders. Partnerships are formalised in clear agreements that set out mutual rights and obligations. Attention is also paid to agreements on intellectual property, given the innovative nature of artistic research. Partnerships are evaluated at regular intervals to ensure that they remain in line with and contribute to our mission.

International cooperation is inherent to our work and presents specific challenges. This requires special attention to cultural diversity and local contexts. Governance structures are transparent, with clear agreements on the roles and responsibilities on individual and institutional levels. Inclusivity is a key condition for successful cooperation.

Ethics and conduct

We operate on the basis of respect for human dignity in all its forms. This principle translates into professional and ethical conduct in all our interactions. Where confidentiality is necessary, it is strictly respected, without compromising our duty to communicate decisions and processes clearly and accessibly.

Given the nature of artistic research, we attach great importance to research ethics. We follow international standards, but recognise that artistic research also raises its own ethical questions that do not always fit within existing frameworks. Transparency in methodology and the correct recognition of all contributions are fundamental principles for us. In addition, we encourage open dialogue when ethical dilemmas arise within research projects.

We promote a culture in which differences are valued and everyone has equal opportunities to contribute. Diversity and inclusion not only increase fairness and accessibility, but also enhance creativity, innovation and the quality of our research and governance. To achieve this, we monitor and report on diversity indicators, actively create equal opportunities, offer training and support for inclusive leadership and systematically incorporate diversity, equality and inclusion into our policies.



The accessibility of our infrastructure and information is continuously being improved, with attention being paid to any barriers that may hinder participation.

Complaints and reports

An accessible complaints procedure ensures that problems are quickly detected and carefully dealt with. We have a defined process in place whereby complaints are treated confidentially and seriously. A confidential advisor is available for those who are unable to report directly and wish to maintain discretion. Reporters are protected against any adverse consequences of their report, whereby we carefully monitor the delicate balance between confidentiality and necessary action.

Implementation

This charter will come into effect after approval by the Board of Directors. It will be actively communicated to all stakeholders and made public on our website. It forms a binding framework for all bodies and employees of the Orpheus Institute vzw and finds its legal basis in the articles of association, as published in the Belgian Official Gazette on 8 July 2025. Where developments in our environment or organisation require it, the charter will be updated to remain relevant and effective.



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Advanced studies
and research in music