

Conservatorium van Amsterdam

Associate Degree

Amsterdam Electronic Music Academy -  
AEMA

Study Guide 2021-2022  
**Part 1: Programme description**

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## Studying Dance and Electronic Music at the CvA

The Amsterdam Electronic Music Academy (AEMA) of the Conservatorium van Amsterdam (CvA) is open to talented musicians with a passion for creating dance and electronic music. Geared towards offering young students higher professional training, the course is embedded in the CvA Pop Music Department and focuses on the DJ/producer professional profile. Launched in 2018 and accredited in 2019, the course can accommodate ten to twenty motivated students. Currently, most students are from the Netherlands, but the course is fully prepared to receive foreign students in the future.

Future AEMA alumni can look forward to a broad and varied professional experience. There is a real need for trained producers and DJs equipped with the knowledge and skills for creating music for dance events, producing as an artist or for other artists and for games, advertising, film, television, fashion and art. Professionals active in the dance and electronic music world create, perform, produce and effectively present their work. Thanks to the CvA network, The School of House and numerous leading partners based in Amsterdam, the course boasts teachers and instructors known for quality, state-of-the art knowledge and good connections with the professional world.

Students from diverse backgrounds bring different experiences to the programme. One student may have already established his or her own artistic identity and is looking to turn it into a professional product. Another may have acquired various basic skills and is looking for ways to establish his or her own identity. The programme provides scope for further development from different starting levels.

The CvA's AEMA is part of the Pop Music Department, which offers a Bachelor's and a Master's Degree in Pop Music, in addition to the AEMA Associate Degree. AEMA would appear to offer added value both for the students and teachers of these courses. There are opportunities for exchange between those enrolled in the Bachelor's Degree in Pop Music and the AEMA. Pop music students supplement their knowledge with electronic production skills and the dynamism (e.g. online marketing and strategy) of the dance scene. AEMA students can capitalize on the expertise of the Pop music programme by working on collaborative projects or taking electives. The interaction between the two is a source of inspiration, resulting in new musical interconnections and making both the AEMA and the Pop Music Department cutting-edge programmes and stronger in the future.

### Course details

**Study load:** 120 ECTs

**Length of study:** 2 years (full-time)

**Languages of instruction:** Dutch and English

**CROHO code:** 80160

**Degree:** Associate Degree in Music

## Curriculum

The AEMA programme consists of two years of study. The first year is divided into *trimesters*, the second into *semesters*. The first year offers plenty of scope for students to broaden their horizons by discovering a variety of aspects among the core elements of the course. Students gain as much knowledge as possible and discover what is right for them. In the second year, students shift their focus to preparing the final project and moving into the professional world as independent players in the arts sector. It is during the final examination that students present their skills and artistic ideas to the outside world.

Each term ends with an assessment: three in the first year, two in the second. At the three points at which assessment takes place, students will present the results of their composition projects. The teachers assess these results in accordance with the A-MACK system (see explanatory notes below). The last week of each term is the evaluation week. The examinations and presentations of each student are discussed during the teacher meetings. Teachers give feedback to students on their development based on their performance in all subjects, so that the students can adapt and coordinate their personal academic process.

### **Educational concept**

The AEMA programme has been shaped in accordance with a number of guiding principles reflecting the starting level and different profiles of the students enrolled on the course.

- These are individual and focused on each student's maximum learning output. The profiles and development issues of enrolling students are different, but the basic curriculum offers sufficient scope for a tailored approach.
- Students learn to reflect on their performance and development, in relation to which they are increasingly able to set realistic, independent goals in line with their personal ambitions and potential. This prepares them for lifelong learning in an ever-changing line of work.
- Classes are small - no more than twenty students are accepted each academic year. There is sufficient scope for private instruction and guidance in artistic, business and technical areas.
- The final assignment is a professional product consisting of a project plan and the student's own work. It can also be used by students as an aid to positioning themselves in the professional field.

### **Structure of the curriculum: the four pillars**

The individual subjects are grouped into four pillars on which the programme is built. Core subjects recur across and throughout these elements. The curriculum overview below shows a graphical representation of the programme. The separate course descriptions can be found in the second part of the prospectus (on the intranet).

AEMA - jaar 1	Trimester 1		Trimester 2		Trimester 3
Producties en projecten					
Kennisvakken					
Business, Industry and organisation					
Persoonlijke ontwikkeling, keuzevakken en Vrije Ruimte					
AEMA - jaar 2					
	Semester 1		Semester II		
Producties en projecten					
Kennisvakken					
Business, Industry and organisation					
Persoonlijke ontwikkeling, keuzevakken en Vrije Ruimte					

*Translation of the terminology used in the above table:*

AEMA year 1 / year 2:

“Producties en projecten” => Productions and Projects

“Kennisvakken” => Knowledge courses

“Business, Industry and Organization” => idem

“Persoonlijke ontwikkeling, keuzevakken en Vrije ruimte” = > Personal development, electives and ‘free space’

In each block making up the two academic years, students cultivate their knowledge and develop their artistic and business profile. Learning is built around four fundamental pillars offered throughout the course:

#### *Outputs and Projects*

During the Outputs and Projects module, students experiment with making their own tracks and develop concepts independently. Students develop their technical skills and apply the theoretical knowledge they have acquired.

#### *Knowledge courses*

Knowledge courses provide students with a music theory framework allowing them to develop skills which support the analysis and composition of music. They also develop their understanding of the terminology and technology used in the profession.

#### *Business, Industry and Organization*

The pillar of Business, Industry and Organization allows students to explore market opportunities and to gain insight into the music industry as a whole.

#### *Personal development, electives and ‘free space’*

Elective courses and ‘free space’ offer students the opportunity to explore, cultivate and further develop their own profile and artistic identity.

**Level indicator**

Our level indicator is broken down into three variables:

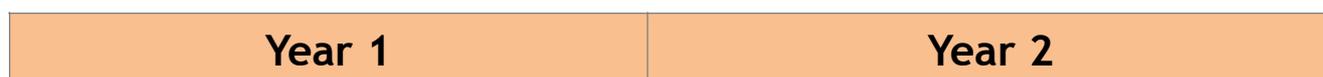
1. Environment: focus inside (level 1) and outside (level 2)
2. Collaboration/communication: focus alone (level 1) and together (level 2)
3. Output creation: unconscious competence/conscious incompetence (level 1) and conscious competence (level 2)

Level 2 represents the final level of the programme for all variables. In the course descriptions (see intranet), these levels are indicated for each course and for each block.

	1. Environment	2. Collaboration/communication	3. Output creation
Level 1	<p>1 = Inside</p> <p><b>Explanatory remarks:</b> You create your own work, but there is no, or only a limited, correlation between it and your environment.</p>	<p>1 = Alone</p> <p><b>Explanatory remarks:</b> You work alone and thus not with your peers or with other disciplines.</p>	<p>1 = 1A: unconscious competence 1B: conscious incompetence</p> <p><b>Explanatory remarks:</b> 1A: You create compositions/your own tracks which are good but which came about mainly through intuitive means. 1B: You are not yet able to produce compositions as fully fledged outputs or songs, but you are motivated to learn how to do so.</p>
Level 2/ Final level	<p>2 = Outside</p> <p><b>Explanatory remarks:</b> Commissioned by others, you produce compositions, remixes or music to be used to accompany visual material.</p> <p>There is a direct correlation between your work and your professional environment.</p>	<p>2 = Together</p> <p><b>Explanatory remarks:</b> You work as part of a team (multidisciplinary or otherwise). You can adapt and get your point across to the others. You adapt and empathize with the others and their points of view.</p>	<p>2 = conscious competence</p> <p><b>Explanatory remarks:</b> You are aware of how you structure your compositions, work or remixes, and can carry out and manage this process consciously and competently.</p>

### Structure of the two-year AEMA curriculum

The two-year AEMA curriculum is structured in accordance with the level indicator described in the previous section. The structure is shown schematically in the diagram below.



<p><i>Students arrive with different knowledge and skills. We make a distinction here between two guiding principles:</i></p> <p><i>(1) Students start out with unconscious competence - in other words, they just happen to create good music serendipitously. In taking part in the learning process, they follow the path towards conscious competence.</i></p> <p><i>(2) Another option is that students start out with conscious incompetence, and follow the learning process to conscious competence. At this stage, consciousness is the main aim in both cases.</i></p>	<p><i>The students' consciousness is developed (further) by focusing on personal and fundamental reflective skills. This phase of the course focuses on output - there is no longer any place here for serendipity. The result is the emergence of conscious competence.</i></p>
<b>Diverging</b>	<b>Converging</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students lay a foundation of knowledge and skills aimed at producing and composing electronic music.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students are primarily engaged in applying and deepening their knowledge and skills, and creating music for a personal release.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- They learn to use tools and apply them in their own work. These tools include the most important software programs, an initial integration with hardware, historical context and the development of the ear and analysis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students use the tools they have acquired to deepen the process of making their own music.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- They work together with their peers on pieces of music, learn to work together and come into contact with styles outside their own world of experience and taste.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students learn to arrive independently at an artistic statement in their music.</li> </ul>
<b>Discovering and exploring</b>	<b>Selection and continued development</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students will explore the questions of What am I good at? What else do I want to learn?</li> <li>- Students develop a musical frame of reference. They will be doing research and broadening their framework. The exploration of a range of styles is key.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students will stand up for who they are. What is their style? They will be identifying tendencies here and developing their own style.</li> <li>- Students work towards their own release, in both musical and business terms.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- They work to develop their ear.</li> <li>- Students learn to control the instrument (laptop) and to express in words the path they wish to take: producing sound in a digital environment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students have developed their ear in such a way that they can recognize and reconstruct music (or elements thereof), but also invent and develop it themselves.</li> </ul>

The AEMA curriculum is a mix of creative and theory subjects. Each year represents a study load of 60 credits, the total programme consisting of a study load of 120 credits.

AEMA credits									
Year	Outputs and Projects	EC	Knowledge courses	EC	Business and Industry	EC	Personal development	EC	up to
I	Style Labs I DJ & Repertoire I Mix & Production I Music & Media I	6 4 6 4	Music Technology Sound Synthesis & Set-up General Music Theory Composition & Analysis Building Tracks Percussion Lab	6 4 3 3 4 2	Industry & Entrepreneurship	10	Artist & Culture Electronic Music History	4 4	
Subtotal		20		22		10		8	60
II	Style Labs II Mix Lab & Production II Artist Release & Performance	6 4 6	Music Technology II General Music Theory II Creativity and Identity Building Tracks	6 3 5 4	Industry and Entrepreneurs hip	10	Elective 1 * Elective 2 Elective 3 Free space	4 4 4 4	
Subtotal		16		18		10	(4 choices)	16	60
<b>Total</b>		<b>38</b>		<b>36</b>		<b>20</b>		<b>30</b>	<b>120</b>

#### Overview of electives:

Course name	EC
Advanced DJ & Repertoire II	4
The Web, Social Media & Distribution	4
The Art of Remixing I (teacher A)	2
The Art of Remixing II (teacher B)	2
Music & Media II	4
Production II	4
Ableton Advanced Course	4
Apple Logic Certified Pro	4
Electronic Music History II	4
Art Theory: Pop & Electronic Music	4
Coaching & Course Development	4
Instrumental lesson (subsidiary subject)	4
Internship	4

## Methods of instruction

The lessons consist of a mix of lectures, practical seminars, creative projects, studio sessions and independent outputs. Through feedback, reflection and guidance, students are encouraged to take their own work to the next level. Knowledge acquired can be applied directly to the outputs students are working on. The lessons will be adapted as necessary to students' individual learning needs. The course contents do not change, but one student can focus more on a competency he or she needs to develop, while another can focus on another competency. Standard 3 examines in greater detail how teachers can facilitate such a tailored approach.

The lesson material consists of software, a well-equipped studio environment and various books and articles from periodicals. The teaching is truly tailored to the students' needs. Various themes are revisited in a number of the lessons.

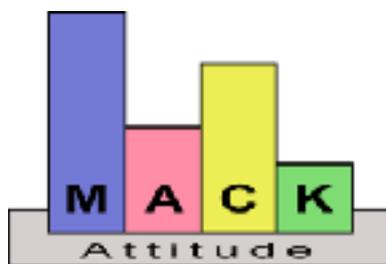
Classes are given in a lecture hall, a computer lab and three electronic music studios. These are furnished with computers with professional software, hardware synthesizers and additional studio equipment. Students can also avail themselves of drop-in classes in the studio of the main building and use the recording facilities there.

## Assessment and testing

### A-MACK assessment

All terms and courses are concluded with an assessment in the form of a presentation, examination, paper, etc. The description of each course describes how assessment is carried out. The A-MACK student monitoring system is used throughout the degree programme as a reflective assessment system and communication model. The A-MACK system is a transparent, valid and reliable monitoring system and serves as the guiding principle underlying personal development.

In a nutshell, A-MACK stands for Attitude and Motoric, Auditory, Creative and Knowledge skills.



- A - Attitude
- M - Motorische vaardigheden
- A - Auditieve vaardigheden
- C - Creatieve vaardigheden
- K - Kennis vaardigheden

The A-MACK monitoring system is applied starting from admission up to and including the final examination and in respect of all interim assessments and assignments. Students learn to deal with feedback by means of the A-MACK system from the beginning of the course, thus enabling them to gather information much more consciously, continue to ask questions when things are unclear and refine their communication and strategies.

The table below shows how the basic skills are broken down for each part of the system. It also makes clear on which criteria students are assessed.

A	M	A	C	K
Independence	Attitude	Listening skills	Composition and remix	Insight
Motivation	Movement	Sound	Arrangement	Knowledge of the material
Concentration Energy	Mastery of the material	Aural skills	Production	Analytical ability
Boldness Individuality	Sound association	Musical imagination	Self-sufficient Authentic	Knowledge of the music industry
Discipline	Coordination	Sound production	Concept development	Music theory

Using this system, the team of teachers discusses the entire student population once every trimester (in the first year) or semester (second year). The resulting insights are then discussed with the students via the mentors and lead to new study goals and strategies. The level indicator and structure of the two-year curriculum discussed in the previous sections have also been adapted to the A-MACK monitoring system. The qualitative level expected of students at the end of year 1 and year 2 has been formulated for each component, thereby creating a holistic rubric for the programme based on the A-MACK monitoring system. As a result, expectations for the student are made transparent, and the intersubjective reliability of the inter-assessors, too, increases. The result is presented in the table found in annex 1.

Once assessment of the individual subjects has taken place and the teachers have drawn up their A-MACK reports, they jointly spend one week for each unit assessing the students, focusing on what the students still need to acquire during the next unit. In some cases, if students already far exceed the final level, a tailored curriculum will be created. After the teacher meeting, the A-MACK reports are collected, and an overarching report produced. Mentors give students feedback on this information, providing them with the most important focus points, learning goals and artistic challenges for the coming term. For example, if a student is technically very far advanced, but still has a way to go to develop their collaborative skills, he or she can draw up a plan together with the mentor and/or other teachers to focus more on this area. Feedback for students ensures that they have a clear picture of where room for development still exists and where things are actually going very well.

### **Final assignment**

The final assignment will depend on how individual students conceive of, and intend to pursue, their career. It consists of two parts: a project plan and a graduation assignment. The final project consists of a recording featuring four or five of the student's own works. The project plan lays the foundation for the final project. It must be written out in full and submitted electronically, and present an artistic and business plan, as well as a media strategy. The final project itself consists of an EP featuring four or five works which are the student's own compositions. The mentor and teachers help students shape their identity as artists. The business coordinator has office hours to help all students shape their work plan. Mentoring and consultations during office hours will intensify in the final term as students prepare for the final project.