EKA Estonian Academy of Arts

SELF-EVALUATION REPORT FOR INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION 2024

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Abbreviations

AA	EKA open academy
AI	artificial intelligence
AL	Architecture and Urban Design Integrated Curriculum, also Architecture and Urban Planning INT in EKA
ArchiPrix	biennial competition for architecture, urban planning and landscape architecture graduation projects
ARTI	continuing education information system at EKA
ASTRA	institutional development programme for R & D and higher education institutions in Estonia
BA	Bachelor's studies
BAUA	Baltic Architects Unions Association
BIM	Building Information Modeling
BIP	Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programme
BKU	Fine Arts Bachelor Curriculum, also known as Fine Arts BA in EKA
BMAT	Fashion, Textile and Accessory Design Bachelor's Curriculum, also BA Fashion, Textile and Accessory Design in EKA
CIRRUS	Nordic-Baltic Network of Art and Design Education
CLO 3D	fashion visualisation software
Cumulus	International Association of Universities and Colleges of Art, Design and Media
DAMA	Nordic-Baltic Network of Higher Level Dance Education Institutions
DiMa	The Sustainable Design and Materials Lab in EKA
DKT	Art History and Visual Culture Studies Doctoral Programme, also known as Art History and Visual Culture Studies PhD in EKA
DoraPlus	European Regional Development Fund programme for increasing the international competitiveness of higher education
DreamApply	information system for admission of international students
DSKD	Design School Kolding
EAAE	European Association for Architectural Education
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System (1 ECTS = 26 hours)
EDDA Norden	Network of Nordic and Baltic Higher Art Education Institutions
EKA	Estonian Academy of Arts
EKA Creative Cluster	EKA project in ASTRA (2014-2020)
EKA wiki	EKA intranet
EKKM	Contemporary Art Museum of Estonia
ELIA	European League of Art Institutes
EMTA	Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre
EMÜ	Estonian University of Life Sciences
ENG	in English
ENIC/NARIC	European Network of National Information Centres on Academic Recognition and Mobility/National Academic Recognition Information Centres
ENQA	The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQ-Arts	Enhancing Quality in the Arts (ENQA affiliate)
Erasmus+	European Union programme for education, training, youth and sport
EST	in Estonian
EstQF	Estonian Qualifications Framework
ETAG	Estonian Research Council
ETHO	European Technical Heads Organisation
ETIS	Estonian Research Information System
FashionSEEDS	Erasmus+ strategic project Fashion Society, Economic & Environmental Design-led Sustainability
FashionTEX	CREA-CULT project on the digitalisation of fashion education
FAST45	Futures Art School Trends 2045 (2021-23), ERASMUS+ Knowledge Alliance Project
FTE	full time equivalent
GIS	geographic information system
HAKA	Estonian Quality Agency for Education
HARNO	Education and Youth Board
Harvard GSD	Harvard University Graduate School of Design
ICT	information communication technology
JC	joint curriculum
KOV	local government
KTKDK	Graduate School of Culture Studies and Arts
KUMU	KUMU Art Museum

KUNO	Nordic-Baltic Network of Fine Art Education
KVI	Institute of Art History and Visual Culture
LCA	Life-cycle Assessment
LIFE IP BuildEst	LIFE integrated project Pursuing Estonian National Climate Ambition Through Smart and Resilient Renovation
MA	Master's studies
MAKK/MACA	Contemporary Art Master's Programme
MIxD	Interaction Design International Master's Programme, also Interaction Design MA
MOME	Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design Budapest
Moodle	online learning management system used at EKA
MuIS	Information System of Estonian Museums
MUKOLA	Cultural Heritage and Conservation Lab
n/a	Not available
NBAA	Nordic Baltic Academy of Architecture
NCAD	National College of Art and Design, Dublin
NEMC	The North Estonia Medical Centre
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
Nordplus	Educational programme of the Nordic Council of Ministers to promote and strengthen cooperation between the Nordic and Baltic countries
OSKA Report	Forecast of Estonia's labour and skills needs
PAKK	Timber Architecture Research Center inEKA
PARTGO	joint programme Digital and Critical Views on Public Art Pedagogy
PERH	The North Estonia Medical Centre
PI	principal investigator
QGIS	geographic information system software
RDC	Research, development and creative activity
RMIT	RMIT University, Australia
RMIT PRS	RMIT Practice Research Symposium
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAIS	admission information system
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SIS	Study Information System (in EKA Tahvel)
T4EU	TRANSFORM4EUROPE ERASMUS+ European University Alliance
TAO	EKA research and development office
TKTK	TTK University of Applied Sciences
TLÜ	Tallinn University
TTÜ	Tallinn University of Technology
TÜ	University of Tartu
TÜ VKA	University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy.
TUAS	Turku Arts Academy
ÜTAK	EKA Centre for General Theory Subjects
VR	Virtual Reality
VVIS	information system for admission of international students
WD	document management system used at EKA
YTAA	Young Talent Architecture Award, EUmies Awards

Glossary

This section addresses specific discrepancies between international higher education terminology and the terminology used at EKA due to SIS Tahvel, which is employed by high schools, vocational schools, and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Estonia. The distinctions are as follows:

Subject (EKA term): In EKA, the term 'Subject' is equivalent to 'course' in international higher education contexts.

Subject Card (EKA term): Corresponding to what is traditionally known as a 'course description,' the 'Subject Card' provides an overview of the subject, including its content, volume, objectives, and learning outcomes.

Subject Programme (EKA term): Analogous to the 'syllabus' in international higher education, this document outlines the details of the subject, including the timetable, required materials, assignments, assessment criteria, and other pertinent information that guides both teaching and learning.

EKA regulations or other linked documents

Foundational Acts

- EKA Act
- Statutes of EKA
- EKA Development Plan 2021-2025 (subject to change, pending approval)
- EKA Code of Ethics
- EKA Gender Equality Plan 2025

Study regulations

- EKA Study Regulations (subject to change, pending approval)
- EKA Doctoral Study Regulations
- Admission Rules of EKA
- Procedure for Ensuring the Organization and Quality of Continuing Education EKA
- EKA Artificial Intelligence in Education

Research, development and creative practice

- EKA Research, Development and Creativity Strategy 2021–2025
- Procedure Governing EKA Research Centres
- Estonian Artistic Research Framework Agreement

Personnel and recognition

- EKA Rules on Employment Relations with Academic Staff Members
- Principles of recognition at EKA
- Involvement of Non-Staff Members in the Teaching Activities of EKA and Their Remuneration Procedure
- EKA Principles for Employee Motivation
- EKA Onboarding Programme for New Employees
- EKA Good Leadership Practice

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Appendix 3 Fine Arts BA (BKU) curriculum diagrams

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4a. UT6111 Art, Architecture, Design and Society III
4b. KU6382 Questions of Contemporary Art 5. Feminist Research and Art Practices
4c. KU6280 Installation and Sculpture Studio 7
4d. KU6280 Graphic Art Practice 1
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8b. ÜT6012 EM Creative Workers - Basics of Entrepreneurship
8c. TE6336 Biomaterials
8d. MO6135 Ethno Collection
8e. AK6202 Accessory project

Appendix 9 Fashion, Accessory and Textile Design BA (BMAT) teaching staff table

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12b. AL7429 Architecture and Urban Planning 7
12c. AI7421 Urban Prototyping and Analyses
12d. A2-2024 3DL Studium-Form Study 2
12e. AL6331 Photography

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Exhibition "New Home for the Estonian Academy of Arts"

Grand opening of EKA's new building. Photos: Raul Meel

ANALYSIS OF THE ORGANISATION AND ACTIVITIES OF THE ESTONIAN ACADEMY OF ARTS

I General introduction of EKA. Brief description of the self-evaluation preparation process. Aggregated data on students and employees.

1.1. Brief introduction of the Estonian Academy of Arts

The Estonian Academy of Arts (hereafter EKA, the Academy) is the only public arts university in Estonia. It is a contemporary academy where artists, designers, architects and art historians are engaged in current and future topics and issues as well as the application and development of traditional techniques. EKA recognises its responsibility for the organisation and quality of education, continuing education and research in the fields of art that shape society's cultural space and living environment.

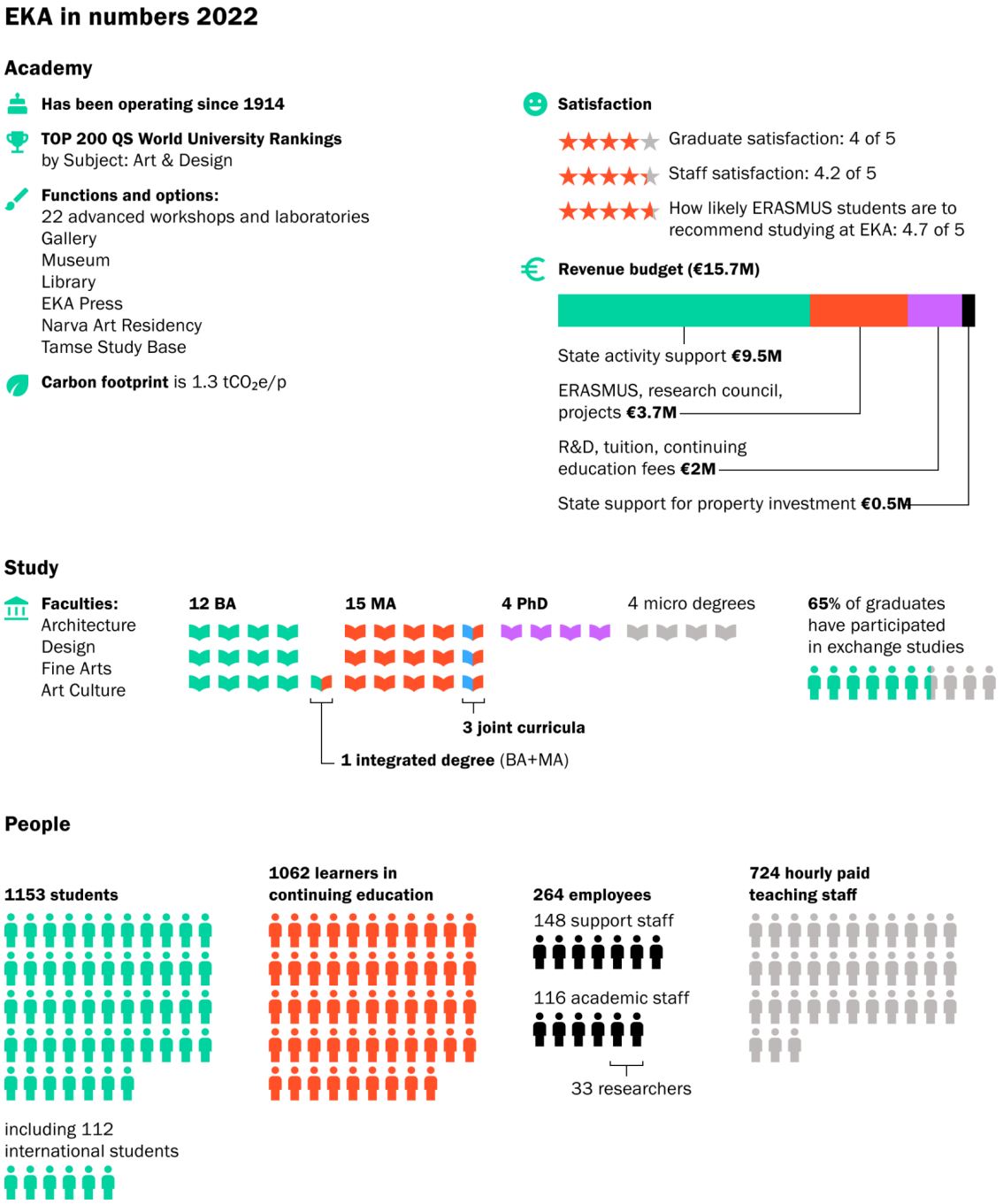


Figure 1. EKA in numbers 2022

1.1.1. EKA's mission, vision and strategic objectives

As an educational, research, creative and cultural institution, EKA is guided in its activities by the principle of constant change in the culture of art and continuously engages with innovations at both the teaching and research levels.

EKA's mission is to be a platform for creative and critical thinking, to advance cultural and social life in Estonia and to interpret and analyse developments around the world. As the only public arts university in Estonia, we provide higher education in architecture, design, art and art culture. We support Estonia's development by making sense of and shaping the cultural space and helping to create a more sustainable living environment.

EKA's vision is to be a university that offers one of the highest-quality educations in art, architecture and design in the Nordic and Baltic region and is a leader in creative work, research and development in the field in Estonia. A culturally diverse EKA is a sustainable and open university based on creative self-expression, co-creation and the inclusion of different perspectives. With the help of leading experts in their field, the students learn to be independent and responsible creative actors. EKA brings together the best experts in the fields of fine arts, design, architecture, art history, cultural heritage and conservation and is growing in influence as a major centre of creative thought. EKA offers an opportunity to link creative work to wider developments in society and thereby gain insight into Estonia and the world today and tomorrow. EKA is a force for shaping cultural life and pointing out new directions, and an attractive fixture on the art scene for both the local community and visitors.

To realise this vision, EKA's Development Plan 2021-2025 sets out four field-specific objectives[1] (Table 1).

Table 1. EKA strategic objectives and desired outcomes

Field	The strategic objective of the EKA Development Plan	Desired result
Teaching	EKA curricula are up-to-date and offer a top-class higher education.	EKA is a promoter of art, design and architecture education and a maintainer of continuity, offering development and creativity-based higher education opportunities at all levels of higher education and continuing education in art, architecture, design, humanities and art education.
Research, development and creative work	Research at EKA creates new knowledge for society and culture both through academic research and innovative artistic research practices. EKA is part of the international art field and research in this field.	EKA cultivates art and science, including artistic research, while emphasising both domestic and international collaboration and influence.
Societal impact	The activities of EKA generate value in different walks of life.	EKA's activities enrich cultural and artistic life and contribute to the development of many other areas of life. The Academy stands for the preservation and promotion of art, design and architecture and their study in society.
EKA as an organisation EKA is an organisation based on dedicated people, with a culture of open communication and governance and opportunities for professional self-realisation.		

1.1.2 A brief history

EKA stands as Tallinn's oldest present-day university, established in 1914, which makes it the only one founded before World War I and Estonian independence in 1918. The founding body, the Tallinn Estonian Art Society, aimed to elevate Estonians craftsmanship skills so that they would rise above the ranks of manual workers. Initially modelled on the German Kunstgewerbeschule-type of arts and crafts school, it offered a

[1] EKA's strategic management workdesk is discussed in more detail in section 3.1 "Strategic Management".

diverse range of applied arts specialities. In 1938, fine arts were added at the higher education level. This was part of the government's capital-centred policy to diminish the role of Pallas, Tartu's prestigious fine arts higher education institution.

After World War II, the Soviet authorities, in a Stalinist purge, destroyed Tartu's higher art education altogether, merging it with the Tallinn school in 1950. As the Tallinn Polytechnic Institute gave up architectural studies, the art school also grew by including this speciality in 1951. During the Soviet era, EKA was the most international of Estonian universities. Here, Latvians, Lithuanians and Moldovans studied subjects not taught in their home countries. Many of the students did their internships in art schools with strong traditions in the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland.

After the restoration of independence, in the 1990s, art history and cultural heritage and conservation specialities were opened and opportunities for doctoral studies were established. The new century saw the rise of photography in higher education and the creation of a New Media Department. This was followed by the gradual introduction of English-language international curricula. In 2003, the publishing house was founded, and the museum was inaugurated in 2019. A structural reorganisation in 2006 resulted in the formation of four faculties: Fine Arts, Design, Architecture and Art Culture. Such a constellation of specialities and units positions EKA as a significantly larger-than-average arts university both in Estonia and in Europe. But at the same time, it is to be expected that in a small country there are no separate schools for different specialities. Teaching artists and architects within the same school has been regarded as a key strength of the Estonian cultural landscape. EKA has a strong identity and a firm place in Estonian cultural consciousness, which is why consolidations or other changes would be painful (no such plans are known at the moment).

Over the years, EKA's activities have been significantly shaped by the environment where learning, creative and research activities take place. From 1917-2009, the school was located at the beginning of Tartu Road, in a 19th-century gymnasium building, which was extended in the 1920s and 1960s-70s. In anticipation of a new building, the building was demolished in 2009 and the Academy moved to rented premises where it stayed for almost 10 years. The current main building gives students the opportunity to acquire skills in 22 studios and workshops equipped with state-of-the-art technology and the open studio areas allow students to study and create together. To serve the community, EKA has an open gallery, a library (with an extensive e-library collection), a museum, an art residency NART in Narva, a study base on the island of Muhu in Tamse, as well as its own publishing house EKA Press and equipment rental. The dormitory Muusa Majutus is shared with the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre.

EKA's post-independence opening up to the global educational landscape in 1990s reflects a deep commitment to internationalisation, including study mobility and membership in numerous international networks and associations.

1.1.3 EKA organisational structure

1.1.3.1 General management of EKA

The general management level of EKA consists of the Council, the Senate and the Rector.

The **Council** is the highest management body of EKA and it is responsible for the long-term and sustainable development of the Academy and for making important economic, financial and asset-related decisions, ensuring the achievement of the Academy's objectives. The Council adopts the Statutes, the Development Plan, the budget and approves the budget implementation report, the financial plan and the annual accounts, lays down the principles for the conduct of economic activities, etc. The Council is chaired by its Chairman. The Council consists of nine members, four of whom are appointed by the Senate following the procedure laid down in the Statutes of the Academy, one member is appointed by the Estonian Academy of Sciences and four members are appointed by the Minister responsible for the field from among persons who have the necessary knowledge of the Academy's fields of activity, economics or business to perform the duties of a member of the Council and connect the Academy with society and an impeccable reputation. The Council's mandate lasts for five years.

The **Senate is** the academic decision-making body that is responsible for the teaching, research, development and creative activities of EKA and ensures their high quality. The Senate is composed of 22 members,

including the Rector, two Vice Rectors, the Director of Finance and Administration, four Deans, the Head of the Open Academy, five student representatives for a year and eight academic staff representatives (two from each faculty for three years). Two Senate committees deal with general issues of teaching and research quality: the Academic Affairs Council and the Research Council. The Chairman of the Senate is the Rector.

The **Rector** is responsible for the general condition, development, reputation and execution of the budget of EKA and for the lawful and proper use of its financial resources. The **Rectorate** acts as an advisory body to the Rector and the **steering board** is convened for operational management, consisting of members of the Rectorate and the heads of the support units. EKA has two Vice Rectors: the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs and the Vice Rector for Research. Administrative and financial matters are handled by the Director of Finance and Administration.

The organisational structure of EKA is shown in the figure below.

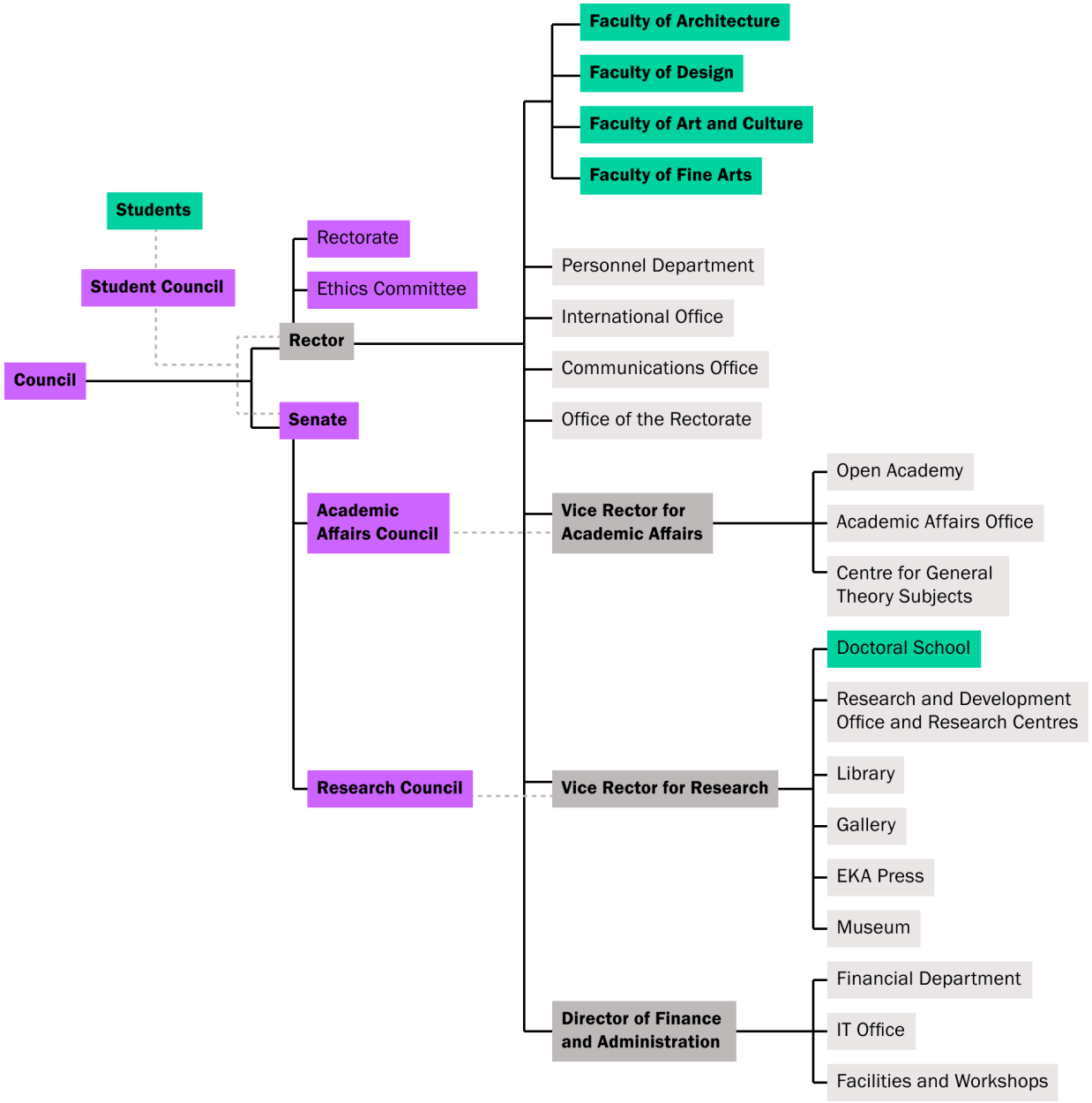


Figure 2. EKA structure

1.1.3.2 Faculties and student body

EKA has four faculties: **Faculty of Architecture**, **Faculty of Design**, **Faculty of Art and Culture** and **Faculty of Fine Arts**. In addition, there is a **Doctoral School** as an academic unit. They train artists, architects, designers, art historians, art teachers as well as heritage conservationists-restorers. In many curricula, it is possible to obtain higher education in Estonia only at EKA, at the Bachelor's, Master's and doctoral levels. Lifelong

learning opportunities are offered by the **Open Academy**, where it is possible to participate in a pre-academy, continuing education courses or acquire a micro-degree.

The **Student Council** is the responsible and organising representative body of the students, which represents the students in relations with the Academy, Estonian and international organisations, institutions and individuals. The representative body appoints the representatives of the students to the EKA Senate and other decision-making and advisory bodies of EKA based on the Statutes.

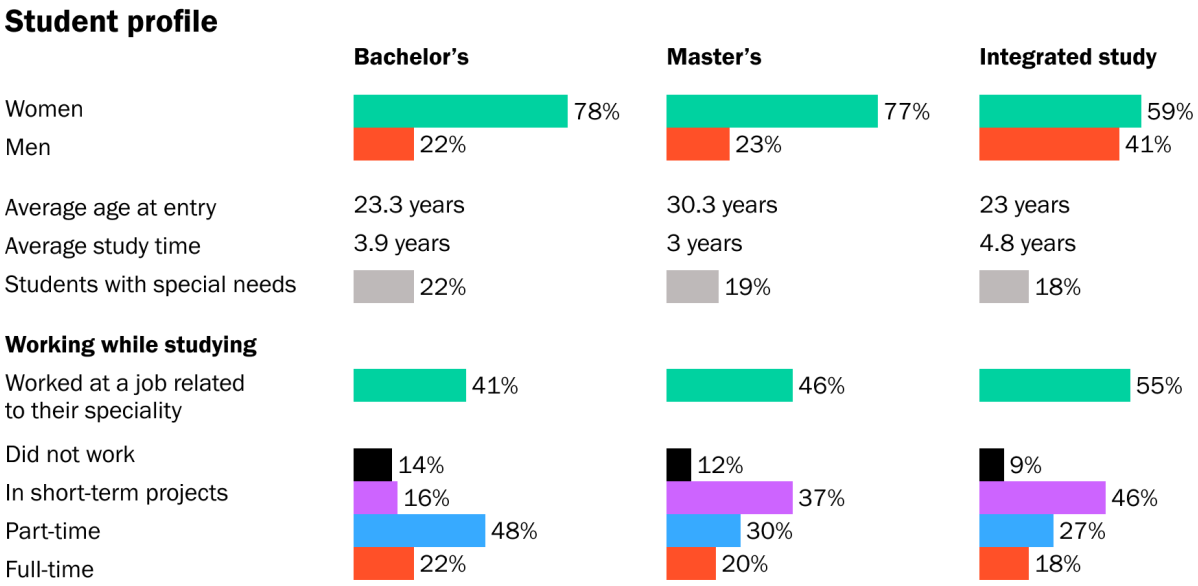


Figure 3. EKA student profile by degree (based on graduates in 2022/23)

1.2. A brief description of the self-evaluation and the report writing process

1.2.1 Areas of responsibility for preparing the Self-Evaluation Report

The preparation of the Self-Evaluation Report (SER), started in early 2023, when the main persons responsible for the preparation of the report by standards and areas were agreed upon at the Rectorate's level, who in turn formed the following working group:

Table 2. Areas of responsibility for preparing the EKA Self-Evaluation Report

	Standard / Area	Responsible persons and leaders
I	General introduction	Mart Kalm (Rector), Kristiina Krabi-Klanberg (Head of Quality and Development), Elisabeth Kuusik (Head of Academic Affairs), Dagmar Raide (Head of Human Resources)
II	Main changes to the standards following the recommendations of previous institutional accreditation	Kristiina Krabi-Klanberg (Head of Quality and Development)
III	Self-evaluation by standard:	
3.1	Strategic management	Mart Kalm (Rector), Jorma Sarv (Strategy Consultant)
3.2	Resources	Dagmar Raide (Head of Human Resources), Andres Tammsaar (Director of Finance and Administration), Solveig Jahnke (Head of Communications)
3.3	Quality culture	Kristiina Krabi-Klanberg (Head of Quality and Development)
3.4	Academic ethics	Pille Epner (TAO Leading Specialist)
3.5	Internationalisation	Sandra Mell (Head of International Office)

3.6	Teaching staff	Dagmar Raide (Head of Human Resources), Anne Pikkov (Vice Rector for Academic Affairs)
3.7	Curriculum	Anne Pikkov (Vice Rector for Academic Affairs), Elisabeth Kuusik (õppeosakonna juhataja)
3.8	Learning and teaching	Anne Pikkov (Vice Rector for Academic Affairs), Anneli Porri (Lecturer)
3.9	Student assessment	Anne Pikkov (Vice Rector for Academic Affairs), Anneli Porri (Lecturer)
3.10	Learning support systems	Elisabeth Kuusik (Head of Academic Affairs)
3.11	Research, development and/or creative activities (RDC)	Anu Allas (Vice Rector for Research), Pille Epner (TAO Leading Specialist)
3.12	Service to society	Mart Kalm (Rector), Solveig Jahnke (Head of Communications), Elise Jagomägi (Head of the Open Academy)
IV-V	Enhancing the curriculum self-evaluation and appendices of selected curricula	Deans of Faculties and Heads of Curricula (Professor Liina Siib, Professor Piret Puppart, Professor Andres Ojari, Associate Professor Tanel Kärp, Professor Andres Kurg)

1.2.2 Main activities and process description

The process of preparing the Self-Evaluation Report consisted of a variety of activities, including sharing and presenting background materials related to the topics and expectations of the evaluation, holding discussions, co-creating texts and refining data in shared document formats, etc. During the process, seminars were held with representatives of the fields and the draft report was discussed in the Senate and the joint meeting of the Council. The analysis of the curricula was based on the results of the regular analysis of the curricula conducted in 2023 focusing on the year 2022. A more detailed timetable and action plan are set out in the table below.

Table 3. Work plan for the completion of the EKA Self-Evaluation Report

Year	Time or period	Activities
2023	February	Drawing up the initial structure of the SER, presenting the work plan to the steering board, agreeing on the timetable and the division of work
		Translation of legislation, clarification of raw data, revision of previous IA protocol, terminology agreements in EKA wiki
	March	Informing EKA members about the institutional accreditation process (EKA wiki, newsletter).
	14 March	HAKA institutional accreditation training
	April	Curriculum analysis submission and feedback seminar
	April–June	Drafting of the first version of the SER by standards
	August–November	Self-evaluation writing and feedback in workgroup
	19 September	Discussion of the SER draft at the joint meeting of the Council, the Senate and steering board
	October–November	Institutional accreditation information session. Opportunity to read and comment on SER in EKA wiki
	5 December	Approval of the full version of SER and proposals for the renewal of the EKA development plan by the Senate
	December–January	SER translation, editing and layout
2024	31 January	Submission of SER to HAKA
	February–April	EKA in-house trainings and discussions
	24-26 April	Expert panel site visit to EKA

In March 2023, HAKA organised a one-day training for members of the working groups and other interested parties (67 EKA staff and student representatives attended).

The preparation of the Self-Evaluation Report aligned with the revision of the EKA Development Plan 2021-2025. A comprehensive update of the EKA Development Plan took place in 2020-2021, with a scheduled preview for the 2023-2027 period planned for 2023, with the anticipated changes set to be

approved by the Council in April 2024. As a result, the analysis of EKA's strategic direction planning and implementation overlapped with the SER preparation, enriching both processes with more value and depth.

The task of the working group dealing with the topics was to carry out a self-evaluation following HAKA's institutional accreditation standards. They analysed the current situation and prepared a report with proposals for development and changes. Regular discussions took place within the working group throughout the process.

In September 2023, a joint meeting of the Council, the Senate and the steering board took place. During this meeting, the working group provided an overview of the strengths, the areas in need of improvement and the planned development activities related to the standards. The SER draft had been open for review in the EKA wiki by all EKA employees since 30 November 2023, and comments could be submitted until 7 December 2023. The report was also reviewed by three external experts. Major changes included strengths and improvement activities, data disclosure and analysis. The SER was approved by the Senate on December 5, 2023.

The Self-Evaluation Report was finalised and submitted to HAKA in January 2024. The SER is available to EKA staff and students on the EKA wiki and will be on public display on the EKA website. In addition, according to the internal communication plan, members of EKA will be informed through various channels (newsletter, interactive seminars-trainings, etc.) after the completion of the SER.

1.3. Aggregated data on students and employees

1.3.1 Aggregated data on students by degree levels

Over the past four years, there has been a 4.7% reduction in student enrolment (see Table 4). This decline is attributed to a decrease in the number of curricula offered; there are five fewer curricula open to admissions than five years ago (see section 3.7 "Curriculum" for a detailed annual overview). This, in turn, is linked to the reorganisation of Bachelor education at the Faculty of Design, which reduced the number of BA curricula. During the COVID pandemic, the number of dropouts and graduates both increased. The study of arts disciplines relies heavily on creative practice, which is difficult to do remotely, and as the EKA buildings were closed to the public for certain periods in 2020, this may have affected the dropout rate. However, the number of dropouts at EMTA and TÜ decreased during the pandemic. On the other hand, there has been a significant increase in the number of graduates, which is related to measures to support graduation in the nominal time in EKA.

Table 4. Number of EKA students by degree level, international indicators, and number of graduates for the academic years 2018/19–2022/23

Students, curricula	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Number of students*	1,140	1,210	1,215	1,209	1,153
including in Bachelor's studies	*633*	*691*	*670*	*659*	*635*
including in integrated studies	*107*	*116*	*124*	*130*	*128*
*including in Master's studies***	*343*	*344*	*361*	*358*	*321*
including in doctoral studies	*57*	*59*	*60*	*62*	*69*
including in international curricula	*165*	*168*	*161*	*148*	*127*
Number and percentage of international students	95 (8.3%)	106 (8.8%)	118 (9.7%)	121 (10%)	112 (9.7%)
Number of students admitted	345	343	335	319	310
Number of dropouts	102	97	112	131	106
Percentage of dropouts	8.9%	8%	9.2%	10.8%	9.2%
Number of graduates	217	198	266	265	279

* Data are given as of 10 November of each year indicated in the table, not including data on joint curricula
** Not including data on joint curricula

Appendix 1. Number of students, admissions, dropouts and graduates by curriculum in the academic years of 2017/18.

1.3.2 Aggregated data on academic and support staff

The number of permanent staff has increased by 25% over five years (see Table 5). The growth is mainly due to an increased share in the field of research and development. New grants, entrepreneurship and collaborative projects were added that needed content providers and doctoral junior researcher positions were created as part of the doctoral education reform. The growth in the field of RDC has been accompanied by an increase in the support structure, which supports project coordination and management. In addition, the outsourcing of the cleaning service was abandoned and the building's cleaning staff were employed with the employment contract. Members of the management, workshop managers, and masters also fall under the support staff.

Table 5. Number of EKA academic and support staff 2018–2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total number of employees	211	217	237	248	264
Number of employees (FTE)	179	187	192	204	219
Number of academic staff	92	99	107	110	116
Number of support staff	119	118	130	138	148
Percentage of academic staff with a doctoral degree	23%	23%	28%	26%	26%
Number of international academic staff	4	5	8	6	8

Photo: Marek Metslaid

Photo: Architecture Department Archive

Photos: Tõnu Tunnel

II Main changes to standards following the recommendations of the previous institutional accreditation

The institutional accreditation of EKA took place in 2017 and the EKKA Council for Higher Education Evaluation made the following recommendations during the evaluation.

Table 6. Main changes in EKA activities based on the 2017 institutional accreditation recommendations

Recommendations in the evaluation report	Change
Organisation management and operation	
1. The organisational structure of EKA should be streamlined and harmonised. The competences, tasks, membership, activities and information-sharing between all the councils should be clearly defined. It is recommended to optimise the management and administrative structure of the Academy.	In 2019, the management structures of EKA were reorganised with the changes to the EKA Act and Statutes – a Council and Senate were established, involving stakeholders. The Academic Affairs Council and the Research Council became advisory bodies to the Senate. Deans were merged with the Rectorate, the academic structure and the connection between departments and curricula were adjusted and the structure of workshops was streamlined. The Rector has set up a steering board for operational management and it has its own rules of procedure. During the implementation of changes, academic self-governance, academic and creative freedom, collaboration, inclusivity, openness and flexibility have been considered important. The current situation is described in more detail in section 3.1 "Strategic management".
2. Inter- and trans-disciplinary cooperation between different faculties, with other universities and beyond the academic sphere should be strengthened, using the full potential of the new building.	EKA's new main building (2018) was designed to promote the integration of specialities and interdisciplinarity. A system for cross-use of workshops and laboratories was created. The composition of the Rectorate was expanded (2020) to include the Deans, so that interdisciplinarity would be addressed at a more senior level of management. In the Faculty of Design, narrow applied arts specialities were merged into broad thematic curricula. Three interdisciplinary thematic research centres were created (2021). Interdisciplinarity is further supported by entrepreneurial cooperation, joint curricula and micro degrees (including in cooperation with TLÜ, TTÜ and TÜ). The Centre for General Theory Subjects (2017) was created with the aim of offering cross-faculty subjects that bring together students from different curricula. Transdisciplinarity is also reflected in the choice of topics for theses, the objectives of study mobility and the programmes of public conferences organised by the EKA (e.g. artificial intelligence, health, sustainability, etc.).
3. In addition to the qualitative indicators in the development and action plan of the university, the quantitative indicators should be defined and clearly stated that could be used to measure the achievement of the objectives. The persons who are responsible for achieving the main operational objectives of the action plan and not just individual measures should be defined. The objectives of the action plan should be monitored annually at the management level, its results should be presented publicly and transparently and the next steps should be planned for the future.	As part of the inclusive process, the action plan of the EKA Development Plan 2021-2025 includes quantitative indicators and heads of fields to measure the achievement of the objectives. The results are reported on the EKA wiki and in the annual report. The annual report is approved by the Senate and the Council, the results are discussed in the Rectorate and the steering board meeting and the annual report is freely available to everyone online.
4. In the area of staff development (including training of teaching staff), particular emphasis should be placed on the nature and potential outcomes of artistic research, to fully involve the faculties of Fine Arts, Design and Architecture.	The creation and dissemination of competence in artistic research has been targeted through the Doctoral School. Since 2019, the Art and Design PhD curriculum has been developed with the aim of engaging students in the field of fine arts and design in artistic research. In 2020, an artistic research working group was set up together with EMTA and TLÜ, with which a framework agreement for artistic research was developed by 2021 and in 2023, a good practice for the evaluation of artistic research was completed. For more information on this topic, see section 3.11.3 "Artistic research" of the report.
5. EKA should be better marketed to attract more international students and teaching staff to study and teach there. More longer-term mobility abroad for teaching staff needs to be strategically	The Communications Office now includes a marketing specialist, who is responsible for marketing local and international curricula. The marketing communication budget has been increased, additional resources for international marketing have been requested from the Study in Estonia and Dora+ programmes and support has been received from the T4E programme.

supported. A thorough market analysis of all curricula is recommended.	In 2022/23, the share of international students at EKA was 9.7% (the national limit is 15%), with an average competition of 3.6 candidates per place. The number of international curricula has increased as well. The number of international academic staff at EKA is 7% and all curricula make use of the possibility to involve Erasmus experts in both the core curriculum and the open lecture series. EKA's work organisation is conducive to long-term mobility abroad for academic staff. An increasing number of academic staff are spending their free semester in residency outside Estonia. The market analysis has preceded the opening of new curricula and alumni surveys have been conducted for existing curricula. The current situation is described in more detail in section 3.5 "Internationalisation".
6. IT systems should be upgraded to reinforce online management, information exchange and e-learning platforms.	The opening of the new building in 2018 was accompanied by a technology procurement (€2 million), which had a significant impact on the quality of teaching facilities. In 2019, EKA switched fully to paperless administration (with the support of Webdesktop). In 2020, a new SIS - Tahvel - was introduced, major developments were made in Moodle, the ARTI continuing education information system was launched and a technical solution for the quality manual was created. In 2021, a digital learning designer was engaged to help teaching staff and heads of curriculum implement e-learning opportunities, and an EKA TV platform with technical support was created. 2022 saw the launch of the intranet EKA wiki, the creation of digital learning awards to highlight best practices, the introduction of Palk365, a human resources and payroll program, and the creation of mobility.artun.ee, an information platform supporting student exchange created in collaboration with students from the Faculty of Design. There has been a marked increase in the use of cloud services. The current situation is described in more detail in section 3.2.3 "Digital EKA".
7. EKA should no longer consider itself a "small higher education institution", as it is (compared to other European art schools) a fairly large and complex organisation.	EKA has positioned itself as a larger and more ambitious partner than before, including in the management activities of international organisations (ELIA, CUMULUS, CIRRUS, KUNO). EKA is a partner in several large-scale international projects (FAST45, Transform4Europe) and an organiser of discussions (e.g. ELIA Leadership Symposium 2022).
8. The quality committee should be part of the university structure, with clearly defined objectives and means to achieve them and with the power to formulate a more ambitious quality management policy.	The role of the quality committee is shared between the Academic Affairs Council and the Research Council, which meet regularly, the Senate and the Council monitor the achievement of the objectives and the quality objectives are formulated in the development and action plan.
9. "Top-down" measures should be better balanced with support and development opportunities when assessing the performance of teaching staff. Otherwise, the drain of talented teaching staff to the private sector could become a serious problem for the university, as the punitive and intrusive nature of the assessment will undermine the teaching staff's satisfaction and motivation.	Since 2018, all staff, including teaching staff, have had performance development reviews with their direct supervisors. Since 2017, the regular Good Teaching Seminars (GTS) have been providing development support for teaching staff. Starting in 2020, there has been an annual course titled Help For Teaching Staff, which covers topics related to evaluation. The evaluation system was improved in 2020 with a measure to facilitate preparation. EKA staff have a significant motivation package and ample opportunities for international self-improvement. There has been no outflow to the private sector, rather a greater rotation with the private sector is needed for the sake of innovation. The current situation is reflected in section 3.6 "Teaching Staff".
10. Teaching staff repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with their salary levels. How teaching staff are remunerated needs to be made more transparent and understandable and comparable across different faculties – for example, it should be explained to teaching staff how exactly the salary for additional tasks is calculated. Teaching staff salaries should also be brought into line with those of other comparable universities.	There has been a steady increase in the salaries of both academic and support staff, e.g. the average salary of a professor has increased by 46% between 2018 and 2022 (cf more in section 3.2. “Resources”). A new salary regulation that streamlines the entire bonus system as well as principles for motivating staff have been adopted. In 2018, the Gambling Act was amended and a scholarship programme was established at the Cultural Endowment to stimulate the creative activities of teaching staff, to partly compensate for their lower salaries compared to research universities. At EKA, more than 20 members of the teaching staff receive this scholarship each year in addition to their salary. The commitment and satisfaction of academic staff is reflected in the report in section 3.2.1 "Human resource management".
11. It is advisable to analyse the justification and necessity of the unusually high proportion of professors at the university.	The proportion of professors has been brought into proportion with the staffing of departments, while the process is ongoing in the Faculty of Design.

12. The proportion of respondents to surveys on satisfaction with university management should be increased.	The number of respondents to the employee survey has increased. In the previous assessment period, the average number of respondents was 29.9%. However, since 2019, the average number of respondents has been 35% and in 2022 it was 39%.
13. There is a need to establish clearer internal rules on ethics violations.	The Code of Ethics has been repeatedly improved and a guide for the members of the Academy who encounter an ethical conflict has been developed. Staff and students are involved in the issues through discussion seminars. The current situation is described in more detail in section 3.4 "Academic Ethics".
Study activities	
14. The content of "student-centred learning" should be better defined in the university so that it is understood by all stakeholders. Students should be informed about the content and conduct of subject courses in a more systematic and user-friendly way, to give them, among other things, the opportunity to plan their own studies.	Student-centred learning is covered in the course Help For Teaching Staff, which is recommended for new teaching staff. In the Doctoral School, there is the subject Learning and Teaching at the University. The concept is explained separately in EKA ÕPE study information newsletter. The seminar Best Examples of Student-Centred Learning was organised in cooperation with the Baltic Film, Media and Arts School, involving both teaching staff and students. A separate measure has been added to the feedback of subject courses ("During my studies, I had the opportunity to participate in discussions with my study group and with the teacher(s)."). Subjects and semesters start with a brief introduction and setting of objectives. The needs of students with special needs are taken into account (see section 3.10.5). Students are involved in curriculum committees and student feedback is increasingly valued in the development of the quality of subjects. Analyses of curricula reveal practices that demonstrate a student-centred approach. There are already examples of subjects taught by students themselves. In the development of Tahvel, it has been important to make the content and delivery of the subject courses easily accessible and convenient for the students, including the involvement of EKA students in the development process.
15. More recognition should be given to students who pursue independent projects and entrepreneurship.	Opportunities are created for the public presentation of students' independent projects during assessments, special events, festivals, etc. A selection of projects are developed into final projects and presented at the TASE exhibition. The Young Artist/Designer/Architect Awards will be presented at the graduation. EKA also recognises applied research works (including in cooperation with the City of Tallinn). Participation in both local and international competitions (such as BAUA, ArchiPrix, Cumulus Green and international film festivals) is encouraged and the results are communicated through EKA and other channels.
16. The quality of subject descriptions, content, objectives, learning outcomes, teaching methods and assessment criteria varies considerably between faculties.	We have standardised the subject cards, subject programs and syllabi and have created supporting formats for these documents. In addition, EKA has organised training courses to ensure the consistency of information and quality. All teaching staff have the opportunity to consult with an art education lecturer to enhance the clarity and pedagogical competence of their subjects. Approximately five teaching staff members utilise this service each semester.
17. There seems to be a lack of a unified approach to interdisciplinary collaboration at the university.	Relocating the Academy to a single building in 2018 created a significantly more collaborative spatial atmosphere. A key interdisciplinary shift was the introduction of cross-use workshops in the new building, although this integration progressed gradually. Interdisciplinary collaborative projects are considered in the faculty performance funding (Dean's Fund). The common part of the specialities is enhanced by the Centre for General Theory Studies (established in 2017), which organises the theory modules of both Bachelor's and Master's studies.
18. There is a lack of clarity on the form and format of entrepreneurship education in curricula.	Since 2016, EKA has made entrepreneurship studies mandatory at both the BA and MA levels, blending general courses on entrepreneurial idea implementation with field-specific training across faculties. The BA curriculum focuses on foundational concepts like entrepreneurship, career development, intellectual property and project management. At the MA level, emphasis shifts towards professional self-identity within Estonia's creative economy, encouraging students to launch their own businesses or work as freelancers. This approach is reinforced through national internships, Erasmus+ funded traineeships, participation in business accelerators like the STARTER programme and collaborations with Garage48 for hackathons. EKA has initiated a spin-off company and advocates for entrepreneurship, but recognises the need to further develop project-based internships, specialised entrepreneurship courses and a sustainable entrepreneurship support framework.
19. The university lacks clear guidelines on how students' international	We adhere to the rules of the European Commission's Erasmus programme, ensuring that international internships are fully recognised within our curricula. This

internship experiences are assessed and taken into account in the curriculum.	integration is supported through the use of RPL for relevant experiences, such as the “Entrepreneurship internship”. Guidelines have been established to facilitate this process.
20. There is a widespread perception among teaching staff and students that the SIS does not allow for effective collection of student feedback. One option would be to introduce a more anonymous feedback system.	In 2020, the new SIS Tahvel was introduced, which allows student surveys to be conducted anonymously. The number of respondents to the surveys in Tahvel has increased significantly (from 39% by graduates in the spring semester of 2021/22 to 49% in the spring semester of 2022/23; from 19% for subjects in the autumn semester of 2020/21 to 89% in the spring semester of 2022/23) and the reason for this is that from 2021/22 it has been mandatory to complete the survey aimed at graduates and from 2022/23 the feedback survey for individual subjects.
21. At the Bachelor’s level, there is currently not enough introduction to research methods and research methods are not adequately covered at Master's level either.	As part of general theory subjects, students are supported by the elective module Academic and Self-Expressional Skills where students can choose one of four courses: Artistic Research, Basic Writing Course, Creative Writing or Argumentation and Public Speaking. This is complemented by more specific courses within the curricula (often tutored by researchers). In addition, all students will have the opportunity to participate in individual writing consultations coordinated by the Centre for General Theory Studies. In-house grants and the creation of research centres have increased opportunities to acquire research-related competencies.
22. There is no uniform assessment system at the university to ensure the comparability of assessment results and the link between assessment standards and learning outcomes. It is advisable to formalise the assessment processes and to consider the possibility of providing written feedback to students as part of the summative assessment and having them assess each other.	A series of assessment and feedback trainings and discussions have been carried out at EKA in 2018-2022. Estonia has a common assessment system at the higher education level and EKA legislation is based on it as well. The EKA Academic Affairs Council is of the opinion that the faculties represent fields with different assessment cultures, which is why it is not sensible to formalise uniform EKA-wide assessment processes. Good assessment practices have been shared and a set of Good Assessment and Feedback Practices has been drawn up in Good Teaching Seminars. In some curricula it is common practice to provide written feedback, and peer feedback and self-analysis is also used in different subjects.
23. It should be investigated what causes students' dissatisfaction with RPL counselling.	The use of the RPL framework has been continuously improved based on graduates' feedback (graduates' satisfaction with RPL counselling is above 4 of 5 points). Training for advisers has been organised on a regular basis.
24. Access to psychological and career counselling services should be improved, as demand is high.	Since 2017, EKA has employed a psychologist-career counsellor whose services have received positive feedback from students. Please read more from 3.10.1 “Learning Support Systems”.
25. It is advisable to formalise a process whereby student feedback is taken into account and changes are made at the institution and curriculum level.	Since 2020, an analysis has been carried out for each curriculum, with student feedback as an important input. The analysis is used as a basis for curriculum development and support for academic staff development. In addition, student feedback is used as input for the evaluation of academic staff.
Research, development and/or other creative activities	
26. Teaching staff should be better trained in artistic research, so that teaching staff from different faculties understand its nature and output and are prepared to participate in joint research projects.	As part of the PhD Vitamin course and Doctoral School guest lectures, relevant courses have been organised for potential doctoral students, which are open to all current and future teaching staff. There is also a framework agreement on artistic research and a basis for assessing artistic research. The topic was addressed at the 2023 conference of the network of teaching staff in creative disciplines. The current situation is described in more detail in section 3.11 "Research, development and creative activities".
27. The number of peer-reviewed research papers published in international journals should be increased to raise the international reputation of EKA.	Since 2018, the number of high-level publications has increased by 41% (from 34 to 48 (see Table 28), and in addition to these, there are other significant academic publications in the fields of fine arts and architecture (research project reports) that carry substantial value in the field. The outputs of artistic research are not necessarily published scientific articles. Recognising the diversity of research outputs is as important for EKA as increasing the number of publications.
Service to society	
28. More attention should be paid to the large Russian-speaking population when promoting EKA's activities.	The EKA Narva Art Residency (NART), located on the Estonian-Russian border in Narva, has been operating since 2015 as a successful integration project in Ida-Viru County, fostering dialogue through art and culture. NART offers the chance to introduce Russian-speakers to the professional contemporary international art

	scene and artists, as well as to appreciate local history and view it in a broader context. EKA has targeted potential students with a Russian mother tongue and the trend in enrolments of Russian school graduates is rising. Students are regularly directed to the Russian-language media to cover curriculum projects.
29. The Open Academy could set even more ambitious targets. Currently, the Academy is spread across the city in temporary premises, making it difficult for people to take part in its activities.	Almost all continuing education courses (81 out of 82 courses in 2022) take place in the main EKA building, with all the necessary classrooms and workshops. The ambition of the Open Academy in the EKA Development Plan relates, among other things, to research focuses, curricula related to entrepreneurship and sustainable thinking, micro-degrees, digital learning, master classes, the pre-academy programme, the development of international cooperation, the growth of private funding and the participation of alumni in learning and as trainers. The current situation is described in more detail in section 3.12.3 "Continuing education objectives".
30. It is advisable to measure the societal impact and results of EKA's activities in order to further develop them in the future.	One of the key indicators of EKA's Development Plan is the media coverage of the Academy's activities. EKA receives regular information on this, with a steady stream of positive coverage over the years. In addition, EKA participated in Kantar Emor's 2018 reputation survey of universities, according to which EKA is among the five most prestigious universities in Estonia (see also section 3.2.5 "EKA's internal and external communication").

Photos: Tõnu Tunnel

Photos: Tõnu Tunnel

III EKA self-evaluation by standards

3.1 Strategic management

#EKA's Act / #Open Management Arts University / #EKA Development Plan 2021-2025 / #Lessons learned from crises of the recent past

3.1.1 Management organisation and levels

The processes, choices, decisions, etc. related to the management of EKA can be divided into two broad categories: developments in the external environment (including various policies related to EKA's objectives, both at home and abroad) and developments in the internal environment, i.e. in EKA's own structure. Although the description of the external environment is not covered in depth in the current assessment, which focuses primarily on the organisation, it is worth mentioning that both international policy frameworks (e.g. sustainable development goals) and national policies (in particular Estonia 2035, education and culture policy guidelines and positioning e.g. with the state budget and other related areas) have a significant impact on EKA's activities. EKA's management objectives and activities are divided between different levels of management:

Table 7. EKA management levels

Level/area	**Basis/institution responsible**
Legal status, purpose and tasks	EKA Act
Long-term sustainable development	EKA Council
Strategic planning and monitoring of its implementation	EKA Rectorate
Ensuring the quality of studies, research, development and creative activities	EKA Senate
Organising day-to-day work, including student involvement	Faculties, departments, Student Council, steering board, other units

3.1.2 Impact of the EKA Act on management activities

The adoption of the Estonian Academy of Arts Act in 2019 significantly strengthened EKA's position. This legislative change came at a crucial time, following a period of crisis at the beginning of the decade marked by insufficient learning environments, reduced funding, debates over university mergers and the negative media image of art and art education. Establishing a renewed legislative foundation for EKA's development was critical. The direct impact on management included the establishment of the Council with external members to oversee financial and economic issues and the creation of the Senate, which is responsible for academic decisions. The transformation of the Academic Affairs Council and the Research Council into Senate committees was important in supporting the management structure.

3.1.3 Reorganisation of the EKA management structure

In 2020, the functions of the Rectorate and the steering board were more clearly delineated – the Rectorate for strategic management and the steering board for operational management. Deans were added to the Rectorate to make management more inclusive, improve cooperation between faculties and enhance information sharing. In 2021, the development and optimisation of the administrative organisation continued with the creation of the Office of the Rectorate, which brought together previously fragmented Academy-wide functions (in addition, the position of the Environmental Specialist was created). In addition, there were lively discussions on the reorganisation of the academic structure from 2018-2020. Various models were discussed, but no solution was found that met the different expectations well and had sufficient impact, so it was decided to stick with the current system, which had proved its worth in day-to-day work.

In 2022, Good Leadership Practice at EKA was developed. The sixteen principles, formulated on the basis of employee consultation, aim to improve the quality of leadership in a situation where management-related

tasks are shared by many employees. This, in turn, stems from the broad democracy inherent in EKA's structure, where management decisions are taken at various levels of the organisation. In day-to-day work, this means a horizontal management model, where supervisors have a relatively high degree of autonomy and negotiation and open communication is valued when making decisions and choices.

3.1.4 EKA Development Plan and strategic management

EKA is managed on the basis of the Development Plan. The period of preparation of the current Development Plan for 2021-2025 was affected by pandemic constraints, but nevertheless involved the whole Academy, with numerous staff workshops and discussions with interest groups outside the Academy. During the process, the mission and vision of EKA and the four major strategic objectives were formulated, together with the actions planned to achieve them. The figure below gives an overview of the structure of EKA's Development Plan and the connection between mission and vision objectives and day-to-day work.

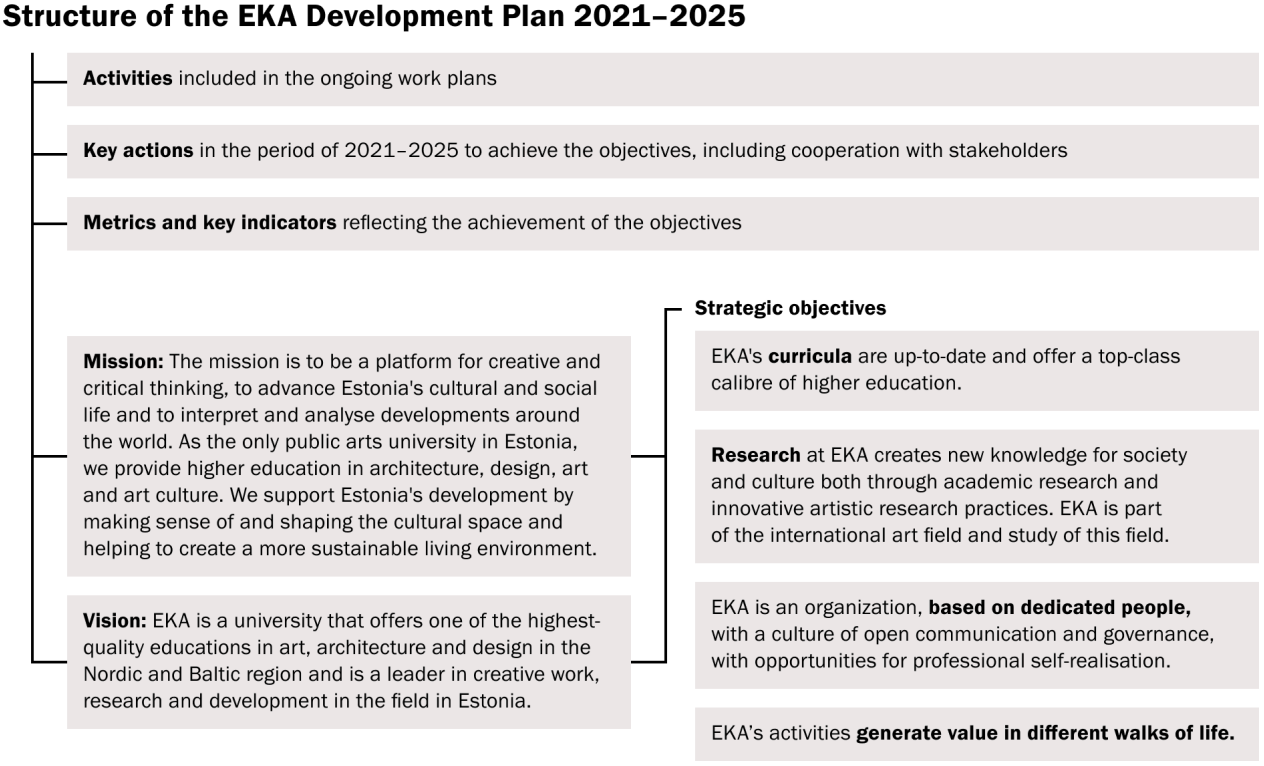


Figure 4. Structure of the EKA Development Plan 2021-2025

In formulating the strategic objectives, care was taken to ensure that the context affecting the achievement of each objective was jointly discussed and accompanied by an explanation as to which activities and indicators would be used to achieve the desired results.

Table 8. EKA strategic objectives and related key indicators

Strategic objective	Content and context	Related key indicator and target 2025	Reference level 2020	Indicator 2022
1. EKA curricula are up-to-date and offer a top-class higher education.	Creative collaboration centre: teaching and curriculum development are organised flexibly, supporting each student and keeping in touch with what is happening in society. Cross-pollination between disciplines is important, as is valuing students' independence and determination. EKA makes clever use of the opportunities	Admission competition (in 2025: 3.5 candidates per place)	2.9	3.0
		Average study period (not lengthened)	BA 3.8 MA 3.1 PhD 6.25 INT: 6.8	BA 3.8 MA 2.8 PhD 6.5 INT: 5.5

	afforded by the digital transformation and blended learning, thus also intensifying international relations. The Open Academy increases access to art education and contributes to the growth of the EKA community.	Percentage of dropouts (less than 10%)	7%	8.5%
		Student satisfaction: (4.3 / 5)	3.96 / 5	4.0 / 5
		Influence in the Nordic and Baltic countries, coordination of networks (coordination of at least three networks)	Coordinator of the Nordic and Baltic networks: NBAA, CIRRUS, DAMA	Coordinator of the Nordic and Baltic networks: grants and management of the three NordPlus networks
2. Research at EKA creates new knowledge for society and culture both through academic research and innovative artistic research practices. EKA is part of the international art field and study of this field.	EKA as a research and development institution: EKA supports high-level and diverse research at the fundamental research, applied research and experimental development and artistic research levels. The priority for research and development is the development of strong focus topics in each faculty, taking into account the topics and goals of the support frameworks of the European Higher Education Area and European Research Area.	Number of scientific publications (not decreasing)	45	57
		Percentage of international PhD students (20%)	8.3%	7.2%
		Percentage of research, development and creative activities in the budget (18%)	13%	14.8%
3. The activities of EKA generate value in different walks of life.	Valuable vibrancy, with an impact outside the Academy: EKA opens opportunities for new searches, raises important issues related to society and the cultural sphere, and offers solutions to them. We keep our thought process sharp, from the design of the living environment all the way up to exhibition activity, research and broader discussions. We value creative and intellectual freedom.	Employment of graduates on the labour market (at least 90%)	87%	84.1%
		In the media monitoring, EKA's value-creating activities (in coverage: EKA activities meet the objectives)		Total coverage: 2863 Sample 1468 research/education 29% role in society 13% internationalisation 8% sustainability 7%
4. EKA is an organisation based on dedicated people, with a culture of open communi-cation and governance and opportunities for professional self-realisation.	Functioning governance: the opinion of EKA members is taken into account in shaping the future of the organisation. Once a year, brainstorming sessions on longer-term goals are held as an open discussion, where EKA involves members in formulating the goals of the university and the action plan prepared to achieve them. The development of EKA's environment is based on the principles of sustainability and the underlying international aims. A solution for cross-use of EKA's multipurpose facilities has been developed.	Staff satisfaction (has increased)	3.7 / 5	4.2 / 5
		Optimal space programme according to resources and needs (usable space per student has increased)	Useful floor space per student (m2): Faculty of Art Culture 4.2, Faculty of Architecture 3.8, Faculty of Design 4.6, Faculty of Fine Arts 8.2	Useful floor space per student (m2): Faculty of Art Culture 4.2, Faculty of Architecture 3.8, Faculty of Design 4.6, Faculty of Fine Arts 10.2

3.1.5 Cooperation with stakeholders

EKA has a very close mutual cooperation with stakeholders at home and abroad. Society's expectations of EKA are borne by more than half of the members of the EKA's Council, who are stakeholders who very directly manage the Academy's activities. Employers and other stakeholders are always consulted in the preparation of the Academy's Development Plan. Stakeholders are represented by employers and alumni, who, like students, sit on all the curriculum committees that directly guide the development of study activities. It is important to influence Estonian higher education policy together with other public universities through regular proactive cooperation between the Universities Estonia and between support staff. EKA is also active in shaping international higher education in the arts through its participation in the governance and activities of relevant organisations.

EKA has many hourly-paid members of teaching staff who bring in the latest expertise from stakeholders. They articulate the expectations of stakeholders and they can guide students in their learning accordingly. A large proportion of students' internships are with stakeholders in the art field, architectural and design firms, restoration companies, museums and galleries, editorial offices and government departments. Many of the academic staff's RDC activities take place in the same stakeholder companies and institutions, so they are well-informed about stakeholders' expectations and teach accordingly. Stakeholder engagement includes the participation of academic staff in many expert panels, boards, editorial boards, juries, etc. where knowledge transfer to stakeholders occurs.

3.1.6 Crisis management

EKA has not had a separate crisis management framework in the past, but the last few years have seen two crises, the resolution of which has supported making the management of unexpected situations more systematic. Both the pandemic and Ukraine's response to the aggression have provided valuable lessons for better and more effective management. What EKA learned about itself is that it is a flexible organisation that adapts and responds quickly and collaboratively and that can also initiate and mobilise partners internationally and involve the community, and the received recognition validates the appropriateness of its decisions.

3.1.6.1 Experience with COVID-19 pandemic

When the pandemic broke out, the main building was closed and the first challenge for teaching staff and students was how to organise distance learning. At the very beginning of the crisis, in March 2020, a 7-member crisis committee was set up, chaired by the Head of Quality and comprising the Rector, the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, the Head of International Office, the Head of Communications Office, the Head of Human Resources, the Director of Finance and Administration and the Facilities Manager. The committee steered crisis-related decisions and choices, formed policies, organised communication and handled individual cases. New solutions included the creation of EKA TV, the improvement of the Moodle environment and access for staff to the Zoom online communication platform. The period of coronavirus waves gave impetus to the development of EKA's distance learning and remote work opportunities and several developed solutions are still in use to a reasonable extent today. Overall confidence in crisis management arrangements is shown, for example, by a survey conducted among students in the spring of 2020, in which the availability of information was rated four out of five points. In addition, there was the knowledge that the Academy's members followed the management's recommendations on vaccination and the vaccination rate at EKA was over 94%.

3.1.6.2 Support for Ukraine and Ukrainians

When the war broke out, EKA was able to be operational and as early as the end of February 2022 invited students from Ukrainian art universities to resume their interrupted studies here. The leaders of EKA lobbied at all levels for Ukraine to become a partner in the Erasmus+ programme and they succeeded surprisingly quickly. The staff of EKA contributed extensively to helping refugees in every way possible. 19 Ukrainian art students participated in studies at EKA in the spring semester of 2022. In the Ministry of Education and Research Teacher of the Year competition, EKA was awarded the Education Achievement of the Year prize for its prompt admission of Ukrainian students.

Strengths

The management structure of EKA has improved (the EKA Act) and is becoming more and more organised (reforming the activities of the Rectorate and the steering board).

EKA is a people-focused organisation with a relaxed and free atmosphere and its management is inclusive, collegial and approachable.

Management assessment is carried out throughout the structure (good leadership practice).

EKA's Development Plan, as an important management tool, has been developed in a broad way and with the involvement of the organisation and it is monitored.

In the context of the pandemic and the military action in Ukraine, EKA has recent and overall successful experience in managing crisis plans and urgent changes.

Areas for improvement

Continuing discussions on the objectives and values of EKA and refining agreements with the goal of consistently implementing what has been agreed upon, thereby enhancing the management level's capacity. Involving in-house service design expertise to manage complex challenges and bring more value to the Academy.

Continued advocacy for the sustainable growth of higher education and EKA funding.

Taking into account the areas for improvement and development needs formulated in the preparation of the Self-Evaluation Report when updating the Development Plan and related action plans.

3.2 Resources

#Dedicated people / #Careers at EKA / #New main building / #Paperless university / #Financial management / #EKA's image and reputation

3.2.1 Human resources management

EKA aims to be an organisation based on dedicated people, with an open communication and management culture and opportunities for professional self-realisation. We measure commitment with three questions in the employee satisfaction survey. The quotient of the averages of the responses forms the commitment index (Figure 5). The commitment index was 3.7 out of 5 in 2019 and 4.2 in 2022. These ratings have improved significantly compared to 2018 and we have set a target for the commitment index to be above 4.

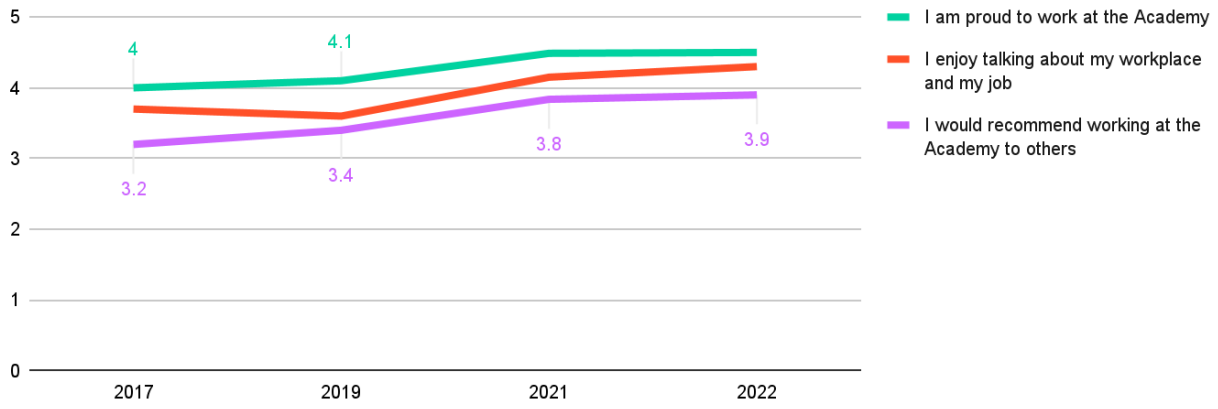


Figure 5. EKA staff commitment indicators from 2017-2022 (scale 1-5)

Human resources management is carried out by the Personnel Department under the direct authority of the Rector, with the aim of developing and implementing a human resources policy that supports the development of EKA and organising employment relations. The department is also responsible for the organisation and development of archives and document management according to the needs of the Academy. The Personnel

Department supports those joining EKA by introducing the organisation, professional development opportunities and communication culture[2].

3.2.1.1 Recruitment, induction and development support

The head of the unit is responsible for the staffing and development of the unit. Elections of academic staff are governed by EKA Rules on Employment Relations with Academic Staff Members. One important change is that from 1 January 2020, it will only be possible to apply for permanent contracts through open competition. There are usually international competitions for the positions of professors. Professors are elected by the Senate and all other academic posts are elected by the Council of the Faculty where the position is held. Outstanding artists, practitioners or researchers in their field may be invited as visiting academic staff members without competition for up to five years to achieve the objectives of the curriculum. Support staff are also usually selected through open competition. In 2017, the Academy launched an onboarding programme for new employees. An orientation event for new employees is held every autumn. Each new employee is welcomed by a human resources specialist who introduces the document management system, the EKA structure, values and the EKA wiki materials. In 2018, a fundamental overhaul of the system of performance development reviews was introduced and in five years the percentage of employees having performance development reviews has risen to 70%, which is an increase of 180%. The performance development review is an important management tool and we want to further increase participation in it.

Employee development needs are analysed primarily during the performance development review conversation between the head of unit and the employee. EKA's in-house trainings are based on input from the summaries of the performance development reviews, the results of the employee satisfaction survey, student feedback, the Development Plan, societal expectations and other objectives derived from EKA documents.

3.2.1.2 Employee motivation and remuneration

In 2018, the Academy adopted a policy for motivating EKA employees. EKA provides motivational activities and benefits for employees in four areas: supporting development, supporting health, maintaining work-life balance and recognising employees. In addition to the benefits EKA offers, significant importance is attached to the role of the unit head in motivating employees and to the individual employee expectations[3]. In 2021, the EKA Senate adopted the general principles for recognition, establishing a comprehensive system of staff recognition.

In 2018, a new remuneration regulation was adopted that describes the salary levels and the options for determining additional remuneration, performance rewards and support payments. In addition, there is a transparent system of bonuses, where heads of fields have a budget for rewarding staff. Academic staff have seen their salaries increase by an average of 10% each year, while support staff have seen their salaries increase by an average of 5%-10%. From 1 January 2023, academic staff salaries were increased by 15% on average. As a result of the implementation of these legislations and measures, there has been a marked increase in employee satisfaction with the clarity of remuneration policies and the motivating remuneration system (Figure 6). In 2022, 70% of employees had a performance development review and rated their satisfaction with their pay at 6.5 out of 10, which is slightly higher than the result of the anonymous survey and the percentage of employees who took part in performance development review is also higher than those who took part in the employee satisfaction survey.

In addition, EKA teaching staff can apply for a special university staff oriented Cultural Endowment scholarship to advance their creative work.

[2]In addition, the main legislation governing human resources is available on the EKA website.

[3]E.g. verbal recognition, creating a supportive working environment, maintaining good relations, providing tasks that reflect the employee's strengths, flexible working arrangements, supporting career and professional development, etc.

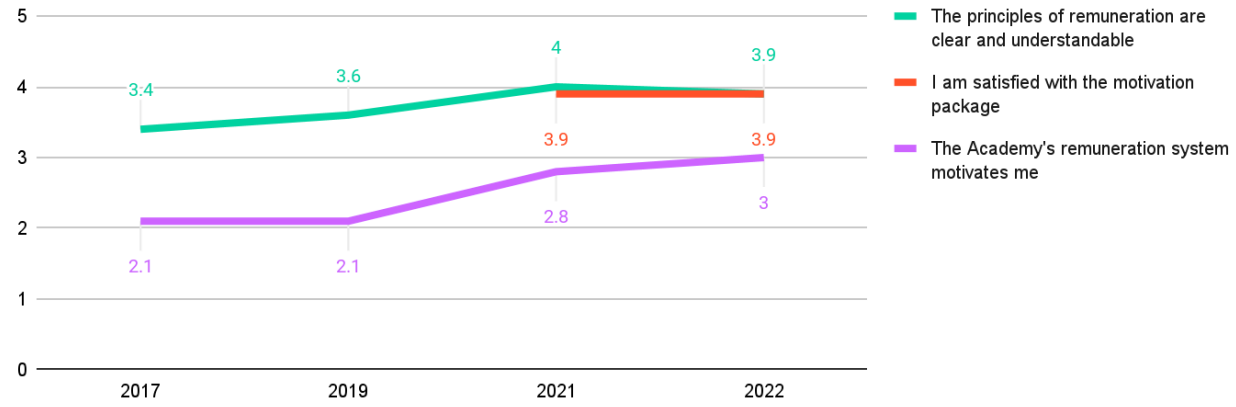


Figure 6. EKA staff satisfaction with the remuneration principles and motivation package 2017-2022

Universities Estonia academic staff salary survey (in Estonian), published in 2022, compared the average salary of all academic staff across universities (Figure 7). EKA's salaries are most comparable to those of the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre (EMTA), the University of Life Sciences (EMÜ) and Tallinn University (TLÜ). We have been working hard to raise salaries and in the university market situation, EKA's academic staff salaries are not yet competitive with only two universities (TÜ and TTÜ).

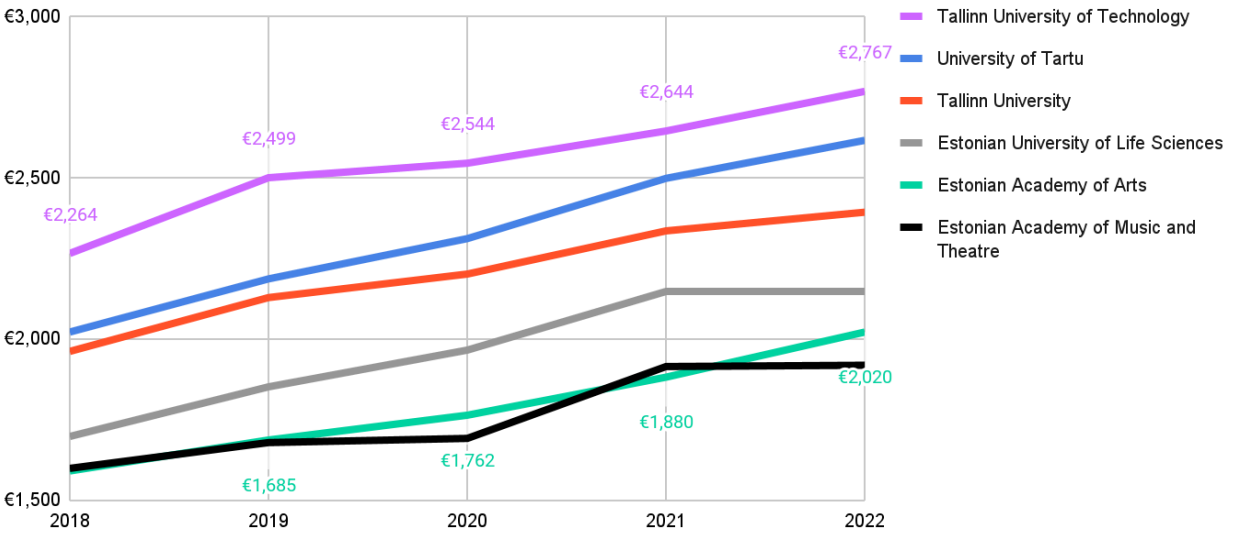


Figure 7. Comparison of average academic staff salaries in euros at Estonian universities 2018-2022

3.2.2 EKA infrastructure

EKA has a total of 19,000 m^2 of space at its disposal, owned and rented (Figure 8). The EKA campus is mainly located in the Kalamaja district of Tallinn. In 2018, the Academy started operations in the new main building at Põhja pst 7, which was sustainably built in a former textile factory and equipped with state-of-the-art technology. The main building does not fully meet EKA's space needs and expansion opportunities are constantly being sought. In 2021, a parking and outdoor area was completed at Kotzebue 6 and 6a[4]. EKA owns a building on Raja Street in Mustamäe, Tallinn, a study base in Tamse on Muhu Island and leases an Art Residency in Narva. EKA also owns, in cooperation with EMTA, a dormitory at Kuhlbarsi 1 in Tallinn. Due to space constraints, we rent a total of 900 m^2 of space outside the main building, including animation and painting studios. In September 2024, a new laboratory building of 1100 m^2 will be completed at Kotzebue 10. In addition, we are negotiating with the city on the Kotzebue 2 property, where a building of

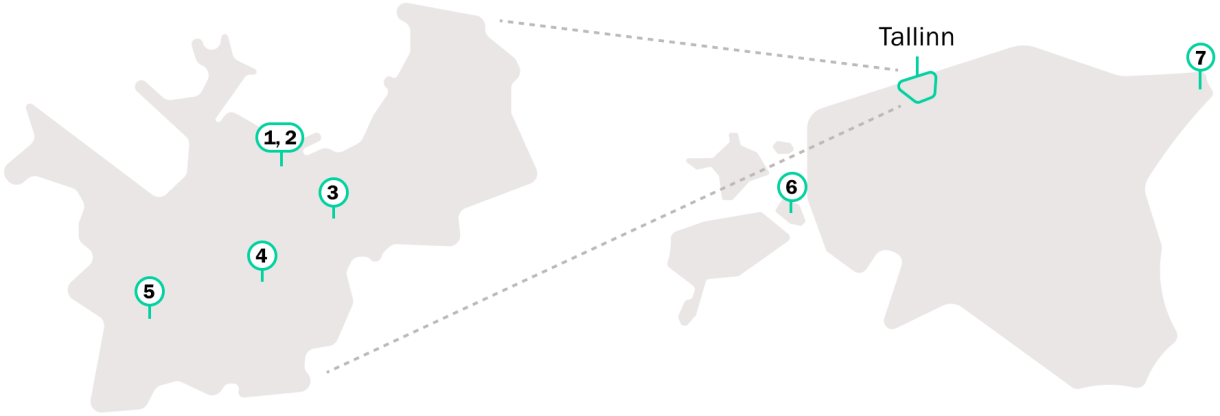
[4]In addition, at the time of preparing this report, a courtyard building for laboratories (1100 m2) is under construction near the main building.

about 2500 m^2 could be constructed. Even after the completion of the laboratory building, we will need to find an additional space of around 2700 m^2 for 21 different purposes and functions.

Significant investment in energy efficiency in buildings will take place in 2023, with projected energy savings of 10-15%. EKA was the first Estonian university to be awarded the European Green Office certificate in 2022 and it has developed a sustainable environment action plan.

Ongoing upgrading of the technology in the laboratories and workshops essential to EKA is underway and it is expected that costs will increase in the coming years to maintain these levels.

EKA buildings



Tallinn

1. **Main building**
   Põhja pst 7, 12300 m²
   - main study building
   - 22 workshops and laboratories
   - Gallery
   - Library
   - Museum
   - EKA Press
2. **EKA laboratories building**
   (will be completed in 2024)
   Kotzebue 10, 1100 m²
   - workshops
   - laboratories
   - workspaces
3. **Muusa Majutus**
   Kuhlbarsi 1, 5500 m²
   Joint property with EAMT dormitory
4. **Rented studios and gallery**
   Tallinn, 730 m²
5. **Raja building**
   Raja 11, 2500 m²
   - studios and gallery
   - warehouse

Island of Muhu

6. **Tamse study base**
   700 m²
   artistic fieldwork and traineeship base

Narva

7. **NART**
   (long-term lease)
   Joala 18, 1026 m²
   - arts residency, cultural centre and educational institution
   - traineeship base

Figure 8. EKA buildings

3.2.3 Digital EKA

Since 2018, the IT infrastructure and digital solutions have been systematically developed to support EKA's core and support activities. The new SIS Tahvel (2020), the human resources software palk365, the continuing education information system ARTI (2020) have been taken into use, the intranet EKA wiki (2022) has been created, the information management system Webdesktop, the website and the e-learning environment Moodle have been continually developed and equipment rental for students' creative projects has been opened. EKA has been paperless, i.e. fully digital since 2019. All of the environments also provide usage analytics, which we want to use more of in developing our services. At the beginning of 2022, an IT Council was set up to gather information, analyse and make decisions on IT and digital developments consisting of a selection of members of the Rectorate, heads of support units and staff involved in the field. EKA's digital development strategy is in the process of completion, which defines the main lines of action and principles in the planning, organising and developing activities related to information systems and IT infrastructure (including activities and audits related to information security and data protection, for which important actions will take place in 2023/24[5].

[5]It is guided by national principles and values, as set out in the sectoral development plan Estonia's Digital Agenda 2030.

3.2.4 Financial management

Financial management at the Academy is based on a Development Plan, a financial plan, a procurement plan and internal accounting rules. The principles for drawing up the budget are based on, among other things, economic forecasts, the national budget, the higher education programme and the performance funding review, as well as developments in the arts. The annual audited accounts are available on the Academy's website (in Estonian).

Over the last five years, operating revenue has increased from €10.6 million to €15.2 million, an increase of 70% (Table 9). Alongside the significant increase in revenues, the increase in the diversity of income is important, but the most important is still the stable growth in the state activity support. In 2018, the state activity support represented 71% of operating revenue, while in 2022, it was 63% of operating revenue. Over the same period, total human resources costs have increased by 54%, while operating costs have decreased by 15%. The biggest driver of savings in operating costs was moving into the new building – rental expenses were reduced and the new building is significantly more cost-effective in terms of utility expenses.

The curricula are sufficiently funded and each curriculum has its own budget based on a common methodology that can be used flexibly by the head within the budget. In addition to salary expenses, the curriculum budget includes adequate funds for the operating costs of the curriculum. The cost of fee-based international curricula has been developed through a combination of market analysis and EKA's financial contribution, where the cost of the curriculum has to be covered by tuition fees, which have increased by an average of 10% per year in recent years.

The pressure on the budget is increasing every year, as salary expectations, additional space and the implementation of the spatial programme, technology upgrades and digital environments need funding, thus it is important that the state activity support increases annually and that EKA also requests additional resources for development projects.

Table 9. EKA expenditure and revenue distribution 2018–2022 in Euros

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Revenue from economic activities	1,515,477.00	1,635,879.00	1,560,833.00	1,621,448.00	1,987,152.00
State activity support	7,549,335.00	7,790,250.00	8,417,877.00	8,653,510.00	9,541,933.00
Target fin. revenue for operating expenses	1,595,468.00	1,926,760.00	1,465,496.00	2,154,928.00	3,717,438.00
Target fin. revenue for fixed assets	11,635,525.00	-852,050.00	1,335,489.00	266,224.00	421,551.00
including financial correction		*-1,206,157.00*	*1,206,157.00*		
TOTAL OPERATING REVENUE	22,295,805.00	10,500,839.00	12,779,695.00	12,696,110.00	15,668,074.00
main activity revenue	*10,660,280.00*	*11,352,889.00*	*11,444,206.00*	*12,429,886.00*	*15,246,523.00*
increase in main activity revenue		6.50%	0.80%	8.61%	22.66%
increase in activity support		3.19%	8.06%	2.80%	10.27%
activity support as % of main revenue	70.8%	68.6%	73.6%	69.6%	62.6%
TOTAL STAFF EXPENSES	5,317,709.00	5,809,397.00	6,286,623.00	6,997,362.00	8,211,957.00
TOTAL ECONOMIC EXPENSES	4,720,835.00	3,281,249.00	2,436,897.00	2,840,693.00	4,029,078.00
TOTAL GRANTS GIVEN	959,343.00	1,105,156.00	1,023,589.00	1,313,960.00	2,073,499.00
including study grants and scholarships	*852,065.00*	*952,748.00*	*860,227.00*	*1,145,043.00*	*1,833,547.00*
Depreciation of fixed assets	309,865.00	745,952.00	758,436.00	763,972.00	762,642.00
Other expenses (including VAT)	2,639,092.00	433,982.00	422,738.00	460,965.00	681,158.00
Interest income and expenses	-21,191.00	-17,986.00	-14,686.00	-4,322.00	-4,645.00
Total financial income and expenses	760.00	373.00	-346.00	-82.00	865.00
RESULT FOR THE REPORTING YEAR	8,328,530.00	-892,510.00	1,836,380.00	314,754.00	-94,040.00

3.2.5 Internal and external communication of EKA

Both internal and external communication is based on the general strategic goals, core values and organisational culture of EKA. Since 2018, major changes have taken place in EKA's communication. The new main building has brought the whole Academy under one roof, which has made communication between units much more efficient. Before the arrival of the new building, EKA's visual identity was renewed with the involvement of students, staff and alumni, which has supported the clarity and impact of EKA's messages in both internal and external communications. An internal communication audit carried out in 2021 highlighted several problems related to the flow of information. For employees and hourly paid teaching staff, finding information was a problem, as EKA's work processes use a wide variety of platforms. An important solution was the development of an intranet EKA wiki, i.e. a digital house guide and lobby that brings together information on the functioning of EKA. EKA TV has also been launched, which broadcasts various lectures, events, briefings, etc[6].

For external audiences, the main and most important communication channel is still the EKA website, which is visited around 1.4 million times a year. Over the years, the number of the Academy's social media channels has grown dramatically, with advertising and outreach campaigns taking place on all the most popular channels: Facebook (14,000 followers), Instagram (11,200 followers), Linkedin (5340 followers), X, Vimeo, Youtube, TikTok and others. In addition to the central EKA social media pages and groups, almost all EKA specialities have their own social media pages or groups (mainly on Facebook or Instagram). EKA has joined both new and several long-established professional and educational online magazines or portals (Archinect, studyportals, masterstudies, ArtsThread, etc.).

In addition, marketing communication and image building is carried out through media relations, regular media coverage, opinion articles, social media channels, public lectures, exhibitions and a series of events. According to the Station BMMG media monitoring, there were a total of 2863 mentions of EKA in various media channels in 2022.

The effectiveness of external communication is measured through ongoing media monitoring and visits to events and online environments. The EKA community itself rates the reputation of the Academy highly (4.5 out of 5 in the employee satisfaction survey).

Strengths

The commitment of EKA employees to their work has grown year by year.

EKA's salaries are more competitive every year. Satisfaction with EKA's remuneration system is increasingly motivating and transparent for EKA people.

EKA operates in a new and modern main building that is much more economical and uses smart building solutions. Significant amounts of new technology and equipment have been acquired (including upgrading of workshop equipment). EKA has a European Green Office certificate.

EKA's administration is paperless and fully digital.

The budget has seen an increase in the share of project and business income and income from educational services, which has reduced dependence on state activity support.

The creation of EKA's wiki has increased the efficiency and user-friendliness of administration.

Areas for improvement

Continued action to increase research and education funding to improve the competitiveness of staff salaries.

Developing a system of performance development reviews and increasing the number of interviews, including through training, awareness-raising, etc. As a result, the preparation of an increasingly high-quality training and development activities plan.

Gradually solving the issues of space constraints, including improving the quality of spatial analytics and monitoring (overview of the use of spaces and their purposefulness), construction of new spaces (completion of a small building

[6]Although the role of such a digital environment was even greater during the restrictions of the pandemic, the additional possibilities associated with distance or hybrid events are continuously being developed even now.

at Kotzebue 10 in 2024 and preliminary work for the development of the Kotzebue 2 knowledge transfer centre together with the city of Tallinn).

Implementing the programme to reduce the greenhouse gas footprint of real estate as a concrete expression of eco-responsibility.

Continued development of the digital EKA (digital warehouse, eduRoam and eduGain, repository and other high-impact projects), in line with the digital development strategy.

Developing the EKA website in line with changed user expectations, intranet development and EKA communication objectives.

3.3 Quality culture

#Implementation of the quality system of the arts university / #Linking internal evaluations with improvement activities / #Managing study quality

3.3.1 The starting points of EKA's quality culture

As the only visual arts university in Estonia, EKA considers it important to maintain and develop principles of quality that characterise an arts university and enable it to contribute to the development of art, design and architecture. EKA's quality culture builds on the specificities and diversity of arts specialities and their teaching practices and aims at the vitality and development of the academic communities within the fields. For EKA, a shared quality culture means the responsibility and active role of all its members – employees and students alike – in quality development, continuous improvement and learning to create workable solutions to the challenges of the specialities, society and the future. The development and improvement of the quality culture is therefore an ongoing process. Purposeful continuous improvement is supported by evaluations that enable transparent and relevant analysis of processes and results and encourage the sharing of best practices. Motivated and competent employees are at the core of the quality culture and to this end, professional development and continuous improvement of employee skills are supported, with the aim of maintaining expertise both locally and internationally.

The basis for the quality assurance of EKA's activities is the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), as well as the standards in the HAKA guidelines and the Higher Education Act, the Standard of Higher Education, the Standard of Continuing Education and the Organisation of Research and Development Act. As the arts disciplines have their own specificities in the higher education system, EKA's participation in the EQ-Arts activities[7], is important as a discussion forum for ensuring and improving the quality of European higher education in the arts. Under the leadership of the Universities Estonia, a quality agreement for Estonian public universities, an agreement on good quality practices and a quality agreement for doctoral studies have been concluded to increase cooperation and systematisation in the field of university quality. In addition, the Estonian universities EKA, EMTA and TLÜ have signed a quality agreement for artistic research in Estonia. EKA is also involved in the Erasmus+ project for creating future scenarios Fast45 (Futures Art School Trends 2045), which deals with strategic choices for the future of arts universities. To link different standards and frameworks, EKA has developed its own quality management and internal evaluation system with its stakeholders.

3.3.2 EKA quality system

The values and principles of EKA form an important pillar of the quality system, which are agreed upon in the Development Plan, the Code of Ethics, the Good Leadership Practice and the Gender Equality Plan and have been formulated as a result of joint discussions. EKA's quality management system is based on a PDCA cycle of continuous improvement, consisting of planning, implementation, (interim) evaluation of activities and improvement activities based on the evaluation results (Figure 9).

[7]Anne Pikkov, Vice Rector of EKA, is a member of the EQ-Arts Council.

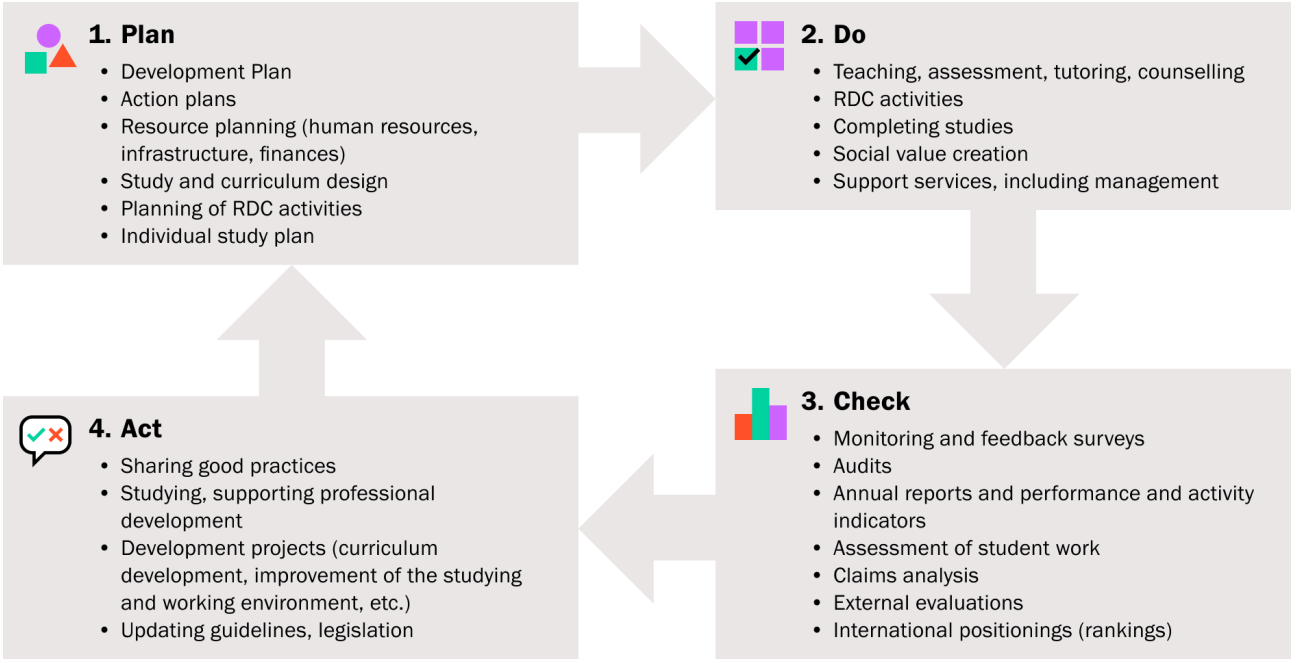


Figure 9. Quality management system at EKA

Decision-making processes related to the quality system are linked to the structure of EKA:

- The Senate and the Rectorate are the leaders of the quality culture, responsible for shaping EKA's quality policy and setting strategic objectives.
- The head of quality and development deals with the improvement and management of the quality management system, internal evaluations and pointing out and solving problems, as well as sectoral communication, together with the managers of the areas of responsibility.
- Heads of departments and curricula implement and are responsible for the quality requirements in the activities of their unit. The heads of the Academy's support units are the formulators of quality standards (legislation), advisors and consultants and, if necessary, they also point out problems.
- Quality in core and support processes is ensured when quality is a natural part of the daily work and studies of every member of EKA. The principle of continuous improvement means that employees develop their fields, participate in the formulation of quality requirements and, if necessary, in trainings where awareness and responsibility are enhanced.
- The Academic Affairs Council, the Research Council and the curriculum committees have representatives of various stakeholders who help shape the quality strategies of the fields.
- Internal and external stakeholders (students, partners, accreditation bodies, etc.) can participate in feedback and make suggestions.

Since 2020, the interactive EKA quality manual has defined the requirements for the management and organisation of core and support processes and the principles of quality assurance. In addition to the quality manual, the activities of staff and students are supported by the EKA wiki (intranet), where various manuals can be found. Discussions, trainings and seminars are organised for all members of the Academy when significant changes in the quality requirements of processes (regulated legislation) are planned or implemented. The internal evaluations will be followed up by open feedback seminars, presenting the results of the internal evaluations and new challenges. Systematicity in the Academy's activities is supported by a management calendar, which helps managers remind themselves of the annual timetable to follow in their activities. The systemic approach allows EKA to maintain and improve a learning and working environment where quality, i.e. doing the right things at the right time in the right way, and continuous improvement are at the core of all activities.

3.3.3 Regular internal evaluations

Regular internal and external evaluations (Table 10) provide information on the quality of core and support activities and the achievement of the mission and objectives of EKA and the results are used to improve

activities. EKA has successfully passed external evaluations of institutional, curriculum group and research and development, as well as various audits (Erasmus+, structural support project EKA Creative Cluster, cyber security).

Table 10. Regular internal evaluations at EKA

Internal evaluation form	Frequency	Use of results
Audited annual report, which includes the activity report and the consolidated accounts	annually	Among other things, the achievement of the objectives of the Development Plan is assessed (through key and performance indicators) and an audit of financial activities is carried out. Input for process improvement, resource allocation, as well as for improvement of the Development Plan.
Internal evaluation of studies (curriculum analysis)	annually, comprehensive every three years	Monitoring and analysis of curriculum performance indicators. Input for process improvement.
Student feedback on subjects	at the end of each semester	Input for internal evaluation of studies.
Feedback on teaching and assessment from assessment panel members/experts in the field	at the end of each semester	Input for the assessment of the quality and development needs of subjects and curricula.
Graduate satisfaction survey (survey and focus group interviews)	annually, compulsory for all graduates	Input for internal evaluation of studies.
Alumni survey	organised by the state at certain intervals	Input for quality assessment of studies
Doctoral students' satisfaction survey	annually from 2022	Input for the internal evaluation of doctoral studies.
Evaluation of doctoral students	annually	To find measures that prevent the lack of advancement of doctoral students and support graduation.
Election and performance evaluation of academic staff	as needed, assessment once every five years	It helps to ensure that academic staff comply with higher education standards, provides input for training and development activities, as well as analysis of management activities.
Performance development reviews	annually	It provides important and valuable information and feedback to the parties involved in the review and input to the Personnel Department when planning training and other development activities.
Employee satisfaction survey	annually	It provides important and valuable information for shaping organisational culture and input for management and human resources activities.
Measuring carbon footprint	annually	Input for decisions on reducing carbon footprint.
Continuing education course feedback	at the end of each study year	Input for the evaluation of study year quality and development activities.

The results of the internal evaluation may reveal various quality issues, which provide input to the Senate, the Rectorate and the steering board for strategic decisions on which challenges to address in the coming periods. The results of the internal evaluation are presented to EKA's members through management communication, as well as through the EKA wiki and monthly briefings. In the field of study, feedback seminars involving teachers, management and students are held, where best practices are shared. The results of the internal evaluations are also used as a basis for planning internal training courses and seminars for staff and for improving the working environment. The most important changes from the results

of both internal and external evaluations in the last five years have been the reform of the curricula of the Faculty of Design at both BA and MA levels, the reform of doctoral studies in the Faculty of Architecture, the launch of the process of internal evaluation (analysis) of the curricula[8], the launch of the system of in-house trainings supporting the development of academic staff, the reform of workshops, the harmonisation of project management, creating research centres and developing the EKA wiki and discussions and action plans on good practices and principles of equality and ethics.

3.3.4 Evaluating the quality of studies

From 2020, the system of internal evaluation of study quality (curricula) has been operating at EKA (Figure 10; analysis form), which helps to make the assessment of study quality evidence-based and to harmonise the evaluated parts across the Academy. As part of the internal evaluation, an analysis of the curriculum is prepared, based on the HAKA curriculum evaluation standard. The task of curriculum analysis is to analyse:

- the compliance of the curriculum with agreed quality criteria;
- the activities carried out during the academic year and their immediate results;
- feedback and expert assessments of alumni, graduates and subjects;
- proposals for the development of the curriculum and study activities based on the analysis.

Internal evaluation allows the results of student and other surveys to be linked to other indicators reflecting the curriculum and teaching and to plan improvement activities. Curriculum committees are involved in the process, including representatives of stakeholders. The analysis will be carried out every three years (the next one will take place in 2026).

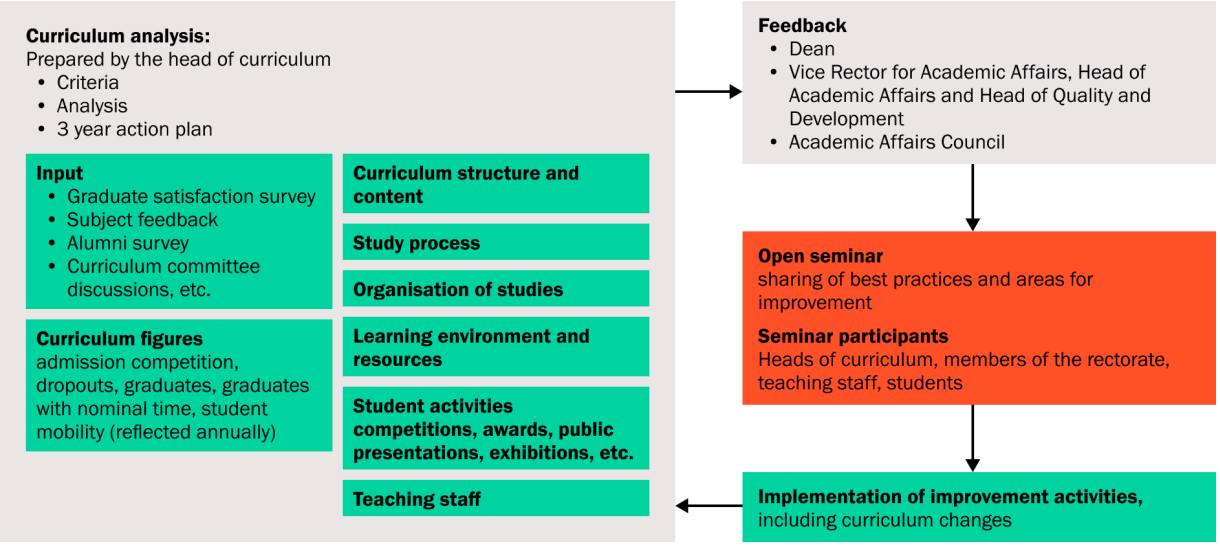


Figure 10. Curriculum analysis at EKA, i.e. the internal evaluation system for study quality

Feedback from graduates is presented, analysed and discussed at a feedback seminar at the beginning of the academic year, where students are invited as well. Additionally, after the self-assessment of the curriculum, a feedback seminar is held for all interested parties, especially for heads of curricula, to learn from each other and share best practices. From autumn 2021, a subject feedback questionnaire based on the new methodology has been used. The subject feedback statistics desktop on the EKA wiki helps the Head of Curriculum to comprehensively display the results.

In addition, the profile of Heads of Curricula has been developed, i.e. the role and responsibility of the Head have been specified and it is in the job description and Head of Curriculum's annual report. The selection and evaluation for teaching staff are also essential to ensure that they are of high quality.

The Academic Affairs Council is a discussion and agreement body that shapes and promotes the quality of study and its objectives. For example, the modules of general subjects, the study organisation process and

[8]Further information on curriculum quality development is provided in section 3.7 "Curriculum".

the curriculum analysis model are developed and the feedback questionnaires of graduates and subjects have been updated.

Strengths

EKA has a well-thought-out quality management system, with related expectations described and communicated.

EKA has an up-to-date Development Plan that describes the most important work directions and strategic objectives for the coming years.

Various internal evaluations are regularly carried out, including a systematic internal evaluation of studies based on student feedback and other indicators. The quality indicators and methodology have been worked out and agreed upon with the parties and the data about the results are available in WD and on the intranet. The results of the internal evaluation are used to plan development activities.

Areas for improvement

Building on the quality framework, the development and improvement of the quality culture that characterises EKA as an arts university is progressing step by step. Addressing bottlenecks related to the specificities of the arts university (e.g. changing and dynamic arts landscape, clarification of qualitative indicators and impacts, clearer linking of quality management to day-to-day work processes, etc.).

Continued development of user-friendly platforms, including digital solutions and sharing of best practices, empowering support activities to simplify and reduce administrative burden.

3.4 Academic ethics

#Value-based EKA / #Developing ethical guidelines / #Preventing and solving problems / #Study and research ethics

3.4.1 Shaping the value space of EKA

In its activities, EKA is guided by the principles of academic ethics and equal treatment, which are laid down in the European Charter for Researchers, the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (ALLEA 2017), the Code of Ethics of Estonian Scientists (ETA 2002) and the supplementary Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, which was prepared in 2017 in cooperation between the Estonian Academy of Sciences, the Estonian Research Council, research institutions and the Ministry of Education and Research. In the framework of the preparation of the EKA Development Plan 2021-2025, the core values underlying the Academy's activities were formulated.

Table 11. EKA core values

Core value	Context
Fast pace balanced with an in-depth approach	We promote a contemporary and creative learning environment and co-creation and encourage students to shape their studies in a thoughtful way and with an understanding of the responsibilities of all parties.
Directness	We keep things simple, avoid excessive paperwork and digital clutter, treat each other with respect, communicate openly and constructively and value and recognise our people.
Sustainability	We share common space, skills and resources in a smart way and promote a sustainable and environmentally friendly way of thinking.

The core values also include the principles and values of academic ethics – we treat each other with respect, communicate openly and constructively, value and acknowledge our people, value freedom and are aware of our responsibilities and duties towards nature and society. Various regulations, best practices and guidelines have been developed to provide more detailed guidance.

Table 12. Guidelines on academic ethics at EKA

Document	Relationship to academic ethics
EKA Development Plan 2021-2025	The Development Plan is the basis of the Academy's organisational culture. It articulates the Academy's core values and strategic objectives and the action plan to achieve them.
Code of Ethics (updated 2021, 2023)	The Code sets out the principles of ethical conduct and equal treatment and guidelines for reporting unethical behaviour, including the criteria for the establishment of an ethics committee. Further guidance on how to deal with ethical conflicts can be found on the EKA website.
Gender Equality Plan (2022)	It sets out guidelines and operating principles that promote gender equality and ensure equal opportunities and treatment for all members of EKA.
Good Leadership Practice (2023)	It sets out the behaviours that characterise a good leader at EKA.
Good Practice of Supervision	The guide can be found as an annex to the doctoral regulations.
Study Regulations	The Regulations concern, among other things, guidelines for ethical behaviour in the context of studying.
Intellectual Property Procedures (to be updated)	The Procedures explain the copyright ownership of works created by academic staff and students during studies, the procedures for the exercise of rights and the disposal of proprietary rights.
Good Assessment and Feedback Practice (in process)	The agreement will support good teaching and learning practices in the study process, including assessment and feedback.
Artificial intelligence in education (2023)	Guidelines under which EKA does not prevent the use of AI in studies, but it is important that the Academy, its teaching staff and students are transparent in the use of AI and that there are prior joint agreements on the use of AI in studies.

In addition, institutional guidelines for the implementation of good research practices and a data protection code of conduct for research and education will be finalised in 2024.

3.4.2 Equal treatment

The principles of equal treatment are set out in the EKA Code of Ethics. Following the European Commission's recommendation to research institutions, in 2022 we developed a Gender Equality Plan for the EKA, which complements the Code of Conduct and aims to ensure equal opportunities, equal treatment and support for all members of EKA through awareness raising and improvement activities. The objectives and action plan were developed based on gender statistics, focus group interviews and discussions in a broad working group involving students, academics and support staff. Based on the data collection and analysis, we can say that the EKA has a balanced gender representation and no gender pay gap. To further monitor, initiate and evaluate activities, an analysis group (composed of the Head of Human Resources, the Head of Quality and Development and the RDO Leading Specialist) was set up, which will produce an annual overview of the current situation and activities in the annual report, to ensure gender balance across professions, when moving up the career ladder and in decision-making bodies.

Table 13. Gender Equality Plan objectives and activities at EKA

Gender Equality Plan objectives for the coming years	Related activities
• To raise awareness of equal treatment and equal opportunities. • To promote an organisational culture supportive of gender equality. • To raise awareness of workplace bullying and gender and sexual harassment and focus on preventing and tackling issues.	Organising seminars and information days (e.g. on unconscious bias, integrating the gender issue into studies and research), monitoring work-life balance, training of managers (avoiding gender stereotypes in communication, monitoring gender balance in recruitment and decision-making, encouraging men to take on leadership roles), streamlining guidance materials.

3.4.3 Counselling and complaints handling

Guidance on how to deal with ethical conflicts at EKA are provided in the Code of Ethics, revised in 2021 and 2023. More detailed guidance on how to deal with discrimination or bullying is available on the EKA website (including advisers one can contact first if necessary, but who do not resolve complaints). Psychological counselling is provided for students by a psychologist-career counsellor and for staff by a Head of Human Resources. From autumn 2023, a psychologist service was introduced for employees, which can be used three times a year at the Academy's expense.

In the event of a conflict, an EKA employee or student can turn to their unit or the Ethics Committee (Figure 11). If the process reaches the Ethics Committee[9], the decision may be conciliatory, justifying the behaviour or condemnatory (including a proposal to the Rector to issue a warning to the person who has behaved unethically, terminate the contract with the employee or expel the student).

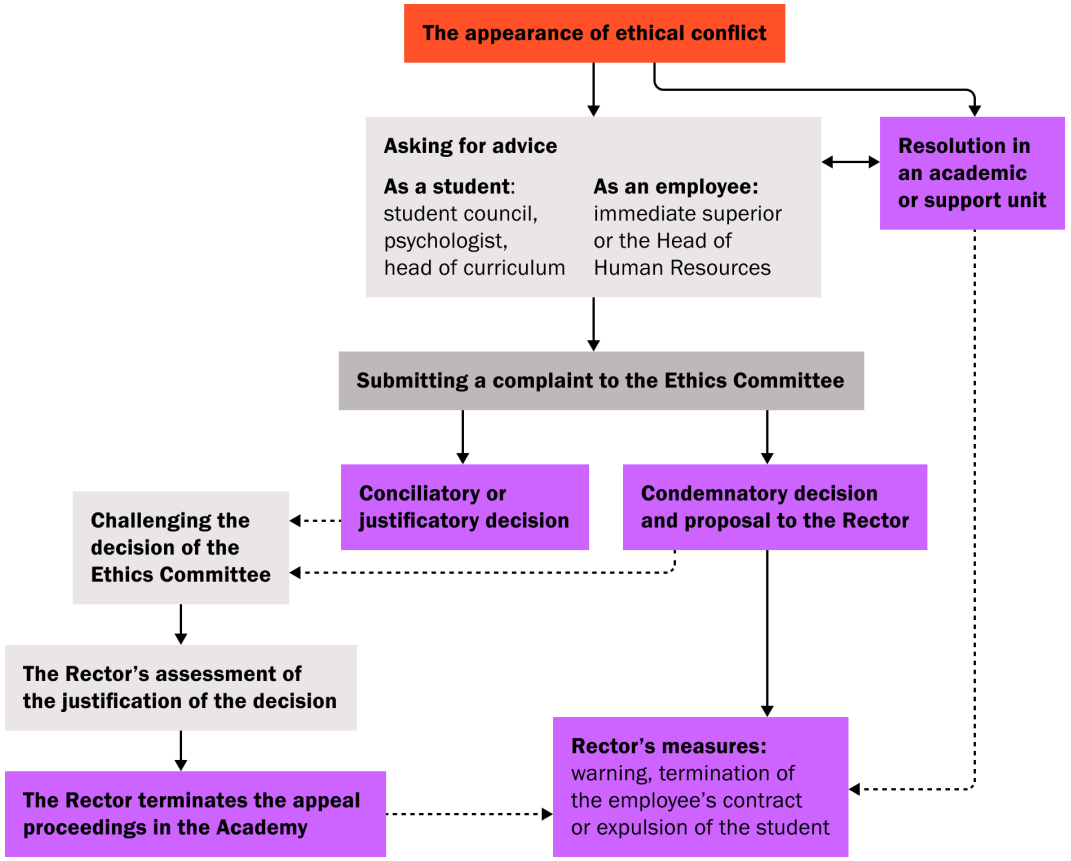


Figure 11. Conflict resolution process at EKA

3.4.4. Study ethics

Upon logging in to the study information system (Tahvel) for the first time, the student enters into a study agreement with EKA, with which they confirm that they have familiarised themselves with the Republic of Estonia and EKA legislation applicable to the study agreement (including rules governing study organisation and intellectual property) and EKA's Code of Ethics and the house rules. The relevant documents can be found on the EKA website under official information and on the EKA wiki (intranet). Good practices and regulations for studying at EKA are presented to first-year students during the induction week. According to the Academic Regulations, students are obliged to follow the principles of academic ethics and avoid plagiarism and misconduct in their studies. According to the Academic Regulations, misconduct includes breaches of generally accepted standards of behaviour and academic practices and breaches of obligations under the law, including plagiarism, falsification of documents and intentional offences.

[9]Between 2018 and 2022, the Rector has received four formal complaints, three of which were dealt with by the Ethics Committee. Two cases concerned sexual harassment by a staff member, one concerned student misconduct and the fourth concerned suspected plagiarism. All cases were resolved.

As a preventive measure against plagiarism, EKA uses the plagiarism detection software Ouriginal (from February 2024 we use the new platform Strike Plagiarism/Plagiat.pl). Based on the procedure laid down in the Academic Regulations, the Faculty's study specialist organises the processing of theses using the Ouriginal software and, in case of doubt, informs the tutor and the student. Theses that show signs of plagiarism will not be allowed to be defended. Non-textual plagiarism, e.g. the theft of a design idea, is more difficult to detect and prove – it cannot be automated and depends on the assessors' knowledge and competence[10]. If a student has committed academic fraud or other cases of misconduct, the Academy has the right to issue a written reprimand or expel the student.

Considering that artificial intelligence has become an integral part of our everyday life, including in studies and research, a guide for students and academic staff was prepared in 2023 covering, among other things, the possibilities of using AI in education, referencing the use of AI and academic fraud and its prevention.

3.4.5 Research ethics

In 2017, EKA joined the Code of Conduct for Research Integrity agreement[11]. The Code of Conduct for Research Integrity is required by the EKA Code of Ethics and the Gender Equality Plan. In the past, research ethics has not been systematically addressed at EKA. A more detailed plan is being developed to raise awareness of the principles of Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, to advise researchers and, where necessary, to intervene and handle cases of suspected misconduct[12]. Since EKA is a small university and also due to its sectoral orientation, research works requiring the approval of the Ethics Committee are rare. Thus, the role of the Ethics Committee is fulfilled by the Research Council and, for doctoral students, by the Board of the Doctoral School. If necessary, researchers can also turn to the ethics committees of other research institutions (e.g. the Human Research Ethics Committee of the National Institute for Health Development or the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Tartu). For advice on research ethics, one can turn to the leading specialist of the Research and Development Office with appropriate training, or, if necessary, to a more experienced colleague, supervisor or head of department. Members of the Academy can consult a data protection specialist on issues related to the processing of personal data in studies and research.

Strengths

The Code of Ethics, together with the guidelines, provides step-by-step advice on how to act in case of problems. The EKA Code of Ethics is updated as necessary.

In connection with the creation of the Gender Equality Plan, statistics are systematically collected in EKA to monitor and ensure gender balance both by position, when moving up the career ladder and in decision-making bodies.

Principles and guidelines for the use of artificial intelligence in studies are in use.

In 2023, a course dealing with the principles and application of research ethics systematically was launched for doctoral students (EST, ENG).

Areas for improvement

Establishment of a Code of Conduct for Research Integrity at EKA, including a procedure for counselling and for identifying and resolving violations, to cover other academic and research ethics issues (in addition to those related to discrimination, harassment and bullying at work).

Developing a system for the management and storage of research data (creation of a repository of research data) and a data protection guide for conducting research.

Developing a training programme on academic and research ethics.

[10]No such cases of plagiarism have been detected at EKA, despite a few cases of attention being drawn to them.

[11]The Code of Conduct is a guide for all Estonian research institutions and their researchers. The Code of Conduct for Research Integrity was developed by the UT Centre for Ethics as a complement to the Estonian Code of Ethics for Researchers and describes the expected behaviour of researchers and the responsibility of research institutions in ensuring good research.

[12]In addition, starting from the academic year 2023/2024, doctoral students can choose the course Good Research: Principles of Research Ethics (3 ECTS) in Estonian and in English.

Photos: Raul Meel

3.5 Internationalisation

#EKA as an international arts university / #EKA in international networks / #International experience for every member of the EKA

3.5.1 Objectives of internationalisation

- EKA's vision states its goal to be among the universities offering the highest quality art, architecture and design education in the Nordic and Baltic region.
- EKA aims to provide up-to-date curricula and offer a high level of higher education and to achieve this, we develop international relations and bring the international study or cooperation experience to every member of EKA.
- In 2017, EKA was ranked among the top 200 design and art universities in the QS World University Ranking for the first time and we aim to maintain this position.

EKA is by its very nature a university with an open international culture — an arts university combining the international and the local, where internationalisation creates opportunities for broadening horizons and developing intercultural competencies, including language skills, perceptions of social and global issues and forming identity. EKA alumni and employees are connected to the global labour market. The growing internationalisation of fields requires both students and academic staff to have a broader understanding and better preparation to handle cultural diversity and different environments. Valuable social networks are created through international mobility as a prerequisite for further professional cooperation. All of EKA's curricula (including those in Estonian) have international competence, which has been achieved through study mobility by students and staff and the involvement of incoming experts from abroad, top specialists in the field. Almost all major assessments and exams take place including external international experts.

The contemporary, open-to-the-world approach enabling international mobility has become deeply embedded in the academic culture of EKA, influencing students and teaching staff, most of whom have participated in ERASMUS or postgraduate studies abroad, and thereby having a significant impact on the design of modern curricula.

In the context of EKA's internationalisation goals, we recognise the challenges related to the carbon footprint of mobility and seek to reduce it as much as possible, while recognising that our geopolitical location means that we do not have many options if we are to meet the goals we have set.

We also consider it important that the voice of EKA reaches the bodies shaping the direction of the internationalisation of Estonian higher education, e.g. the bottlenecks related to the digitalisation and other challenges in European higher education.

3.5.2 EKA in international networks

EKA is active in European and global renowned arts universities and international networks and associations such as ELIA, Cumulus and the European Alliance of Academies, as well as in strategic partnerships with Nordic and Baltic networks such as CIRRUS, EAAE, KUNO, DAMA, Nordic-Baltic Academy of Architecture and EDDA Norden. A strong network of cooperation partners increases the international visibility of EKA, expands the geography of cooperation and allows EKA to have a say in shaping the higher education policies of European arts universities. EKA's long-term goal has been to be more active and visible in the region's international networks. Today, EKA's International Office coordinates three Nordplus networks (CIRRUS, DAMA and Nordic-Baltic Academy of Architecture) and manages international cooperation in key speciality fields[13]. EKA has been a member of the European University Consortium Transform4Europe[14] since 2021.

[13]EKA's senior staff are valued members of European sectoral organisations, e.g. Rector Mart Kalm is a member of the board of ELIA and Vice Rector for Academic Affairs Anne Pikkov is a member of the management of CUMULUS.

[14]The consortium includes Saarland University (Germany), University of Alicante (Spain), Estonian Academy of Arts (Estonia), Universidade Católica Portuguesa (Portugal), University of Primorska (Slovenia), Jean Monnet University (France), University of Silesia in Katowice (Poland), Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" (Bulgaria), The University of Trieste (Italy), Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas (Lithuania). The project is funded by the Erasmus+ European Universities programme and the consortium

EKA has over 100 ERASMUS partner universities (in KA131), many of them for (teaching) staff and student exchanges, but there are also longer-term and broader cooperation partners. In ERASMUS International Credit Mobility (KA171) projects, EKA has been active in cooperation with the USA, Canada, Australia, Kenya, Ghana and Israel. Sub-Saharan Africa is clearly a strategic priority for EKA through collaborations initiated by the Faculty of Design, thereby supporting, among other things, European sustainability goals.

3.5.3 Student mobility

We present all the opportunities for studying abroad for EKA students and opportunities open for incoming students on a website created in cooperation with digital product design students at EKA in 2022: mobility.artun.ee. The content of this website creation study project was to map the Erasmus journey and to create a prototype of the EKA Erasmus programme website. The website has been in operation for over 1.5 years and has received mostly positive feedback from users. In the autumn of 2023, HARNO (the Education and Youth Board) carried out a system audit on the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme, praising EKA for "producing a very comprehensive and easy-to-understand website on study mobility". In addition, the audit concluded: "The percentage of participants with fewer opportunities was 37% for the 2019 project and 30% for the 2020 project. The average for all HEIs (in Estonia) was 20% in 2019 and 22% in 2020. EKA's performance in engaging participants with fewer opportunities is significantly above average."

Table 14. Student mobility at EKA from 2018-2022

Students, curricula	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of students	1,140	1,210	1,215	1,209	1,153
Number and percentage of international students	95 (8.3%)	106 (8.8%)	118 (9.7%)	121 (10%)	112 (9.7%)
Number of EKA students in Erasmus long-term study mobility and its percentage out of the total number of students	74 (6.5%)	104 (8.6%)	82 (6.7%)	110 (9.1%)	128 (11.1%)
International visiting students at EKA (Erasmus)	90	94	73	87	96
Alumni internships (Erasmus)	38	43	34	42	56
Erasmus students' in short-term blended study mobility	-	-	-	-	244
Students in Transform4Europe short-term study mobility	-	-	-	-	25
Students in Nordplus programme (CIRRUS, DAMA, KUNO, NBAA, etc.) short-term study mobility	-	-	-	-	91
Erasmus study mobility students as a percentage of graduates in a given year	65%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

3.5.3.1 EKA students abroad

EKA stands out among Estonian higher education institutions in fostering international study mobility. This is evident in the volume of funding, as well as in the proportion under the ERASMUS KA131 programme (Table 14; Figure 12). Study mobility is carried out and supported in EKA mainly through the programs, projects, and rules of the European Commission. EKA is clearly the most successful institution in Estonia in securing and implementing Erasmus KA103/107 funding (from 2021 KA131/171). Also - students and teaching staff have an opportunity to carry out mobility within the Nordplus networks using Nordplus grant.

has also received funding for the Horizon 2020 project for the development of research and development cooperation (T4ERI - Transform4Europe Research & Innovation).

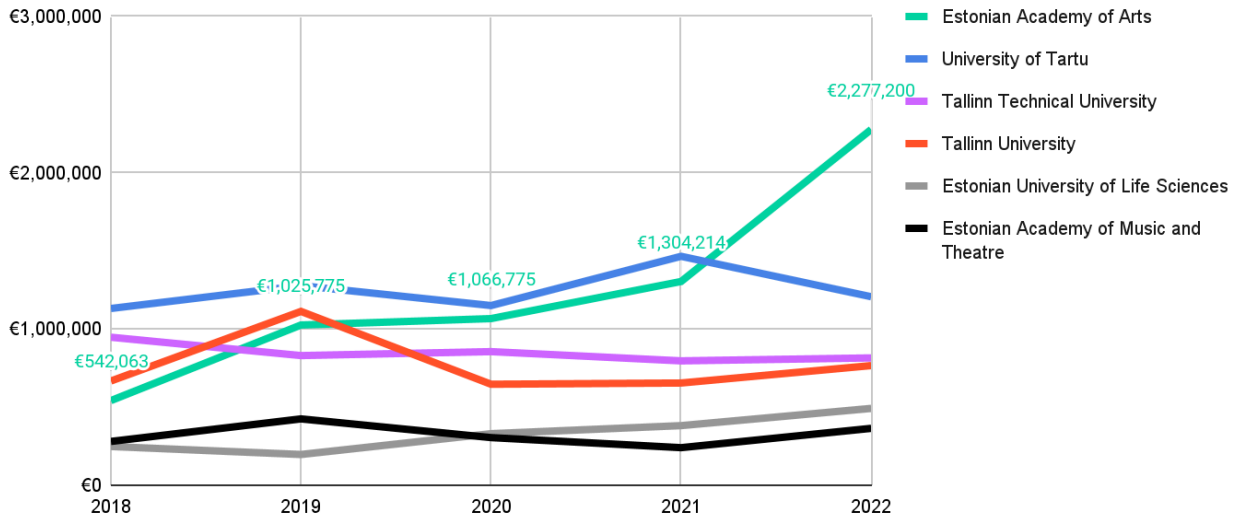


Figure 12. Financial resources for study mobility in Estonian universities 2018–2022 (Erasmus+ intra-European KA103/KA131 mobility program)

EKA offers the opportunity to go on exchange studies to all students either within the framework of Erasmus+, Nordplus or a bilateral agreement. In addition, students and recent alumni have the opportunity to participate in (recent graduate) traineeships. As EKA has been a successful and sustainable applicant and user of Erasmus KA1 programme funds, it is possible to provide scholarships for all interested students to study in Erasmus+ countries. To go to third countries, a competition for funding is organised for students twice a year, using the international part of the KA171 or KA131 programme (20%) to support them. Within the framework of the KA131 programme, EKA has conducted 6 BIPs (Blended Intensive Programmes) and students and teaching staff are actively seeking opportunities for blended mobility in Europe and third countries.

Erasmus exchange studies completed at a partner university abroad is recognised for the fulfilment of the curriculum using RPL procedures (see section 3.9.6). EKA transfers all ECTS credits earned abroad and thus[15] fulfils the obligations stipulated in the Erasmus Charter assigned to it.

3.5.3.2 International students at EKA

International students are either exchange students or degree students at EKA. Incoming exchange students study with local students at EKA. EKA has an onboarding programme for all international students – both degree students and exchange students from ERASMUS and other programmes, including a student-buddy programme whereby students studying at EKA advise and organise events for new international students. From 2022, the Estonian language and culture programme has been expanded so that all international students who are going to study at EKA have the opportunity to study conversational Estonian intensively for a couple of weeks in August before the start of their studies, including the culture programme.

As of 2022, EKA has 12 international Master's and doctoral programmes covering art, design, architecture and art culture[16]. The current share of international students in degree studies is around 10% (the 2022-2025 management contract recommends up to 15% at levels I and II), which can be considered close to an ideal rate in terms of size and resources.

According to the 2017 Institutional Accreditation, EKA has made significant progress in recruiting international students – candidates are stronger and more knowledgeable. The competition for international Master's programmes in 2022 was 3.6 candidates per place, an increase of 39% over the 2018-22 period. An in-depth analysis of the curricular market, based on our geopolitical and curricular strengths, has been carried out and tools have been implemented to support EKA's marketing activities at home and abroad. The community of

[15]Regulated under §26 and §19 of the EKA Study Regulations.

[16]In 2023, the first EKA Erasmus Mundus joint degree programme Service Design Strategies and Innovations was launched in cooperation with the Art Academy of Latvia, Stockholm School of Economics Riga and the University of Lapland, with whom we already have a long-standing cooperation experience through various short-term intensive projects in the CIRRUS network.

international graduate students is diverse (e.g. in 2022, there were students from 42 countries, and in 2018 from 35 countries, an increase of 20%; in 2022, the highest number of international students were from Russia, the USA, Ukraine, Germany and Turkey).

Students from EKA partner universities can apply for exchange studies at EKA twice a year[17]. Students apply for an exchange place on the basis of an application form by submitting a digital portfolio and a letter of motivation, in addition to the other required documents.

Thanks to the good image of the curricula and the positive experience, EKA is an attractive destination for international exchange students (according to the feedback of Erasmus incoming students for 2022/23, the EKA recommendation index was 4.7 out of 5, with responses from 75% of incoming exchange students).

3.5.4 Staff mobility

EKA offers unique opportunities for teaching staff and other employees to share and upgrade their professional skills through a range of mobility opportunities. Compared to other universities, we consider the possibility of using ERASMUS+ study mobility on a rolling basis to be unique, i.e. staff does not need to apply for funds, but they are guaranteed by the Academy throughout the year, which allows for the dynamic implementation of internationalisation goals. The same principle applies to the invitation of incoming experts, who are constantly involved in the teaching of subjects, in panel assessments and as members of examination committees. While the mobility indicators of teaching staff and all other employees at EKA are very good (Figure 13), there is still a high ambition for the Academy's academic staff to teach abroad for a longer period or to be involved in RDC activities[18]. In 2018, EKA had four full-time international teaching staff members and in 2022 there were eight. EKA considers this to be an optimal growth rate, synchronised with the growth in the number of international students.

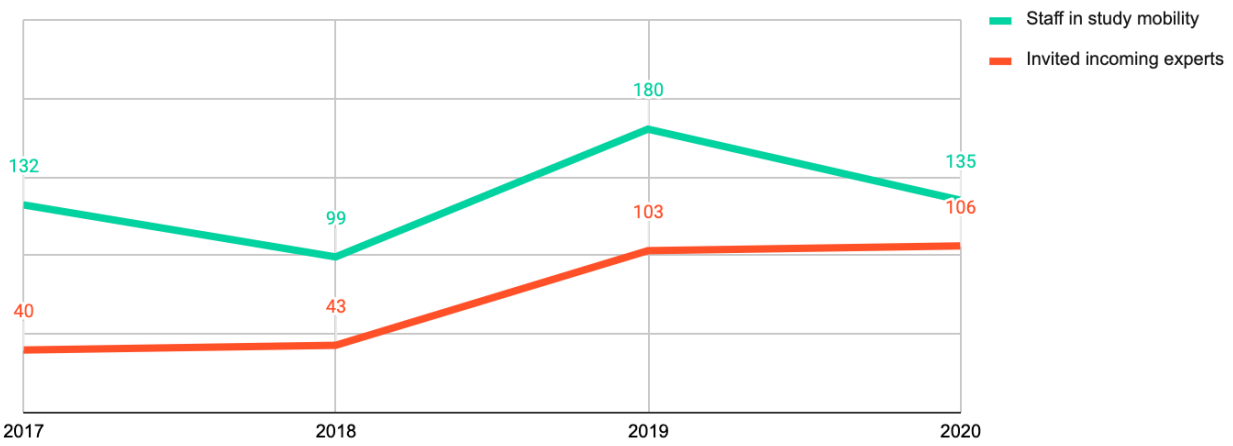


Figure 13. Staff mobility at EKA (based on the intra-European KA103 2017-2020 projects) per employee and duration of 2-60 days

Strengths

Operating in an international environment provides unique value and opportunity for students, raises the quality of EKA and allows it to be an active influencer in the landscape of arts universities in the Nordic and Baltic countries.

Membership in international associations and in their leadership opens up additional opportunities for high-impact relationships and cooperation in Europe and beyond. A strong network of cooperation partners increases the

[17]Applications are accepted via the DreamApply platform.

[18]Examples include Professor Maroš Krivy (Marie Skłodowska-Curie 3-year grant from the Canadian Centre for Architecture), Professor Linda Kaljundi (Fulbright grant from MIT) and Professor Ülo Pikkov (Fulbright grant, including a nine-month placement at EKA's long-term partner Rhode Island School of Design).

international visibility of EKA, expands the geography of cooperation and allows EKA to have a say in shaping the higher education policies of European arts universities.

A system has been created that allows for a wide variety of mobility opportunities (EKA's indicators are very good compared to other Estonian higher education institutions). The proportion of international students in degree studies has increased, including in terms of geographical diversity.

Post-graduation Erasmus traineeships facilitate graduates' integration into working life.

Areas for improvement

Aware of EKA's mobility activity, we regularly analyse and reduce our environmental footprint. We have already taken the important step of making EKA paperless and storing documents digitally.

Bringing EKA's voice to the decision-making and representative bodies that steer the course of internationalisation in Estonian higher education. Strengthening international cooperation through networks in the direction of the European Commission, including e.g. awareness of bottlenecks related to the limits of digitisation and mobility projects.

To create a more dynamic study mobility pathway, we will continue to enhance the digital pathway for student and employee mobility within EKA.

3.6 Teaching staff

Academic careers at EKA / Collaboration with experts in the field / Teaching skills and feedback / Good Teaching Seminar

3.6.1 Age and gender distribution of academic staff

EKA aims to create opportunities for professional self-realisation, the main activities of which are the Good Teaching Seminar and other opportunities for professional development, including at universities abroad. In addition, our strategic objective is to employ the best professionals in their field, who are guaranteed a decent salary. We see an important role for the direct supervisor in supporting the employee's professional development journey.

EKA's teaching staff are internationally renowned artists, architects, designers and researchers. Hourly-paid teaching staff from Estonian and international universities as well as experts from other sectoral organisations are regularly invited to teach.

The employment relations of the academic staff of EKA are governed by the Academic Staff Employment Regulations, which, in addition to the filling of posts, define the career stages of academic staff, the organisation of evaluations, the tasks and the workload of academic staff (including the proportions between teaching, RDC activities and administrative activities). On the reasoned proposal of the Dean or the Vice Rector, the Rector may temporarily change the proportions of the academic staff member's field of work. The age structure of the academic staff ensures that EKA's objectives are met and sustainable (Figure 14). The age structure of professors, associate professors and senior researchers, i.e. the higher career levels, has remained the same and entry to these levels is by competition or promotion (associate professor and senior researcher).

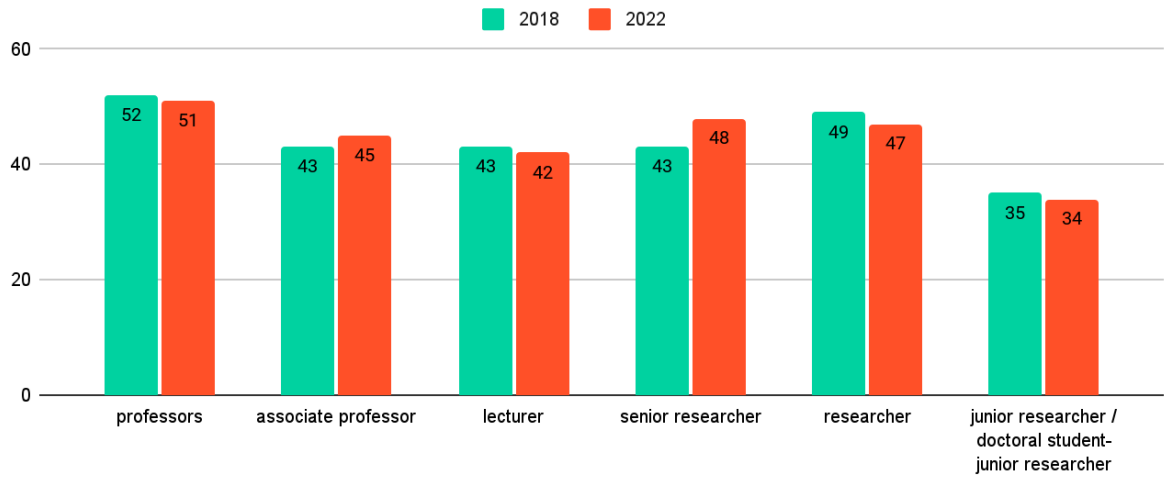


Figure 14. Average age of academic staff at EKA in 2018 and 2022

In addition to age distribution, EKA places significant importance on the gender distribution of employees across various positions (Figure 15). In 2022, academic staff composition was 56% women and 44% men. According to the European Commission's recommendation, EKA considers a situation to be gender-balanced when both sexes are represented by at least 40% of the total workforce. EKA meets this criterion, indicating a very positive scenario (see also 3.4.2). The higher proportion of women in the three research roles - senior researcher, researcher and junior researcher - is primarily due to the majority of these positions being in the Faculty of Art and Culture. In this faculty, women hold 73% of all academic posts, a common trend in the field of humanities.

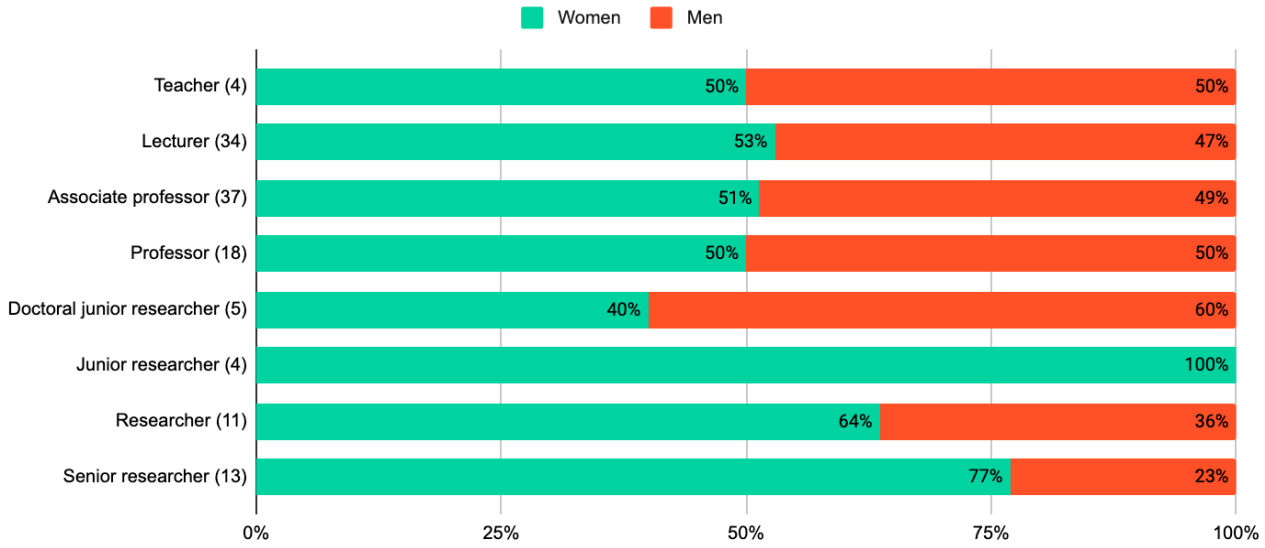


Figure 15. Proportion of women and men in academic posts at EKA in 2022

3.6.2 Number of academic staff

As of the end of 2022, there were 13.6 students per one academic staff member (FTE) at EKA. In general, departments have a small proportion of permanent academic staff and at least half of the curriculum is taught by hourly paid teaching staff.

The number of academic staff with a doctorate degree has increased slightly and now accounts for 26% of academic staff (23% in 2018). Approximately 75% of EKA's academic staff are in the arts, where, according to the HE standard, a PhD is not a mandatory requirement. For research posts, a doctorate is required for associate professors and professors. In addition, a doctorate is required for the posts of researcher and senior researcher.

The number of professors has been decreasing year by year. At the end of 2022, EKA employed 18 professors (down 14% from 2018), which represents about 16% of the total number of academic staff. Given the high proportion of hourly paid academic staff, the number of professors at EKA is optimal, except in the Faculty of Design. In addition to being at the top of their field and shaping the entire curriculum, professors at EKA have a role to play in selection and accreditation committees. Candidates for the position of Rector at EKA can only come from among the elected professors. Over the past five years, the share of research staff in the total number of academic staff has risen rapidly, reaching almost 30% by 2022. The increase is due to the addition of new research and development projects and grants, as well as the conclusion of employment contracts with doctoral students.

Despite Estonia's small size, an increasing number of academic staff have been elected who have completed a level of education outside Estonia. These include dean Sille Pihlak at the University of Applied Arts Vienna, Professor Andres Kurg at the Bartlett School of Architecture in London, Professor Linda Kaljundi at the University of Helsinki and Professor Jüri Kermik at the Royal College of Art in London, among others.

A significant part of the curricula is taught by hourly paid teaching staff and experts. Their invitation is decided by the head of the curriculum based on the needs of the speciality. The proportion of hourly paid teaching staff is the result of the fact that, as the only university of arts in Estonia, we cover all the expectations of the country's important art, architecture and design specialities for the next generation, which creates a situation where there are many curricula, but the volume of specific subjects taught is small, which does not allow for the creation of positions. The head of the curriculum agrees on the objectives, content and workload of the subject, based on the procedure for the involvement of hourly paid teaching staff. The teaching competencies and digital training and consultations offered by EKA are open to hourly paid teaching staff, as are international opportunities for professional development.

3.6.3 Recruitment and evaluation of academic staff

Since 2015, academic staff have been offered permanent employment contracts after a public competition. A vacant permanent position is subject to a public competition, unless it is decided to fill the post by promotion through evaluation. There is always a public competition for professors. We consider competition for elective positions to be low (Table 15) and our goal is to increase it.

Table 15. Competition for elective academic staff positions at EKA from 2018–2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Announced competitions	10	11	8	4	7
Number of applications submitted	13	14	9	3	9
Number of qualified candidates	10	11	9	2	6
Number of candidates per position	1	1	1.1	0.5	0.9

The Higher Education Act obliges academic staff to undergo an evaluation[19] at least once every five years. In 2020, a new career model for academic staff came into force and regular academic staff started to be evaluated in accordance with EKA's Rules on Employment Relations with Academic Staff Members. An important innovation is the explicit linking of the evaluation process to performance development reviews, which aim to assess, at least once a year, the performance and satisfaction of staff members with their work and working conditions, to support their professional development and to provide feedback. In order to ensure objective and fair evaluation, evaluation committees for professors, associate professors and senior researchers are not set up at the faculty level, but by the Rector. The composition of the committee also respects the requirements of objectivity and uniformity and always includes an external expert, as well as the vice rector and the human resources specialist and staff representatives. The staff member is evaluated in three areas of work: 1) study activities, 2) research, development and creative activities and 3) administrative activities. In justified cases, the Evaluation Committee may decide that a higher volume and performance in

[19]Evaluation is a periodic assessment of an academic staff member's performance and compliance with the requirements of the position, designed to support the academic staff member's development and career prospects and to determine the suitability of the staff member for the post.

one area of work may be a substitute for a lower volume and performance in another. This is done by submitting the academic staff member's report and teaching portfolio and for professors, a summary of international activities attesting to their activities as an internationally recognised researcher or creative practitioner. In the portfolio, the teaching staff provides a summary of student feedback along with examples of how it has been used to improve studies. The evaluee's direct supervisor provides an assessment of the evaluee's performance, based on the results of the annual performance development reviews and the evaluee's own brief review of what they have done and the question and answer session preceding the decision.

Between 2020 and 2022, 46 evaluations were carried out, with four negative decisions. For all negative decisions, the employee was given re-evaluation time to correct the deficiencies. One professor asked to be evaluated for an associate professor position at the end of the period. With the new career model and evaluation procedure, the opportunity for academic staff to take up a higher position through promotion was added as an innovation. It is possible to promote a regular lecturer to associate professor, a junior researcher to researcher and a researcher to senior researcher through promotion. Since the procedure's entry into force, eight academic staff members have been promoted on this basis.

3.6.4 Developing teaching skills

Supporting the professional development of teaching staff has been an important priority for EKA. Our approach to enhancing teaching and supervisory skills is rooted in the Good Teaching Seminars. These seminars are complemented by training sessions that promote teaching skills, e-learning guidance and facilitate the exchange of international experiences. Furthermore, faculties organise training courses and seminars and an art education lecturer offers individual consultations on teaching matters. Every year, we offer the courses Help for Teaching Staff and Learning and Teaching at the University. These training opportunities and seminars for sharing best practices are available to both full-time and hourly paid teaching staff. Academic staff members have the opportunity to take a semester off for professional development and research, development or artistic work.

A Good Teaching Seminar working group has been set up to develop teaching skills, with the aim of organising training courses and seminars mainly in the field of teaching and tutoring, including digital competences (Table 16). The input for the organisation of the training comes from the academic staff's performance development reviews, evaluations, student feedback and broader expectations and needs arising in the current situation. In addition, the Student Council and the teaching staff have the opportunity to come out with their own training and best practice sharing seminars within the framework of the Good Teaching Seminar, supported by the Good Teaching Seminar working group. In order to reflect broader societal needs, the working group initiated an annual conference between universities focusing on common key issues and developments in the arts field. In order to develop digital competences, the position of digital learning designer was created in 2021, whose main responsibilities are to support teaching staff in developing digital competences and to develop e-learning solutions for the Academy. Since 2019, Good Teaching Seminar has held annual trainings for the development of digital competences, which intensified in 2021 in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic and the joining of the digital learning designer. To support the novice teaching staff member, in 2021, EKA teaching staff put together a series of videos Help for the Teaching Staff to share their teaching experience and support colleagues. One of the areas for improvement is to ensure that all teaching staff attend the training regularly.

Table 16. Teaching staff courses & attendance 2018-2022 at EKA

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
Number of courses and seminars	6	16	10	8	8	**48**
Number of participants	155	137	242	139	177	**850**

Additionally, since November 2021, teaching and learning topics have been a focus in the EKA study information newsletter (in Estonian) launched by the Good Teaching Seminar working group. The monthly newsletter focuses on key topics related to the field of study and interviews with members of the EKA community. The newsletter is received by all EKA employees and hourly paid teaching staff.

3.6.5 Feedback on the work teaching staff

In addition to the immediate supervisor's ongoing feedback and annual performance development reviews, feedback on the work of the teaching staff is collected from students at the end of each semester and in a graduate satisfaction survey (Table 17). From the 2022/23 academic year onwards, responding to the graduate survey and the subject survey has been compulsory. The subject survey data is visible to the head of the curriculum and to teaching staff of the subject. In addition, a feedback seminar is held once a year to present the graduate survey report. Both sets of data are inputs to the curriculum analysis. Based on the feedback, the head of the curriculum is asked to respond if the teaching staff's performance rating is below 3.5. Feedback from graduates has remained high, with some drop-off in 2020 (most likely due to the rapid transition to distance learning). Improved feedback from students on the pedagogical knowledge and skills of teaching staff suggests that this has been facilitated by the increased importance of this issue at management level, the GTS training and the experience of teaching staff from their international assignments.

Table 17. Graduates' satisfaction with teaching from 2018/19–2022/23 (scale 1-5)

Statement	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
The level of professional knowledge of the teaching staff was high.	4.4	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5
The teaching staff's pedagogical knowledge and skills met my expectations.	3.8	3.6	3.0	4.0	4.1
During my studies, I had the opportunity to participate in discussions with my study group and with the teaching staff.	-	-	-	4.5	4.6
The teaching staff gave constructive and timely feedback on my studies.	3.8	3.6	3.6	4.0	4.0
In assessing study results, the teaching staff followed the assessment criteria, which I was informed of beforehand.	3.9	3.5	3.6	4.0	4.1
The feedback from the supervisor during the process of creating my graduation work/portfolio was constructive and supportive.	4.3	3.9	4.1	4.3	4.3

Strengths

Estonia's best experts in their field teach at EKA, an increasing number of whom have studied at the world's leading universities.

EKA is ensuring a future growth of teaching staff (with different profiles, expertise and ages and an increasing number of PhDs, including graduates of the EKA Doctoral School).

The proportion of hourly paid teaching staff allows for the integration of expertise and practical know-how in studies.

The share of research staff has increased to 30% of academic staff, thanks to successful grant and project applications.

A training system for teaching staff has been set up (including a Good Teaching Seminar and other development activities). The positive impact of the activities is demonstrated by feedback from graduates on their satisfaction with teaching.

EKA has an evaluation for teaching staff that ensures high quality teaching.

Areas for improvement

Increasing participation in training and development activities related to teaching skills, with a view to ensuring that teaching staff regularly participate in upgrading their pedagogical skills.

Continued action to increase research and education funding to improve the competitiveness of staff salaries.

Photo: Aurelia Minev

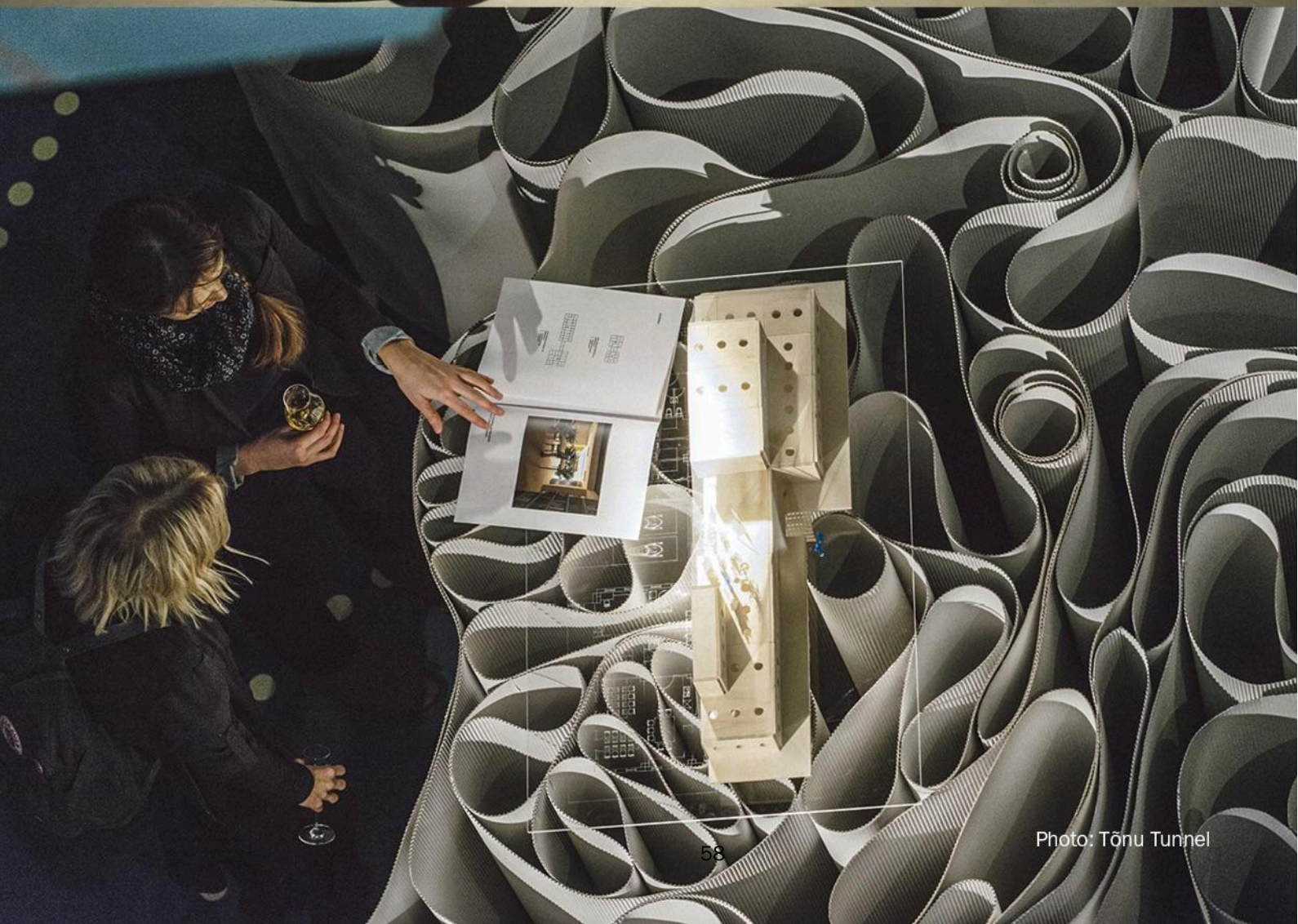


Photo: Tõnu Tunnel

Photos: Graphic Design Department Archive

3.7 Curriculum

#Principles of curriculum development / #Future competencies and skills / #Expectations and change management

3.7.1 Curriculum targeting and the overall situation of curriculum development

EKA's curricula are designed and developed with the aim of providing a high-quality education that meets national, academic and creative work-related requirements and the needs of society. The study content is directly related to artistic research and/or research and development work, ensuring relevance to current trends in the field. The curricula are developed with the aim of staying one step ahead of society's needs and drawing on up-to-date know-how and research in the field.

In order to ensure the quality of our curricula, we have set targets to analyse and improve the curriculum's entry competition, graduate satisfaction and creative achievements of students and we are targeting the provision of international learning experiences in all speciality subjects.

The curriculum is designed with the expectation that it will have a logical structure, a well-founded choice of study methods and a well-thought-out link to practices in the field. Curriculum development places emphasis on achieving better coherence of learning outcomes and a balance between the content and volume of course subjects. Student feedback indicates the density of the content of small-volume (1-2 ECTS) subjects and their separation from the semester's speciality projects. This is why curricula are increasingly shifting towards more speciality projects, covering both specialised and broader field-specific knowledge and skills, as well as generic competences. The curriculum reform in the Faculty of Design was carried out using design tools that were justified in their use and we want to apply this across the Academy in curriculum development.

In the 2022/23 academic year, EKA had 28 curricula open for admission at three levels of study (Table 18), including 12 international (see section 3.5.3) and 3 joint curricula. In the period under review, EKA had three joint degree curricula: the Design and Technology Futures curriculum in cooperation with Tallinn University of Technology, the Literature, Visual Culture and Film Studies and the Art Teacher curricula in cooperation with Tallinn University and the Service Design Strategies and Innovation curriculum in cooperation with the Art Academy of Latvia, the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga and the University of Lapland. Joint curricula mean studies can be unique and stronger than just a single field and the student gains additional opportunities through the resources and competences of the universities.

An overview of the number of students per curriculum can be found in Appendix 1.

Table 18. Number of curricula open for admission from 2018-2022 at EKA

Curricula	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
All curriculums open for admission	37	33	32	32	31
including Bachelor's studies	*17*	*13*	*12*	*12*	*12*
including integrated studies	*1*	*1*	*1*	*1*	*1*
*including Master's**	*15*	*15*	*15*	*15*	*14*
including doctoral studies	*4*	*4*	*4*	*4*	*4*
International curricula from all curricula*	13	13	12	12	12
Joint curricula from all curricula	3	3	3	3	3

* Together with joint curricula.

The EKA Development Plan 2021-2025 prioritises the goal of teaching in a way that values sustainability, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals. On this basis, a further analysis of the EKA curricula has

been carried out, mapping the share of subjects related to sustainability and entrepreneurship[20]. In the future, we will be highlighting in the curricula and/or subject cards and programmes which UN SDGs and areas are addressed in each curriculum.

3.7.2 Curriculum development process

The curricula are developed following the Higher Education Act and the Standard of Higher Education, the Estonian Academy of Arts Act, the Statutes of the Estonian Academy of Arts, the EKA Study Regulations and the EKA Doctoral Study Regulations. The regulation of the curriculum is set out in the Study Regulations. EKA opens new curricula in the curriculum groups in which the Academy has the right to conduct studies. The Vice Rector for Academic Affairs is responsible for the field of study, while the Vice Rector for Research is responsible for doctoral studies. The Academic Affairs Office is responsible for the development and monitoring of legislation on studies and curriculum development.

There must be a justifiable societal need to open a curriculum that is in line with EKA's Development Plan. It must also be shown that EKA has sufficient academic and material resources for the planned activities. An application for the opening of a new curriculum is first submitted by the Dean of the respective Faculty to the Rectorate. In the case of a positive response, the development of the curriculum can start, involving the leading representatives of the curriculum and representatives of the various target and stakeholder groups (including professional associations, employers, alumni, etc.). The Vice Rector for Academic Affairs then submits a request to the EKA Senate for the opening of a new curriculum, which is coordinated with the Head of the Academic Affairs Office and the Director of Finance and Administration. The application includes:

1) a formalised curriculum with subject descriptions and a curriculum table;
2) a comparison of the learning outcomes of the curriculum with those of the corresponding level of the higher education standard;
3) a letter of explanation on the opening of the curriculum, including the societal need for the curriculum and an analysis of similar curricula in the region;
4) letters of recommendation from target groups and stakeholders;
5) a curriculum funding calculation;
6) information on the qualifications of the teaching staff.

The Head of Curriculum is responsible for the implementation and development of the curriculum, based on the Study Regulations, the guidelines of the Faculty Council and the proposals of the Curriculum Committee. Bachelor's and Master's level curricula shall have a Curriculum Committee consisting of the Head of the Curriculum, at least one permanent and one non-permanent member of teaching staff, a representative of the students of the curriculum and a representative of employers or target and stakeholder groups. The Curriculum Committee is responsible for the continuous development of curricula and for proposing amendments. The quality and development of the doctoral curricula are the responsibility of the Doctoral Councils, whose composition is approved by the Vice Rector for Research for a period of five years.

To support the Head of Curriculum, the EKA wiki has a guide and an annual schedule for the Head of Curriculum and monthly meetings are held with the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, the Head of Quality and the Head of Academic Affairs Office.

To ensure the quality of studies and as part of the internal evaluation, from 2020 onwards, the heads of the curricula submit a curriculum analysis report (see section 3.3.4) focusing on admission competition, dropouts, graduates, structure and content, study process, study organisation, teaching staff, study environment and resources and student activities. We see involvement of alumni and employers through providing feedback on the curriculum through an alumni survey as a new opportunity, as we are currently using nationally aggregated data.

Curriculum changes are based on proposals for development resulting from curriculum analysis and feedback. Once a year, the Head of the Curriculum can propose changes to the EKA Senate.

[20]Subjects related to sustainability, sustainable development, environmental protection, climate change or environmental management were marked as sustainability subjects. A subject was marked as entrepreneurship-related if the subject title was related to economics, entrepreneurship or management.

3.7.3 General competences

Based on the descriptions of qualifications set out in the Estonian Qualifications Framework, the learning outcomes of the curricula and modules of EKA include not only specialised knowledge and skills but also general competences (creativity, interdisciplinarity, sustainability, self-analysis and leadership, entrepreneurship and collaboration, dialogue with society and digital skills). These are developed through general theory and electives, project-based speciality studies and predominantly practical research (including theses).

In addition to specialised knowledge, the theoretical subjects of the field and speciality in the modules of speciality subjects develop general competences, oral and written expression skills (including in a foreign language), analytical skills and value space. Practical speciality subjects, including internships, support general competences, teamwork skills, the skill to collect and analyse the data needed for the work and a continued willingness to learn, in addition to specialised knowledge.

The general theory courses taught at the Academy provide a common ground for students from different curricula, place creative practice in a broader context, foster interdisciplinarity and provide tools to make sense of it from different perspectives and to develop it further. The topics covered in general theory subjects are supported by examples from architecture, design and art. This allows the student to juxtapose what is happening in different fields and analyse it in turn in relation to larger processes in society. The vast majority of general theory subjects are electives, allowing students to design their own general knowledge development plan.

In the optional subjects module, students are free to choose subjects that broaden their perspectives, introduce them to another field or support their existing skills. The choice of optional subjects is made up of speciality subjects offered by the faculties.

3.7.4. Closure of curricula

Closure of a curriculum is initiated if at least one year has passed since the last group admitted has graduated or for other reasons under the Higher Education Act (Table 19). The decision to close is approved by the Senate and as a rule, the date of closure is set by the nominal length of the last accepted study group, plus one year. The Academic Affairs Office informs the students studying in the curriculum about the closure and the procedures involved.

Table 19. Aggregated statistics on the opening and closing of EKA curricula 2018-2022 (including joint curricula)

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Open curricula	1	2	1	0	0
Closed curricula	0	2	0	7	0

Strengths

Curriculum development at EKA is a continuous and flexible process, allowing for improvements in the quality of curricula and relevant and data-driven changes.

Curricula are systematically managed, but with sufficient flexibility to decide autonomously on their own budget and the suitability of their respective activities.

The internal evaluation of study quality is carried out through curriculum analysis, in which the heads of curriculum assess the content and organisation of the curriculum as well as indicators reflecting strategic developments (based on feedback from students and graduates collected through focus group interviews and a general survey).

Areas for improvement

Constant monitoring of the volume of subjects and student workload and a move towards more comprehensive subjects.

A more targeted approach to generic competences in specialist subjects.

Introducing design tools and methods into curriculum development activities.

Continued involvement of alumni, employers and other stakeholders in curriculum development.

3.8 Learning and teaching

#EKA as a creative learning environment / #Application of modern learning methods / #Digital learning / #Student satisfaction with learning / #The role of internships

3.8.1 Conditions and organisation of admission

EKA's admission policy is based on the Admission Rules, which regulate the submission of applications, entrance examinations and their assessment, the filling of study places, minimum language requirements and appeals against admission decisions. Admission to EKA is by open competition. The maximum number of students admitted to a curriculum is published on the EKA website. The Admissions Committee is responsible for general admissions matters, monitoring compliance with the Admission Rules and deciding on issues not covered by the rules. Entrance examinations are assessed by curriculum evaluation committees.

The admission applications are submitted electronically to the Admission Information System (SAIS). International student candidates submit their admission application electronically through the International Students Admission Information System (VVIS) In the academic recognition of education acquired abroad, the Academy takes into account the assessment and recommendations of the Estonian ENIC/NARIC Centre, which bases its recognition on the Lisbon Convention, various international agreements and the regulation of the Government of the Republic. The initial counselling of international students and the verification of educational documents are carried out by the Academy's admission staff according to the knowledge gained from the training organised by the Estonian ENIC/NARIC Centre. All candidates must provide proof of language proficiency if their mother tongue is not the language of instruction of the curriculum or if they have not completed a previous stage of study in the language of instruction of the curriculum. The different ways of meeting the language requirements are set out in the Admission Rules.

At the first level of higher education, the prerequisites for admission are the results of the Estonian state examinations. In addition, each curriculum has specific entrance exams to learn as much as possible about the candidate's motivation to study and their suitability for the speciality[21]. Entrance examinations can take the form of on-site or distance examinations (e.g. interview, speciality examination) and/or written examinations (e.g. essay, motivation letter, portfolio). At the second and third levels of higher education, a prerequisite for admission is the submission of various written documents, such as a letter of motivation, Master's thesis plan and previous works/portfolio. On the basis of the materials submitted, the Curriculum Assessment Committee will decide who will be admitted to the next round of interviews. Study places are filled on the basis of approved admission limit numbers and full-time and part-time study places in one curriculum are filled according to subject preference and/or ranking. A person who has met the conditions of admission will be sent a notification about their acceptance via SAIS or VVIS.

3.8.2 Learner support and learning methods

As a contemporary arts university, EKA is based on creativity as a means of making sense of social, economic, environmental and cultural practices. The creative process is of particular importance for EKA, as it allows students to benefit from the more diverse methods that go hand in hand with studying different specialities, in addition to the acquisition of theoretical knowledge. EKA's study information newsletter (“EKA ÕPE kuukiri”), which started in 2021, regularly reports on learning-related issues. In addition to current affairs, one can find things like interviews with teaching staff, good examples of innovative teaching methods,

[21]In a comparison of Estonian higher education institutions from 2018 to 2022, EKA has the lowest percentage of first-year dropouts, which also indicates a well-functioning entrance examination system (for a comparison of higher education institutions, see section 3.10 "Learning support systems").

study mobility and statistics. EKA promotes active and inclusive learning, including opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills in an interactive and practical way.

Table 20. Contemporary learning methods at EKA

Method	Description
Problem-based learning	Students work on real-world problems and acquire the knowledge and skills to solve them. The method encourages critical thinking, problem-solving skills and teamwork.
Project-based learning	Students are involved in authentic projects where they can acquire and apply their knowledge and skills in a real-life context. This method fosters cooperation and gives a realistic sense of the future working environment.
Collaborative learning	Group work, collaborative projects and online collaboration tools allow students to learn with others through sharing ideas, experiences and knowledge. It supports communication skills, teamwork and networking (including in the international arena)[22].
Blended and hybrid learning	Students' participation in studies is facilitated by digital opportunities. For larger groups, blended learning improves learning feedback. Digital platforms improve the management of learning materials and independent work and the monitoring of one's own studies.
Individual learning	Students' individual needs and interests are taken into account by offering them opportunities to adapt the learning process to their preferences. A special feature of EKA is that in several specialities, students are ensured an individual or study group studio area.

Several examples of diversity in learning methods stem from the field or speciality. The Faculty of Design is characterised by the planning of studies through the principles and stages of design thinking. The Faculty of Architecture has integrated studio-based subjects into each academic year. The Faculty of Fine Arts bases its studies on the acquisition of creative techniques and approaches and the development of the student's identity as an artist. It is characteristic of the EKA learning process that students are actively involved and constantly engaged in noticing and reflecting on their own development, in creating their own identity and personal style as an artist or designer or architect.

Graduates' satisfaction with the quality of studies at EKA has increased over the past five years (Figure 16) and can be considered satisfactory – especially in terms of the learning environment (we moved to a new building), satisfaction with the curriculum (we have been systematically developing our curricula), acquired competences and teaching (we have been supporting the development of our teaching staff). Students are most critical about the organisation of studies. The biggest problem in this regard is the transition to the new study information system Tahvel and its launch, which is not developed by EKA as it is an online environment provided by the Ministry, and the challenges related to the planning of studies in terms of non-permanent teaching staff and changes in the subjects' timetable.

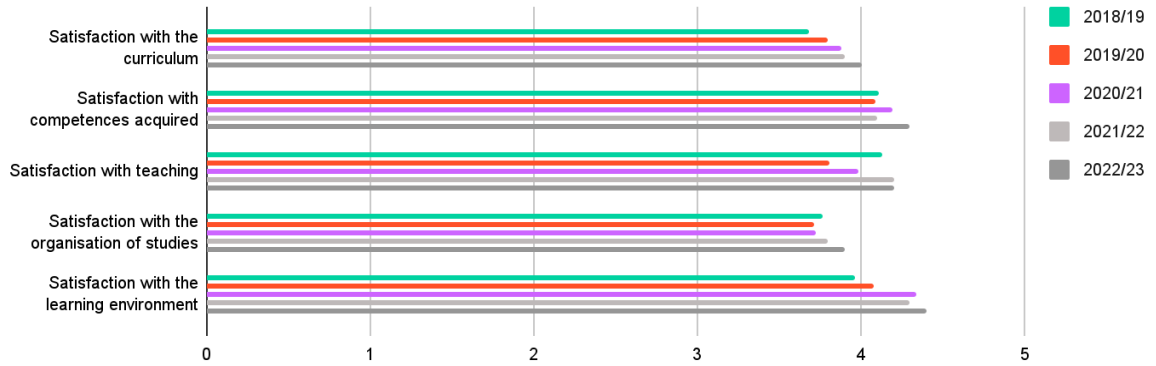


Figure 16. Average of graduating students' satisfaction ratings with the quality of studies at EKA from the academic years of 2018/19 -2022/23 (scale 1-5)

[22]As a form of collaborative learning, EKA has enabled and encouraged students to take the initiative and lead their own studies. For example, during the 2022 workshop week, an optional subject Energy Yes! was organised by students from the Faculty of Design, where students applied best practices from their studies abroad. A similar example is the study abroad/optional subject of students of the urban studies curriculum Urbanism of Migration: Researching the Periphery of the European Union.

The level of satisfaction with the quality of studies among the 2016-2018 alumni of EKA is relatively similar to that of alumni of other Estonian higher education institutions (Figure 17). The biggest difference for EKA alumni is a higher level of dissatisfaction with the physical environment of their studies, which is understandable given that the alumni are from a period when EKA was in temporary buildings all over Tallinn in anticipation of a new one. Additionally, there is less satisfaction with counselling services – after this period, the reform of study specialists was carried out and a psychologist-career counsellor of EKA was employed. Employer satisfaction information reaches EKA through national surveys, employer participation in curriculum committees, teaching activities, Alumni Day and the EKA Council.

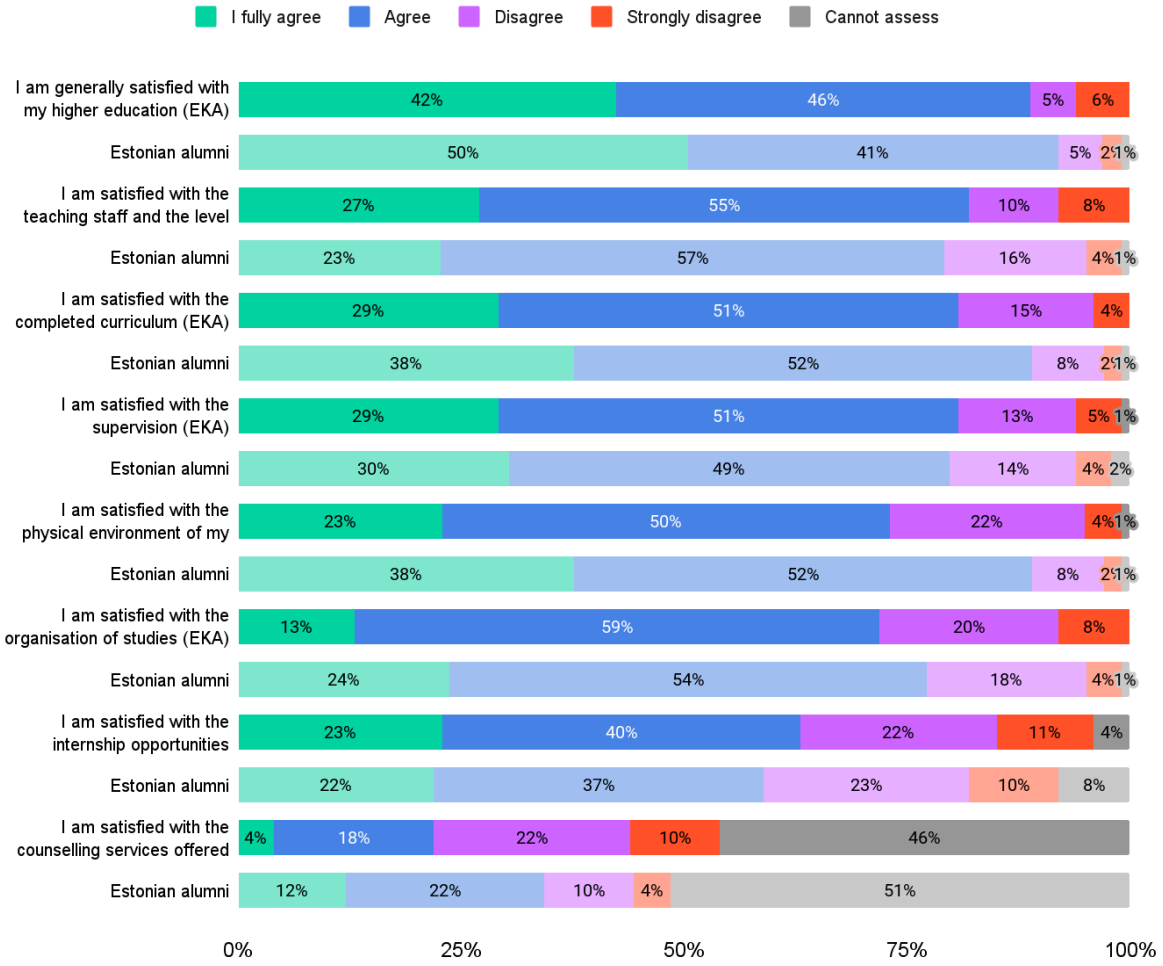


Figure 17. Satisfaction with the quality of studies at EKA and the average across Estonian universities among 2016–2018 alumni (scale 1-5)

3.8.3 Digital solutions

EKA's Digital Development Strategy (in process) includes strategic principles and objectives for digital learning that will help implement digital learning tools and methods. This includes promoting best practices in learning and teaching, setting quality criteria, providing training and support for teaching staff and incorporating student feedback into digital learning environments. EKA is fully supportive of the introduction of modern learning methods to create opportunities to develop digital literacy and make the learning process more diverse and effective.

Studies are directly affected by various developments in the professional working environments, including technological innovations[23]. As EKA does not always have the financial capacity to cover the licensing fees for

[23]In addition to various programmes and applications, more and more modern technological methods have been added, such as high-resolution photography, laser scanning, photogrammetric surveying, 3D modelling, VR studio, ultraviolet scans, infrared scans, X-ray scans, etc.

all platforms (e.g. different 3D modelling technologies, etc.), so trial versions and special access for educational purposes are also used in studies. The use of newer technologies is further supported by EKA workshops (including a prototyping lab with 3D printing facilities, a digital printing workshop, photo, video and sound studios, a VR studio) and equipment rental. As practical specialised study is an important value for EKA, the Academy's concept of technology-enhanced studies is also somewhat broader than making learners active in the classroom with digital tools.

In the wake of the experience of distance learning during the Covid-19 restrictions, the use of blended learning and hybrid learning has found its place. More often, blended learning has been implemented in larger groups to use the time of in-person meetings for seminars with smaller groups. It has also created additional opportunities for the involvement of external experts (e.g. video lectures) or for making sure students are at the same level (e.g. the sustainability self-study folder for first-year students at the Faculty of Design). Video learning materials are created and managed using two applications - EKA TV and EKA Vimeo. After the pandemic, several curricula (e.g. MA in Interaction Design) have continued to regularly use the option of hybrid learning in agreement with students.

E-learning platforms and other virtual learning environments enable interactive and self-directed learning and access to various learning materials and resources. Moodle is used as a unified learning management system that first received a visual identity specific to EKA at the end of 2020 and will undergo a major version change in early 2024.

3.8.4 Internships

The aim of the internship is to give students experience, skills and a practical understanding of professional work in a real working environment and prepare them for their future careers. The internship is integrated with speciality studies and coordinated in a curriculum-centred way, offering students the opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge in a practical working environment. Individual and group internships support the achievement of the learning outcomes of the curriculum. As a rule, the Academy is responsible for creating and mediating internship opportunities and collaborates with companies or organisations to offer students practical learning opportunities. There are specific requirements for completing the internship and it is placed in the curriculum according to how the prerequisite subjects are completed. The student may be assessed or given marks for completing the internship, reflecting their performance and achievement of learning outcomes. Doing an internship abroad after university is also highly valued by students.

The voice of employers is strongly present in curriculum development through internship bases. In addition, a representative of employers is present in the thesis defence committees. Project-based learning has been introduced in almost all specialities, bringing students into contact with future clients and employers. Heads of curricula are usually members of their professional associations, bringing in knowledge from a wide field of the profession.

The work in the creative field is very diverse. During this period, speciality-specific internship modules (e.g. in product design or graphic design) were developed in study modules and very good examples were created that we have shared within the Good Teaching Seminars. We support the development of a system of clear internship guidelines for the curricula and share good practices at feedback seminars, for example. We want to develop an EKA approach to internships.

Strengths

For a better understanding of the contemporary cultural situation and to ensure the unity of the community, all curricula include a block of general theory subjects that all students must complete.

EKA supports an individual approach and study paths that are compatible with working life.

The involvement of a digital learning designer in study development activities has increased the possibilities of e-learning.

Areas for improvement

Systematisation of activities related to internships.

Establishment of a centre for the development of teaching in creative subjects to support teaching staff and heads of curriculum.

3.9 Assessment of students

#Specifics of creative work assessment / #Diversity of assessment methods / #Student satisfaction with assessment /#Assessment competences / #Evaluation of doctoral students / #RPL

3.9.1 Assessment methods and assessment organisation

In Estonia, there is a common outcome-based assessment system at the higher education level that is regulated by a regulation of the Minister of Education and Research and on which EKA legislation is based to ensure comparability of assessment results. Both the learning outcomes and the assessment criteria are based on the learning outcomes for higher education levels set out in the Standard of Higher Education sätestatud kõrgharidusastmete õpiväljunditele. The Good Assessment and Feedback Practices (in process) apply at EKA and EKA's Study Regulations regulate assessment in more detail.

EKA uses differentiated and non-differentiated assessment. The subject is considered to be completed after the assessment of the achievement of the learning outcomes is passed with a positive result. The technical solution of the study information system Tahvel allows one to choose assessment methods and tasks and to formulate separate assessment criteria for each of them. The prerequisites for assessment and the assessment conditions, methods and criteria are formulated in the subject card and the subject programme, which are visible to students at the beginning of the subject course. By enrolling in the subject, the student commits to undergoing an assessment of learning outcomes. Throughout the course, the student will receive oral feedback (formative assessment) to support the final assessment. If the student's competences do not meet the expected level at the end of the course, they are entitled to a re-assessment. If the student fails this as well, they will have to take the same subject again in the following academic year. Students have the right to contest their grades by contacting the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs. The procedure for handling disputes related to assessment is regulated in the Study Regulations.

In recent years, there has been a discussion about the suitability of differentiated and non-differentiated assessment in EKA's curricula and how best to support the students. The EKA Academic Affairs Council is of the opinion that the faculties of the Academy represent different fields and practices, which is why it is not reasonable to formalise uniform assessment processes across EKA. Thus, as a result of the discussion (including student feedback), EKA has introduced different assessment methods[24].

3.9.2 Students' satisfaction with the assessment process

Students value constructive, criteria-based feedback, as well as mid-term assessments. In 2022, the satisfaction survey of first and second study level graduates was carried out for the fourth time, focusing in particular on assessment. The survey asked graduates for their views on the changes to the assessment principles. In the previous three years, both evaluations and comments have highlighted concerns about the lack of sufficient feedback and understanding of how the marks are formed. According to an EKA psychologist, the assessment of creative work is the most important concern for students. 217 final year students responded to the question, of which 45.2% (98 respondents) were in favour of the change in

[24]For example, non-differentiated assessment has been chosen for the MA Graphic Design and the BA Photography and BA Fine Arts curricula, while in the Faculty of Architecture and the Faculty of Art and Culture, differentiated assessment continues to be important to ensure ranking, as well as students' readiness to meet the conditions for applying to universities abroad and competing for scholarships. Non-differentiated assessment in the above-mentioned curricula is supported by arguments from international practices in the field and the role and methodology of feedback.

assessment principles and non-differentiated assessment, 16.6% (36 respondents) were in favour of differentiated assessment and 38.2% (83 respondents) had no firm opinion on the matter.

Compared to the last two years, there has been a marked improvement in the understanding of the assessment principles of courses. In 2020, 37% of respondents considered this issue problematic, while in 2022 that figure was 17%. This is probably due to the fact that there are fewer graded subjects than before. However, the comments point out that the assessment has been subjective, the method for grading is not understood and the grade often depends on the assessor rather than the student's performance.

3.9.3 Assessment methods and evaluation of theses

The methods used to assess students' competences mostly follow the principles and tools of authentic assessment that a future artist, architect, designer or researcher will use in their work. This principle supports the development of self-directed professionals and the development of general competences. The most common methods of assessment are the exhibition and presentation of works, projects, portfolios, research essays and self-reflective essays. Specialised projects, specialised studio work and creative projects are always assessed by committees consisting of members from the curriculum to be assessed and professionals of the speciality from outside the Academy

Assessments, especially in the form of an exhibition, are often open to the public[25]. The assessment of creative projects can also take the form of independent exhibitions at EKA Gallery, Vent Space Gallery, the NART Narva Art Residency, the ARS project room or other public professional galleries.

The thesis assessment committee consists of at least three members in Bachelor's level curricula and at least five members in Master's level curricula. The member of the assessment committee must have at least a degree or equivalent qualification at the level of study being assessed. At least one of the members of the assessment committee should be from outside the Academy. The assessment committee has decision-making power if more than half of the members of the committee and the chairman of the committee are present at the defence. If a member of the assessment committee is also the supervisor of the thesis to be defended, they will not take part in the discussion of the thesis or the voting of the mark (except for in the case of supervision of a portfolio).

3.9.4 Developing assessment competences

A series of assessment and feedback trainings and discussions have been carried out between 2018 and 2022[26]. Teaching and assessment-related training courses for teaching staff take place throughout the academic year. They are free of charge and open to all EKA staff. The assessment training is divided into three types based on content:

- training courses on how to tackle current assessment-related problems;
- discussions on assessment in terms of learning and curriculum development;
- individual consultations according to the needs of the teaching staff from the point of view of digital learning design as general didactics.

Experience stories of teaching staff and students that support collegiality, learning from each other and the development of common understandings have been shared in EKA's weekly newsletter, the study information newsletter, feedback seminars and online.

[25]The most prominent is the end-of-semester Faculty of Fine Arts assessment marathon, which shapes the exhibition, evaluation and criticism culture in the fine arts. In order to achieve coherence between the different subjects and to support cooperation between the teaching staff, the exhibition will showcase the work of the different subjects in a joint display, giving a good overview of the students' competences, strengths, personalities and development needs.

[26]From 2018-2023, for example, there have been further training courses on Assessment and Feedback in Distance Learning, Assessment Practices at EKA, Assessment and Learning Outcomes as a Challenge for EKA (in the framework of the Good Teaching seminar), An Analytical Look at EKA Curricula (in the framework of the Good Teaching seminar) and The Art of Curriculum Design (seminar for heads of curricula on the role of assessment in curriculum design). In addition, assessment is one of the main topics of the annual refresher course Help for Teaching Staff (3 ECTS).

3.9.5 Evaluation of doctoral students

Doctoral studies at the Academy are organised on the basis of the Higher Education Act, the Organisation of Research and Development Activities Act, the Study Grants and Student Loans Act, the Estonian Academy of Arts Act and other applicable legislation, and the Doctoral Study Regulations of the Estonian Academy of Arts. The doctoral student is obliged to submit a four-year research plan to the coordinator of the Doctoral School before matriculation, the fulfilment of which will be assessed at the annual evaluation[27]. A doctoral student is evaluated once per academic year, after two semesters of study since their last evaluation or matriculation, except after the seventh semester.

The Evaluation Committee is composed of the Vice Rector for Research, the Head of Curriculum (in the fourth year, the heads of all doctoral curricula), an Associate Professor of the Doctoral School and, if necessary, additional members. The doctoral candidates are evaluated at an Evaluation Committee meeting attended by the members of the Evaluation Committee, the doctoral candidate/student together with the supervisor(s) and the immediate supervisor (except for the doctoral student). When making an evaluation decision, the Evaluation Committee takes into consideration the evaluation report and individual plan submitted by the doctoral student as well as the assessment of the doctoral student's progress given by the supervisor, Head of Curriculum and, in the case of the doctoral student/junior researcher, the immediate supervisor. The feedback from doctoral students on the clarity of the evaluation principles and the effectiveness of the process (Table 21) is good, so no major changes to the procedure are planned, but for doctoral student/junior researchers in particular, more rigorous monitoring of compliance with all evaluation requirements is needed to ensure completion in the nominal time.

In the case of an artistic research doctoral thesis, the creative project and its peer review are generally open to the public. The reviewers are appointed by the Head of the Curriculum. At least one of them must be from outside the Academy. The review will be the subject of a public discussion between the reviewers and the doctoral student.

Table 21. Doctoral students' feedback on the evaluation at EKA in 2022/23 (scale 1-5)

Criterion	Doctoral School average	Architecture and Urban Planning PhD	Art and Design PhD	Art History and Visual Culture PhD	Cultural Heritage and Conservation PhD
The principles underlying the evaluation are clear	4.0	3.8	4.0	4.0	4.3
The evaluation ensures an adequate assessment of the doctoral student's progress	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.3	3.7
Sufficient feedback is provided during the evaluation	4.2	4.5	4.0	4.7	4.0
Evaluation is helpful in the further planning of doctoral studies	4.3	4.7	4.1	4.3	4.0

3.9.6 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

RPL helps to recognise and value the learner's knowledge and skills, wherever they are acquired. The system allows one to take into account one’s previous studies in educational institutions in Estonia and abroad, continuing education or independent learning and knowledge and skills acquired through work experience. As a contemporary university, EKA is ready to recognise the skills and knowledge students have acquired outside the formal education system and to consider them equally important. This means recognising learning outside formal education, creating appropriate assessment criteria and recognising it as equal to formal education.

At the Academy, the RPL application and procedure are regulated by the Study Regulations (§ 26-29). The student can usually submit an RPL application twice a year for the crediting of courses of the following

[27]In addition, each year the doctoral student submits an individual plan for one academic year.

semesters with previous performance. Information on RPL can be found on the EKA website and wiki and students can receive counselling from the Academic Affairs Office before applying. Intensive training of staff dealing with RPL applications shows an increase in the level of counselling, resulting in a decrease in the number of rejected applications (Table 22). The application is submitted through the Study Information System and the student is not charged for its processing. The application is assessed by the head of the curriculum/speciality, who may, if necessary, involve the faculty's RPL evaluation committee, teaching staff of general theory and/or practical subjects or other experts. There are two reasons for the decrease in the number of applications: better quality and combined applications are being submitted as a result of good counselling (in the past, one student could submit several applications in one round) and students do not wish to carry over previous studies as they prefer to attend courses organised by EKA. This is particularly the case when it comes to counting credits from subjects obtained in exchange studies abroad, where there is a preference for transferring credits to optional subjects rather than counting them towards speciality subjects.

Table 22. Submission and assessment of RPL applications 2018-2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of applications submitted for RPL	202	247	211	121	152
Volume of applications (ECTS)	2,239	2,377	1,982	1,202	1,604
Number of fully or partially accepted applications	180	208	187	112	142
Volume of applications accepted (ECTS)	2,029	1,793	1,785	1,044	1,436
Number of applications rejected	22	39	24	9	8

Strengths

In specialised projects, the authentic assessment is based on the working environment of the field.

The decision to use differentiated and non-differentiated assessment is based on feedback from students and taken into account.

Assessments are based on the logic and needs of the learning process (not session-based).

Areas for improvement

Ongoing development of assessment and feedback practices: organisation of training courses and workshops, preparation of assessment committee or panel members, conducting joint consultations for stakeholders (students, counsellors and evaluators), etc.

Addressing assessment and feedback challenges and developing competences in cooperation with other arts universities, including the development of Good Assessment and Feedback Practices.

3.10 Learning support systems

#EKA as a supportive environment for students / #Student counselling / #Students with special needs at EKA / #Access to literature and databases / #Open workshops and laboratories / #Student Council

3.10.1 Student counselling

EKA offers students the opportunity to receive advice and support through academic counselling, career counselling, psychological counselling and counselling for students with special needs. Graduates' feedback on counselling has varied, but the average over the five years has been 4 out of 5 (Table 23). Based on the feedback, we made the counselling and support of learners with special needs more systematic in autumn 2023.

Table 23. Graduates' average ratings of counselling services from 2018/19-2022/23 (scale 1-5)

Description	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Counselling index (covering academic, psychological and career counselling)	4.0	3.6	4.3	3.7	4.0
Counselling for learners with special needs, rating of the statement "I have a special need (hearing, visual, mobility or psychological), I have informed EKA about it and I felt that it was taken into account in my studies."	-	-	-	3.5	3.1

Academic counselling. The study information system, Tahvel, contains information on curricula, subjects, timetables, faculty and student data and an overview of student performances. In addition to Tahvel, a lot of important information for students, teaching staff and support staff is available on the EKA wiki. For first-year students, there is an introductory week before classes start, during which there are lectures on EKA's history and the organisation of studies and student life and a meeting with the head of the curriculum, who introduces the curriculum structure, content and opportunities. The head of the curriculum/speciality is responsible for advising students on the content of their studies during the study period, while the study specialist of the curriculum advises the student on questions related to the organisation of studies. The aim is to enhance the accessibility of study information, consolidating necessary content in a user-friendly manner for students.

Students' progress in their studies is generally very good. EKA analyses obstacles to graduation and takes steps to support graduation in nominal time. Among the public universities in Estonia, the proportion of students who drop out in the first year of studies is the lowest in EKA (Table 24). One of the biggest factors here is likely to be the entrance exam process, where applicants' abilities are thoroughly assessed and expectations are managed[28].

Table 24. Percentage of dropouts in the first year in Estonian universities in the 2018–2022 calendar years (HaridusSilm)

University	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Estonian Academy of Arts	12.7%	7.4%	7.6%	8.7%	10.3%
Estonian University of Life Sciences	27.7%	32.5%	23.9%	29.2%	31.0%
Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre	12.8%	11.5%	13.5%	8.9%	12.1%
Tallinn University of Technology	26.1%	25.5%	22.1%	24.3%	23.6%
Tallinn University	21.8%	19.4%	15.7%	15.5%	15.8%
University of Tartu	16.6%	16.7%	15.6%	15.0%	15.0%

The main reasons for dropping out of studies in the following years are the unsuitability of the speciality, economic reasons, etc. (Table 25). The biggest obstacles are social problems as there is no scholarship system to support full-time study. A large proportion of students work, which means that their study duration is longer. In the final year, the main obstacles arise with completing the thesis, especially the written part of it[29]. In most curricula, supervision of the thesis takes place on a group basis, i.e. in studios, where there is always at least one supervisor from the Academy whose task is to support the completion of the written part. In order to support students' writing skills, the Centre for General Theory Subjects has organised writing consultations aimed at improving the level of various written texts and providing individual feedback on the student's text, both linguistically and in terms of content, since the spring semester of 2018/19. The consultations have received very good feedback from students.

[28]The admission process is described in section 3.8 "Learning and Teaching" of the Self-Evaluation Report and the activities to support the integration of international students are described in section 3.5 "Internationalisation".

[29]To remedy this, supporting subjects such as Creative Writing, Artistic Research, Academic Writing and Research Methodology have been created for curricula.

Table 25. Causes and percentage of dropouts at EKA (first year and throughout the whole study period) (per academic year)

Causes of dropouts	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Expiry of the end date of studies	21.6%	31.9%	27.7%	35.1%	34%
At student's own request - other reasons	23.5%	17.5%	27.7%	22.9%	24.5%
At student's own request - unsuitability of the speciality	13.7%	18.6%	8.9%	11.4%	12.3%
Non-attendance, not starting studies	14.7%	8.2%	5.4%	2.3%	8.5%
Non-performance - non-compliance with part-time study requirements, other reasons	7.9%	12.4%	6.2%	13%	6.6%
At student's own request - economic reasons	10.8%	7.2%	10.7%	9.2%	5.7%
At student's own request - going to study abroad	3.9%	2.1%	8%	3.8%	4.7%
Failure to pay tuition fees on time	3.9%	2.1%	4.5%	1.5%	2.8%
Inappropriate behaviour	0%	0%	0%	0%	0.9%
Other reasons	0%	0%	0.9%	0.8%	0%
Percentage of dropouts among all students	**8.9%**	**8%**	**9.2%**	**10.8%**	**9.2%**

Career counselling. At EKA, students can receive career counselling from a psychologist-career counsellor and entrepreneurial counselling from the Research and Development Department. Many of EKA's specialities are directly or indirectly related to entrepreneurship, as future careers often involve either freelancing or working on a project basis.

Table 26. Career counselling opportunities at EKA

• **General opportunities**	• **Psychologist-career counselling topics**
• Opportunity to participate in various projects, including initiatives by EKA or the Academy's business-related partners • Opportunity to participate in STARTER Tallinn, a joint business idea development programme of Tallinn's universities • Opportunity to do a professional traineeship in Estonia or abroad (during studies or as an alumnus)	• finding a suitable job and form of work • decisions and uncertainty regarding career choices • writing a motivation letter and CV (how to highlight one's strengths, basic mistakes in • CV writing) • preparing for and going through the job interview process • for those who work while studying, workplace relations and balancing work and school life

Psychological counselling is available to all students at EKA to support them in their studies and in their personal life. Counselling is provided in Estonian and English on-site or online. Counselling is free of charge for students[30]. The student can get an appointment within two weeks and the amount of counselling is not limited by EKA. The psychologist helps the counselled person to better understand their problem, to formulate it, to support the person in their thoughts, feelings and desires and to find clarity and solutions to their fears. There are around 25-30 on-site meetings on average at EKA per month. Most students attend more than one meeting. Many students attend meetings with shorter or longer time periods in between them throughout their studies. If necessary, the psychologist will refer the student to other specialists (for treatment or long-term therapy).

[30]The most common reasons for turning to the psychologist include anxiety, stress, sadness or depression, low self-esteem and insecurity, difficulty adapting, communication and relationship problems, difficulties in making decisions, loss of inspiration and motivation, exam anxiety and unexpected life events.

3.10.2 Students with special needs at EKA

EKA supports students with special needs[31] throughout their admission and studies. EKA has a counsellor for students with special needs, whose job is to support students with special needs and ensure that they have equal opportunities with their fellow students. The counselling is confidential. When applying to EKA, candidates can ask for reasonable adjustments during the entrance exams that take into account obstacles arising from the specifics of their special needs.

In order for reasonable adjustments to be made, the basis for the special need must be presented to the counsellor for students with special needs and the counsellor will assess the need for the adjustments to be recommended to the academic unit. According to the specifics of the student's special needs and the obstacles and requirements of the learning environment, the teaching staff are given recommendations on how to organise studies. In the 2022/23 academic year, 11 requests for counselling or consultation were made by students and eight by departments or teaching staff[32].

3.10.3 Access to literature, databases, materials

In addition to access to literature, databases and other materials, EKA supports students' self-realisation through access to its museum, gallery and workshop studios. Satisfaction with the learning environment has increased steadily in recent years (Table 27).

Table 27. EKA graduates' average assessment of the learning environment in the academic years of 2018/19-2022/23 (scale 1-5)

Statement	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	20222/23
The study rooms were in good condition	3.9	4.2	4.3	4.2	4.4
The educational and scientific literature provided by the library was sufficient for studies	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5
I am satisfied with the opportunities to carry out practical assignments at the Academy	-	-	-	4,3	4.2
The workshops had modern tools and good working conditions	3.9	4.1	4.4	4.5	4,5
The workshops were also accessible outside the time indicated on the timetable	-	-	-	4.1	4.3
I received sufficient guidance from a technician in the workshop when needed	-	-	-	4.4	4.6
I have enough information about the workshop (opening hours, how to use the workshop)	-	-	-	4.0	4.3

3.10.4 EKA Library

EKA Library is one of the six Estonian public university libraries that have been permanently awarded the title of research library by the Ministry of Education and Research. This provides the library with stable financing from the Ministry for collection purchases, both physical and digital items. The library's collection totals more than 90,000 items, including 88,666 printed items, 2803 DVDs, more than 50 international academic journals and 11 licensed databases. It is Estonia's best research library in the field of art, architecture and design.

The library is open to all art-loving readers. EKA students, academic staff, support staff, alumni, art educators and students and teaching staff from other universities/higher education institutions may borrow

[31]To demonstrate eligibility for such support, the acquisition of a disability certificate from the Social Insurance Board, a reduced work capacity certificate from the Unemployment Insurance Fund or a certificate from a specialist doctor is required. List of special needs.

[32]Special needs covered in the consultations included autism, Asperger's, fibromyalgia, rheumatoid arthritis, depression and anxiety disorder, dyslexia and visual impairment.

items from the library. The library's 428 m^2 reading hall houses a collection of books and journals, workstations with computers (PC, Mac) and individual workstations. The content of the library is selected in cooperation with departments and academic staff. Closer direct communication takes place with Master's and doctoral students to find the source materials they need. Based on the library's profile, the main areas of collection are contemporary art and art history, architecture, design and applied arts, art education and criticism, cultural heritage and conservation, restoration, photography and cinematography (including animation), scenography, semiotics and cultural studies. The needs of new research areas and EKA research centres (e.g. various digital design topics, timber building and architecture) are taken into account.

Full-text databases (including Perlego e-library, EBSCO) are accessible through the university's computer network or with our passwords. It should be noted that in addition to the databases, other (open-source) e-resources are also used, such as e-encyclopedias (EKA has access to the Oxford University Press art encyclopaedia, Grove Art Online), image banks and media archives. The library's catalogue is available in ESTER, the Estonian library e-catalogue. Digital databases of Master's and doctoral theses are also kept. The availability of up-to-date study and research literature and other teaching materials and tools, including for independent work and access to research databases, is ensured for the conduct of study, research, development and creative activities[33]. EKA preserves and makes available digital material of historical-cultural value (digital images and metadata of visual and material theses)[34]. The aim is to create a central, modernised digital repository for long-term access to EKA's audio, video, 3D, visual and textual materials.

3.10.5 EKA Press, Gallery and Museum

The publication of academic literature and other literature in the field is supported by EKA Press. The aim of EKA Press is to publish academic texts on art history and culture and art education to ensure the continuity of Estonian art culture and the quality of art education. The work of the EKA Press is governed by a publishing committee, which includes the deans of all faculties, who submit publication ideas and subjects that they currently lack in their teaching. An average of 10 works are published each year. In addition, the Doctoral School publishes doctoral theses to be defended.

EKA students' activities are also supported by the EKA Gallery and the EKA Museum. EKA Museum collects exceptional student works to preserve and study and to present EKA's unique art collection to the public and to future generations. The museum's main asset is a collection of more than 100 years of student works, which is gradually being added to the museum information system MUIS.

3.10.6 Open workshops, labs and studios

In order to provide students of creative specialities with opportunities to develop their skills, EKA has 22 state-of-the-art workshops, studios and laboratories, that have been equipped with the latest technologies and resources (specialised tools, high-tech software and cutting-edge equipment and materials and supplies) for the opening of the new building. They include not only conventional tools, but also 3D printers, CNC milling machines, laser cutters, VR equipment and more. From 2020, the workshops were made open on the principle that all students can use all workshops if they have the relevant skills, while maintaining priority for students from workshop-related curricula. The woodworking and mock-up workshop, the photo and video studio, the prototyping lab, the accessories and binding workshop and the metal workshop are the most used. If students need additional equipment for their studies, such as video and photo cameras, screens, batteries and speakers, they are advised to use the EKA technical equipment rental service. This is highly appreciated by both EKA and Erasmus exchange students, who consider the combination of EKA workshops-labs and the contribution of the technicians as creative practitioners in supporting their learning to be remarkable. The EKA workshops participate in the activities of ETHO, which, in collaboration with ELIA, brings together workshop staff from arts universities to share best practices between workshop staff.

[33]In the 2022/2023 academic year, 5529 queries were made to the EBSCOhost databases and 944 full texts were downloaded. From the JSTOR database, there were 5891 queries and 1586 full texts downloaded in the 2022/23 academic year. In 2023, 606 books from the Perlego e-library were read (with the most read subjects being design at 14.62%, architecture at 13.12% and art at 12.79%). A curated selection of e-resources is listed on EKA library's website in the e-library section.

[34]Three environments are in use: metfond.artun.ee, the digital library of heritage conservation and, from 2020, the TASE webpage.

3.10.7 Student Council and extra-curricular activities

EKA supports student participation in extra-curricular activities and civil society initiatives, including through the Student Council. The Student Council leads projects that improve students' opportunities to study and work, and participates in the management of EKA, including in the Senate, the curriculum committees and the Academic Affairs Council, among others. A budget has been set aside for the Student Council that is used to organise events, hire equipment, create welcome bags for freshmen, reimburse students' sports benefits, support the chamber choir and provide scholarships for Student Council members. It organises the work of study group representatives, various events such as the Fox Party, the graduation party, the Christmas party, the Christmas market, health week, the EKA garden, seminars for class leaders, the Tamse work camp and the Peek into the Department series, which introduces the different EKA departments to students.

EKA students are supported by study group representatives and incoming international students by student-buddies (see section 3.5). Study group representative's support students in the same year and are the link between the Student Council and students. Study group representatives' meetings are held monthly and are organised by the Student Council. In the future, the Student Council would like to jointly discuss and clarify the tasks of study group representatives and organise seminars and training sessions for them.

At the beginning of 2022, the Student Council organised a charity auction to support Ukraine. There is also a Lecturer of the Year election, which awards the most beloved teaching staff. The Student Council looks for sporting opportunities and advantages as well and allows students to take part in intra-university summer games and other competitions. Twice a year, scholarships are awarded to students to carry out projects based on their applications and the Student Council supports the integration of students and international students in the university as well.

Strengths

Individual approach to supporting the student's learning path (individual adjustments).

A thorough approach to the admission process and consistent implementation of entrance exams ensures low dropout rates in the first year.

Excellent conditions in EKA workshops and studios to support the production of student work.

Students have access to all the main databases in the field through the EKA Library.

Students at EKA are supported by a functioning system of study group representatives and student-buddies.

Areas for improvement

Continuous support for students with special educational needs.

Contributing to the development of a better student scholarship system to increase the number of students graduating within the nominal time.

The comprehensive development of educational information to be user-friendly.

3.11 Research, development and creative activities

#EKA's role as a contemporary research, development and creative centre / #Focus themes and research centres / #Artistic research opportunities / #RDC finances / #Doctoral School / #RDC opportunities for cooperation

3.11.1 Objectives and management of research, development and creative activities

The objectives of EKA's research, development and creative activities (RDC) are defined in EKA's Development Plan 2021-2025 and EKA's RDC Strategy 2021-2025. As a research and development institution, EKA aims to create new knowledge relevant to society and culture through academic, practice-based and artistic research. As regards creative activities, the RDC strategy focuses on artistic

research directions. EKA members are free in their creative activities and EKA does not regulate this, but it does collect data on public presentations and recognition of creative works. EKA considers it important to involve students in the activities of research groups and to organise courses, seminars and workshops based on research topics.

The Research and Development (R&D) area is headed by the Vice Rector for Research, who is also the head of the Doctoral School and is responsible for the Research and Development Office, EKA Library, EKA Press, EKA Gallery and EKA Museum. The functioning of EKA's research policy is advised by the EKA Research Council, which also draws up the EKA's RDC strategy and monitors the achievement of its objectives. EKA's Research and Development Office (TAO) provides the Academy's members with the necessary support services for research and development activities and is involved in strategic planning in the field. TAO develops EKA's research management system, provides support in finding funding opportunities and applying for projects, advises on project implementation and organises training and marketing activities in the field of research and development. In addition, TAO provides consultancy services in the fields of entrepreneurship cooperation and intellectual property, and coordinates the preparation of strategically important project proposals for the Academy. To increase the success rate of applications, the post of Project Finance Coordinator was added in 2022.

EKA's RDC activities received positive results in the regular national R&D evaluations in the field of humanities and arts in 2017 and in the field of engineering and technology (architecture and urban planning) in 2021. The next R&D evaluation will take place in 2024. Also, EKA's three doctoral programmes (Art and Design, Cultural Heritage and Conservation, Art History and Visual Culture) passed the quality evaluation of doctoral studies[35] in 2019 and the doctoral programme in Architecture and Urban Planning passed in 2021.

We analyse the performance of RDC activities based on research publications and public presentations of creative works (Table 28). The number of high-level research publications has increased slightly over the selected period, but has decreased per research staff member, which may be related to, among other things, the recruitment of PhD students as junior researchers from 2022 onwards. At the same time, we consider the number of publications to be very good. The number of public presentations of creative works dropped significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2022, there were problems with data submission and the data collection process needs to be reviewed accordingly.

Table 28. Research, development and creative activities output at EKA 2018-2022

Indicator	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
High-level scientific publications*	48	41	54	50	57
Incl. 1.1.	*16*	*15*	*14*	*13*	*23*
Number of scientific publications per research staff member (FTE)	2.70	1.97	2.33	1.92	1.73
Public presentations of creative works	228	242	111	118	106
R&D as % of total revenue	9.6	13	15.4	16.6	14.8
Contracts with enterprises - volume in Euros	184,401	204,048	134,905	360,731	344,360
Support for research activities within Estonia (including base funding, personal research funding) in Euros	467,421	540,183	870,821	946,750	1,199,123
Including state base funding for research in Euros	*222,570*	*330,004*	*360,893*	*362,143*	*462,746*
External funding for R&D activities in Euros	217,213	266,429	270,559	250,506	476,019
Number of PhD students	57	59	60	62	69
Doctoral studies competition (applications per study place)	2.5	3.9	4.4	5.3	5.4

*Included in high-level scientific publications according to the ETIS classification: 1.1., 1.2., 1.3., 2.1., 2.3., 2.5., 3.1.

[35]The committee, consisting of experts from various creative universities and institutions in Europe, highly valued the research work underlying the curricula and the experienced supervisors, the guest lecturers involved, the management of the Doctoral School and the strong network of alumni, employers and researchers.

3.11.2 Focus topics and research centres

The Institute of Art History and Visual Culture has the longest history of research, which is known as a centre for the study of the history of art and architecture of the Soviet period in Estonia, as well as for art history historiography and visual culture studies. The priorities of EKA's research and development activities are the strengthening of the focus topics of the field and the development of research centres. These priorities are linked to the desire to mitigate the risk of excessive fragmentation that can arise from the broad scope and diversity of EKA's research activities (basic research, applied research, experimental development and artistic research). In 2021, the Procedure Governing EKA's Research Centres was prepared and the first three research centres were created: The Sustainable Design and Materials Lab DiMA, the Timber Architecture Research Center PAKK and the Cultural Heritage and Conservation Lab MUKOLA. The Research Centres aim to develop EKA's priority (practice-based) research areas, promote collaboration between researchers, involve doctoral students and students in research activities and increase knowledge transfer through cooperation with private and public sector institutions[36]. All the research centres started their work with funding from the ASTRA+/Creative Cluster measure, with some support from the EKA Research Fund, but the aim is to become increasingly financially independent through external funding (grants, partnership agreements).

3.11.3 Artistic research

One of the priorities of EKA's RDC activities is the development, popularisation and integration of artistic research into the Estonian research system. EKA is one of the main competence centres for artistic research in Estonia and aims to become an important regional and international centre for artistic research. Artistic research is a rapidly evolving and often ambiguously defined field that has different statuses in different higher education systems and cultural contexts. In order to promote activities at the local level, we have created a working group with the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre and the Baltic Film, Media and Arts School at Tallinn University to develop and popularise artistic research and integrate it into the Estonian research community.

In 2021, three universities signed the Estonian Artistic Research Framework Agreement. In 2023, good practices for the evaluation of artistic research were formulated and an online platform for the popularisation of artistic research was created. Over the years, the working group has been joined by a number of other institutions of higher education (University of Tartu, University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy, Estonian National Museum) and the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education and Research and the Estonian Research Council have been involved in discussions. Activities under the framework agreement aim to raise awareness, valuing and funding of artistic research on an equal footing with other fields of knowledge creation. As a result of the working group's activities, the Ministry of Culture opened an artistic research funding measure in 2022 that has supported a total of eight EKA projects.

3.11.4 Research funding

EKA's research income nearly doubled between 2018 and 2022. While in 2018, the revenue of the R&D field amounted to €1,242,000 (12.4% of EKA's total revenue), by 2022 it was €2,198,327 (14.8% of EKA's total revenue). In connection with the increase of national research funding to 1% of GDP in 2021 and EKA's good performance indicators, public base funding for R&D has increased significantly in recent years. There has also been a significant increase in external funding for R&D activities, mainly due to more active application for external funding and the development of support systems. The largest support has come from the institutional development programme ASTRA+, including €15.5 million for the construction of a new building and €1.9 million for the development of EKA as a centre for the study and research of Estonian visual and spatial culture (including research centres, knowledge transfer, doctoral studies, etc.). Research activities have also been expanded by the good results in attracting national research grants from the Estonian

[36]Major projects in the first years of the Research Centres' activities include DiMa's Fashion for Change (an international project aimed at increasing the sustainability of the European fashion industry), PAKK's project to develop a modular, factory-produced wooden educational building following circular economy principles (in cooperation with Elektrilevi OÜ) and the MUKOLA Bernt Notke Holy Spirit Church altar retable studies.

Research Council[37] and the successful applications of EKA doctoral students in the application rounds of the national programme Supporting Artistic Research in Cultural and Creative Fields launched in 2022[38].

The Vice Rector for Research manages the EKA Research Fund, where the state base funding of research and development institutions is transferred and which is the main and most stable instrument for funding research and development activities, next to external funding. The use of the Research Fund is governed by the Statutes of the EKA Research Fund and covers three types of expenses: the researchers' salary fund, EKA research grants[39] and the research-related current expenses (membership fees of associations, grants for the publication of EKA journals, publication grants, researchers' mobility, co-financing of grants, research awards, conferences, seminars, etc.).

3.11.5 Funding doctoral studies

According to the administrative agreement between EKA and the Ministry of Education and Research, the state funds one new doctoral study position in each of the curricula each year and therefore requires the defence of four doctoral theses each year. Up until the doctoral reform in 2022, state funding covered the scholarships of four new doctoral students; since the reform, the salary costs of four new doctoral junior researchers are covered every year. Until the reform, EKA provided one more study position per year with a scholarship for each curriculum from the operating grant. In order to not reduce the number of doctoral students, places with scholarships were kept after the reform as well. In addition, the junior researcher salary fund has been used to support previously accepted doctoral students (0.5 junior researcher position for a given period).

In the period of 2014-2022, the main support measure for doctoral studies, in addition to state funding, was EKA Creative Cluster, funded by the ASTRA+ programme of the Structural Funds, which has, among other things, financed participation in the Graduate School of Culture Studies and Arts (KTKDK). Membership of the KTKDK enabled EKA doctoral students to participate in internationally high-level winter schools and writing camps, organise intensive seminars and workshops for doctoral curricula, involve external experts in EKA conferences and open lectures and lay the foundations for the visiting professor programme in the Art and Design PhD curriculum. University cooperation will continue within the framework of a new measure to be launched soon.

3.11.6 Doctoral School

EKA's Doctoral School has four curricula: 1) Art and Design, 2) Architecture and Urban Planning, 3) Cultural Heritage and Conservation, 4) Art History and Visual Culture. In addition to the general framework (including the Higher Education Act, the institutional funding schemes, the Quality Agreement of Universities Estonia) doctoral studies are managed by EKA Doctoral Study Regulations. The Board of the Doctoral School consists of the Vice Rector for Research, the heads of curricula, the Doctoral School Associate Professor and the representative of the doctoral students. The day-to-day work is organised by the Coordinator of the Doctoral School.

From 2023, all doctoral curricula are international. The international dimension of doctoral studies has been boosted by various mobility programmes such as Dora Pluss, Erasmus+, Nordplus and the Kristjan Jaak scholarship programme. Doctoral curricula are led by heads of curricula who conduct specialised seminars and shape the content of the curriculum, including organising courses by guest lecturers. The progress of doctoral students is assessed in the doctoral evaluations[40]. The doctoral thesis defended at EKA can be either text-based (an article or a monograph) or practice-based research. In the curricula of Art and Design

[37]Personal research grants have accounted for most of the growth: Mart Kalm's institutional research grant, Andres Kurg's start-up grant and Virve Sarapik's group grant in collaboration with Tallinn University and the University of Tartu.

[38]Projects by Taavet Jansen, Jane Remm and Marta Konovalov, Katrin Kabun and others have received grants from the application rounds opened by the Ministry of Culture in 2022.

[39]From 2019, EKA has awarded in-house research grants (research grant, artistic research grant and development grant) and continuation grants (at the end of an externally funded research project), which aim to support and develop research topics that are important to the Academy, to prepare for applying for more external funding and to ensure the stability of EKA's research activities.

[40]The evaluation of doctoral students and related statistics are described in more detail in section 3.9 “Assessment”.

and Architecture and Urban Planning, the practice-based doctoral thesis is usually considered artistic research. The biggest competition, with a broad international scope and rapid growth, is for the Art and Design curriculum.

3.11.7 Cooperation with private, public and non-profit sector

All the faculties and research centres of EKA are engaged in knowledge transfer in their main areas of focus, carrying out research and development projects with partners from the private, non-profit and public sectors and involving students[41]. In addition, EKA has supported entrepreneurial cooperation through the mini-grant system of the EKA Creative Cluster project funded by the ASTRA+ programme. EKA is a founding member of the Adapter.ee network and, in 2022, joined the Estonian Universities Knowledge and Technology Transfer Network and a similar umbrella network in the Baltic States. EKA's knowledge transfer revenues have almost doubled since Covid-19 restrictions ended. While in the past, many cooperation projects were carried out with the Innovation and Development Department of Enterprise Estonia (now the Estonian Business and Innovation Agency), since the change in the conditions of its funding programmes, more and more projects have been financed by companies themselves. Through the European Commission's Horizon 2020-funded Transform4Europe Research and Innovation project, EKA is part of a consortium of ten European universities working together to develop collaborative innovation and research projects, research career strategies, open research and research communication.

Strengths

Art history and visual culture research comparable to that of the strongest universities in neighbouring regions.

High-level artistic research and development.

A surge in R&D funding (both national and external) during the evaluation period.

Clearly developed focus areas (research centres), which largely overlap with national priorities for R&D activities.

Increased number and volume of business cooperation agreements.

Estonia's best research library in the field of art, architecture and design.

Areas for improvement

R&D support services will be developed to enhance research quality and elevate project standards.

A strategy for entrepreneurial cooperation and key supporting activities will be formulated and implemented.

Institutional principles of good research practices will be established, encompassing regulations on data management and research ethics.

Research groups will receive support to secure larger grants and establish more extensive cooperation agreements.

Efforts will be made to increase the effectiveness of doctoral studies.

3.12 Service to society

#EKA societal impact / #EKA as a creator of added value / #EKA initiated innovation / #EKA as a centre for lifelong learning

The overwhelming majority of EKA's activities serve society, both as a natural component and as a result of its studies and research. Art projects range from intimate self-expression to addressing society's sore spots. Practical problem-solving is offered through projects by architects and designers and artists' exhibitions, actions and other activities invite critical engagement. EKA members interact with the public mostly through exhibitions at KUMU, Tallinn Art Hall, Tartmus, the Estonian Museum of Architecture, the Estonian Museum of

[41]In the Faculty of Design, entrepreneurial cooperation was brought together in 2022 under the LAETUS programme, which was created for this purpose (see also section 3.12 "Service to society").

Applied Art and Design and the Contemporary Art Museum of Estonia. Of course, EKA members also communicate with the public through all kinds of media, such as radio, TV and the press.

Examples:

- when the controversy over the removal of the communist monuments erupted in society after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, EKA members were among the most vocal speakers.
- colonial heritage has been reflected in the major exhibitions curated by Prof Linda Kaljundi at KUMU,
- Associate Professor Ingrid Ruudi's major exhibition at the Museum of Architecture dissected architecture through a feminist lens,
- the exhibition of spatial utopias of the 1960s in the Museum of Architecture, curated by Prof. Andres Kurg and researcher Mari Laanemets, brought together materials from 28 collections across Europe,
- reflecting on the art history of the Eastern Bloc has been the theme of several exhibitions,
- a handbook of Estonian art monuments was prepared for German-speaking readers for the Dehio publishing house.

As a matter of course, EKA members advise the state and society at large in a wide range of expert and advisory councils, from the timber construction cluster and all the expert commissions on heritage conservation to the Council of the Cultural Endowment. Internationally, members of EKA have been involved in the Venice Biennales of Art and Architecture, prestigious art fairs (e.g. Frieze, Brussels Art Fair, Artissima in Turin, Paris Photo Fair, etc.), London Fashion Week, served on the advisory boards of several research institutions and the editorial boards of magazines, curated at the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin, etc.

EKA Gallery is also at a prominent place, curating international exhibitions among other things. In line with EKA's mission to develop the Estonian cultural space, the publishing house EKA Press has been actively translating core texts of contemporary theory. The seven volumes of The History of Estonian Art, compiled under the auspices of EKA from 2005 to 2023, generalise the results of research on the history of art and visual culture for a local and international audience, demonstrating the cultural multi-layered nature of Estonian art history. Remarkably, EKA Museum's exhibitions revisiting past student works have attracted a wide audience. In Tallinn, EKA's series of open lectures introducing young up-and-comers from all over the world are popular, with the most consistent of them, the architecture open lecture series, celebrating its 10th year. NART, the Art Residency of EKA in Narva, is actively engaged in integration policy issues. Young art is bridged to the art world by the student-run Vent Space gallery in the basement of the Tallinn Art Hall. TASE, an annual thesis festival, is both a place for thesis defence and a report on the school's activities for society. TASE includes screenings of films from the Department of Animation and others in cinemas and the ERKI Moeshow (fashion show), which was born as a student initiative back in 1982.

3.12.1 Examples of EKA initiatives with a societal impact

In addition to public events, EKA has spearheaded or been involved in many initiatives related to community well-being or the dissemination of know-how. For example, EKA is the co-founder, together with its partners, of the Estonian Design Centre and the Estonian Centre for Architecture. Both centres are important drivers of policies and developments in the field. Besides this, there are many projects that deal with social issues - the table below gives ten relevant examples.

Table 29. Selected examples of EKA's social impact initiatives

Initiative	Brief overview
Sustainable Design and Materials Lab DiMA	The lab brings together students, researchers, practitioners and businesses to link research and studies with sustainable product development and design practices.
Timber Architecture Research Center PAKK	The centre works on enhancing the properties of wood with the aim of creating a transfer between science and industry.
sLender	In the sLender project, the Faculty of Architecture and the Estonian timber company Arcwood collaborate to create a modern take on the so-called Lender-type house from a century ago. Renowned researchers in timber engineering, energy efficiency, acoustics and fire safety are involved in addition to architecture specialists. As a result of the project, a preliminary

	project of a four-storey apartment building in the city of Tallinn will be completed that meets the current construction standards.
Design showcase	At the event, partners, private and public sector institutions are presented with collaborative projects carried out through studies.
Design programme LAETUS	The programme of the Faculty of Design, to which organisations interested in working with EKA students to develop products, services and processes are selected through a competition.
Developing health services at the North Estonia Medical Centre (PERH)	In cooperation with the Faculty of Design and the Department of Interior Architecture, students have redesigned and improved patient treatment journeys and the operation of the day care centre, designed a more comfortable treatment procedure for dialysis patients, contributed to the creation of conditions that bring people to donate more blood and participated in other collaborative projects. For the implementation of joint initiatives and long-term cooperation, EKA was named PERH's Partner of the Year in 2020.
Product design in medicine	During the COVID-19 crisis, first-year students of Product Design responded to the needs of the situation and designed special visors that are well-suited to the needs of medical workers or service staff. As a result of quick action, a manufacturer was found and several thousand visors were put into use.
Research project Unfinished City	A collaborative project of the Faculty of Architecture, financed by Kapitel AS. The research project dealt with Tallinn's urban design visions and spatial scenarios. A large book was compiled and a TV series was produced, which was broadcast on national television. The project won a national culture award.
Research project Christian Ackermann – Tallinn's Pheidias. Arrogant and Talented	This wide-ranging and multidisciplinary research project aims to awaken from oblivion the most scandalous and talented sculptor of the Estonian Baroque era. The research is led by the EKA Cultural Heritage and Conservation Department, co-coordinated by the Art Museum of Estonia and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Estonia (EELK), with contributions from the Departments of Graphic Design and Interior Architecture and many other institutions: EELK Council for Cultural Heritage, EELK congregations, Estonian National Heritage Board, Tax and Customs Board, University of Tartu, Estonian Environmental Research Centre, Estonian Center of Analytical Chemistry, Tallinn City Archives, Rändmeister OÜ, Archaeovision OÜ, Vatson OÜ and Tallinn Urban Planning Department.
Research project Sustainable Management and Exhibition of Tallinn Old Town	The purpose of the research was to analyse the impact of growing tourism on cultural heritage and to look for solutions on how to present and promote Tallinn Old Town as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in a dignified way, preserving its dignity and values. The project aimed to find solutions to improve logistics for tourists, develop new products and services, better connect the urban space between the port and the Old Town and promote Tallinn as a tourist destination. The City of Tallinn shapes its intervention practices based on the results.

3.12.2 Continuing education opportunities at EKA

The EKA Open Academy (EKA AA) is a continuing education centre dedicated to the development of creative thinking and skills, which offers a lifelong learning programme in cooperation with EKA and professional institutions and thus serves the interests of EKA's alumni and society. The programme includes professional continuing education courses, micro-degrees[42] as well as various arts courses in Estonian. In addition, the

[42]In the autumn semester of 2022, four micro-degrees were opened at EKA AA, the curricula of which were drawn up by the respective departments of EKA: Font Design, Design in Education and Educational Design, Architecture Conservation and Restoration and Baltic German Cultural Heritage in cooperation with the University of Tartu and Tallinn University. In 2022, 51 students started their micro-degree studies. The average duration of the micro-degree was 163 academic hours. The micro-degree curricula are approved by the EKA Senate.

EKA AA offers Pre-Academy courses for young people aged 16-26 to support future university entrants with preparatory courses. In addition, the EKA AA organises custom trainings. The basis for the activities is the procedure for the organisation and quality assurance of continuing education approved by the EKA Senate.

In the period of 2018-2022, the average number of AA students in EKA was 1340 students per year (Figure 18). The average volume of continuing education training is 129 academic hours for basic courses and 23 academic hours for short courses with curricula approved by the EKA Senate. The number of students has decreased as the format of short courses has changed in favour of longer courses, which has been a strategic change to increase the impact of learning. Revenues from continuing education have increased by 48% between 2018 and 2022.

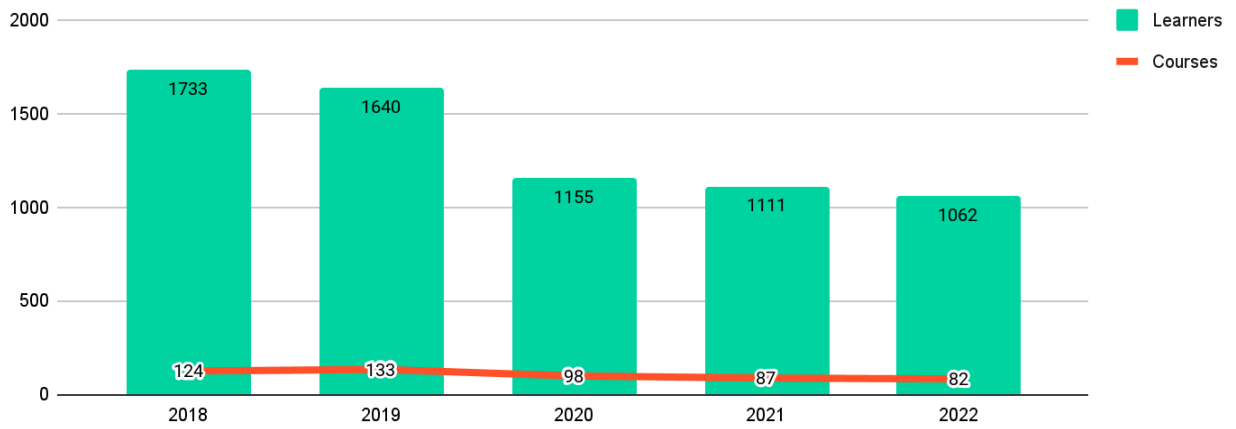


Figure 18. Continuing education learners and courses at EKA in the period 2018-2022

3.12.3 Continuing education objectives

According to the development plan, the EKA AA aims to expand its activities and grow the EKA community through lifelong learning, one of the measures of which is the share of EKA alumni in the AA's continuing education. The proportion of alumni (15% of all learners in 2022) can be measured from 2019 onwards due to the improved continuing education database system.

It is important to strengthen cooperation with EKA's departments to enhance the transfer of knowledge and skills created at EKA to society. The achievement of the target is measured by the proportion of EKA teaching staff and alumni among EKA AA tutors and by the number of micro-degrees created by EKA departments. From 2018 to 2022, an average of 134 tutors per year have supervised the EKA AA continuing education courses, 21% of whom on average are EKA employees. Since 2022, the share of EKA alumni and students among EKA AA tutors has been more accurately measured, showing that a total of 84.5% of tutors were associated with EKA.

The development of lifelong learning opportunities is based on EKA's possibilities and objectives, the needs of learners, stakeholder demand and other factors. The most important factor in the development of the quality of studies at the EKA AA is the mandatory feedback from students, which has been systematically collected since 2016. The need for training has also been analysed and the expectations of those who wish to study have been identified. The quality of the EKA AA programme depends heavily on the tutors and staff supporting its organisation. We participate in networks, including the Estonian Network for University Continuing Education, to promote development. In addition to training for professionals, the EKA AA programme covers general visual literacy competencies and helps people to learn or change their profession. Flexible modes of learning create better conditions for learners pursuing education while working and take into account the educational needs of people with special needs and groups at risk.

Strengths

The exhibitions, art activities, conferences and other public events organised by EKA are popular both internationally and locally. Gallery and student exhibitions often receive national media coverage.

EKA is an important centre for arts and culture and an attractive venue for various kinds of initiatives and events.

Through their opinion leaders, experts and the community, EKA members contribute to societal debates and drive the agenda and issues.

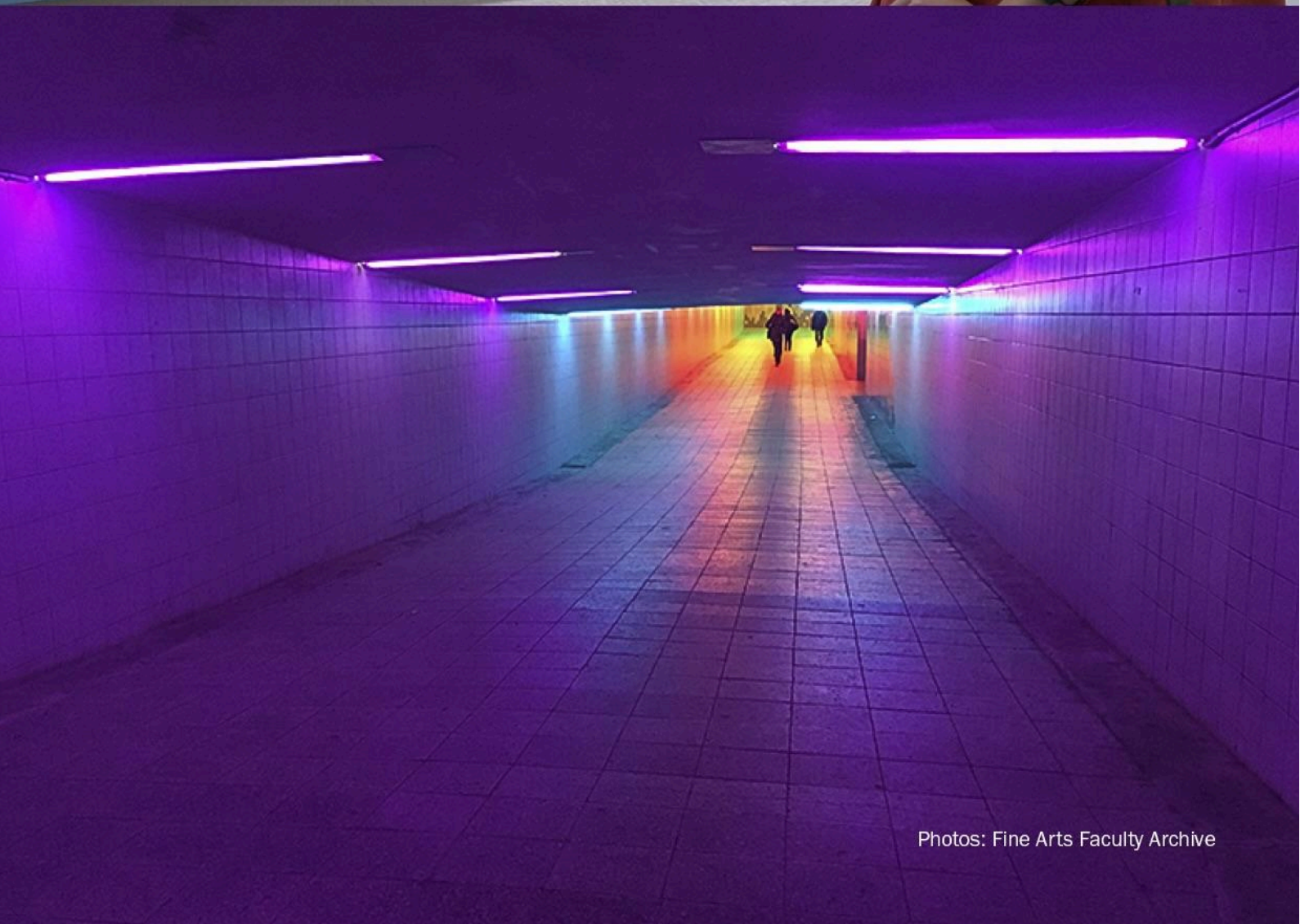
Together, the EKA Library, EKA Press, EKA Museum and EKA Gallery form a cohesive ecosystem serving the public.

EKA has a well-functioning and high-quality continuing education system in all fields for different target and age groups.

Areas for improvement

We will improve the methods and analytics of converging society-oriented activities of EKA members.

Increasing the involvement of EKA alumni in continuing education as learners.



Photos: Fine Arts Faculty Archive

IV Self-evaluation of selected curricula

Following the joint discussions between EKA and HAKA, the selection of curricula to be analysed includes Fine Arts (BA), Fashion Accessory and Textile Design (BA), Architecture and Urban Design (INT), Interaction Design (MA) and Art History and Visual Culture (PhD). In analysing these curricula, considering EKA's internal workflow, it is expected that the analysis will focus on centrally managed topics that have been previously addressed in self-analysis. Such overlaps or repetitions are intentional and aim to convey the structure and methodology of EKA's operations.

4.1 Fine Arts (BA)

Curriculum title, study level	**FINE ARTS (BKU), Bachelor**
Structural unit responsible for curriculum	Faculty of Fine Arts: Department of Graphic Art, Department of Painting, Department of Installation and Sculpture
Principal compilers of the curriculum self-evaluation, Head of Curriculum	Kirke Kangro, Head of Curriculum of BA Fine Arts 2018-2021, Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts, kirke.kangro@artun.ee Reimo Võsa-Tangsoo, Head of the Curriculum of BA Fine Arts 2021-2023, Associate Professor of Photography, reimo.vosa-tangsoo@artun.ee Liina Siib, Head of the Curriculum of BA Fine Arts since 1 September 2023, Professor of Graphic Art and Head of the Department of Graphic Art, liina.siib@artun.ee
Brief description of the process of self-evaluation of the curriculum and preparation of the report (period, who was involved, division of work, approval)	Kirke Kangro and Reimo Võsa-Tangsoo's analysis of the 2022 curriculum has been used in this analysis. As of September 2023, Liina Siib took over the leadership of the curriculum and carried out this self-evaluation together with Dean Kirke Kangro and curriculum direction leaders Kristi Kongi and Taavi Talve. Approved by: BKU Curriculum committee (Liina Siib, Kirke Kangro, Kristi Kongi, Taavi Talve, Tõnis Saadoja, Sandra Puusepp (representative of students), Viktor Gurov (representative of alumni), hourly paid teaching staff member Kulla Laas (representative of stakeholders)

Table 30. BKU curriculum in figures 2018/19–2022/23

	2018/2019	**2019/2020***	**2020/2021**	**2021/2022**	**2022/2023**
Students	63	69	69	68	60
Admitted	21	22	20	16	17
Dropouts	5	4	1	7	5
Graduates	11	16	17	17	15

4.1.1 Planning and management of studies

The BA in Fine Arts curriculum (hereafter BKU, curriculum) brings together **three disciplines**: graphic art (hereafter G), installation and sculpture (hereafter IS) and painting (hereafter P), offering students the opportunity to gain both **a broader understanding** of art practice and its interdisciplinarity, as well as **focused study** in a specific discipline. The **aim of the curriculum** is to provide students with versatile basic skills and knowledge in the main areas of art. **Maintaining the quality of the curriculum** requires a coherent and active engagement with contemporary art discourse in its broadest sense. The **quality of the curriculum focuses** on enabling the acquisition of the skills, knowledge and competencies needed by the artist, the continuous mapping and analysis of these skills and a well-thought-out and linked sequencing of the teaching process. Awareness of the artistic and cultural context, the provision of technical and practical competences, the

development of an original artistic style and the positioning of the artist and communication skills are key markers. The **quality of the curriculum is supported by** clear communication of the learning process and the learning outcomes of the subjects to the students, which is reflected in the written subject cards and programmes and supported by continuous discussion between students and teaching staff.

The **curriculum development process** involves the participation of the heads of specialties (G, IS, P) and, if necessary, the Dean. **At least once a year**, a curriculum committee meets, consisting of the Head of the Drawing Studio and representatives of students and alumni. Possibilities for developing the curriculum are also discussed with other colleagues (representatives of the fields of photography and scenography and ÜTAK as well as the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, representatives of employers, external experts, etc.).

The main changes made in the past three years:

- the proportions of theoretical and practical subjects have been changed,
- subjects are linked more effectively and there is more active focus on speciality subjects,
- an important change has been the decision to make the entire assessment process non-differentiated, following extensive discussions and feedback from graduates.

The field of contemporary art continues to play an important role in **public discussions**. The role of artists and creative people in shaping future societies is more important than ever. In a fast-changing world, art must also anticipate processes for which it is not yet possible to collect enough information to model them. The plasticity, flexibility and imaginative part of art allows us to take into account the uncertainty and insecurity that are an inevitable part of our visions of the future. Thus, in addition to their teaching activities, **the mission of the specialised departments** is to develop the field and keep abreast of the latest international trends and major societal developments. In addition, **rapidly evolving technologies**, including artificial intelligence, are an important driver. The curriculum, which previously focused on the development of autonomously thinking and self-directed artists, must also support artists' ability **to navigate the labour market** and to relate to both the Estonian and international **art market** and sales galleries[43].

The **main reference schools** for curriculum development have been the **Uniarts Helsinki, the HDK-Valand-Academy of Art and Design, the Trondheim Academy of Fine Art, Dutch art academies** and, in an earlier reform of the curriculum, **British art universities**. The **aim of the comparisons** has been to map and profile EKA's higher art education in the Nordic and Baltic region and Europe in general and to develop the curriculum based on the best practices there (taking into account the expectations of students, the local cultural background and the international quality expectations of the contemporary artist). Within Estonia, it has been important to monitor the curricula of the **Pallas Art School**, to ensure that the profiles of Estonia's only higher education institutions of art are sufficiently distinct and form a cohesive whole.

Teaching staff play a key role in the launch and development of EKA's curricula and their active artistic research directly enriches the educational experience offered by the curriculum. The research projects carried out by the Faculty are often driven by the active research focuses of the teaching staff themselves. At EKA, **creative activities** are treated as equal to research and development. The academic and support staff of all BKU specialities consists of practising artists.

For example:

- Associate Professor of Sculpture Taavi Talve's research topic is experimental films that link the Eastern European perspective with the political history of different regions of the world. Several personal exhibitions and lecture courses on this topic have been produced.
- Liina Siib, Professor of Graphic Art, besides lecturing on artistic research, has participated in expanded cinema projects in Tallinn, London, Helsinki, etc.
- Jaan Toomik, Professor of Painting, expands perceptual fields in his paintings and films.
- Associate Professor of Painting Kristi Kongi's works exploring colour have been exhibited worldwide (Mexico, Austria, etc.).

[43]Such competences are supported by the course Introduction to Artistic Life in the Questions of Contemporary Art course series in the curriculum and the courses Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship, Intellectual Property, Introduction to Cultural Policy and Teaching and Mediation in the elective module Life after University.

- Sirja-Liisa Eelma, Associate Professor of Painting, addresses the topic of emptiness in painting and collaborates with specialists in literature and linguistics, etc.
- the PARTGO research project, which brought together faculty and researchers from EKA, TUAS, MOME and NCAD to study the development horizons of public higher education in art. The 4-year project resulted in an online publication that brought together four practical local education projects, a study and a catalogue of interviews.

The **choice of external partners is based** on the regional aspect as well as on the profiles of higher education institutions with similar curricula, as we primarily see other Nordic-Baltic universities as substantive partners. EKA is a member of **KUNO**. We are in a common discussion space with the schools in the network and cooperate in conducting KUNO intensive courses and express courses open to students from different schools. Often, KUNO courses are combined with summer internships in the specialities[44]. The Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts, Kirke Kangro, chairs the KUNO steering group. BKU teaching staff and technicians are also involved in the **ELIA** and **ETHO** workshops programme and virtual seminars that started during the shut-downs caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. External teaching staff are engaged according to the need to provide competences[45].

BKU's **combined curriculum model** differs from curricula in the surrounding areas, as its cross-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary coherence is unique in the region. From the 2021/22 academic year, students are allocated to specialities in the entrance exams. The first semester is held jointly for the students, giving an overview of the techniques and identity of the specialities. At the end of the first semester, students are **assigned to their speciality departments**, without excluding the possibility of changing their choice of speciality in agreement with their professors. The curricula of the specialities provide the skills to create art in the techniques of the discipline and their extensions, while remaining flexible, free and crossing genre boundaries. The BKU is structured in a balance between **theory subjects** (~28%), **general technical skills subjects** (~22%) and **skill subjects and practices specific to the field of study** (50%). The integrity of the curriculum is respected and overlapping of subject content is avoided. In addition to the joint specialised studio classes in the first semester, lecture series and seminars on contemporary art issues and the experience of top experts in the field are jointly held for all BKU specialities' and BA Photography students.

All the theory subjects in the speciality are strongly linked to **the development of generic competences**, while participatory subjects and arts projects are mostly linked to the development of **future competences**. The curriculum is constantly evolving (including technically), keeping abreast of changes, including **digital competences, environmental sustainability, independent creative practice and entrepreneurship**.

The curriculum has **practical subjects** with a deliberately flexible format that varies depending on the speciality. Internships offer the opportunity for **experimentation** with what students have learnt at EKA, putting it into a new context, promoting a deeper understanding of the field. Alongside professional knowledge, experience and skills, it gives artists the opportunity to get to know themselves better as authors and to be able to set and see their goals more clearly.

The most used format is the internship outside EKA, often as a week-long summer school or intensive course.[46] Less frequently, the internship format (G) of assisting an art expert is used. The concept of practical work in art is a broad one and needs to be better explained and communicated. Perhaps this is why the sufficiency of the internships received a modest rating (3.8/5) in the feedback from graduates. A large number of alumni take advantage of the Erasmus+ internships a year after graduation.

Opportunities for international students to participate in the curriculum are fairly synchronous with those for regular students. Exchange students (Erasmus) come for a semester or up to an academic year to take the curriculum, mostly choosing practical subjects and studios where language is not an issue[47]. Students from

[44]E.g. in the series of courses Border As a Place, which started in 2019 at EKA's Narva residency, or in the summer internship for sculpture and photography students organised with the Iceland and Tromsø art academies. The course continued in 2022 in Druskininkai, Lithuania, and in 2023 in Iceland.

[45]For example, the Head of the Graphic Art Workshop, Maria Erikson, has previous work experience with the graphic art workshops of Uniarts Helsinki and currently at KHIO Norway and this expertise contributes to the development of the graphic art workshop at EKA.

[46]Well-established internship places include the Narva Art Residency and the Tamse base in Muhu.

[47]For full-time study, a student needs to have B1 level Estonian language skills.

other Estonian higher education institutions can choose subject courses and modules. While different educational backgrounds create an administrative and advisory burden, Erasmus students play a very valuable role in the curriculum by bringing international perspectives and experiences to the curriculum discussions. International students are very active in completing the curriculum, participating intensively in exhibition projects and collaborating with local students and artists. For example, EKA's international students are involved in curating and organising the student-run galleries Vent Space and Uus Rada. **An example of the activities** between graphic art students at EKA and graphic design students at the Art Academy of Latvia is their cooperation with journalism students from Tartu University. This collaboration enriches art projects and events with an interdisciplinary dimension, adding depth to the curriculum.

Stakeholder feedback on the curriculum subjects is received through a feedback survey conducted by EKA regarding study subjects at the end of semesters and separately from alumni who have graduated from EKA. Feedback is taken into account to a significant extent and is used to guide the **selection of teaching staff, the keeping of subjects in the curriculum and the linking of subjects**. In addition, information is collected from students on their satisfaction with the organisation of their studies regarding things like the conduct of assessments etc.[48] The lack of use of the BKU's potential for interdisciplinary mobility has been criticised. A major responsibility for gathering information from stakeholders and making curriculum developments based on this information lies with the Head of the BKU, who communicates with all hourly-paid teaching staff, meets regularly with people involved in the curriculum and brings issues to the Faculty Council.

From the point of view of the sufficiency of **material and financial resources**, the BKU is sustainable in the long term. Material resources have improved significantly since 2018, when we moved into our new building. Students have access to **new studios and workshops with contemporary equipment** (e.g. the Printmaking Workshop has received new lithography and gravure printing presses, a ventilation cabinet, etc.).

Lack of space is the biggest problem. There is insufficient space for drawing, general sculpture and monumental painting, as well as no workshop for classical planar techniques such as mosaic, fresco and stained glass. In the Printmaking Workshop there is little opportunity to do serigraphy or make any prints on a larger scale. There are problems with equipment and software in the Digital Lab. Teaching staff of the specialities do not have their own office (desk) space. Their base in the department is in the technicians' rooms.

The management of the technicians and workshops is matrix driven, receiving input from both the facilities department and specialised department. The workshops have their own budget. Salaries of the teaching staff have increased. Erasmus+ funds support the recruitment of international experts and teaching staff. There was one study specialist in the faculty, which was insufficient so a 0.25-time position was added from 2023.

Access to research literature and databases is provided by the EKA Library, through which it is possible to order the needed study literature for the specialities. In addition, there are collections of more specific literature for the specialities. Students have access to EBSCO research databases, which are introduced to them in the general theory subjects. Specialised subjects use digital resources as well (e.g. public online lectures on developments in specialities and ontology).

EKA's green values are communicated to students during the introductory week. Several of the specialised studios, internships and masterclasses are directly linked to ecology, with subjects designed with an ecological footprint in mind. Waste is sorted in workshops. Study trips to neighbouring regions are mostly by ferry, bus and train. Many students have an active interest in sustainability and are showing initiative in addressing these issues in their art practice[49]. The graphic art part of the curriculum focuses largely on the study of materials and their process, with students making crayons and inks from pigments. Tallinn Book Printers provides us with half-used paint containers, used cardboard and offset aluminium plates. Nature-friendly solvents are used.

There are opportunities for **independent work** in specialised studios, workshops and common rooms and workshops. In many workshops, it is necessary to complete a course in using the equipment to work independently. From 2022, BKU students have a common area with partitions and better equipment with

[48]A good example is taking student feedback into account in the transition to non-differentiated assessment.

[49]For example, Johanna Vahtra has carried out a content evaluation on study subjects, waste sorting, the physical environment, curriculum planning and its content.

tools, which helps to address the concern expressed in feedback from graduates that there is no space in the school to store works in progress. In the common area, there are desks and shelves to store works. Students of the speciality have their own cabinets and project or course drawers in the workshop-studio where they can temporarily store their work. General conditions are satisfactory and attention is paid to maintaining order and respecting fellow students.

The BKU **fosters collaboration**, **collective forms of work and discussions**. Students are seen as junior colleagues. The departments organise joint events that bring together students and alumni. One part of the social learning environment is social media (mainly Instagram and Facebook). The social learning environment is extended both through relations with the professional community of the speciality and through mobility. An important social learning environment is the **EKA Gallery**, where curriculum assessments take place. Connecting with fellow students is supported by **observation trips and group excursions and exhibition visits** (e.g. the recent Venice, Helsinki and Riga Biennales). Of particular importance are the opportunities for students to operate in **autonomous spaces as gallery or project spaces**, such as VentSpace in the basement of the Tallinn Art Hall and Uus Rada in the former sculpture department building in Mustamäe. Cooperation is done with many local art institutions – EKKM, Art Hall, EKL, ARS, Kumu Art Museum, KKEK, etc.

Strengths

BKU's strength lies in the carefully selected composition of its teaching staff and visiting experts.
The three-speciality curriculum offers BKU students a more interdisciplinary arts education.
BKU's phased structure of specialised, general and contextual subjects is logical and balanced.
BKU's assessment strategy has been adapted for arts education and is a strong element of the study process.

Areas for improvement

The selection of optional subjects is problematic, with practical skills groups filling up quickly. This means a student may be left with optional subjects that are not meaningful for them.
Analysing the opportunities and risks of moving to a 4-year BA with admission in every two years. The limited time available for the curriculum allows for only two years of in-depth specialised teaching over the three years.
To improve flexibility and curricular design, contemporary art courses should be made optional per semester.
Students should have a more informed role in curriculum design and easier movement between the three specialities.
Improving study coordination through increased staffing, better curriculum administration and communication to students.
A better space programme: study and studio spaces, opportunities to exhibit works.
Attention needs to be paid to linking the BA Fine Arts and MA Contemporary Art for further studies and to communicating the function of both curricula in the education path of art professionals.

4.1.2 Learning, teaching and assessment

Potential student candidates are **informed about the possibility of studying at EKA** through an Academy-wide admissions campaign and open days organised by the Communications Office. An important activator of BKU's recruitment programme is the ***Kasulik kunst*** **(Useful Art) competition** for creatively talented secondary school students (held for the third time in spring 2023), within the framework of which BKU's specialities have issued special awards. The faculty has been running **an information campaign *Hakka kunstnikuks!*** **(Become an Artist!)**, introducing young student artists. Alumni and teaching staff of the curriculum have been visiting secondary schools to talk about their work and learning opportunities **in the *Kunstisaadikute*** **(Art Ambassadors) programme**, which was launched by the faculty in 2018 and has now expanded into an Academy-wide activity. A wide range of exhibitions and projects, works in the public space, etc. are good promoters and mediators of the curriculum as well.

The **admission process** is carefully designed and implemented. The entrance exam consists of several parts:

- writing a short review of an exhibition of the candidate's choice,
- a portfolio and interview round and an interview based on a given text,

- a drawing exam,
- a creative work and its presentation.

The **committee is composed of** the Head of the BKU, the heads of the specialities, the head of the Drawing Studio, the dean and a student representative. Despite a comprehensive and democratic examination process, **regional inequalities** in accessing exams have been found to be a problem. The **quality of the admission competition** is quite high considering the number of candidates, which has also been improved by the reduction of the admission limits (about 6 students per speciality). The number of students admitted is balanced with the number of graduates over the period of the review. **Admission of international exchange students** is organised centrally by the International Office. The decision on the admission of international candidates is made by the head of the speciality together with their team and the ENIC NARIC system is used to check the candidates' data.

The structure of the creative subjects and the direct personal dialogue with the lecturer support the **individual development of the learner**, as well as working with different professionals, working methods, specific techniques, theories and approaches according to the profile of the learners. **An important focus of** the BKU is the development of the position of the artist as author. The possibility of electives and optional subjects can help to tailor the curriculum to the student's needs, as well as the active involvement of the specialities in the involvement of visiting experts (artist talks, international master classes, international members of assessment committees, etc.). An important role is played by **the student's own conscious contribution to the learning process** and individual work. Possible further studies at BKU include MAKK and Scenography, as well as the Craft Studies curricula, while the possibility of graduates embarking on an independent artistic career after graduation is also considered.

In creative subjects, the **teaching method** is a combination of group discussions and individual supervising, with observation practices and field trips being important. The main outputs of the specialised forms of learning – studios and masterclasses – are public presentations (exhibitions, performances) or publications (painting booklets, newspapers). In this process, students go through several stages: planning a work or project, executing it, joint discussions, group work, planning an exhibition or event, its execution and presentation. Interdisciplinarity and cross-disciplinary cooperation is the main challenge. In the case of international cooperation[50] a mobility component is added, including exposure to different working cultures.

The **use of digital technologies** is possible in Academy-wide studios (computer labs, digital printing lab, prototyping lab, VR Lab, etc.). Digital technology learning is included in the curriculum in the form of computer learning (Photoshop, Vector Graphics), prototyping lab (laser cutting), VR Lab (space scaling masterclass), print design and print file production (Graphic Art Studios). The reorganisation of contact learning during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic gave impetus to a number of developments, e.g. the recorded materials of lectures on general theory are an important support for students who cannot be physically present at the lecture. The possibility of using a hybrid form of learning, including blended learning, became common practice as well.

The **curriculum is actively linked to the field of RDC**. Many students already participate in solo and/or group exhibitions during their studies and are active in the arts outside the curriculum. The issues of artistic research in the field are introduced in the BA programme and continued in depth in the MA programme in Contemporary Art. The students' period of study involves creative activity through several studio projects, which usually culminate in a public exhibition. A common profile of research projects combines practice-based creative synthesis with work in archives or museum collections. Observation practices and cooperation with different local communities are important formats.

For example:

- Associate Professor Eve Kask's EKA artistic research grant project **Käsmu People and Houses 2** involved Käsmu residents, researchers from EKA, TÜ and TLÜ and students in anthropological fieldwork.

[50]For example, the collaboration of the Department of Painting with the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna on the exhibition *Where is the Body* in Vienna and at the Narva Art Residency Gallery in 2021-2022 (lecturers Daniel Richter and Nazim Yilmaz, curators Lilian Hiob and Julius Pristauz), a masterclass on "fictional exhibition" with painting students from BKU and curatorial and graphic art students from Vilnius Academy of Arts, young sculptor award exhibitions at ARS art centre, as well as a project on public space art education with Turku Arts Academy, MOME in Hungary and Dublin Art School.

- Associate Professor Charlotte Biszewski's (PhD) research in typography **19th Century Newspapers and the National Awakening** was held in collaboration with TYPA (letterpress and paper art centre), the UT Department of Journalism and Communication and the Department of Graphic Design at the Art Academy of Latvia.

As of autumn 2023, the BKU **assessment** became **non-differentiated** and based on a survey of the situation, the thesis grade was made non-differentiated as well.[51] The main drawback of differentiated assessment was seen as an excessive focus on the final outcome and an undervaluing of the learning process. The **shift to non-differentiated assessment** has been implemented gradually. The written analysis given to students at the end of each semester and summarised by the heads of curricula on the corresponding feedback page is seen as a new quality.

During the learning process, the academic staff provides ongoing feedback to students, as do fellow students, who are encouraged to express their opinions. In the final process of formative assessment, e.g. at the Evaluation Marathon, the department's assessment panel with at least one external member is involved in providing feedback. Students are informed of **the assessment criteria** in the subject cards and programmes and teaching staff give an overview of the assignments and their assessment at the beginning of the course. Participation in at least 80% of the activities is a very important component of completing the courses. **Students can have a say in** the course preparation process, in performance reviews and in semester feedback.

The **RPL system** used at EKA allows for taking into account studies previously completed at educational institutions in Estonia and abroad, continuing education or independent study and knowledge and skills gained from work experience. As a contemporary university, EKA is ready to recognise the skills and knowledge students have acquired outside the formal education system and to consider them equally important. This means recognising learning outside formal education, creating appropriate assessment criteria and recognising it equally with formal education. **Compliance of the subject** in the RPL application with the curriculum is decided by the head of the curriculum or head of the field of study together with the RPL committee (dean, heads of curricula, head of the ÜTAK). Subjects are compared through learning outcomes and subject descriptions. Courses that lacked sufficient commonality have been disregarded.

In the study organisation, the **academic and support structure** is there to provide maximum support to the student, to monitor and support their learning process and the achievement of learning outcomes. Group dynamics play a role as well, with courses with a strong group spirit having better completion indicators due to support and encouragement for each other. The problem is the fragmented timetable and the proportion of small-volume subjects in the timetable, because if a student falls behind, some compulsory subjects can only be made up a year later (in some cases the subjects in the curriculum also change). Solutions to such situations are found together with the head of the curriculum.

Students' support needs are charted during the course of their studies. In addition to EKA's psychologist, the faculty has offered the possibility to get a consultation from an external partner if needed. The student can report their problems to the head of their speciality, the head of BKU, as well as the dean. In order to prevent problems, first-year students are informed about codes of conduct related to ethical conflict and seminars have been organised for students and lecturers on power relations at the Academy (as part of Good Teaching Seminar activities).

A **frequent reason for dropping out** is lack of progress, e.g. a student not returning to study after academic leave. The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated students' depression and mood disorders, which have been a barrier to graduating on time. Nominal-time graduation is problematic. We want to support nominal-time graduation and although the young emerging artist will not have an easy time ahead, we want to develop opportunities for a smoother transition to independent creative work in our proposed new creative incubator.

The **labour market in the art field** is a concept in need of a broader understanding and reflection. The number of such institutional jobs in Estonia is small and a significant number of them are filled by EKA alumni. At least half of the BKU alumni work as freelance artists and further studies at the MA level play an important role as well (many continue their studies at EKA MA programmes, but also at TÜ, EMTA and TLÜ). Both the BKU and the MAKK/MACA curricula need to be highly author-sensitive, with a rich range of competences and flexibility to develop a broad profile of teaching for professional artists. The curriculum has good contact with alumni. Some graduates have become members of the teaching staff, while the vast majority remain active in

[51]A thesis mark is not normally required for entry to a Master's degree course at European or Estonian universities.

the field of arts. Alumni feedback is taken into account in shaping the professional competences of learning, to ensure the skills to meet the challenges of freelancing or to find MA programmes with academic and creative outputs suited to their creativity.

Table 31. Student mobility in BKU curriculum in figures 2018/19–2022/23

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Incoming student mobility	12	13	9	4	12
Outgoing student mobility	6	4	4	5	10

Strengths

A learner-centred approach, individualised learning and close contact with teaching staff.
The dynamics of teaching allow subjects to change according to changes in the art field.
Non-differentiated assessment provides students with comprehensive and motivating feedback on their study process and creativity.
The importance of exhibitions and public performance in the learning process supports the practising artist's career potential.

Areas for improvement

Regional balance in the composition of entrants.
Consideration of options for four-year BA studies.
Providing feedback and its continuous improvement.
Supervisor's feedback on the thesis.
Availability and accessibility of theoretical teaching materials in Estonian.
Providing a stronger technical foundation so that students can work with techniques independently.
Paying more attention to writing skills.
Joining of studios into larger units, consolidation of 1-2 ECTS subjects.
Better availability of subject content and requirements.
The topic and placement of optional and elective subjects in the curriculum.
Increased visibility of the semester projects and thesis works.

4.1.3 Development, cooperation and internationalisation of teaching staff

Systematic support for the development of teaching staff has been an important priority for EKA. EKA's system of teaching and supervising skills builds on the Good Teaching Seminars for teaching staff, training in teaching skills and generic competences, e-learning counselling and international exchange of experience[52].

The **recruitment of teaching staff** takes place either through open competitions or, in the case of a shorter period, through a visiting lecturer contract. To support the creative work of the teaching staff, time for creative activities is included in the employment contracts. In order to prevent problems with the timely submission and entry of **teaching staff workloads** and to make the workflow smoother, we experimented with a workflow in the spring of 2023 where the BKU workloads were entered into Tahvel by the heads of the fields of study, as they had the best overview of the changes in the curriculum and the teaching staff. Every five years, the teaching staff has the opportunity to take advantage of a free semester. EKA awards bonuses for professional achievements: Head of Curriculum bonus, artist bonus and thesis supervisor bonus. Opportunities for self-development are offered by mobility and participation in networks. The Cultural Endowment of Estonia has launched a scholarship for teaching staff in the creative disciplines.

The Higher Education Act obliges staff to **undergo an evaluation** at least once every five years. In 2020, a new career model for academic staff came into force and regular academic staff started to be evaluated in accordance with EKA's Rules on Employment Relations with Academic Staff Members. For a more detailed

[52]For a more detailed description of these activities, see section 3.6.4 “Developing teaching skills”.

overview of EKA's policies and practices in this regard, see section 3.6.3 "Recruitment and evaluation of academic staff". Feedback from the immediate superior is provided in the form of an annual **performance development review** and similar interviews are also held on an ongoing basis as required. The performance development review identifies how the employee and their superior can work together to improve the performance of the lecturer's work, as well as the career prospects and expectations of the lecturer.

The teaching staff of BKU is balanced in age and gender. In addition to the heads of speciality, associate professors and technicians of the specialities also actively teach, courses are taught by teaching staff from other curricula, and a large number of courses are delivered to students through hourly paid teaching staff. The educational level of the teaching staff is uniformly at Master's degree level (there are four PhD holders in the teaching staff) and creative achievements are taken into account to a significant extent in the quality of the teaching staff. Sharing of best practices takes place both at curriculum teaching staff meetings and faculty meetings, as well as in the framework of Good Teaching Seminars and workshops. There are training courses for dealing with students with special needs and seminars offering psychological counselling related to studies. Academic trips of teaching staff provide an opportunity to discuss the best educational strategies internationally. Most major international art events and festivals are attended by our staff.

Table 32. Academic staff in BKU curriculum in 2022

Total number of academic staff	Male staff	Female staff	Average age	MA level of education	With a PhD degree
24 (17,75 FTE)	12 (8 FTE)	12 (9.75 FTE)	women 46/ men 47 yrs	20	4

Based on student feedback (2018-2023), students are generally satisfied with the teaching staff: professional competence, ability to identify problems related to the speciality and to analyse different solutions are valued (the related satisfaction indicator has been 4-4.5 out of 5). Specialists and hourly paid teaching staff involved in the learning process are valued, as is the opportunity to participate in the study process and have discussions with the teaching staff. The timely availability of information, the organisation of studies and the study information system and the pedagogical competence of the teaching staff (related indicator 3.9 out of 5) were criticised. Criticisms on teaching staff are taken into account in the planning of workloads for the following semesters and in the structure of subjects. Whenever possible, teaching staff are asked to participate in more practical learning (e.g. computer training) in addition to the Good Teaching Seminars.

Compliance with the principles of academic ethics (including the Ethics Committee, relevant guidelines, etc.) is organised centrally at EKA, an overview of which is provided in section 3.4 "Academic Ethics". So far, there has been one case under review concerning the BKU's activities that required the convening of the Ethics Committee (the problem was the blurring of the boundaries between personal and work relations and the possible use of discriminatory language). There have been no complaints of creative plagiarism within the scope of the curriculum, although there have been discussions on related general issues.

Mobility of both incoming and outgoing teaching staff is high.[53] International teaching staff and experts have given master classes, participated in evaluation committees and supervised internships intending to broaden the dimension of feedback given and enrich the dialogue between analysis and reference. External experts are consulted on the objectives of the subject, the subject card and the assessment criteria.

The job descriptions for teaching staff require **active engagement in RDC activities**, which are reported on during regular evaluations. The contract of academic staff ensures the sustainable development of creative activities – professors have 50% and associate professors 25% of their working time intended for RDC activities. Research projects allow for a reduction of the workload based on an application.

[53]Over the past three years, BA Fine Arts teaching staff have taught courses at the Rhode Island School of Design in the USA, Emily Carr University of Art and Design in Canada, Art Academies of Iceland, Latvia, Vilnius, Vienna and Turku, AVU in Prague, NKAD in Dublin, Universidad Diego Portales in Santiago, Chile, Universidad de Monterrey in Mexico and others. Incoming lecturers have come e.g. from the Art Academies of Helsinki, Ljubljana, Latvia and Georgia.

For teaching staff, **social contribution to wider society and professional practice** are very important and EKA encourages teaching staff to participate in social discussions, speak out in media, etc.

Strengths

The teaching staff, which brings together graphic art, installation and sculpture as well as painting and drawing, has a wide range of competences and values the quality of teamwork.

Mobility of teaching staff is at a very high level, supported by both the faculty and the International Office.

Cooperation with international partner schools and with international colleagues is very good. There is a wide range of high-quality hourly paid teaching staff from Estonia.

Subject teams are intensively involved in artistic and RDC activities.

A reasonable amount of teaching time is allocated to creative work (professor 50%, associate professor 25%).

Areas for improvement

Increased focus on study organisation and early planning for the next semester. Strategic cooperation with the study specialist.

Explaining the link between assessment criteria and learning outcomes. Consultations on the subject with international experts/teaching staff.

Increasing higher education pedagogy, including curriculum management competences in the team. Implementing an inclusive learning process.

Photo: Heigo Teppo

4.2 Fashion, Accessory and Textile Design (BA)

Curriculum title, study level	Fashion, Accessory and Textile Design (BMAT), Bachelor
Structural unit responsible for curriculum	Faculty of Design: Departments of Fashion, Accessories and Bookbinding and Textile
Principal compilers of the curriculum self-evaluation, Head of Curriculum	Piret Puppart, Professor, Head of Curriculum piret.puppart@artun.ee
Brief description of the process of self-evaluation of the curriculum and preparation of the report (period, who was involved, division of work, approval)	The timetable for the self-evaluation is in line with the work plan in section I of the EKA report. The curriculum analysis was carried out by the BMAT working group, i.e. the permanent academic staff and coordinators of the curriculum, in weekly meetings and with the support of the Academy's annual curriculum analysis (head of the working group: Piret Valk). Division of work: ● general content creation - Piret Puppart; ● proofreading and additions – Piret Valk, Stella Runnel, Anu Ojavee, Sirle Rohusaar, Kadi Kibbermann; ● statistics - Anu Ojavee, Kadi Kibbermann, Piret Puppart; ● structural drawings - Piret Puppart, Krista Leesi, Stella Runnel; ● examples of subjects – Anu Ojavee, Stella Runnel, Sirle Rohusaar, Krista Leesi, Piret Puppart, Maarin Ektermann; ● approval of versions – Dean Ruth-Helene Melioranski

Table 33. BMAT curriculum in figures 2018/19–2022/23

	2018/2019	2019/2020*	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
Students	-	22	38	52	64
Admitted	-	21	18	19	18
Dropouts	-	4	7	3	1
Graduates	-	0	0	3	15

*Admission since the 2019/20 academic year.

4.2.1 Planning and management of studies

The curriculum **Fashion, Accessory and Textile Design** (hereafter referred to as BMAT, curriculum), which was launched in 2019, was formed by integrating three separate curricula, Fashion Design, Textile Design and Accessory and Bookbinding Design, into a single curriculum[54]. The first semester of the curriculum involves mostly common subjects, but from the second semester onwards, students can start the in-depth study of the speciality approved upon admission. The **curriculum focuses** on broad-based professional development and international competence in the field, taking into account the needs of both the student and the current and future labour market. The student is regarded not as a mere recipient of information, but as an architect of knowledge and as a designer of their own future authorship and creative path. The curriculum Fashion, Accessory and Textile Design is in line with the higher education standard[55].

The **annual analysis of the BMAT** is carried out by the Curriculum Committee[56]. As a three-discipline curriculum, we have followed the good practice of always involving one representative from each speciality to ensure that everyone's interests are covered. **Student feedback**, as well as various **analyses and reports**, the

[54]The merger was carried out in response to the prescription received in the previous accreditation, which drew attention to the excessive number of curricula at EKA.

[55]Cf the documents for the opening of the curriculum, including a detailed overview of the objectives in the "Comparison of learning outcomes".

[56]The basis for the formation of the Curriculum Committee is given in section 3.7.2.

UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and comparison of information and analysis of ideas gathered through internships or from partner universities play an important role in curriculum development. Since feedback on subjects became mandatory in 2023, the number of feedback providers in the faculty has increased significantly (from 49 in the autumn semester of 2022/23 to 442 in the spring semester of 2022/23). With the first significant number of students graduating from the BMAT curriculum in spring 2023, the **focus group interviews** provided the first comprehensive overview and feedback on the curriculum as a whole. Some of the changes will therefore remain for the next accreditation period, while students already considered the merger of curricula to be the right decision in the 2022 satisfaction survey.

The general developments in BMAT curriculum as a whole include:

- a revised sequence of subjects, which makes the structure of the curriculum more logical and accessible and introduces the student to the speciality earlier;
- updated course titles, so that they are better aligned with the content or, on the contrary, are not too restrictive and the programme can be more in line with the latest thematical needs of the specific class;
- increased volume of speciality subjects across the faculty by 3 ECTS from autumn 2022 (the change was based on the need expressed by both teaching staff and students to increase the number of speciality subjects, as a result of which the speciality and general knowledge are better balanced in the curriculum);
- increased proportion of electives that develop technical competences, including the creation of workshop licence subjects to ensure equal and supervised access for all students in the faculty[57];
- jointly developed Speciality Internship course and study trips related to practical skills.

The **most significant changes** have been in the speciality studies in **accessory design**, as the field needed to be redefined and modernised and interest in enrolment was lower than expected. As a result of discussions[58], in the accessories design speciality:

- more external experts have been integrated into studies than before;
- students' technical digital skills preparation, visual communication skills and analytical skills on sustainable design have been improved;
- the volume of speciality study trips both in Estonia and abroad has been increased;
- the increase in opportunities for students to build their individual profiles has been fostered, illustrated by meetings with various professional experts, substitutions of subjects in the curriculum according to the needs of the students, assistance in finding internships, etc.

The curriculum is oriented to the **needs of society and the labour market**. **Various reports** play an important role in assessing the coherence between the curriculum and future needs. A very important example is the 2018-2022 Erasmus K2-funded project **FashionSEEDS**, in which the BMAT curriculum represented EKA. The project developed tools for teaching staff aimed at initiating radical sustainable changes in fashion and related fields. One of its key outputs was the Future Skills Foresight 2030 Report, which analysed data from nearly 60 companies and 60 higher education institutions relevant to the field and stipulated the principal growth trends affecting our field. Based on this, the sustainable approach will be further strengthened and the emphasis on digital skills will be increased[59].

One of the **objectives of** the curriculum is to provide an education that will lead to the **graduates actively participating in the labour market**. In addition, decisions on curricula take into account **the results of the OSKA report produced by the Estonian Qualifications Authority**[60] **and the overall national strategies**. In the context of

[57]The initiative was based, among other things, on the results of the workshop reform audit.

[58]Several workshops have been conducted in 2022 to plan changes, including a survey of accessories design students and a joint curriculum development workshop conducted by international expert Alex Neuman (Denmark), a roundtable of domestic and foreign specialised companies and higher education institutions and an international positioning of the field in relation to curricula of other universities. Cf workshop materials.

[59]As a further continuation of the initiative, a grant has been allocated to EKA in connection with the FashionTEX project, which mainly concerns advanced CLO3D programme studies and funding.

[60]The cooperation between the Estonian Qualifications Authority and the curriculum is also linked by the fact that the Dean of the Faculty of Design, Ruth-Helene Melioranski, is a member of the Estonian Qualifications Authority's Design Working Group.

the OSKA report, the key topics for the curriculum are the specialised ICT competences - CLO 3D (digital competences), marketing skills and analytical skills, which are planned to be further developed in different parts of the curriculum. The OSKA report also predicts job growth in the field in Estonia, forecasting a 34% increase in the number of designer jobs over the next decade. In order to develop the curriculum in line with changes in the labour market, the curriculum must take into account relatively high growth expectations. In addition, targeted surveys and workshops to keep abreast of what is happening in the accessories design market (e.g. round tables with national and international experts and companies) have been organised to develop the speciality.

A curriculum combining these three specialities in this way is probably unique in the world. In **international comparison**, the curriculum development has drawn on Prof. Nithikul Nimkulrat's previous experience in various higher education institutions (Loughborough University, Aalto University School of Art and Design), where textiles and fashion are separate units. The most significant recent observations have been carried out by analysing the curricula of the Design School Kolding (DSKD), a university in Denmark, both at BA and MA[61] levels. The Accessory speciality, on the other hand, has created working groups for cooperation with international and domestic higher education institutions with a similar focus, as well as a database that gathers information on curricula and hobby education, which supports, among other things, the implementation of changes.

The contribution of **the research, development and creative activities of the teaching staff** is an important part of BMAT's activities. The main development and research directions in the field of design at EKA are **supportive of sustainability and social innovation** and these themes are well represented in the curriculum. It is important to note that researchers are actively involved in teaching activities and that research results are integrated into teaching as well.

For example:

- Kärt Ojavee, PhD, as a senior researcher, has carried out various projects focusing on the creation of new bio-based materials over the years, in which students from different curricula have been involved throughout;
- Katrin Kabun's projects under the name *Rehabilitation of Sheep Wool - Implementation Possibilities of Archaic Material in Contemporary Design* explore wool as a resource and have laid the foundation for the Wool Project, an elective subject offered to students at the Faculty of Design;
- Electives Dyeing with Plants and Colouring with Plants (instructor Piret Valk) are based on the nature-based research project *All for Colours: Dyes from Plants Growing in Estonia on Textile*;
- former Professor Nithikul Nimkulrat, PhD has made a significant contribution to the development of the Textile Design speciality in the curriculum and its integration of research and teaching, the development of the future direction of textiles and the integration of research with teaching has been continued at various stages by Associate Professor-Senior Researcher Kristi Kuusk, PhD, Visiting Associate Professor Varvara Guljajeva, PhD and Visiting Lecturer Marie Vihmar.
- developing a multi-sensory environment for the Porkuni School and a research article on the topic grew out of the subject Social Design;
- Julia Valle Noronha, PhD, Associate Professor from 2018-2022, has an analytical approach to fashion and on the basis of her practices, for example, the subject Experimental Cut was developed;
- the aforementioned FashionSEEDS and FashionTEX, run by Prof Piret Puppart, are both focused on developing the teaching staff and thereby bringing new know-how to students;
- in the Accessory Design speciality, Workshop Manager Eve Kaaret was involved with researcher Jaana Päeva, PhD, in the artistic research *Reconstruction and Creative Development of Historical Relief Printing*, through which this knowledge reaches practical bookbinding training.

BMAT involves **external partners and experts** whose profiles support the development of the curriculum. Mostly external international experts whose experience is applicable both to the curriculum and more broadly at EKA are invited**. Sustainability and digital competences** have been important international focuses in recent years. A strong emphasis has been placed on introducing different designer profiles, collaborating with companies and expanding the internship base. An important goal is to create wider networking opportunities for students, so that they can later go on to internships or to work and initiate collaboration projects etc. In addition to various workshops, a **working group between four universities** (Detroit College for Creative Studies,

[61]In order to strengthen sustainability perspectives in higher education and to increase professional interactivity and collaboration across specialities, the DSKD MA curriculum is successfully structured around three major sub-themes: People, Planet, Play. As a result, there has been a major change in the structuring of the MA in Design in EKA by grouping studies around three major themes, namely Circular Design, Social Design and Craft Studies.

DSKD, London College of Fashion, EKA) was established by the Accessories Design speciality in 2021, with the aim of jointly addressing and planning the development of the Accessories Design speciality. **A working group of domestic higher education institutions** involved in accessories, bookbinding or leather studies (Pallas, EKA, TÜ VKA) was also convened, with the aim of working together, keeping curricula distinct and complementary and developing the speciality across institutions.

The curriculum has been structured considering the **logical sequence of modules and subjects** to create the prerequisites for the acquisition of increasingly demanding and specific skills and the necessary context for new knowledge (the coherence of the subjects is illustrated in the diagrams annexed to the analysis). The objectives, content and learning outcomes of the subject are formulated in the subject card. Assessment methods, criteria, timetable and additional information are described in the subject programme. The subject card and subject programme will be sent to the student through the SIS Tahvel or the latter by separate email. Combining theory and practice and learner-centredness are an important part of designing learning coherence. The assessment methods for each subject are chosen according to its learning outcomes. The assessment of basic studies of curriculum and speciality subjects is usually based on the presentation of the practical outcome and the accompanying process documentation. Combined methods allow the learner to analyse, interpret and contextualise the experience of solving a practical assignment. In the presentation, the learner evaluates their learning experience and can compare it with individual feedback on the achievement of their learning outcomes.

The curriculum aims to support the preparation of specialists with broad knowledge and professional skills. Many of the skills acquired in solving specific learning tasks are also universal and can be used in broader contexts, e.g. **generic competences** such as:

- creative and adaptive thinking;
- interdisciplinarity, supported by collaboration between the three curriculum specialities and across the faculty, both in practical and theoretical studies;
- sustainability orientation, distinguishing between environmental, cultural and social sustainability;
- self-reflection and leadership skills;
- entrepreneurship and cooperation, developed through collaborative projects with companies and other external partners;
- public speaking and visual communication skills (including project and work presentations);
- developing digital competences.

Internships are reflected in the curriculum in different ways. Since the field of the curriculum deals with disciplines where the student often has to create a job for themselves, it is important to ensure preparation for working life and laying the foundation for their career. In addition to the mandatory internship subjects, there are various ways to learn about what is happening in the field[62]. Over the past years, a database of internships across the three specialities has been set up and joint BA and MA Enterprise Internship assessments have been organised, where students have the opportunity to listen to other students' experiences. The **selection of internships** takes place in three different ways. In most cases, the choice is made by the student, but there are also situations where the head of the curriculum or a lecturer may find a suitable internship placement according to the student's profile, or the internship provider itself contacts the school and makes a proposal. In addition to internships within Estonia, many also go on internships through the Erasmus+ system[63].

The **workload** for each subject is reviewed and adapted **according to needs**. The learner-centred credit accumulation system does not impose any upper limit on the number of credits and it is the **responsibility of the learner** to decide and plan their additional workload. The faculty's extensive block of elective subjects and the composite curriculum provide opportunities for balancing subjects according to need. At the same time, learners who are already more competent in their subject and have experience in creating collections can take

[62]For example, as the first elective subject of the first year, students visit various practitioners within the Studio Tour subject, the aim of which is to make contact with the real world of work right at the beginning of their studies. Participation in the ERKI Fashion Show has a significant place in the curriculum, which is particularly used by fashion students, but over time textile and accessories students have received awards as well.

[63]This is more popular after the end of school, as then there is a maximum portfolio to present. However, we have also organised targeted competitions with some organisations during school (e.g. for an internship at Balenciaga in 2021).

part in the elective and optional subjects planned for the senior course. To ensure that the information reaches students in time, at the beginning of each semester, students receive a more detailed overview of the compulsory, elective and optional subjects of the curriculum (in written form and as a presentation), in addition to the information in the SIS. Information exchange has been improved in response to student feedback, as it was initially difficult for students to take in the opportunities of the three specialities of the joint curriculum.

The aim of the curriculum today is that during their studies, **every student goes abroad at least once**. International mobility broadens students' perspectives, but it is also often the only way to gain specific knowledge and experience. Given that many jobs today have an international profile, this kind of mobility is also an important investment in making contacts and thus creating future career opportunities. **Study mobility** is supported by the curriculum and has recovered at an increasing pace following the pandemic. Most students do their exchange in the 5th semester, when it is possible to apply with the strongest possible portfolio and thus gain admission to the best universities. As an alternative to long exchange periods, there are several short-term study mobility schemes, such as the NORDPLUS AND CIRRUS workshops or the relatively new BIP, which we have started to actively develop. In addition, there are visits to specialised trade fairs, exhibitions, museum collections and manufacturing companies both in Estonia and abroad.

Table 34. BMAT curriculum student mobility 2019–2022

Mobility (number of students going on a half-year exchange during the academic year)	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
Outgoing student mobility	11	8	2	9
Incoming student mobility	5	5	5	7

On average, Erasmus **international students** of the curriculum are offered around 25 subjects related to their specialities each academic year. Programmes to help international students settle in are central[64], but there is also individual communication within the curricula, a study plan is drawn up together with the head of speciality, recommendations are given, etc.

Stakeholder feedback is mediated by, among others, the Curriculum Committee, which always includes at least one **student from the curriculum**. A focus group interview is conducted with graduates in the spring, the results of which can be analysed by the curriculum staff at the beginning of the new academic year. In addition to collecting feedback on each subject in Tahvel, **focus group interviews and workshops**[65], were conducted by the curriculum, on the basis of which the speciality development action plan was created. In some cases, interviews with students take place after the speciality subjects or on an ongoing basis throughout the semester to understand whether the planned learning outcomes and objectives are understood, clear and appreciated by the students and whether anything needs to be adjusted more quickly than in the curriculum change process. The results can be analysed at weekly curriculum meetings. **Based on feedback from graduates**, a reform of the electives in the Faculty of Design was carried out that significantly increased the number of elective subjects, including the development of practical and digital skills. To support completion in nominal time and improve performance, **the selection of optional subjects was changed**, including the creation of a cross-curricular elective subject to support the preparatory work for the final thesis, options for replacing subjects were made **more flexible** and requirements for the Bachelor's thesis were **clarified**. **To encourage further study mobility,** proposals to update ways of sharing information and experiences of studying abroad and to link credits to the tutoring of application portfolios were supported.

The curriculum is predominantly **funded** based on speciality departments. **The department's budget** covers the teaching of compulsory and a small volume of elective subjects of the curriculum and the primary teaching and other expenses. Expenses of most elective and optional subjects, workshops and overheads are covered centrally by EKA. The main cost of the curriculum is personnel, but the small ratio of students to teaching staff, which allows for individual tutoring, is an important advantage of the curriculum. However, **additional funding** is constantly sought for some elective and optional subjects and for activities that complement

[64]For a more detailed description of the activities, see section 3.5 "Internationalisation".
[65]For example, between 2021 and 2022, Accessory Design conducted in-depth interviews with its students, alumni and teachers and organised four workshops on the curriculum, also involving students, alumni and teachers.

teaching and improve the visibility of the curriculum. The pay scale for external experts is very different from the salaries based on the EKA budget, which requires the search for additional funds[66]. For example, the Open Academy runs paid courses to generate additional income. The need to apply for additional funding significantly increases the share of administrative work for permanent staff, which could increase the risks of a decline in the quality of academic work over time.

It is a **combined curriculum**, bringing together three specialities, thus several elective and optional subjects can be offered **jointly**. This, in turn, frees up some financial resources for additional activities when study groups are merged. The solution of **interdisciplinary subjects** also allows for **better planning of material resources** and thus more sustainable use, for example by reducing material waste through **cross-use**. Additionally, in recent years, various gatherings and events have been organised jointly, saving money and helping to strengthen relations between the specialities. The **new EKA building** with its modern and open workshops gives the curriculum **a significant competitive edge**. The advantage of the workshops has been highlighted by graduates in their feedback, as well as incoming Erasmus students and external partners from other higher education institutions. A **system for the use of workshops** has been developed, taking into account the risk analysis carried out at EKA. The shortcomings, however, include students' complaints about the increasing use of studios and the lack of personal work spaces.

The aim is to more consciously guide students to use research databases in their studies at the BA level, to make it easier for them to work with research texts and prepare creative research papers in their MA studies. EKA students have access to **the research library** with over 90,000 items[67]. To purchase specialist literature, it is possible to use the budget of EKA Library[68].

The Green Deal and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals feature prominently in the curriculum objectives. One of the initiators of the sustainable thinking event series **ROHEKA** is Stella Runnel, Head of Accessories speciality. The **Sustainability Study Folder**, developed under the leadership of BMAT and intended for use by the entire Faculty of Design, harmonises basic terms and concepts related to sustainability right at the beginning of studies, in the first semester. In addition, a large number of tools to assist teachers have been developed in the framework of the aforementioned FashionSEEDS. Students and companies are involved in the development of **material circulation** through tasks aimed at recycling materials[69].

EKA's common areas are open to students for **independent work**. After undergoing health and safety training, users have **free access to some studios** during the technician's off-duty hours, but this comes with the responsibility of keeping them in order, which still requires further discussion. Opportunities for independent work are most affected by space constraints (e.g. in relation to fashion students working with larger forms, accessories design students using workshops and textiles students cross-using workshop space). Following the example of fashion and textiles, the accessory design programme has been exploring the possibility of opening up its studios to students in the evenings to provide better conditions for independent work. The fashion department, which is struggling the most in regards to space, has been restructuring its premises since spring 2023 in order to provide a more supportive learning and social space for students.

The **social learning environment** is supported, for example, by joint events at the beginning and end of the academic year or semester and by networking with alumni. Over the last two years, Design Thought conversation evenings have contributed to the development of the design network. Student-led events play an important role as well, including the major ERKI Fashion Show event, various Student Council initiatives, creating exhibitions, etc. (e.g. the gallery space outside EKA premises, Vent Space, is institutionally independent and student-run).

[66]The costs of training trips for foreign experts, teachers and employees are normally covered by Erasmus funding, but also by Cirrus, the Cultural Endowment of Estonia, Transform4Europe, BAFF and other sources.
[67]In addition, a library of materials from DiMA is planned in the building under construction.
[68]Between 2020 and 2022, the library ordered 39 items related to the Textile Design speciality, proposed by the department, in addition to its own selection.
[69]For example, for more than eight years now, the Experimental Form course has been using only second-hand (or even third-hand in 2021!) materials to create the project. The Wool Project course explores the potential uses of waste materials and the Biomaterials course explores natural novel materials.

Strengths

Regular weekly meetings among staff for consistent open communication and problem-solving.

Curriculum development takes place annually through a development meeting in which the committee analyses, among other things, feedback from graduates and proposes corresponding changes.

An active dialogue between the three specialities helps to optimise activities and to initiate cross-disciplinary development activities, as it allows for strategic combination, comparison and consultation.

The curriculum takes the lead on sustainability issues in its faculty and also more broadly throughout the university.

It is a unique curriculum combining three specialities, giving students an internationally distinctive profile.

Well-equipped workshops and the promotion of their cross-use allow learners to combine theory and practice and acquire a versatile technical preparation.

Areas for improvement

Make conversations with students after speciality classes more regular and better document the conversations held throughout the semester.

Starting in 2024, involve one student from each speciality in the curriculum development committee in order to increase students' influence and thus learner-centredness in development activities.

Try to systematise and optimise the activities related to obtaining additional funding, for example through the preparation of interdisciplinary applications, the inclusion of centrally prepared entrepreneurship cooperation agreements, etc.

Cultivating students' sense of ownership to ensure order and proper use of studios and classrooms.

Constraints in creative work due to limitations in available space. Ongoing efforts to restructure the existing premises continue, yet these efforts are met with intrinsic constraints. Furthermore, enhancements are expected through central developments at the Academy level.

4.2.2 Learning, teaching and assessment

The main **information on study opportunities** can be found on the EKA website. In addition, various **social media channels** such as Facebook and Instagram (e.g. @eka_aksessuaar, @eka_moedisain, @eka_tekstiilidisain) are used to provide information. Potential applicants can find information through EKA's open-door workshops (free of charge), tours, Pre-Academy or micro-degree studies, as well as through various public events or meetings in schools. In addition, they can find **career stories** on the curriculum website. The statistics of the admission competitions in recent years, which show that there were 4.0 and 3.7 applicants per place in 2021 and 2022 respectively, indicates how well-informed people are. Several candidates were taking part of the competition for the second or third time. **Preparation for admission** is supported by the workshops and training courses mentioned above, as well as free admission consultations offered by the curriculum.

The general **admission process** and the composition of the admission assessment committee are centrally decided at EKA. Differences arise in **the entrance exams for the curricula**, which for BMAT are:

- an **online interview** (credential interview), based on the application documents submitted (the candidate's perspectives and motivation questionnaire and previous work);
- those who pass the first round are given **three specialised assignments** to do at home, with a minimum of 48 hours to complete them;
- an **on-site interview** with a discussion of the creative tasks completed at home.

Each of the three tasks is assessed separately, and the fourth mark is obtained as a combination of the interview, previous work and the questionnaire. Applicants indicate their preferred speciality, but in order to admit the strongest possible candidates, they are asked for consent to be transferred to a different speciality if they do not make the ranking.

As the groups are small (less than 10 people), **individual support for students** can make a big difference through conversations and discussions in class. It allows teaching staff to monitor students' participation in

class and communicate individually with them to overcome problems. More specific career perspectives for students are discussed as well to support their particularities and interests. It must be said that, for the most part, students set high goals for themselves. Teaching staff critically assess the learning volume chosen by students and, if necessary, recommend adjustments to ambitions. At the same time, it is important to strike a balance – strong specialised concepts should be encouraged, as they can have a significant impact on the future careers of some students. **We value all students**, including those with special or additional needs. The EKA building and studios are generally physically easily **accessible**. **Guidelines for consideration of special needs** related to students are sent to the department via EKA's psychologist.

The student takes responsibility for their choice of subjects as well as for extra-curricular activities such as participation in competitions, design fairs, etc. The learner-centred and learning-centred approach translates into the possibility and responsibility of each student to shape their own learning path according to their interests and possibilities. Most of the speciality's assignments require the student to set their own objective and individual approach within the framework of the subject. In particular, it is worth highlighting the reform of the electives of the Faculty of Design, which was launched in 2023 and will further support learner-centred choices in the design of individualised education. From the second year onwards, students can **fine-tune their studies** and develop a more specific profile (mainly through optional and elective subjects, but also through speciality subjects), as the first year of common courses provides the technical skills to participate in most of the more complex speciality subjects. In addition, the curriculum allows for several **short-term study mobility** opportunities. In this way, students can create **a more tailored final result** and those more ambitious can enhance the quality of their portfolio. The biggest challenge is to find suitable time slots available for all students of the curriculum, which depend not only on the timetable of core subjects but also on the availability of rooms and teaching staff.

In-house training at EKA, as well as visits to other universities and learning from best practices during study visits abroad, support teaching staff in **developing teaching methods**. In addition to the more common methods used at EKA[70] innovative learning methods that support creativity and engage the learner can be highlighted in the context of BMAT, including experiential learning (learning by doing), place-based learning, artistic research, etc. Discussions on the quality of teaching in arts universities and on modern teaching methods are supported by EKA's participation in international networks in this field (e.g. ELIA, CIRRUS, CUMULUS).

Teaching staff use **digital tools** to plan, manage and deliver teaching in line with the learning objectives and learning outcomes. The ability to use digital tools can be considered average among teaching staff. The full-scale implementation of the national study information system TAHVEL has been difficult due to the processes that still need to be developed in the environment. At the same time, **programme studies are diverse** and at a very high level (including Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, InDesign, Rhino, Fusion, Arduino, textile equipment programs WeavePoint, Loom Control, Stitch and Sew, DesignaKnit 9 and others). We actively bring in external experts to **implement new and innovative practices** (e.g. 3D modelling of collections).

Supervision and feedback on independent work is mostly given orally in class. Feedback on written work is generally given based on a document submitted by the student or in an agreed online environment. Feedback on the final project is given according to the nature of the work – an art project involves discussion, while a written work needs, for example, fact-checking or reflection on the structure of the work. **Student feedback on supervision** is good, with more criticism on assessment and general feedback (e.g. there have been enquiries about the possibility of more in-depth written feedback, which we would like to move forward with in the coming years).

Students are also involved in **RDC activities**. For example, the Accessories Design speciality, which is most in need of change, has organised joint curriculum development workshops with students in both 2021 and 2022. An example from the Fashion speciality is the optional subject Energy - Yes! Quality - No!, initiated and organised by students, aimed at discussing the best new practices experienced by the final year students during their exchange studies. New optional subjects have also been initiated during open discussions in the Textile speciality (e.g. Working in a Future Textiles Studio). The current final thesis format **supports artistic research more than the previous one**. Artistic research methods are also applied in subjects focused on

[70] For more information, see section 3.8 "Learning and teaching".

learning techniques and understanding materials[71]. In connection with the growth in the number of doctoral students in the speciality, the involvement of doctoral students in teaching has increased. **In the field of creative activities**, the curriculum is systematically engaged in **the presentation of creative work**. Over the last three years students have consistently organised popular experimental exhibitions (*Multiversum*, *Quick Silver*, *Pillow's Brink*, etc.), as well as participated in the annual ERKI Fashion Show both as organisers and designers. Joint exhibitions of students and teachers are an output as well.

In the context of the actual workload of students, it is essential to support students' time management in order to mitigate the risks of piling up too many tasks in a narrow window of time. **Time management is supported by** the subject program. Students have given feedback that the timetables and deadlines set out in the subject programme help to plan their work process and workload. In addition, information on assessment methods and criteria (including what is required for assessment) is provided at the beginning of the course, which in turn helps to estimate the volume of work and schedule activities[72].

The relevance of assessment methods is ensured both by familiarising tutors with assessment methods of universities abroad and by sharing in-house practices, including good practices from other schools presented in the framework of EKA's central training course Help for Teaching Staff. A bottleneck specific to an arts university when adopting the practices of other universities are certain particularities, e.g. the subjectivity associated with the evaluation of art. 78.4% of course credits are marked as pass/fail, i.e. **non-differentiated**. The basics of the speciality, the basics of design, the general theory and the elective and optional subjects all have non-differentiated assessment, with a written test or essay in the case of theoretical subjects and a physical presentation and analysis of results in the case of practical subjects. **Differentiated assessment** is predominantly used for major speciality subjects, which usually culminate in a project presentation and defence. The uniform application of the assessment principles is monitored by the head of the curriculum or speciality. In the case of projects related to the speciality, students receive continuous feedback on the work they are doing **during one-on-one intermediate evaluations**, which allows them to continuously improve the work they will submit for assessment. **Throughout such participatory evaluation**, students can share their thoughts and comments on their peers' work as well. The **assessment process** includes a presentation of the student's work, as well as an explanation of the major challenges related to the work. In addition, the whole project process is presented, including the moodboard, designs, mock-ups, work samples, experiments and the final result. This multi-level approach allows students to gain a deeper understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their work. The teaching staff gives feedback to the students on which parts of the work they have done particularly well, which parts are weaker and which skills they need to develop further. As a new initiative, a matrix assessment is being implemented in a pilot phase in the Accessories Design speciality, which breaks the subject down into smaller parts and is also easy to understand for external teaching staff. The **assessment methods and criteria** for the subjects are described in the subject card/programme. While students do not have a direct say in the selection of assessment criteria, proposals from student representatives for future changes are discussed at curriculum committee meetings. From the satisfaction survey of 2023 graduates, it can be concluded that students are familiar with the assessment criteria because they perceive that they are used in the assessment process.

The assessment panel for creative subjects generally consists of at least two members of teaching staff, one of whom must not be related to the course in order **to ensure objectivity**. The involvement of at least two external evaluators and a committee of at least three members is preferred[73]. As a good practice, technicians are also present during the assessment of speciality projects. Exceptions are subjects culminating in an examination or other written work or purely technical subjects where the committee is not involved. The students can present and defend their work and viewpoints and receive comments from the assessors both during and after the presentation. Panel **assessments are open**, which supports the transparency of the process.

[71]E.g. The Wool Project (PhD Katrin Kabun's popular science book https://www.artun.ee/archaically-high-tech/ refers to the results of the wool project carried out in undergraduate studies), Dyeing with Plants, Biodesign and Futurology (collaboration with DIMA), etc.
[72]In the framework of the Accessory Project 1 (called Accessory Project since 2023/24), a written time management and self-evaluation system Critical Path has also been tested in recent years.
[73]The work of the thesis committees, including the principles of involving external experts, is organised centrally at EKA and is written about in section 3.9 "Student assessment".

The **RPL system** used at EKA allows for taking into account studies previously completed at educational institutions in Estonia and abroad, continuing education or independent study and knowledge and skills gained from work experience. This means recognising learning outside formal education, creating appropriate assessment criteria and recognising it equally with formal education. Reasons for rejecting a transfer are usually non-conformity of the content, incomplete documentation or late submission of a statement or evidence.

Due to the fact that the groups are small, the **study organisation support** is largely individual. In addition, in the event of problems or conflicts related to ethical behaviour, there is a separate EKA-wide counselling system for support[74]. The **number of dropouts** has been decreasing steadily since 2022. Each student in difficulty is approached individually and together with the head of speciality - they try to create a personalised plan to continue their studies. The proportion of graduating students can also be affected by their economic need to go to work[75], so flexibility is important for students. Recent dropouts have also been due to change of speciality, family reasons and unsuitability of the curriculum or study timetable. In addition, it should be noted that the first full class of graduates of the new curriculum, which graduated in 2023, had to cope with at least two consecutive semesters of special conditions due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

When evaluating the success of alumni in the labour market, it is important to bear in mind that the BA level prepares graduates for junior-level designers or creative assistants, and that continuing studies and work experience are important for progression from there. BMAT's potential in the context of the labour market can be assessed as good. Graduates have continued their studies at the MA level at EKA, TTÜ and universities abroad, as well as starting freelance design jobs. A more comprehensive overview of the employment and continuing studies of graduates of the last three years, including graduates of previous speciality curricula, can be found here. **Feedback from alumni** helps to analyse labour market perspectives. For example, in the case of fashion students, we see an increase in interest related to freelance employment as well as continuing education in the field of costumes (filmmaking), which is supported by the major production DRAG RACE created three times in cooperation with EMTA (2017, 2019 and 2022). Greater emphasis has been placed on visual and verbal communication, the involvement of external experts and the introduction of real-life job opportunities. In addition, different formats of internships have been tested in business cooperation.

Strengths

Learner-centred education that favours interdisciplinarity and fine-tuning of the profile by the students themselves.

Small study groups allow for an individual and timely approach to each student and their needs and problems. Flexible solutions are sought to address concerns.

The curriculum combines creative, research and entrepreneurial practices to open up a wide range of perspectives for graduates' future studies and careers.

Active development of field-specific digital competences through the involvement of internationally recognised experts and project funding.

Areas for improvement

Harmonisation and improvement of the assessment system, including the development of written feedback options and the development, introduction and implementation of matrix-based feedback for subjects from 6 ECTS and up.

Developing and streamlining the competences of hourly paid teaching staff, including more conscious implementation of the inclusive learning process. Increasing the competence of the team in higher education pedagogy through centralised training and learning from good practices.

More active inclusion of entrepreneurship-related topics in the curriculum through supervised preparation processes for business internships.

The economic need for students to work while attending school. Although there are no specific levers to influence this, Fridays are kept free of classes whenever possible. This initiative aims to help students achieve a better balance between university commitments and work responsibilities.

[74]For more information on this topic, please refer to section 3.4 "Academic ethics".

[75]The EKA graduate satisfaction survey in 2022 found that one in four EKA BA students were in full-time employment between 2019-2022 (48% worked part-time, 22% full-time and 14% did not work at all).

4.2.3 Development, cooperation and internationalisation of teaching staff

Systematic support for the development of teaching staff has been an important priority for EKA. EKA's system of teaching and supervision skills is based on teaching staff's Good Teaching Seminars, training in teaching skills and generic competences, e-learning consultancy and exchange of international experiences[76]. The possibility of a free semester and the creative period set out in the employment contract or job description (percentage according to the position) provide an opportunity to develop professional and pedagogical skills. The application of skills can be analysed and guided during annual performance development reviews or curriculum teaching staff meetings. **Hourly paid teaching staff** are offered support in the teaching process and in the design of teaching and assessment methods and course objectives. When engaging hourly paid teaching staff, we value their professional excellence above all else, in order to bring new real-life experiences to students. BMAT is the curriculum that is among those that **most actively integrate international teaching staff** in the faculty, involving a diverse range of practitioners. The head of the unit is responsible for the recruitment of teaching staff. The bottlenecks are mostly related to the high workload of permanent teaching staff and the high number of ECTS awarded by hourly paid teaching staff. This leads to frequent teaching staff turnover and the need to constantly train new tutors and acquaint them with work processes, which in turn requires a large administrative workload.

Table 35. Trends in the number, workload and average age of teaching staff at BMAT curriculum, 2021–2023

	2021	2022	2023
Permanent teaching staff	9	7	10
Teaching staff (full-time equivalent)	4,5	5	5,75
Average age of teaching staff	42	45	47

Although there has been a small increase in the number of positions, this is not enough to fully develop the curriculum. By way of comparison, for the same volume of specialities, the Design School Kolding in Denmark has 8.33 posts (2.59 in fashion, 1.5 in accessories and 4.24 in textiles respectively), plus three studio managers. The **qualifications of the permanent teaching staff** are a Master's or PhD degree that meets EKA's requirements. There is greater variability in the degrees of external teaching staff, with internationally recognised professionals being involved alongside the leading teaching staff with the appropriate degree where necessary.

EKA is a flexible environment where **collaboration among teaching staff** is encouraged and makes it easy to share good practices[77]. Time flexibility for training and development activities can be improved, which would help, among other things, to increase the participation of visiting teaching staff. One of the methods often used to learn from other lecturers is participating in the subject assessment committees of fellow lecturers. Curriculum discussions are a good way to exchange experiences as well. The **mobility of teaching staff** is highly favoured. Active use is made of Erasmus and Cirrus to teach or train, or to run workshops with the support of the Cirrus and Cumulus networks. Membership in the ELIA network, which specialises in teaching at arts universities, is one of the newest ways for teaching staff to upgrade their skills. The practice of using a free semester allows teaching staff to stay away longer, take part in residencies, gain experience in entrepreneurship, teach at other universities, participate in committees, etc. In general, the head of the speciality ensures that each member of teaching staff has an extended international experience once every five years.

Students are **satisfied or very satisfied with their teaching staff based on feedback**. An example of taking feedback into account was a situation where, following critical feedback, a more suitable teacher was found for the subject. Based on the feedback from the graduates of 2023, the uneven quality and assessment of the feedback from teaching staff came to light, which the curriculum is addressing.

[76]For a more detailed description of these activities, see section 3.6.4 “Developing teaching skills”.

[77]For more information, see section 3.6.4 "Developing teaching skills".

Practising designers, artists and researchers are involved in BMAT activities as permanent staff, supervisors for speciality subjects, internships in companies and theses; members and opponents of assessment, thesis evaluation and development committees. Based on feedback, students highly appreciate experience-based supervision.

Compliance with the principles of academic ethics (including the Ethics Committee, relevant guidelines, etc.) is centrally organised at EKA[78]. Teaching staff attach great importance to the principles of equal treatment of students and design ethics. For example, in the only case of suspected design plagiarism so far, two external experts were involved in analysing the case and concluded that there was no infringement. **In order to prevent problems related to academic fraud**, related issues in different speciality and general subjects are addressed and how to identify the boundary between inspiration and originality is explained. For example, in the Design Methods course, students learn to include references to visual material as well (providing inspiration collages with references to authors). In the Ethno Collection subject, cultural appropriation is discussed in depth. To avoid creative theft, students submit a description of their work process (a so-called research book) in addition to the final result, which helps to add transparency to the work and prove authorship.

The EKA Development Plan aims for all teaching staff to have **international experience**[79] and to keep abreast of international trends. **Mobility aims** to ensure quality design education through diversity and to provide students with international perspectives. In addition, it aims to raise the profile of EKA and Estonian design education and graduates through international cooperation – exhibitions, competitions, visits to partner universities, guest lectures and joint projects. With the support of Erasmus and CIRRUS funding, a number of **external experts and supervisors** have been involved (delivery of subjects, lectures and workshops, consulting on curriculum development, participation in assessment committees or panels)[80]. On average, more than 25 professionals from the field visited the curriculum in the 2021/22 and 2022/23 academic years, of which about 30% were academics from other universities and the rest were practitioners. In addition to this, the BAFF Dialogue Program grant was received in 2022 and 2023 to bring in an expert from the US. During the pandemic in 2020/21, the number of visits decreased by half and some meetings only happened online, but there was also an international expert, Volker Koch, who stayed in Estonia for the whole semester.

Feedback on the work of the teaching staff is supported by annual performance development reviews, student feedback on the subject, overall learning outcomes, discussions with other panel members in the assessment panels (a professional objective view), students' subsequent success, etc. The Higher Education Act requires staff to be evaluated at least once every five years. In 2020, a new career model for academic staff came into force and permanent academic staff started to be evaluated following EKA's Rules on Employment Relations with Academic Staff Members. The workload of permanent teaching staff is determined following the same document. Hourly workloads are set by the head of the curriculum or the head of the speciality following the Involvement of Non-Permanent (hourly paid) Staff in the Teaching of the Estonian Academy of Arts and Their Remuneration Rules.

Disseminating knowledge and **increasing social impact** is achieved through various radio and TV appearances, interviews, exhibitions, participation in conferences and committees, cooperation with museums, schools and other organisations (including specialised lectures), and **membership of professional associations**: the Estonian Leatherwork Artists' Union, the Estonian Association of Designer Bookbinders, the Estonian Association of Designers, the Estonian Clothing and Textile Association, the Estonian Textile Artists Association, the Estonian Artists' Association. Through the associations, technical and labour market information is exchanged, the future of the field is discussed in a wider circle and partners are found for business-related projects. The most recent major contribution to the dissemination of know-how in society has been the creation of the **micro-degree** Educational Design and Design in Education, aimed at general education teachers in arts and crafts. The BMAT specialities receive attention in relation to sensitive social issues as well, such as their active role in the refugee crisis when a sewing campaign was launched for Ukraine.

[78]Further details are available in section 3.4 "Academic ethics".
[79]An overview of international mobility of MAT teaching staff.
[80]An overview of the international teaching staff.

Strengths

The curriculum has a very good network of national and international teaching staff. Teaching staff is composed of active and recognised practitioners.

An open and diverse collective of permanent staff – a plurality of views due to different speciality backgrounds reduces the risk of one-sided and biased decisions.

A high level of involvement of external experts, which strengthens the link with the international scene. The curriculum is one of the most active in engaging international teaching staff in EKA.

It is contributing to increasing the visibility and impact of the field in society.

Areas for improvement

The small number of permanent teaching staff and their work overload present a challenge, primarily stemming from national funding constraints. As a temporary measure, there is an acknowledgment of potential involvement of additional teaching staff through grants, though it necessitates extra efforts for proposal writing, given the current constraints on time resources.

Reducing the administrative workload. Improving the availability of support materials, in particular for hourly paid teaching staff, through central support. Therefore, the aim is to increasingly avoid repetition and systematise and optimise activities within the curriculum.

Setting a clearer focus in international relations to bring about more strategic and major changes with the support of existing partners. This contributes to the reduction of administrative overload as well.

Making the position of Head of Curriculum rotating to avoid burnout, ensure a fresh look at curriculum leadership and create opportunities for professional development.

Photos: Architecture and Urban Planning department Archive

4.3 Architecture and Urban Design (INT)

Curriculum title, study level	Architecture and Urban Design (AL), integrated studies
Structural unit responsible for curriculum	Faculty of Architecture Department of Architecture and Urban Planning
Principal compilers of the curriculum self-evaluation, Head of Curriculum	Prof. Andres Ojari, Head of the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, Head of Curriculum andres.ojari@artun.ee
Brief description of the process of self-evaluation of curriculu and preparation of the report (period, who was involved, division of work, approval)	01.09.2023–01.12.2023: • the input was the analysis of the 2022 curriculum at EKA • Dr Sille Pihlak, Dean: content • Prof. Toomas Tammis, Head of Master's Studios Programme: content • Tiina Tammet, Research Coordinator: CVs, mobility • Liis Mõttus, study assistant: CVs, mobility, basic data collection

Table 36. AL curriculum in figures 2018/19–2022/23

	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
Students	107	116	124	130	128
Admitted	20	20	23	22	21
Dropouts	10	6	9	4	6
Graduates	11	18	14	23	17

4.3.1 Planning and management of studies

The aim of the Faculty of Architecture is to prepare spatially capable architects, interior architects, urban planners and urbanists with independent and critical thinking skills and a broad-based humanities and technical education, providing opportunities for both practical work and professional research. The **Integrated Curriculum in Architecture and Urban Design**[81] (hereinafter AL, Curriculum) is a **holistically curated and open platform** that evolves alongside contemporary issues and teaching methods and enables discussion on the future of architecture and urban design in society at large. In the initial stage of AL studies, general knowledge and skills are provided on engineering and humanities as well as in visual thinking and self-expression, and as the curriculum develops, it moves on to more specific and applied subjects in all subject groups. The structure of the speciality projects moves across the curriculum from simpler, smaller-scale tasks towards more complex, more cross-curricular and larger-scale projects. Methodologically, this implies a shift in the focus of the basic structure of specialised projects from spatial design in the initial phase of the study to research led design in the final phase of the study, culminating in an intertwined symbiosis of research and spatial planning design in the Master's thesis. The curriculum is divided into five blocks: speciality subjects (theoretical and practical), general subjects (theoretical and practical), technical-engineering subjects, internships and optional subjects and minor subjects.

The **process of curriculum development and change** is carried out following the procedures approved by the EKA Senate[82]. The process involves representatives of permanent and visiting teaching staff from the

[81]The structure and content of the curriculum is based on the description of EC PQD architectural studies. EKA Architecture and Urban Design curriculum is covered by the Qualification Directive of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union No. 2005/36/EC Annex V and must follow the framework requirements for architectural education set by the Regulation of the Government of the Republic of 29 October 2004 (red 12.06.2010). Graduates of the speciality of Architecture and Urban Design at EKA are awarded the professional qualification of Diploma Architect, Level 7.

[82]For more details, see section 3.7 "Curriculum"-

curriculum, students from all study levels, support staff, representatives of the profession and employers and, where appropriate, representatives of relevant stakeholders and organisations. The Curriculum Committee, which approves curriculum amendments, is broad-based. Important input for curricular change comes from student and graduate feedback, both on individual subjects and on the curriculum as a whole. In addition to the information collected by the EKA study information system TAHVEL, regular conversations take place with all study groups. Substantive amendment proposals to the curriculum committee are made by the head of the curriculum after prior discussion with the working group formed for this purpose.

The main **ambition of the curriculum development** is to link different subjects with the projects of the speciality, to emphasise the interdisciplinary nature of architecture and the links between the different subject modules. The future of the curriculum lies in creating better synergies between its specific components and in maintaining the substantive links between the subjects while considering the relationship between the contact classes and independent work time actually required to acquire different subjects and credits, from both the student's and the teaching staff's point of view. **Creating greater synergies** around the design studio helps to prioritise the design studio and avoid potential work overload arising from curriculum fragmentation.

Recent changes to the curriculum can be divided into two main areas:

1. **Changes to the structure of the curriculum resulting in the creation of modules and subjects across study years**
   - **Vertical studios**: research-based, cross-course, experimental vertical studios designed to integrate faculty research with teaching and to encourage students to pursue laboratory-based research topics in doctoral studies.
   - **Cross-year design studio**: second and third year students are in joint autumn semester design studios to enhance collaborative skills and support the transfer of knowledge from senior to junior years.
   - **Minor subject modules:** development of minor subject modules to provide students with more choice and flexibility in the curriculum and greater opportunities to develop knowledge in a more specific area of spatial design. Landscape architecture (1), cultural heritage and conservation (2) and planning (3) modules are offered as minor field of study in the volume of optional subjects (16 ECTS).

2. **Creating links between subject modules and study subjects**
   - increasing synergies between semester subjects, with the main ambition being to increase the coherence of different subjects with projects in design studios throughout the semester;
   - increasing the scale and complexity of design studios in the curriculum and linking the design studios in the autumn and spring semesters of the fourth year into a coherent whole, linking the theory of cultural heritage and conservation with the design studio, addressing the topic of energy efficiency throughout the three years of study, linking subjects related to planning from the spring semester of the third year to the autumn semester of the fifth year.

The **relevance of the curriculum** is confirmed by the high employment rate of graduates working in the field (88% as of HaridusSilm, based on graduates from 2005-2022). There is a noticeable desire among students to apply for jobs related to spatial design in local governments and national institutions. This supports, among other things, the aim of the Estonian Association of Architects to see more graduates working in the public sector. The topics of the design studios and the supporting subjects are linked to **broader processes in society**: climate change, resource management, demographic developments and digitalisation processes. Feedback from international students who have studied at EKA and the grades of students returning from student exchange show that our teaching is internationally recognised and of high quality.

The **competitiveness of the curriculum** is demonstrated by, among other things, the successive top prizes in the Master's thesis competitions organised by BAUA and graduates being nominated in the YTAA and ArchiPrix thesis competitions, with a Master's thesis defended at EKA among the 17 finalists in the YTAA 2023 thesis competition competing with about 300 works. Graduates and their supervisors have also been recognised with various awards in the annual thesis competition organised by ETAG.

Being part of **the NBAA network of architecture schools** allows us to stay up to date with current issues and developments in architecture education in Europe. Twice a year, the NBAA holds meetings where

representatives of the Nordic and Baltic architectural schools discuss general and current issues related to architectural education in the region, including curricula, research and doctoral studies. Following curriculum developments, we have looked more closely at the following curricula:

Table 37. Development topics of AL related to curricula of universities abroad

University	Development topic
University of Applied Arts Vienna	Integration of engineering subjects into design studios
Royal Danish Academy and Centre for Information Technology and Architecture (CITA)	Integration of subjects, nature and content of research and its links to the curriculum
The University of Innsbruck	Consolidation of research into laboratories, their start-up, structure and connection to teaching
TU Delft	Curriculum structure and the structure of the Master's programmes
RMIT	The application of practice-based research in architecture studies and its possible implementation in Master's thesis studios in preparation for entry into doctoral studies in the speciality

Close contact is maintained with the heads of the integrated curriculum in Architecture and Urban Studies at Tallinn University of Technology (TTÜ) and the BA Applied Architecture curriculum at TTK University of Applied Sciences (TKTK) to exchange information on the content, structure and differences of the curricula. The content of the subjects is analysed in cooperation with TKTK to enable students to use the RPL system if they wish to continue their studies in an integrated curriculum.

The design studios of the curriculum have been **closely involved in research** in recent years and have influenced the topics of the specialised and vertical studios. The research centres PAKK, the 3D Lab and the VR Lab are linked to science-based vertical studios on topics such as timber architecture, model houses, renovation, circular economy and space circulation and different learning approaches and their impact on school spaces.

Table 38. Examples of RDC projects related to design and vertical studios in AL

Project	Link with RDC activities
Urban design research programme Unfinished City (2017-2021)	4th year spring semester design studios and cooperation with the Harvard University Graduate School of Design design studios (supervisors Andres Alver, Veljo Kaasik, Toomas Tammis, Andres Ojari, Johan Tali)
Abandoned Landscapes (from 2013)	2nd year design studio and workshop (joint project of EKA and TTÜ, supervisors Joel Kopli, Andres Ojari, Riin Alatalu, Targo Kalamees, Simo Ilomets)
Järvamaa County Planning Research Project	Master's studio Master's theses (supervisors Toomas Tammis and Tarmo Teedumäe)
Analysis of the location of Riga Concert Hall	Student participation in research (supervisors Toomas Tammis, Andres Ojari)
3D Lab workshops and exhibitions	Development and testing of clay printing technologies (in the framework of Martin Melioranski's PhD thesis)
VR Lab workshops and exhibitions	In cooperation with the Police and Border Guard Board and the City of Tallinn (supervisors Johanna Jõekalda, Artur Staskevich, Paco-Ernest Ulman)
Analysis of the territory of the Tallinn Bus Station, Environmental House in Tallinn, renovation and modernisation of concrete panel apartment buildings	3rd year design and vertical studios in cooperation with the PAKK research centre (supervisors Sille Pihlak, Siim Tuksam)

Research directions of the Model House	Activities in vertical studios in cooperation with the PAKK research centre (supervised by Renee Puusepp)
LifeIP BuildEst renovation project	First and third year study activities in the specialised studios (in cooperation with ministries, municipalities and other partners)

The **coherence of the curriculum** is based on the work in the design studios. The subject cards describe the assessment criteria and methods that are specific to the subject in the module. Feedback and monitoring of the student's progress throughout the curriculum is ensured through the participation of the head of the curriculum and permanent teaching staff in the assessments throughout the curriculum.

Practice (total 11 ECTS) consists of technical and creative tasks and tasks directly related to the practices of the speciality (including office practice, building practice, painting practice, observation practice, measuring and geodesy practice and construction site practice). The practices end with an assessment of either the practical work or the practice reports. **Supervisors of the office practice** are leading architects working in architectural or design firms who must have a minimum Chartered/Principal Architect, level 7 qualification. **Practice positions are mostly found** through supervisors. Over the years, **a network of offices and construction companies** has been established, to which teaching staff responsible for regular practice can turn when necessary. In the case of office and construction site practice that are not supervised by permanent teaching staff, students have to find their own practice positions by putting together their CV and portfolio. Office and construction site practice end with a self-evaluation, which in turn supports the development of general competences. In addition, the external supervisors of the office and construction site practice fill in a feedback form describing the student's activities during the practice and giving an evaluation of the student. The feedback from practices has been mostly positive. Practice **in local government architectural and spatial design departments** have been added, as well as support for practice in modular house factories and related design departments (with the support of the PAKK research centre's network).

Developing **general competences**, including creativity and entrepreneurship, professional digital competences and supporting the development of self-directed learners is a natural part of the curriculum. These activities are integrated within specialised study modules, particularly within the design studios, which address competences related to **entrepreneurship** and tackle issues common in office work settings. Additionally, entrepreneurship is explored within the general theory subjects. **The pedagogical strategies** of thematic organization of studio and project-based specialty subjects, a dynamic blend of face-to-face and independent learning, and the flexibility to accommodate both individual and group projects—not only facilitate the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and professional competencies but also reflect globally recognized best practices in architecture and design education. These include a commitment to project-based learning that fosters a strong studio culture, embraces co-learning, encourages creativity and risk-taking, and employs diverse feedback forms. A notable example of these practices in action is the development of **teamwork skills,** where design studios offer a mix of individual and collaborative work formats, preparing students for the multifaceted dynamics of the professional world.

The number of **students going abroad for student exchange** has been in balance with the number of incoming students over the last two years. There has been an increase in the number of exchange students wishing to study for a full academic year. As a positive trend, an increasing number of students are taking advantage of the Erasmus+ programme to undertake **office practice in other European countries** in addition to their studies, both during and after graduation. **Study trips** are a natural part of the design studios, supporting and developing both students and academic staff. The costs of study trips for students are covered by grants from the Cultural Endowment of Estonia and Erasmus+ among others. 18.6% (56 ECTS) of the curriculum is made up of subjects in **English**, which includes design studios at both BA and MA level. In addition to the compulsory curriculum subjects, the English-language subjects include minor subjects in planning (16 ECTS). In addition to the subjects of the AL curriculum, **incoming students** are offered the subjects of the Master's level curriculum of Urban Studies in English, which forms a good combination. In addition, EKA offers a centralised subject module specifically aimed at exchange students[83].

[83]For more information, see section 3.5 "Internationalisation".

Regular meetings are held with student and employer representatives (including the Estonian Association of Architects, architectural and design offices, development and construction companies, etc.) **to gather feedback from stakeholders**. The Estonian Association of Architects strives to support graduates to go into the field of planning in local governments and the public sector. Companies are generally interested in the practice part of the curriculum and are willing to provide information on practice positions and related opportunities. Based on both the practice reports and the overall feedback, employers are satisfied with the structure of the AL curriculum. In curriculum development, **direct involvement of stakeholders** includes, for example, participation in the Construction and Civil Facilities action supporting **green skills and the green turn** (in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Research and the Education and Youth Board, targeting enterprises). **Professional communication and information exchange** is supported by participation in the activities of the **Estonian Digital Construction Cluster and the Estonian Woodhouse Association**, which bring together the field's activities, teaching and research. In addition, representatives of the curriculum are involved in the work of various committees of the **Estonian Qualifications Authority**, e.g. the Qualifications Committee of Architects, the Qualifications Committee of Planners and the Qualifications Committee of Landscape Architects.

The move to the new EKA main building has had a significant impact on the **material resources and working environment** of the AL curriculum, creating new synergies between different faculties and deepening interdisciplinary learning. Investments related to the quality of the learning environment and the improvements are made centrally according to the needs and opportunities of the school, through the budget of the development fund allocated to the faculty, or through separate national or international funding projects. A laboratory building is under construction directly next to the main building, which will allow for the expansion of research activities and thus further increase synergies between studies and research. In connection with the activities of the AL curriculum, the new building will house a VR Lab, a 3D Lab and a new materials library. Students have **24-hour access** to EKA's studios, workshops, modelling workshop and equipment according to the EKA internal rules. Students of architecture can use all the workshops, laboratories and equipment of EKA's departments. Three laboratories play an important role in the AL curriculum: the Prototyping Lab, the 3D Lab and the VR Lab. **The Prototyping Lab** aims to design and build specialised equipment and ancillary tools to promote research and development. The **3D Lab** was created in 2005 with the aim of establishing links between modern architectural computational generation and various surveying and rapid prototyping technologies and applying them to the innovation of architectural education and experimental research projects. In autumn 2018, the **VR Lab** was launched, bringing together the expertise needed by architects and designers to apply virtual reality techniques to the design process. Every spring semester, the VR Lab hosts a vertical studio, which gives students an overview of immersive ways of representing and designing a space.

The **curriculum budget** allows for the planned activities to take place and the principles underlying the budget strategy provide a degree of stability for the near future. The need and compliance of resources are addressed on an ongoing basis throughout the year. A significant part of the budget for teaching-related activities (study trips, exhibitions and publications) requires continuous **fundraising**, which is a major task in terms of application, management and reporting. In addition to the teaching of the prescribed subjects, **international links and collaborative projects**, making the best international knowledge and skills available, research and development and numerous smaller workshops, guest lectures and joint projects with other specialities are essential for the curriculum to work. Finding additional funding has also made it possible to attract external teaching staff who have made the curriculum more diverse and attractive.

The e-library environment of EKA provides access to a number of research **databases**. The list includes databases that are available in the EKA Library thanks to joint acquisitions by the Estonian Libraries Network Consortium ELNET, purchased by the EKA Library or provided by cooperation agreements. In addition, the **e-library environment** provides free access to the Estonian Articles Database, DOAJ Directory of Open Access Journals, Europeana, World Digital Library, Ubuweb and New Left Review. It is common practice to search for books in the national ESTER database. **EKA Library** works in a supportive way to the curriculum and requests for new publications are always met. It is important that current information about new literature and the possibilities of the library's use reach students and teaching staff. The library also supports the use of online platforms that can be accessed via the intranet of the school.

In the design studios and other subject modules of the curriculum, the topics of **resources, the circular economy, CO2, energy efficiency and LCA** related to spatial design and planning are discussed throughout, as well as related principles, starting with the design studio in the first year. The curriculum includes subjects that deal specifically with the topics mentioned above: Environment and Sustainable Development, Urban Ecology, Building Physics, Energy Efficiency and Indoor Climate of Buildings, 3DL Studio: Energy efficiency and modelling software etc., plus elective subjects from the centre for general theory subjects. The PAKK research centre and related speciality subjects take a closer look at the **use of wood** in architecture. Students have set up **a materials sorting system** in the studio area, with the support of the faculty, which invites them to use leftovers in their work. **When planning study trips**, we consider their need and distance, as well as the mode of transport in the travel arrangements.

The new EKA main building has created close to ideal conditions **for independent work**. EKA's general and faculty-specific workshops and laboratories are open to all students, providing a supportive environment for the creation of high-quality presentation materials. The size of the faculty's studio space does not allow for the creation of separate personalised workstations today, but it does allow for group work and, where necessary, **individual workstations**, which are actively used by students. The laboratories building, which is currently under construction, will bring additional opportunities and further enhance interdisciplinary studies and interaction between different faculties. The EKA Library is a highly valued learning area for activities requiring concentration.

The structure of EKA's new building supports **a social and active learning environment and co-creation**, inviting the building's atrium, foyer, gallery and auditoriums to be used as active social spaces for organising different events as well as for conducting studies. The department looks to students to take the initiative in designing their studio space and they can jointly design and structure their studio area themselves with the support of the department. In addition to meeting physically, the faculty, the department and all year groups have their own **digital communication channels and social media platforms** to exchange information. Student representatives are actively involved in curating social media channels. The department encourages the use of EKA premises for organising **various events** (meetings between different schools, specialities, student events, exhibitions, etc.). By agreement with the responsible staff of the faculty and year group representatives, it is possible to use the EKA building 24/7. The department supports students' initiatives in conducting classes and organising events as much as possible. Feedback on the learning environment is provided to the department through daily interviews, as well as through a feedback survey of graduates.

Strengths

Close links between research and the learning process.

Incorporating the best international know-how into studies at all levels.

Addressing the changing needs and challenges of society through curricula and specialised workshops.

Implementation of modern digital tools and skills in curricula and design studios.

Relatively high involvement of external funding to support studies and research.

Strong integration of the internal components of the module of the speciality's practical subjects.

The curriculum's close links with both the local field of speciality and the international academic network.

Areas for improvement

To integrate more subjects with design studios, increasing the latter's volume in credit points and importance both in the curriculum and in the workload of students' independent work.

Developing a digital archive system and implementing it systematically to make prior learning material readily available to all.

Construction of the laboratories building is currently underway and possible extensions to the courtyard area of the main EKA building are being planned as well to create additional opportunities for independent workplaces.

Developing the possibilities of a network-based remote working format in cooperation with the IT department and software developers (VPN or analogue).

4.3.2 Learning, teaching and assessment

Information **on admission to the curriculum** can be found on EKA's website and the department's webpage, where admission requirements and tests are described. Those interested can subscribe to the department's **newsletter** and join various **social media channels**. In addition, we organise **workshops** for secondary schools and attend information days on higher education aimed at them. There is also a regular **EKA Open Day** for student candidates and those interested can come and be a **student shadow**. In addition, information on the Open Lecture Series is provided, which is available free of charge to anyone interested. Over time, the proportion of candidates who have participated in **previous training courses** either at the EKA Pre-Academy or MTÜ Arhitektuurikool (School of Architecture) or attended various art classes has increased. Many secondary schools also have a study module on architecture or 3D modelling. Such pre-training courses are often conducted by alumni of EKA's Faculty of Architecture, as well as by final-year students. Each autumn semester, a **focus group survey of entrants** is conducted to help formulate the communication of the following year's admissions. The **admission process and timetable** are centrally approved by EKA at the end of the previous academic year and the information is available on EKA's website and the nationally coordinated SAIS environment. An **information day on the curriculum** is held prior to admission and those interested can take part in **mock admission tests**. After obtaining a BA degree, it is possible to enter **the Master's programme** from **other schools of architecture** as well, based on the student's portfolio and an interview, for which a separate evaluation committee is formed and the results are approved by the Admissions Committee.

Throughout history, arts universities have been characterised by **a learner-centred approach**, focusing on the development of the student throughout the curriculum. It supports **personal and professional development** and prepares students to navigate a fast-changing world where adaptability, creativity and teamwork skills are needed. As the study groups are small (20 students per year), this allows the supervisors to notice the differences and individual needs of students. The design studios use both **individual and group work formats**. Increasingly, spatial planning is about **shared authorship and collaborative action**, which ensures group work experience. The use of the group work format brings out the skills and individual abilities of different students, which in turn supports the division of roles, the creation of synergy through group work and the development of empathy among students.

After-semester discussions provide **immediate feedback** on the structure and links between the semester's subjects. The student voice is most directly represented in these conversations. Curriculum developments are discussed and approved by the Curriculum Committee, which includes two student representatives. AL students are actively represented in EKA's Student Council and a **system of study group representatives** has been established. In discussions, student representatives change every academic year if necessary, which ensures the participation of a large number of students.

In the General Theory module, students can choose general subjects **that match their interests**. In addition to the Academy-wide optional subjects, it is possible to choose **between three minor specialities**: Landscape Architecture, Restoration and Planning. The total volume of optional subjects is 16 ECTS and in addition to the subjects offered by EKA, it is also possible to choose subjects from other higher education institutions. In the Vertical Studios, students have the opportunity to learn about the different **research topics of the Faculty of Architecture** or to focus on one of them. **When completing a Master's thesis**, it is possible to choose between five different studios, each of which has its own focus: the Architectural Design Studio, the Planning Studio, the Landscape Architecture Studio, the Digital Tools Studio and the Spatial and Material Circulation Studio.

An integral part of the AL curriculum is the availability and teaching of different **digital platforms and programs**, together with the application of skills in specialised and vertical studios. Using and experimenting with innovative digital tools in spatial design is a strength and distinctive feature of the Architecture and Urban Design curriculum. This is supported by **the long-standing development** of the faculty's research directions and laboratories. There is a long tradition of developing digital competences, thanks to the 3D Lab, the VR Lab that has grown out of it and the newly created competence centre for timber architecture PAKK. The use of different digital tools **throughout the curriculum** is unavoidable. Specialised subjects have been created for this purpose, as well as optional subjects for learning alternative software. Everything students learn is

actively applied in **design studios**, where alongside physical models, work takes place in digital space and materialises with the support of laboratories. **Vertical studios** use different **software and hardware** for spatial innovation and experimentation. Parametric design components and data-driven design (GIS, BIM) are essential tools in the process of various specialised and vertical studios. **The supervisors of the design studios**, who are top specialists in their fields, are **very experienced** in using digital tools and sharing their knowledge. Students use personal computers for their studies. The department has **a sufficient number of licences** for students to use on their own computers. Some licences were moved to a cloud-based sharing platform during the Covid-19 pandemic emergency situation in spring 2020. We encourage students to use **free and open-source tools** (e.g. QGIS) as well. For more intensive computing work, the department's Dell Alienware Area51 VR centre and computers interfaced to manufacturing equipment in EKA's computer labs A404 Windows and A407 Apple can be used.

Speciality projects are divided into semester projects and parallel smaller studio works, where in addition to the initial project task, the focus is on a specific technology or digital tool. Semester project **supervisors meet with students** twice a week for about half a day or once a week for a full day during the whole semester. Supervision requires that all students' work, both individual and group work, is **discussed individually** every time. Each semester project has **at least one mid-term review** in the middle of the work process with guest critics, including an external critic from the Faculty of Architecture's Open Lecture Series. The work ends with **an assessment**, to which, in addition to the supervisors, about 2-5 guest critics are invited. 3D Lab Studio projects are supervised by 3D Lab-affiliated and more research-oriented **researchers, PhD students and practising architects**. The supervision of these projects depends on the timetable of the specific project and tends to be intensive and short-term. The 3D Lab Studio projects will also end with a review by guest critics.

The **supervision of Master's theses** is divided into different studios. The completion of the Master's thesis is divided over the last year of study in a way that the first half is more focused on research and background data collection and the second half is mainly focused on design. It is important, however, that both processes run in parallel and hand in hand, with the difference between the first and second half of the year just being the focus. **Master's studios are usually supervised** by two professional architects, one of whom is a permanent supervisor. Supervisors meet with students once a week. Students are expected to further develop their work for each meeting. There are four **mid-term reviews** in the autumn semester and two in the spring semester. The thesis supervision and review schedule is one of the tightest in the entire study process and must result in a comprehensive architectural and urban design project that develops in parallel with the research and is presented in the form of planning tables and models, a book that binds the project and the research and an oral presentation to the thesis defence committee.

When supervising creative work, it is important to learn from the knowledge and experience of as many different masters in their field as possible. This provides an opportunity to explore creative worlds, the importance of which we introduce to students from the very beginning of their studies, emphasising the importance of **developing their personal creative path and intellectual baggage**. The inevitably subjective evaluations of supervision are accompanied by the students' understanding of the diversity of what is on offer. The role of students is to choose the most relevant and best experience, knowledge and teaching.

Theoretical and engineering subjects use **a symbiosis of different teaching methods**: lecture (including digital), seminar, workshop and presentation formats. A new tradition has become **student-to-student feedback** to their studio mates, which develops a range of generic skills.

The **feedback from students on supervision** is mainly positive, although each project inevitably comes with some criticism, to a greater or lesser extent, of the workload, teaching methods or grades. The feedback shows that engineering subjects or studios, which are more complex and require more effort than the average, are the most criticised. Thus, it is all the more important to be able to discuss teaching methods and the structure and content of lectures with the teaching staff of these subjects.

RDC activities have been an integral part of the AL curriculum. One of the important aims of architectural studies at EKA has been to create a **close connection with the nature and methodology of research** in the five-year postgraduate studies, so this work could be considered research-led design at the more senior levels of study and especially in the Master's thesis phase. One of the main strands of doctoral studies is creative practice research, which looks at the real practical work of the architect as a source of new knowledge. It is

important to emphasise that EKA's Architecture and Urban Planning department's curricula, both in postgraduate and doctoral studies, consider it important that **research and creation are synthetically connected** in such a way that one does not follow or precede the other, but both take place in parallel and support each other. They build on the activities of the previously mentioned laboratories and PAKK research centre, which brings together researchers working on timber architecture and innovative digital tools for timber architecture. The second strand of the curriculum is influenced by urban design and planning research led by professors in the department and the theory-based Urban Studies curriculum. The **involvement of students in the activities of the RDC** is mainly through the various vertical studios, design studios and Master's degree studios, where student research activity is significant (see examples of projects in the Curriculum Analysis section 4.3.1, Table 38). The aim of all the different formats and in particular of the vertical studios is to familiarise students with research topics and to encourage those interested to continue their academic journey in doctoral studies.

EKA uses **differentiated and non-differentiated assessment**. The technical solution of the study information system Tahvel allows users to choose assessment methods and tasks and to formulate separate assessment criteria for each of them. The prerequisites for admission to the assessment, the assessment conditions, methods and criteria are formulated in the subject card and the subject programme, which students can view by the beginning of the course. Prior to the start of the subject, supervisors and lecturers introduce the students to the assignment and the expected learning outcomes in terms of the structure and scope of the assignment. Differentiated assessment has been abandoned for general practical subjects and for research and cross-course studios. There have been no significant changes in the principles of differentiated assessment in **exams, assessments and speciality work in recent years.** There has been no need for this either from the perspective of studies or from student feedback. Supervisor(s) and professionals of the field who are not related to EKA are always invited to **speciality subject assessments** and they provide immediate feedback to all students during the review of the works. In addition to the final result, the student's development and participation in the subject are taken into account in the assessment. Thus, **formative assessment** plays an important role in supporting the student throughout the semester (this is particularly important in the case of design studios). **Mid-term assessments and critiques aim** to support the student's development, work process and general competences, while also providing feedback to studio supervisors. The external critic who has taken part in the mid-term assessment is usually also invited to the final review, which allows them to form an assessment of the student's progress over the semester. In addition, the head of the curriculum participates in the mid-term assessments and final reviews, and thus also has an overview of the students' progress. The assessment of speciality subjects is always followed by **feedback from the assessment committee and/or supervisors** explaining the reasons for the results to students. After the final review, the studio supervisors are required to give **oral personal feedback** on the work of the specific studio to each student (group) in order to clarify the mark obtained and to analyse the different components of the work (participation in the design studios, development of the theme during the studio and the results of the mid-term reviews, final outcome and feedback from external critics). In addition to the participation of external experts, the **potential subjectivity** of the assessment is reduced by the fact that the mid-term and final assessments are public. In this way, not only students but also supervisors can receive feedback. The principles for the formation of the **Master's thesis defence committee** have been agreed upon with the Estonian Association of Architects' Qualifications Committee, the aim of which is to ensure equal and transparent assessment of Master's theses. The Committee is composed **exclusively of external members** and chaired by the president, vice-president or a member of the board of the association. The Committee is made up of practising architects as well as representatives of the academic field. If a member of the Committee is the supervisor of the work to be defended, they shall not have the right to vote on the work to be defended.

The **RPL system** used at EKA allows for taking into account studies previously completed at educational institutions in Estonia and abroad, continuing education or independent study and knowledge and skills gained from work experience. As a modern university, EKA is ready to recognise the skills and knowledge students have acquired outside the formal education system and to consider them equally important. This means recognising learning outside of formal education, creating appropriate assessment criteria and recognising it equally with formal education.

EKA offers students the opportunity to **receive advice and support** through academic counselling, career

counselling, psychological counselling and counselling for students with special needs. The main source of study information is the study information system Tahvel, which contains information on curricula, subjects, timetables, teaching staff and student information and an overview of student performance. In addition to Tahvel, a lot of important information for students, teaching staff and support staff is available on the EKA wiki. The **number of dropouts from** the curriculum is not high, although it increased slightly during the Covid-19 pandemic. The **main reasons for dropping out** of education are voluntary or economic. Students who are at risk of dropping out based on their academic results are given an overview of their academic debts and recommendations on how to clear them. Teaching staff are usually accommodating to such schedules. If the student expresses the desire to leave of their own free will, the situation is discussed with the student and the reasons and possible solutions sought. A counsellor is also involved if necessary. In most cases, the student has changed their mind after the conversation. We consider **graduation in nominal time** to be an essential part of the structure of architecture studies. An important step in this direction has been the **gradual renewal of the Master's thesis supervision structure**, which over the past 10 years has become part of a closely supervised study supported by mid-term reviews and other work processes. In addition, a separate supervisor is involved in the writing of the text of the thesis. The chosen path has had two main objectives: to improve the quality of Master's theses and to reduce the number of Master's thesis dropouts, and today we can be satisfied with the achievement of both. The fact that the **average duration of studies has been steadily decreasing** (in 2022 it was 5.5 years) is positive as well. In the past, one of the reasons for the increase in study time was studying abroad. Today, a new culture has developed whereby students are offered the opportunity to **analyse their choices of subjects and design studios** with the head of the curriculum **before going on a study exchange**. The aim is to transfer as many credits as possible from the exchange semester or year to the student's curriculum and to reduce the risk of dropping out by helping the student make a more informed choice between the subjects and design studios offered at the exchange university.

Feedback from graduates has been requested every year since 2016. The score for the statement "During my studies, I acquired the knowledge and skills necessary for professional work" has increased from 2.8 to 4.1 (on a 5-point scale) over the period of 2019-2023. The increase in satisfaction has been supported by the move to the new EKA main building, as well as the integration of subjects and the reduction of curriculum fragmentation. Feedback surveys show that the clearer highlighting of the links between subjects has improved the ability to understand problems related to the speciality and to analyse their possible solutions. The need for improvement is seen in the planning of student workloads and there are also plans to move forward with improving assessment principles and practices, as well as the continued development of the study information system Tahvel (to be developed centrally). We monitor graduate employment through the digital environment Haridussilm. It is worth noting that more and more graduates are going abroad to work through the Erasmus internship programme.

Strengths

A clear, supported and demanding admission process and preliminary work with student candidates provides the curriculum with highly motivated students.

A relatively high proportion of students study at universities and internships abroad.

Supervision supporting students' individual professional development.

Studies are closely linked with research.

Implementing teamwork as a way of promoting future skills.

Areas for improvement

Planning individual workloads in cooperation with students.

Agreeing and explaining the assessment process and principles to students, teaching staff and visiting teaching staff.

4.3.3 Development, cooperation and internationalisation of teaching staff

The development of the professorship and the whole team of the Faculty of Architecture is built on continuity.

Different generations are represented, as well as professionals from different areas of the field, joined by a younger generation of PhD architects who have studied at other European universities. At the moment, 92 members of teaching staff teach in the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, plus teaching staff from minor subjects and general education theory subjects. We attach great importance to **the involvement of the best practitioners** in our teaching. On the one hand, this gives the studies a clear connection with everyday practice, and on the other hand, it opens up the structure of the creative or scientific worlds of top specialists to students. In terms of credit points, permanent teaching staff accounts for 43% of teaching and hourly paid teaching staff for 57%. This distribution gives the curriculum both **variety and flexibility** and allows it to remain constantly changing and attractive (although it also creates an additional administrative burden for the Head of Curriculum and support staff). The AL curriculum has developed a tradition where the **specialist practical subjects (design studios) are taught by top practitioners in the professional field**, who are valued specialists in their field both in Estonia and abroad for their creativity and professional activity. In both the design studios and the general practical subjects, the curriculum involves **double supervising** to ensure personalised and learner-centred supervision, combining both group and individual study methods.

Teaching staff in engineering subjects and co-supervisors of the design studios are also practitioners in their field and there is a **long-standing cooperation with teaching staff from various universities**[84]. The theoretical subjects of the speciality are taught by teaching staff and researchers in the field of architecture from EKA's Faculty of Art Culture and the general practical subjects are taught by teaching staff from the Faculty of Fine Arts. The number of **teaching staff with a doctoral degree** has also increased (currently 36). We have made it a priority to **combine teaching and research**. EKA's well-established doctoral programme in Architecture and Urban Design provides a favourable platform for this. Researchers and doctoral students are involved in education activities and research-based vertical studios are the ideal format for this.

Systematic support for the development of teaching staff has been an important priority for EKA. The Good Teaching Seminars provide training in teaching skills and generic competences, e-learning counselling and there are also vast opportunities for international exchange of experience[85]. **Hourly paid teaching staff** are introduced to good assessment and feedback practices and they work with the head of the curriculum to develop the learning objectives of the subject and the links to general, future and professional competences. Feedback from the student interviews is shared with the hourly paid teaching staff in the form of a discussion on possible developments in a particular subject and the links between different subjects and subject blocks. It has to be acknowledged that it is more difficult for visiting teaching staff to participate in development activities due to their practical activities. One supportive solution could be for example the possibility to watch recordings of the training courses.

The Higher Education Act obliges staff to **undergo an evaluation** at least once every five years. In 2020, a new career model for academic staff came into force and permanent academic staff started to be evaluated following EKA's Rules on Employment Relations with Academic Staff Members[86]. The **research, creative and development activities of the teaching staff** are linked to specific subjects in the curriculum. In most cases, subjects related to a specific research, creative or development activity are conducted in design studios or in subjects and workshops offered in the format of research-based vertical studios. The department evaluates the **effectiveness of the teaching placements** through student feedback, performance reviews and the evaluation process.

Feedback on the work of the teaching staff is generally positive. Feedback received through the EKA Tahvel system is shared digitally with both permanent and visiting teaching staff. In the case of problematic feedback, the head of the curriculum discusses the situation with the individual lecturer during a performance review or in a separate meeting, where the content of the subject, teaching methods and the position of the subject in the curriculum are analysed. The changes in staffing in recent years are mostly related to the module of engineering-technical subjects, where new experts in the field have been included. The

[84]From the group of engineering-technical subjects, 6 out of 15 subjects are taught by TTÜ teaching staff. In the group of practical subjects of the speciality, two lecturers from the Tallinn University teach part of the design studio and one lecturer from the University of Tartu/the University of Turku teach one module of the speciality's theoretical subjects.

[85]For a more detailed description of these activities, see section 3.6.4 “Developing teaching skills”.

[86]For a more detailed overview of EKA's policies and practices in this regard, please refer to section 3.6.3 "Recruitment and evaluation of academic staff".

development of the engineering-technical module and the integration of subjects with design studios is considered one of the curriculum priorities for the coming years. Once a year, the **department's teaching staff meet** to share information about the curriculum and possible changes to it, have an open discussion and exchange of ideas and talk about budgetary possibilities.

Compliance with the principles of academic ethics (including the Ethics Committee, relevant guidelines, etc.) is centrally organised at EKA[87]. **To prevent related problems**, there are both introductory subjects on writing in the general theory module and subjects on writing a Master's thesis, where, among other things, citation and referencing (including working with both text and visuals) are addressed and supervised. Faculty teaching staff and academic staff have the right to check written theses using plagiarism detection software (Ouriginal), which is also introduced to students for self-checking purposes.

There is a high level of **international mobility of teaching staff**. This is supported by memberships in international networks (NBAA, RMIT PRS, T4E) and an active Erasmus programme. Almost a third of the design studios' supervisors in the AL curriculum are either teaching staff from universities abroad or recognised practitioners of the speciality from neighbouring countries. Practitioners from outside Estonia visiting the Faculty of Architecture as part of the Open Lecture series participate in giving feedback to the design studios. This ensures that students receive international feedback at different stages of their speciality project. International experts have also participated in the intermediate and final evaluations of Master's theses[88]. In the period of 2016-2020, thanks to the support of AS Merko Ehitus, a **professorship in energy efficiency was opened** in the AL curriculum, which included teaching staff prof. B. Sommer, G. Moncayo and A. Orlinski, who are teachers of Energy Design at the Institute of Architecture of University of Applied Arts Vienna. Currently, the 3D Lab's studies related to energy efficiency and modelling are taught by construction designer A. Orlinski (Bollinger+Gohmann), whose visiting teaching staff position is additionally funded by Erasmus+.

There is close **cooperation with practitioners in the field**. Both the supervisors of the studio and the architects involved in the office practice are mostly EKA alumni, managing partners and leading architects of renowned architectural firms who are potential employers of future AL graduates. A significant number of practising architects are involved in the Master's thesis defence committees and the intermediate and final critiques of the design studio. All Master's theses are peer-reviewed by practising architects or professionals closely involved in the subject of the thesis. Two thirds of the members of the defence committee are practising architects and thus also representatives of employers, and the chairman of the defence committee is a member of the board of the Estonian Association of Architects.

The teaching staff in the architecture speciality are mostly members of the Estonian Association of Architects and thus **involved in the developments of the profession**. In addition, experts involved in the curriculum participate in the **work of the qualifications committees for** architects, spatial planners and landscape architects, which is a direct link between the knowledge and skills necessary for practising the profession and the curriculum. Permanent teaching staff are involved in **the activities of various professional organisations** and contribute to the organisation of **international** events and journals.

Strengths

Teachers are the best practitioners in the field.

Involvement of international top specialists.

Involvement of teaching staff with a doctorate degree, doctoral students and researchers in teaching.

The mobility of teaching staff and the internationalisation of the curriculum are high.

[87]Further details are available in section 3.4 "Academic ethics".

[88]For example, from 2018-2021, the Master's Committee included MIT Associate Professor and Head of the City Form Lab PhD Andres Sevtsuk, and from 2018-2019, Harvard GSD Senior Research Fellow Lily Song.

Areas for improvement

Teaching staff are very busy with teaching and their creative work, with little room for self-improvement. Enable more production and use of video materials for continuing education.

Involving and linking visiting teaching staff to the study development system.

Improving the feedback culture.

Encouraging and supporting the mobility of hourly paid teaching staff.

Photo: Interaction Design Department Archive

4.4 Interaction Design (MA)

Curriculum title, study level	**Interaction Design (MixD), MA in English**
Structural unit responsible for curriculum	Faculty of Design, Department of Product Design
Principal compilers of the curriculum self-evaluation, Head of Curriculum	Tanel Kärp, Associate Professor of Interaction Design, Head of Curriculum tanel.karp@artun.ee
Brief description of the process of self-evaluation of curriculum and preparation of the report (period, who was involved, division of work, approval)	Compiled for the period August-December 2023. Inputs: ● curriculum evaluation 2022 ● surveys sent to all alumni in September 2021 and August 2023, with nearly 50% of 2018-2023 graduates responding ● 12 open-ended interviews with alumni from all years, February-March 2023 ● retrospective 1:1 discussions with students on 17 December 2022, feedback from students and graduates in Tahvel between 2020 and 2023 ● feedback interviews with visiting teaching staff between 2020 and 2023, after completion of the courses ● head of the curriculum's work experience between 2018 and 2023 ● focus group with employers from agencies (Velvet, TWN, DUX) in December 2022 ● basic curriculum documents and subject cards ● curriculum workload tables, enrolment, study and graduation statistics ● analysis of recent changes in design programmes with a similar approach (CIID, Umea Institute of Design) The report was prepared by Tanel Kärp, with input from lecture Nesli Hazal Oktay and study coordinator Kärt Viljalo.

Table 39. MixD curriculum in figures, 2018/19-2022/23

	2018/2019	2019/2020*	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
Students	33	33	27	26	27
Admitted	12	12	10	12	13
Dropouts	7	3	3	7	3
Graduates	5	12	14	3	12

4.4.1. Planning and management of studies

The **aim of the Master's curriculum of Interaction Design** (hereinafter MIxD, curriculum) is to educate specialists in interaction design and related disciplines (service, product, user experience design), to be a local developer in the field, responding to the needs of students, employers and other stakeholders today and tomorrow. As an international curriculum, **we support EKA's international visibility** and bring to Estonia the

know-how and competence related to a new field of study[89]. Hourly paid teaching staff who are specialists and practitioners in their field play an important role in achieving the objectives.

While developing the curriculum, it is important to keep in mind the future of the field, e.g. the very fast growing interdisciplinarity of the field, the upcoming artificial intelligence revolution, the intertwining of physical and digital interactions and the "post-human-centred" approach. **An important starting point for development** is the regular monitoring of international trends and research[90] in the field of interaction design and design education by heads of curriculum and teaching staff. In the development of the curriculum, in addition to the changes made in response to ongoing feedback, **a more in-depth analysis every autumn** is an important part of the curriculum development process, during which the development proposals collected by staff are processed. The suggestions come from qualitative feedback from students and teaching staff at the end of the courses and semesters, as well as from research, specialised conferences, training and other professional communication in the field. Agreed proposals are approved by the curriculum and faculty councils and are integrated into the process of subject enhancement and development.

Interaction Design is a young curriculum created in 2016 and is the first of its kind in the Baltics. **Developments in recent years** are therefore related to reaching maturity:

- **designing the student's learning path:** creating a logical structure and sequence for the curriculum, thematic structuring of semesters (empathise, build, reflect, thrive), which broadly follows the ideology of the curriculum design approach and the learning process.
- **values shaping:** in line with the growing role of the designer in society in bringing about change, the focus is shifting from a commercially technology-centred approach ("user interface designer") to ethical innovation, social responsibility and sustainability[91].
- **introducing coaching:** introducing a learner-centred approach and systemic coaching focused on personal development, intending to find solutions to individual learning needs and for very diverse groups.
- **teaching staff selection and involvement:** collaboration with teaching staff and related changes (based on student feedback), involvement of programme alumni in teaching.
- **general curriculum streamlining:** creating more precise descriptions and a more understandable structure for learners (including harmonisation of credit points, modules and assessment methods, alignment of subject content and volume).

Consistency with societal developments and the labour market[92] is ensured to a large extent by the curriculum structure: most of the supervisors are active professionals and projects are carried out in cooperation with industry partners. Representatives of top local agencies sit on the Curriculum Council, where they provide input on labour market needs. When evaluating the quality of the curriculum, **feedback** is collected primarily from alumni, but also student evaluations collected at end-of-course and end-of-semester retrospectives are taken into account. Quantitative feedback is collected from graduates before graduation, a qualitative questionnaire is sent out at the beginning of the academic year and random semi-structured alumni interviews are conducted in the spring semester to investigate the success of the transition from school life to working life. **According to alumni**, the content of the curriculum corresponds well to the tasks expected in their professional lives. Project-based teamwork and experience with internship partners make the **transition to working life** natural.

Although lessons have been collected from a number of schools, **two programmes have been the main inspiration for** the curriculum: The Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design in Denmark and the Umea

[89]The curriculum vision corresponds well with the study "White Book on the Future of Design Education", which argues that the future of design education must focus on process-oriented practice that creates meaningful contexts (systems) rather than developing isolated solutions. Aesthetic decisions are made at the end of the process, taking into account technical, managerial, cultural, political and societal interests. Design education programmes must be structured around project-based learning, where students work together in diverse groups and focus on social responsibility, communication skills and prototyping.

[90]Including, for example Meredith Davis, Hugh Dubberly, "Rethinking Design Education", 2023

[91]Specific UX/UI education is covered by the Digital Product Design curriculum opened at EKA in 2018.

[92]The OSKA 2023 report shows that the Estonian market has a very high demand for design professionals today and it will be one of the fastest growing sectors in the future (+34% by 2031).

Institute of Design Master's programme in Interaction Design in Sweden. The curriculum's design approach is initially based on Umea. Each year, their final year projects are monitored for an idea of how the schools are developing and to compare the topics covered in their courses.

The curriculum's connection **with academic RDC activities** have systematically developed and grown year on year. At least one collaborative project with an external partner is carried out each semester. **The main strands of EKA design research** are design supporting social innovation and sustainability. **In the strand of social innovation,** lecturer Nesli Hazal Oktay (alumni 2019) has participated in the research projects Sensorial Design, 2022-2023 and Multi-Sensory Design for Somatic Care, 2023-2025 as part of her PhD thesis. She uses the practices created by the projects in her courses. In the direction of social innovation, Associate Professor Tanel Kärp has used the experience gained in the Health Insurance Fund 2021-2022 project to modernise the curriculum learning outcomes and to supervise the subjects, especially in the 2020-2022 Design for Social Innovation course development cooperation with the North Estonia Medical Centre. Since 2021, the curriculum has included Research in Design, created by Dr Julia Valle Noronha, which focuses on design as a scientific research method. The subject Design in the Changing World has been re-developed by Dr Bilge Merve Aktaş (Aalto University), who uses her approach to human-material studies as a novel teaching method in the course. Dr Mart Kikas uses the methodology developed in his doctoral thesis when teaching the Practical Business Design subject.

As an international curriculum, **we involve international partners in our activities**, based on the need to cover new specialised skills that do not yet exist in Estonia but whose suitability for the curriculum we wish to test. We involve **external teaching staff** in tutoring from 1-3 courses per semester and annually as thesis supervisors, reviewers and evaluation committee members. The curriculum also participates in international RDC collaborations such as Digital Tools for Creative Collaboration (2021-2023). So far, such collaborations have been opportunity-driven rather than purpose-driven, which is why we are hoping to initiate an international RDC project in the near future, linked to our own Design research areas.

The curriculum and the learning outcomes of the modules and courses have been designed in line with the curriculum objectives so that they form a **logical whole** when the curriculum is completed. **Studio-based learning** can develop in very different ways and therefore the learning outcomes are formulated in sufficiently general terms to allow for a learner-centred approach and development. The curriculum is structured around the **development of specific generic competences**. The aim is to prepare students for a fast-paced, uncertain future, focusing on soft skills and developing them to "think like designers". Students acquire competencies through iterative learning tasks, characterised by a gradual escalation in complexity, while their roles and responsibilities systematically expand over the semesters. As technological skills improve, **critical thinking, complex problem-solving, communication and teamwork skills** become increasingly important. Cultivating **curiosity, creativity, initiative, determination, adaptability and social and cultural awareness** are seen as indispensable. Studio projects put students in a situation where they have to acquire and apply professional skills, learning **self-management, cooperation and public presentation**. In the research phase, they learn how to **empathise, think critically and have context awareness**. In the creation phase, they learn **ethics and feedback, develop creativity and an agile mindset**. Interviews with graduates of the programme in spring 2023 suggest that this approach is working. They have said they have **"learned to learn again"** and acquired presentation and teamwork skills, a creative mindset and increased self-confidence. However, they feel a lack of leadership skills.

The curriculum includes a **strong emphasis on practical courses** (30 ECTS), where students work closely with external partners on a given problem. The courses are designed to give students professional exposure to different fields and issues. **The supervisors of the practical sessions** are the teaching staff delivering the courses.

Stakeholder feedback and how it is taken into account. Close industry cooperation and dialogue with employers is one of the defining strengths of the curriculum, appreciated by exchange students and alumni alike. It gives them "real world experience", teaches them to take into account the expectations of the different parties involved and creates links and the opportunity to add prominent works to their portfolio. **Collaborative projects** are initiated through the LAETUS programme or by the head of the curriculum, who selects partners with a suitable profile, negotiates and creates a brief that combines both learning outcomes and business needs.

The **student development process** is **based on the principle of personal coaching**. At the beginning of semesters and studio projects, students set **learning objectives**. During the course and at the end of the semester, students are invited to reflect on their progress and receive feedback from their supervisors (and, in the case of group work, from their course mates).

Erasmus-supported **mobility students** have become a regular part of the curriculum. From 2021-2023, the curriculum had an average of three visiting students per year. At the beginning of the semester, they are introduced to the programme and set learning objectives. They then complete a semester with the other students in the curriculum. **International student mobility** is supported through the Erasmus programme, which has initiated partnership agreements with top universities in the field, such as the Cologne International School of Design. At the same time, students have not participated in mobility following the Covid-19 pandemic, citing strong ties with their classmates and the desire to study with them. In 2023/24, two mobilities are planned before the start of thesis work.

The curriculum **is financed** through state support, tuition fees, industry cooperation revenue and funding from RDC projects. Having multiple sources of funding spreads the financial risks, and the **curriculum is in a good material position** today, allowing investment in modern study equipment, training, mobility, etc. The **learning tools are primarily digital**, which means that material costs are low.

At the same time, **the salaries of teaching staff** are a problem. While the curriculum has the financial resources, these cannot be fully used to pay teaching staff more fairly, as EKA's pay rate is determined by the principle of equal treatment, which is limited by low public funding. This is a problem for the interaction design speciality, where the gap between the average industry salary and that offered by academia is very large[93].

Students have access to databases through the **EKA Library**. Input on the literature needed is collected from the teaching staff and twice a year, a request is sent to the library. Urgent publications and those used as work tools are ordered from the curriculum's own resources for the curriculum. In 2023, a curriculum **design methods database** was created, which brings together the theory acquired during the studies.

The **principles of environmental protection and sustainable development** are followed both in the development and implementation of the curriculum. Designers have **a major role to play in enabling sustainable lifestyles**. Most of the studio projects include environmental considerations in their briefs and companies that promote sustainability are preferred as industry partners[94]. Since 2022, theses have had to **follow the UN Sustainable Development Goals** and elective subjects have been created on how to address environmental concerns as a designer[95]. **Eco-labelled products** are used for study and office supplies and **international business trips** have been reduced. Digital mobility is favoured when involving international teaching staff.

Teaching takes place in **two studio spaces**, the smaller of which is owned by the curriculum and the larger shared with the faculty. Students complain about **the lack of space**, as they need a room to hang material on the walls throughout the course. There is increasing interest in using the various **laboratories and workshops** at the school. Unfortunately, they are difficult to access and students do not know what their options are. **Creating a strong team dynamic** allows students to integrate, do group work and give each other honest feedback. A number of **extra-curricular activities** have become part of the study-related culture[96]. The Slack platform is used, with spaces set up to talk about music, literature and more. Feedback on the social environment is collected from students in end-of-semester retrospectives. Each course has a **class leader** who represents the students in day-to-day matters and is responsible for keeping the studio tidy.

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[93]The MeetFrank 2019 report reveals that the average salary in the design field in Estonia is €1000/month higher than the national average. The average pay at the junior level was €2353, so students were already earning more than teaching staff when they started their professional careers.

[94]E.g. 2018 Uuskasutuskeskus (The Re-use Centre), 2019 Bolt, 2020-2022 Rohetiiger (Green Tiger), 2023 Sustaxo.

[95]E.g. Nudging Sustainable Behaviour, Speculative Design.

[96]Examples include: a workshop and party at the beginning of the year where new students become DJs, events such as the International Dinner, Christmas party, field trips, Design Challenges every Saturday of the autumn semester where a first-year student organises a seminar on a topic of interest to them, Social Media Presidency where every week a new student reports on the curriculum's activities in the media, Book Club where design literature is read and discussed with alumni.

Strengths

Intensive industry cooperation every semester, participation in academic RDC projects where possible.

A contemporary, fast-developing curriculum designed to meet future needs.

The curriculum gives students as broad an overview of the speciality as it allows them to focus on their chosen branch.

Feedback from students and alumni is consistently taken into account in the development process.

The social space created ensures a strong sense of belonging in the group and a trusting environment.

Areas for improvement

There is a clear need for alumni internships to help them enter the labour market. The idea of setting up an internship programme has received a positive response from employers.

To alleviate the lack of space, we plan to start cross-using spaces with other specialities better.

Access to laboratories – preparatory courses in English are rare and students lack knowledge of the possibilities. We are working to improve communication.

To increase the motivation and build a stronger bond between the Academy and the teaching staff, we will start to offer continuous education courses.

Explore the possibility of launching a new RDC project on artificial intelligence and sustainability.

4.4.2 Learning, teaching and assessment

The visibility and relevance of the curriculum are reflected in **the continued interest of applicants** – the curriculum is **one of the most popular at EKA** (competition for one place was 4.8 from 2021-2023)[97]. An **Open House** and a virtual seminar takes place before admissions. In addition to EKA's marketing channels, the curriculum has its own website, is active **on social media**, on **professional websites** describing learning opportunities (UXMastery, startit.ee) and **in Master's studies' portals** (MastersPortal, FindaMasters). **It is also present at professional events** (UX Tartu 2018-2020, StartUpDay 2021, Tallinn Design Festival 2022, World Usability Day 2023).

In order to assess the competence and suitability of students, candidates sit a three-round **entrance exam**, where the candidates' performance is assessed by an admission committee consisting of the head of the curriculum, two teaching staff and one student. Rounds and criteria:

1. **Motivation letter and portfolio.** The candidate's knowledge of the speciality, ambition, self-expression and the matching of motivation with the curriculum are evaluated.
2. **Homework.** Candidates have two hours to solve an open design problem. Attention to empathy, broadness of perception, logical reasoning, creativity and presentation skills are assessed.
3. **Interview.** Candidates undergo a 20-minute video interview with the committee where knowledge, motivation, readiness for teamwork, openness, response to criticism, attitude to life, mindset and communication skills are evaluated through specially prepared questions.

As entry to the curriculum does not require any prior professional competences, it is primarily the **ambition, willingness** and ability to **acquire these competences during studies** that are assessed. The Commission has developed worksheets and criteria for an objective evaluation. Taking into account graduation statistics and feedback on the curriculum, it can be concluded that the admission process supports a thoughtful choice of speciality. **For international entrants,** qualifications are set by region and checked by an admissions employee. Candidates' real language skills are validated by the admissions committee during an interview.

Students' special needs are identified during the entrance exams,supervision and through feedback from fellow students. **In coaching sessions** (1-2 times a semester), students are given suggestions on what to

[97]Candidacy remains high despite increasing competition (e.g. SDSI MA in Latvia 2021, Digital Design BA at EKA since 2018, new Master's programmes at EKA in 2023).

focus on, what additional materials to study, optional subjects to take, etc. Students' progress is monitored by the head of the curriculum throughout their studies.

The curriculum is organised **as a cyclical course**, with classes on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. This provides a stable schedule, allowing time for independent work, participating in optional subjects and working during studies, which is often necessary to pay tuition fees. Most of the learning is **studio-based**, with students solving a brief during the course. **Learner-centred individual methods** such as reading, fulfilling tasks and asking questions are used. Group work involves **group methods** such as seminars and brainstorming. The teacher supports students with feedback and teacher-centred methods such as lectures, demonstrations and guided discussions. **Feedback on students' independent work** is provided in the **form of a design critique seminar**, in which the supervisor assesses the compliance of the created solution with the objectives and guides students with questions or suggestions. In the course reflection, students are required to create personal meaning based on what they have experienced, for example by writing a case study. The **role of the teaching staff** is to create a safe space where students dare to experiment and fail. Studio-based learning allows the students to address topics and methodologies of interest to them. The **task and methodology of carrying out the Master's thesis** are set by the student. The work will be preceded by seminars to help the student choose a topic and approach according to their aims. The **format of the thesis supervision** is agreed between the supervisor and the student. The curriculum has prepared support material and a joint seminar is held with supervisors to explain the process and expectations placed on them.

The **effectiveness of study methods** is assessed through the evaluation of students' performance, in particular when completing the thesis. Study methods are also addressed in the **quantitative feedback** collected at the end of the semester. In the spring semester of 2023, the feedback on the curriculum was assessed with a score of 4.4 out of 5 (Appendix 18). **Students** contribute to improving the quality of their studies as well by providing substantive feedback to the teacher and the head of the curriculum at retrospectives. Reflection and feedback is a guided activity in curriculum retrospectives, where the student is methodologically supported through exercises and questions.

The learning process uses **professional digital tools** for the speciality, enabling students to acquire the skills needed in the labour market. The curriculum offers **free access to** the most used tools (e.g. Figma, Miro, Slack, Zoom) and provides guidance on how to apply for educational licences for less common tools. **Artificial Intelligence tools** are used throughout the learning process, by both teaching staff and students. Students are guided to experiment with them at all stages of their coursework.

Teaching staff **involve students in RDC activities** through research and development projects. The problems set by the studios and the choice of partners are based on the research topics of the Faculty of Design. Studio projects are carried out as part of RDC activities where possible.

For example:

- In the 2021 Service Design course, visions for the university of the future were created within the framework of the Transform4Europe project;
- Within the framework of the Sensorial Design course, N.H. Oktay involved students in workshops to study the impact of material perception on emotions;
- Within the framework of the joint project of the Health Insurance Fund (2021–2022), T. Kärp took students to a co-creative workshop with healthcare workers;
- 'Digital Tools for Creative Collaboration' (2021-2023) involved MIxD students for two years in the form of elective subjects in which they helped with research and development activities;
- students also participate in research electives, e.g. biomaterials courses are popular.

The timetable is designed so that the student focuses on **one studio project at a time** and can apply what they have learned in the next project. **Speciality and elective subjects are scheduled** to support the implementation of studio projects. Since the speed of solving design tasks is individual and much of the learning takes place as group work, it is not possible to plan the **actual study load** outside the classroom. This is also influenced by factors such as work, the different social situations of international students, etc. **Workload assessment** is collected qualitatively from teaching staff and quantitatively from students by subject and taken into account in planning, with many corrections introduced in the early years of the curriculum. At this stage, **students rate their contribution to the learning process** 3.9 out of 5.

The curriculum mainly uses **learner-centred and sustainable assessment methods**. **Assessment is formative and continuous**, with students being given verbal feedback on their chosen approach and the work they have done in meetings with the teacher throughout the course. At the end of the longer subjects, there is a self-assessment and, in the case of group work, peer assessment. As **the study process of the curriculum** is predominantly **studio-based**, the main component of the assessment is the substantive feedback from the teaching staff or the assessment committee on the student's progress in achieving the learning outcomes and learning objectives and the final outcome of the work produced. **Assessment methods are designed** to support the achievement of learning outcomes and to reflect the professional working environment of designers, including preparing students to receive, implement and provide feedback. **To ensure the objectivity of the assessment**, the assessment at the end of the course with more volume is overseen by the head of the curriculum together with the committee using assistive methodologies. Differentiated assessment is based on the criteria set out in EKA's Regulation of Studies (applies to about 25% of subjects) and the teacher must provide oral or written feedback as well. The **defence of theses** involves the head of the curriculum, several teaching staff, teaching staff from (international) external universities and professional practitioners. To **ensure the objectivity of defences**, a tool has been developed, where the aggregate score is the result of the evaluation of the criteria.

The **RPL system** used at EKA allows for taking into account studies previously completed at educational institutions in Estonia and abroad, continuing education or independent study and knowledge and skills gained from work experience. As a contemporary university, EKA is ready to recognise the skills and knowledge students have acquired outside of the formal education system and to consider them equally important. This means recognising learning outside of formal education, creating appropriate assessment criteria and recognising it equally with formal education. When the application is submitted, the head of the curriculum confirms whether the experience matches the curriculum. Generally, students do not cover speciality and practical subjects with RPL.

In case of problems, the student can report them to the Head of the Curriculum or the Dean of the Faculty (either on the EKA premises or daily via Slack). Students have indicated **difficulties in balancing private life and studies**. Projects vary in intensity, which is difficult to plan at the start of the studies. **Psychological and special needs support** is provided by EKA's psychologist. At the same time, a **climate of trust** has been created within the student group and between the students and the head of the curriculum. The need for additional support has been identified both in retrospectives and check-in exercises (the latter was particularly relevant during the Covid-19 pandemic). **Completion of studies in nominal time** has been increasing steadily, reaching 83% in 2021. Based on the lessons from the Covid-19 pandemic and feedback, it is important to develop team spirit within the course, which the curriculum addresses in a targeted way. Personal supervision, a fixed timetable and the possibility of short-term distance learning **support the completion of studies in nominal time** as well. In the period of 2020-2022, five students have **permanently dropped out of their studies**. Students move into a new profession based on the knowledge they have acquired in the curriculum and then find no possibility to prioritise studies. However, a significant proportion of dropouts return and graduate. To improve the situation, we have reduced mediation of job offers and plan to set up an internship programme.

According to the spring 2023 survey, **92% of alumni were employed within their field**. The majority of them (83%) were working in Estonia and nine alumni were in management positions. **Feedback from curriculum alumni** is collected to assess the competence of the learning outcomes and organisation, as well as the relevance to labour market requirements. The impact of the general competences acquired in the curriculum is felt first and foremost on entry into the labour market, so this input is more important than that of recent graduates. As a result of the feedback, the following changes have been made:

- self- and peer-assessment to address individual development have been introduced;
- the positioning of the courses has been changed to form a logical pathway;
- theoretical knowledge and the volume of written assignments has been increased;
- a database of design methods and theory to support practice has been created.

Strengths

The curriculum is popular with entrants and targeted awareness-raising work is ongoing.

The curriculum is logical based on student feedback and the teaching methods support their development.

Objective assessment criteria and methods for admissions, courses and theses have been developed.

The number of graduates within nominal time is high.

Areas for improvement

Graduates state that they have had to acquire specific skills when starting work and that there is an expectation of more theoretical knowledge as well. We see an opportunity to teach more technical skills, for example in the optional subjects or the summer school.

Due to rapid developments in the field, the learning outcomes of the curriculum are outdated and do not reflect reality. The curriculum is being renewed in the 2023/24 academic year.

Communication of assessment criteria is one of the bottlenecks in the organisation of studies. There are few subjects with differentiated assessment and the criteria are formulated in general terms. These need to be updated along with the curriculum outputs.

We plan to manage student expectations better to help them balance their private life and studies better.

4.4.3 Development, cooperation and internationalisation of teaching staff

The interaction design speciality is **developing very quickly**. Against the background of technological, ecological and socio-economic developments, **approaches and methods** are continuously being developed and objectives redefined. In this context, teaching staff are constantly obliged to develop their skills. The implementation of new skills is ensured through the renewal of learning outcomes.

The curriculum has nearly 30 supervisors with backgrounds in universities, state institutions, corporations and agencies. Five of them are among EKA's permanent staff, with a total of **1.5** curriculum-related places. This is inadequate to realise the ambition of the curriculum and can be seen in the consistent work overload. **The permanent teaching staff** have more theoretical and field-expanding skills to teach such as behavioural psychology, speculative design and systems thinking. However, most of the tutors are **visiting teaching staff**, **practitioners and top specialists** in their field. This gives students access to real-life methodologies and case studies. Due to the novelty of the field, there is a **shortage of tutors with a Master's degree** in Estonia. The lack of qualifications of many tutors is compensated by their professional experience. However, teaching staff without academic experience need continuous support in implementing teaching methods.

Table 40. MixD curriculum teaching staff in figures, 2018/19-2022/23

Teaching staff in 2022/23, incl. hourly paid teaching staff	Average age	International staff	Qualification		
			Doctor	Master	Experience-based
28	38	13 states	7	14	8

The **average student rating for the work of teaching staff** in Tahvel is 4.6 out of 5. In the qualitative feedback, the work and feedback of teaching staff is appreciated as well. Specific feedback is given by students directly to the teacher at retrospectives, with some improvements introduced:

- participatory assessment and supervision are more systematically introduced;
- changes in teaching staff have been implemented when the topic is not being taught as expected,
- the scope of the task has been adjusted if there is too much workload on the tutor.

Compliance with the principles of academic ethics (including the Ethics Committee, relevant guidelines, etc.) is centrally organised at EKA[98]. So far, there have been no major cases of plagiarism or fraud. **Ethics are addressed** in lectures (e.g. privacy in user research) and in case of problems or suspected breaches. A more coherent approach is ensured through cross-faculty discussion, electives (e.g. Design for Sustainability) and public lectures. The thesis is accompanied by an author's declaration and the student is aware in advance that the thesis is subject to a plagiarism check. In the context of the curriculum, the areas most in need of attention are:

- exclusion of creative theft and misrepresentation, as a lot of copyrighted material is created and used.
- maintaining confidentiality of information, especially personal data, as confidential data is frequently encountered and applied in research and presentations.

The aim is for permanent teaching staff to undertake **at least one mobility period per year** to keep abreast of developments in the field, to gain knowledge for curriculum development and to find potential teaching staff. **Teaching** at partner universities is supported by Erasmus+ funds and takes place on a case-by-case basis when invited to tutor[99]. The experience and connections gained are effective, what has been learned is applied in studies and after each mobility, new supervisors and committee members have been added to the curriculum. Achievement of the objectives is evaluated by the number of visitors involved and the collected input that can be applied. The normalisation of distance learning allows for **the consistent involvement of international teaching staff** in both teaching and assessment. In 2020-2023, the thesis committee had six members from international universities. The tutors include seven external teachers from schools such as Aalto University, Oslo School of Architecture and Design (AHO), Emily Carr University of Art & Design and Iceland University of the Arts. **International partners in curriculum development are selected** based on the need to cover novel specialised skills that have not yet been developed at EKA or elsewhere in Estonia, but whose suitability for the curriculum we want to test (e.g. speculative design). **External teaching staff** are involved in the tutoring of 1-2 courses per semester and each year as thesis supervisors, reviewers and members of the evaluation committee. International joint courses are regularly offered as optional subjects through Erasmus, Cirrus and other networks.

Systematic support for the development of teaching staff has been an important priority for EKA. EKA's system of teaching and supervising skills builds on the Good Teaching Seminars for teaching staff, training in teaching skills and generic competences, e-learning counselling and international exchange of experience[100]. The teaching staff of subjects with more volume receive feedback at the end-of-course retrospective. Tutors of subjects with smaller volumes receive feedback through the head of the curriculum after the end of the semester, when students provide their input in the semester retrospective and the survey on Tahvel. When giving feedback, the head of the curriculum also takes into account the students' performance in the subjects following the course.

The teaching staff is assessed based on the students' feedback, the achievement of the learning outcomes and the ability to use the knowledge acquired in subsequent subjects. The involvement of the teacher as a thesis supervisor or adviser is an indirect indicator as well. The Higher Education Act obliges staff to **undergo evaluation** at least once every five years. In 2020, a new career model for academic staff came into force and permanent academic staff started to be evaluated in accordance with EKA's Rules on Employment Relations with Academic Staff Members[101].

At least two members of the permanent teaching staff are involved in the preparation of the **feedback of hourly paid teaching staff**. Feedback is treated critically (several students must make a similar claim) and recommendations are communicated to the teaching staff when preparing the course. The head of the curriculum is responsible for developing the teaching skills of hourly paid teaching staff. To develop pedagogical skills, pairs of teachers who have not worked together before will be assigned to supervise. For

[98]Read more about this in section 3.4 "Academic ethics".

[99]Permanent teaching staff have taught at universities in Latvia, Germany, France and Denmark from 2020-2023.

[100]For a more detailed overview of EKA's policies and practices in this area, see section 3.6.4 "Developing learning skills".

[101]For a more detailed overview of EKA's policies and practices in this regard, please refer to section 3.6.3 "Recruitment and evaluation of academic staff".

example, the curricula of the 2022-2024 academic years include two Fullbright visiting lecturers from US schools, whose methods have already been adopted by local teaching staff.

Shaping the workload of teaching staff. Permanent teaching staff are contractually expected to spend **40% of their working time on RDC activities**. This also creates flexibility in the use of working time. The workload of non-permanent staff is determined by the volume of subjects they teach. Beginning teaching staff are informed on how much their workload can be expected to be at different stages of the course.

The teaching staff give presentations at design seminars (IxDA Tallinn, Disainijutud), open lectures and Disainimõte (Design Thought) discussion evenings (EKA), conferences in Estonia (World Usability Day, DisainiÖÖ, UX Tartu, etc.) and abroad (Nordes 2023, Eksig 2023), and exhibitions (Tallinn Design Festival 2022, ICIDS 2021). Studio projects are presented publicly. Case studies of the projects are published and N. H. Oktay has published a number of research articles. Several teaching staff are active in the Estonian Design Centre, promoting the development of the field of design (professional standards, Estonian Design Awards) in working groups. Teaching staff participate in juries in Estonia and abroad as well.

Strengths

The curriculum has developed a national and international network of teaching staff.

A stronger academic teaching staff is emerging alongside teaching staff who are practising specialists in the field.

Teaching staff are involved in a wide range of activities related to society.

Areas for improvement

Increased involvement of supervisors from other specialities in teaching, due to the shortage of permanent teaching staff.

Formative assessment is integrated gradually, with the bottleneck being the involvement of non-permanent teaching staff. We have started to prepare relevant guidance material, including on good teaching practices.

Photo: Madis Kurss

4.5 Art History and Visual Culture (PhD)

Curriculum title, study level	**Art History and Visual Culture (DKT), doctoral studies**
Structural unit responsible for curriculum	Doctoral School
Principal compilers of the curriculum self-evaluation, Head of Curriculum	Andres Kurg, Professor, Head of Curriculum andres.kurg@artun.ee
Brief description of the process of self-evaluation of curriculum and preparation of the report (period, who was involved, division of work, approval)	Period: autumn semester 2023. People involved: Kristina Jõekalda, Associate Professor at the Doctoral School; Irene Hütsi, Doctoral School Coordinator; Pille Epner, Leading Specialist, Research and Development Office; Virve Sarapik, Professor, Institute of Art History and Visual Culture. The input was the evaluation of the 2022 curriculum.

Table 41. DKT curriculum in figures, 2018/19-2022/23

	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020*	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
Students	13	14	15	16	18	19
Admitted	2	2	2	2	4	2
Dropouts	1	0	1	0	1	1
Graduates	0	1	0	2	1	1

4.5.1 Planning and management of studies

The Doctoral Programme in Art History and Visual Culture (hereinafter referred to as DKT, curriculum) is the **only curriculum of the highest level of study** in the field of art history in Estonia. It plays a crucial role in the development of the next generation of researchers and top professionals and in sustaining art history as an academic discipline. The curriculum is developed and implemented in accordance with the Standard of Higher Education, the EKA Development Plan, the RDC Strategy, the Universities Estonia Quality Agreement for Doctoral Studies, EKA's Study Regulations, the Doctoral Study Regulations and the Statutes of the Doctoral School. The needs of the relevant communities are also taken into account. The curriculum aims to train **top professionals** in academia as well as in the arts and culture. **The curriculum aims** to be internationally comparable **with other European doctoral programmes in art history** and to maintain an **active international dialogue** to ensure its level and quality.

The **teaching staff and PhD thesis supervisors** are highly skilled professionals in their field who regularly publish in top international academic journals and present at conferences worldwide. The quality of academic staff is ensured by the principles set out in EKA's Rules on Employment Relations with Academic Staff Members, annual reporting and performance development reviews and regular academic staff evaluations (every five years), the committee of which includes a representative of another university. As a rule, supervisors of doctoral theses are academic staff at the Institute of Art History and Visual Culture (KVI). A second supervisor may be an expert from another university, sometimes outside of Estonia. The research topics of doctoral students are often related to the research projects and specialities of their supervisors, ensuring the necessary quality monitoring of the doctoral thesis and the linking of studies to research from an early stage (see Appendix 23).

The Institute of Art History and Visual Culture (KVI), founded in 1992, is responsible for the content of the DKT curriculum. It is a dual-functional unit of EKA, providing both **research and art history education** at all three levels. KVI is the only art history research institute in Estonia and one of the leading centres in the Baltic states, covering a wide field of art history research from the Middle Ages to contemporary art and

architecture. Since 2020, KVI is a member of the International Association of Research Institutes in the History of Art (RIHA).

KVI has **three broadly defined areas of research**, all of which are closely linked to doctoral studies:

- **Historiography of the History of Art**, with an emphasis on the historiography of the Baltic region in the 19th-21st centuries. The topic is led by Prof. Krista Kodres and it involves four PhD students. Research topics include, among others, the study of Baltic German heritage, Soviet-era socialist art history writing, and the study of the development of contemporary art history. Research in this area has been funded by grants from the Estonian Research Council, individual grants from the Böckler-Mare-Balticum Foundation, and grants from EKA.
- **Studies of Soviet architecture, material culture and visual culture.** The topic is led by Prof. Andres Kurg and involves currently four PhD students. Topics include research on representations of the Soviet home, critical Soviet objects, and the history of curatorship. The research has been funded by grants from the Estonian Research Council, a grant from the EU Culture Programme and individual grants, including from the Graham Foundation and the Cultural Endowment of Estonia.
- **Visual culture studies and picture theory**, with an emphasis on semiotics and phenomenology. The topic is led by Prof. Virve Sarapik and involves five PhD students. Research topics include Edmund Husserl's theory of the image and Charles Sanders Peirce's theory of pragmatism, as well as the discourses of visual culture and memory in the Baltic states in the transitional period of the 1980s and 1990s and in the contemporary period. The research has been funded by grants from the Estonian Research Council and individual grants from the Mobilitas Plus programme.

Additionally, among KVI's core competences are **Early Modern era Baltic art and architecture**, and **feminist art theory.**

Curriculum development is carried out in cooperation between the head of the curriculum and the **DKT Doctoral Council**. In addition, teaching staff and supervisors of doctoral students are involved in discussions and student feedback is taken into account. In addition to the general feedback on the Doctoral School, of late, feedback discussions between the PhD students and the Doctoral School's board (incl. the head of this curriculum) were conducted in spring 2023 and December 2023.

Most important recent changes:

- Admission of international students from the autumn semester of 2023. Although many of the courses and readings were in English, previously the curriculum was only oriented at Estonian-language students. The aim of international admission is to increase competition for doctoral study places, to make the curriculum even more international than before and to stimulate dialogue between students from different backgrounds. There is currently one international student in the core curriculum and another has been admitted as an external student.
- The introduction of a specialised monthly seminar in English, in parallel with the one in Estonian.
- The introduction of a full-length English-language Academic Writing course since spring semester 2023/24.
- Based on the feedback, the literature-based seminars are now accompanied by a meeting for all doctoral students of the KVI, regardless of their language of study, where they can address the difficulties they face in their work and receive mutual feedback.

The **continued relevance of the curriculum is demonstrated** both by the success of our graduates in applying for post-doctoral positions[102] and by their transition to professional employment. **The employment rate of graduates is 100%** and all have found work within their field. DKT graduates work as researchers and teaching staff at other universities (e.g. Heie Treier at Tallinn University), as leading museum researchers and curators (Greta Koppel, Elnara Taidre and Anders Härm at the Art Museum of Estonia) or as top managers or directors general at memory institutions (Eva Näripea at the Film Archives of the National Archives, Sirje Helme at the Art Museum of Estonia). Many of the graduates have gone on to work as teaching staff or researchers at EKA (Andres Kurg, Epp Lankots, Ingrid Ruudi, Kädi Talvoja, Kristina Jõekalda, Anders Härm at the KVI). Many of those mentioned have defended their doctoral thesis within the last 5 years, others within ca. last 10 years.

[102]E.g. Kristina Jõekalda, Yale University 2022; Ingrid Ruudi, Yale University, 2022-2023.

To maintain an internationally high standard, in the case of dissertations in English, at least one opponent is invited from among relevant specialists abroad (most recently Vladimir Kulic, Iowa State University; Jörg Hackmann, University of Greifswald/University of Szczecin). Their feedback on the quality of the work has been very positive (see the reviews of PhD theses: Appendix 25a and 25b). Over the years, the curriculum has also been given an international dimension through **inviting many lecturers from abroad** to give intensive courses. Visiting lecturers are invited from leading chairs of arts and art history also to hold elective courses, as well as specialists whose research is related to the local region or is close to our research topics (e.g. in recent years Klara Kemp-Welch, Courtauld Institute London; Anthony Gardner, Oxford University; Ewa Domanska, University of Poznan; Dan Karlholm, Södertörn University). Cooperation with other Estonian universities has been close, incl. in inviting external teaching staff, especially through the Graduate School of Culture Studies and Arts (until 2022; funding hopefully to be renewed soon).

Structure of the curriculum. The DKT is a curriculum in the humanities, designed to **provide students with theoretical preparation and practical skills in art history and visual culture** at an international level. This means both **theoretical preparation** in current issues and debates in contemporary art history and **practical preparation** in research methodology, its philosophical underpinnings and academic writing techniques, practices and ethics. Central to the learning process is the **students' individual research** (doctoral thesis) and its planning, execution and completion in dialogue with the supervisor. The role of the curriculum modules is to **support and consolidate the completion of the doctoral thesis** and, through it, to **train independent researchers**. The curriculum includes **a module of general theory subjects** (18 ECTS) that is common to all EKA doctoral students. This module includes Academic Writing, Learning and Teaching at the University, and Philosophy of Science (or electively Philosophy of History). In parallel, students complete a **module of speciality subject courses** (33 ECTS), which includes the theory seminars of the specialty. These are seminars structured as a reading group, each year focusing on a selected topic (Decolonisation in 2022/23; Feminism and Re-enchantment in 2023/24). From autumn 2023, the seminars have been held in English and Estonian, allowing for the inclusion of international students in the curriculum. The speciality subjects module also includes practical subjects for students: organising a conference, teaching in a higher education institution and presenting at conferences (incl. EKA Doctoral School annual conference). During practical subjects, the students are supported by their supervisors and the staff of the Doctoral School. A student who has completed the module acquires the experience of organising and presenting at a conference and knows how to prepare a subject course in their speciality and implement the skills acquired in the subject of higher education pedagogy. 9 ECTS must be completed in **optional subjects**, which are chosen independently by the student in cooperation with the supervisor and the head of the curriculum from among the history and methodology courses offered by the DKT doctoral programme. One or two courses annually are taught by external teaching staff (Klara Kemp-Welch in spring 2023; Richard Witman, Anthony Gardner in spring 2024). It is also possible to attend optional subjects from the doctoral level courses of EKA's Doctoral School, EKA's other specialities and/or another university. Most of the subjects are taught **in block mode**, except for the specialised seminars, which take place throughout the academic year for years 1-3; participation is optional in year 4.

The main focus of doctoral studies is the writing of a doctoral thesis (180 ECTS) and its public defence in front of a defence committee. Central to the process of writing the thesis is the dialogue with the supervisor (min. 40 hours per academic year), who helps the doctoral student formulate the research question, enter the appropriate professional context, find the research method and find archives and the necessary literature, and provides feedback on the written chapters and/or articles. The supervisor also approves the doctoral candidate's annual evaluation report, attends the evaluation meeting and is the first instance in referring the doctoral thesis for preliminary defence. The supervisor works following the EKA Doctoral Study Regulations and the Good Supervision Practice in its Annex 3.

An important way to gain academic experience is to **spend a longer period at a university abroad**. In the last five years, five students have studied abroad, one of them twice. There have been five residencies in Germany and one in the United States. For funding study mobility, the Erasmus exchange scheme, the Dora programme, and the Böckler-Mare-Balticum Foundation have been used. Most of the study residencies have been for one semester. The expectation is that more students will take up the study mobility option, but doctoral students often need to combine their studies with family life or work.

Table 42. DKT outgoing doctoral study mobility (2018-2022)

Name	School	Length of stay	Programme
Taavi Hallimäe	Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design (HfG) Karlsruhe	17.04.2023–28.07.2023	Erasmus
Mariliis Elizabeth Holzmann	Humboldt University of Berlin	01.10.2021–30.09.2022	Erasmus
Liisa-Helena Lumberg-Paramonova	Institute for Art and Visual History (IKB) at the Humboldt University in Berlin	2019 autumn, 2 months	Böckler-Mare-Balticum Foundation
Liisa-Helena Lumberg-Paramonova	The library of the Central Institute for Art History in Munich	2022 autumn, 1 month	Böckler-Mare-Balticum Foundation
Mari-Liis Krautmann	Humboldt University of Berlin	01.04.2020–01.10.2020	Erasmus
Ingrid Ruudi	Columbia University	13.02.2019–22.03.2019	Dora

Table 43. DKT incoming doctoral students (2018-2022)

Name, topic	Organisation	Time	Program
Teona Otkhozoria, topic: Comparison of the History of Visual Narrative Development in America and Post-Soviet Countries	Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University	01.11.2021-28.01.2022	Dora Plus
Daria Martynova, topic: Artistic Representations of Hysteria on Estonian Art of the Second Half of the XIXth Century	Russian Academy of Arts	01.03.2020-30.04.2020	Dora Plus

Feedback from doctoral students has been asked annually at the Doctoral School level since 2022 and at the curriculum level at the end of each semester via the Tahvel platform. The data is analysed under the coordination of the head of the curriculum, who then proposes necessary improvements to the programme. Feedback on the subjects is provided to the teaching staff. The results of the feedback meeting with the students, head of the curriculum and Doctoral School coordinator conducted in spring 2023 have been taken into account from the autumn semester 2023/24 onwards. This form of feedback is continued on a regular basis.

The DKT relies on the **EKA Library**, a research library with around 86,900 items, **as its research base.** It is the country's leading art library, providing access to major international databases and participating in the interlibrary loan system. The library also contains about 2,510 manuscripts of teaching staff's research papers, reports and dissertations. In addition, the KVI owns the **archive of the journal Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi** / Studies on Art and Architecture (published by the Estonian Society of Art Historians and Curators, in close connection with the KVI, which contains original image files (circa 2,000), print files of articles and original manuscripts since 2003.

The **budget for doctoral studies** has been consolidated under the Doctoral School and is sufficient for day-to-day teaching activities. **Additional funding** is sought from the EKA Research Fund etc. to invite visiting teaching staff and to run elective courses. Both the EKA Moodle environment and Google Workspace are used for studies. The **lack of a dedicated workspace for** doctoral students is a critical issue, also mentioned in the 2022 doctoral survey. In 2023, **the cross-use of** doctoral students' workspaces was found to be a solution. It provides working space for 3-5 doctoral students at a time, which temporarily eases the lack of workspace. EKA's management is aware of the problems and is looking for solutions (we hope that the situation will ease after the completion of EKA's new annex building in 2025; also the temporary renting of additional workspace outside the building has been discussed).

Within Estonia, the curriculum actively cooperated with the Graduate School of Culture Studies and Arts (KTKDK), which was **funded by the European Regional Development Fund**. International joint seminars and courses were organised with its help (including Winter Schools that brought together top international

researchers). The head of the DKT is EKA's representative on the KTKDK Council. The current funding round of the KTKDK ended in 2022, and the new programme Doctoral Schools 2023-2029, is now open.

As a result of the 2022 national reform, EKA offers the possibility to start doctoral studies as a **full-time junior researcher**. Currently, two students who have been accepted to the DKT curriculum are working as junior researchers. Their responsibilities are defined by the Rules on Employment Relations with Academic Staff Members, and Doctoral Study Regulations, allowing them to be integrated early and more closely into the KVI's research activities.

Strengths

Close association with research at the Institute of Art History and Visual Culture (KVI).

The teaching staff of the curriculum consists of leading researchers in their field.

Graduates have been successful in applying for post-doctoral positions and finding professional work.

Visiting professors and lecturers are from the world's leading universities.

Dialogue with internationally relevant academic trends.

Very good connections to other Estonian doctoral programmes and schools.

Areas for improvement

Stronger focus on internationalisation (increasing the share of international students).

Improving working conditions for doctoral students (larger workspace).

Long-term cooperation with other leading European art history doctoral programmes (possible doctoral network).

4.5.2 Learning, teaching and assessment

Potential students are informed about the study opportunities **through the EKA channels** (webpage, mailing lists, social media) where information can be found about curricula and admissions. Press releases and newsletters reach professional associations, partners and other interested parties (EKA has a separate list of people interested in doctoral studies). Paid advertisements are used on social media during the admission period and prior to it to advertise information sessions. Information is available on the Study in Estonia and DreamApply platforms as well. **Outreach work is supported by** conferences in the field, doctoral school events, EKA Research Cafes, public doctoral thesis defences, exhibitions, research popularisation projects and events. Separate information on admission and information sessions for EKA international programmes are provided to our **exchange students from the last 3-5 years** as well as to international networks in which EKA is a member. Interested parties collected through the online chat window and the newsletter subscription form on the website are informed via newsletters/emails. Those interested in doctoral studies are offered the opportunity to participate in an online **information session**, the recording of which is later often accessible on the Doctoral School webpage.

Admission to the curriculum is by open competition once a year. The admission thresholds for doctoral programmes, the admission conditions, the composition of the admission committee and the curriculum evaluation committees are approved by the Vice Rector for Research and are published on the EKA website. Admission is organised by **the Admissions Committee and the admission assessment boards of curricula**. The Admissions Committee is responsible for general curricula issues, monitors compliance with the admission rules and decides on matters not specified therein. The admission assessment board focuses on issues related to admissions to the curriculum. The admission board of the DKT consists of the head of the curriculum, the heads of the research areas of the KVI and the Vice Rector for Research.

Applications are submitted electronically via the Student Admission Information System (SAIS). International student candidates apply electronically through the International Student Admission Information System (VVIS). **In the academic recognition of education acquired abroad**, EKA takes into account the assessment and recommendations of the Estonian ENIC/NARIC Centre, which bases its recognition on the Lisbon Convention,

various international agreements and the regulation of the Government of the Republic of Estonia (Conditions and Procedure for the Assessment and Academic Recognition of Foreign Educational Qualifications; Use of the Title of Qualification Awarded in the Education System of a Foreign State). On the application form, candidates must indicate whether they are applying for a position of doctoral student, doctoral student-junior researcher, or a doctoral researcher in knowledge transfer.

The **documents to be submitted when applying** are:

- dissertation proposal,
- a motivation letter,
- defended Master's thesis,
- CV (including details of education, research and development activities),
- academic CV of the expected supervisor(s) (having a supervisor is not a prerequisite for the application; CVs do not need to be submitted if the supervisor works at EKA).

The **preselection** is made on the basis of the documents submitted. Candidates who have passed the threshold will be invited **for an interview**. Further selection is based on the relevance, clarity, topicality from the point of view of contemporary art history and visual culture, and originality of the submitted project. **Consideration is given to** the candidate's skills and potential for research, orientation in important aspects of the chosen speciality, motivation to devote oneself to the doctoral studies, and competence of the teaching staff in supervising the work.

Compliance with the admission requirements is assessed on a 10-point scale. The ranking of the competition is formed on the basis of the evaluated admission requirements. The selected junior researcher candidate will be sent a job description; the doctoral student will be sent information about the doctoral scholarship. The candidate confirms their place of study in SAIS or VVIS.

The **RPL system** used at EKA allows for taking into account studies previously completed at educational institutions in Estonia and abroad, continuing education or independent study and knowledge and skills gained from work experience. As a contemporary university, EKA is ready to also recognise the skills and knowledge students have acquired outside of the formal education system and to consider them as equally valid to the formal ones. This means creating appropriate assessment criteria and recognising it equally with formal education. Such **applications are rejected** only in cases where the subject chosen as a replacement does not match the professional experience (e.g. there is a non-match or partial match between the previous experience and the corresponding doctoral study subject).

The focus of doctoral studies is on the **student's individual development as a researcher**. Most essential here is the constant dialogue with the supervisor, who takes into account the student's educational and professional background and guides the student in formulating the research question, entering the appropriate professional context, finding suitable research methods, and providing feedback on the written chapters and/or articles. During the first meetings, the form of cooperation, the frequency and the nature of the communication are agreed upon. The supervisor helps prepare and correct the student's research plan and individual study plan. The supervisor will also recommend suitable universities and research institutions for long-term study abroad and conferences.

Another **important feedback tool** for doctoral students is the **evaluation** at EKA, the annual requirements of which are outlined in the bottom of the evaluation report (an annex to the Doctoral Study Regulations[103]). The doctoral student submits the materials in writing before the doctoral evaluation, and during the evaluation meeting, there is a 20-minute discussion with each doctoral student and their supervisor(s) in years 1-3, and a 45-minute discussion in year 4. The evaluation committee for years 1-3 is formed by the head of the Doctoral School, the head of the relevant curriculum and the associate professor of the Doctoral School. A more comprehensive **evaluation, involving all heads of doctoral curricula**, was introduced for year 4 in 2020 and has proved to be very effective, similar to a pre-defence. If the requirements are not fully met, the Evaluation Committee gives the student a few months to remedy the shortcomings. The doctoral student's individual development is also monitored **through specialised seminars of the curriculum**, where the last seminar of each semester gives doctoral students the opportunity to present problems they are facing in their

[103] An overview of the doctoral evaluation and the feedback from the doctoral candidates can be found in section 3.9.5 "Doctoral evaluation". Minutes of PhD students' evaluation are in Appendix 24.

research and receive feedback from both the professors and their fellow students. In addition to their supervisor(s), doctoral students have the opportunity to **consult** with the head of the curriculum, as well as the associate professor of the Doctoral School throughout their studies. This is an option used by the majority of EKA doctoral students in the final stages of their work.

The DKT is closely related to **the research priorities** of the KVI and doctoral students are involved in its research either through their supervisors and the grants they hold, or directly as research staff members.

For example:

- Andrus Laansalu, Sven-Hannes Vabar and Merily Salura participate in the national group grant PRG636 Patterns of Development in Estonian Culture of the Transition Period (PI Virve Sarapik) as research staff since 2020.
- Maija Rudovska participates as a member of research staff in the national grant PSG530 Forecast and Fantasy (PI Andres Kurg) as of 2023, while Ingrid Ruudi participated in 2020 as a member of research staff in the same topic (PhD thesis completed with the support of the grant).
- Liisa-Helena Lumberg-Paramonova has participated in the EKA research grant Art Historical Contact Zones (PI Krista Kodres) since 2023.

Appropriateness of the assessment methods of the courses is evaluated by the head of the curriculum and the Doctoral School coordinator. If necessary, the Board of the EKA Doctoral School is involved in further discussions. In the case of existing courses, **written and oral feedback from doctoral students** is taken into account, the latter of which is asked during the evaluation process and feedback meetings. The **assessment criteria** are given on the Tahvel subject card/programme, in some subjects more specifically on its Moodle page, orally and in slides at the first meetings of the course. Depending on the specificities of the course, the assessment is carried out by one or more teaching staff members, who then mark the coursework accordingly. The head of the curriculum is consulted if necessary. Assessment in doctoral studies is exclusively **non-differentiated (pass/fail). Assessment criteria of the dissertation** are detailed by the EKA Doctoral Study Regulations: as of 2020, no grades are given, but an outstanding dissertation may be given the distinction *cum laude*. Following international practices and the EKA Doctoral Study Regulations, the defence committee is formed of experts with doctoral degrees from EKA and other higher education institutions. The doctoral thesis opponent is also external to EKA staff.

The primary instance and support for **monitoring the student's progress** is the supervisor, with whom a schedule and system of regular meetings is agreed upon at the first meetings (for students living outside Tallinn, the meetings may be held online). The **doctoral student is advised by** the head of the curriculum on substantive issues of the studies and by the coordinator of the Doctoral School on organisational issues. The International Admissions Specialist is responsible for **advising international doctoral students** on residence permits and visas, while the International Office and the Doctoral School coordinator provide advice on studying abroad. If the doctoral student needs psychological counselling or has special needs, they inform the EKA psychologist.

The **number of students who have discontinued their studies has** remained similar over the years (statistically 0.5 students per year). Reasons for dropping out include **difficulties in balancing work with study** (the current doctoral scholarship did not allow for full-time study without extra income from elsewhere). One of the solutions to this is the **system of junior researchers** introduced in 2022. This allows doctoral students to be more closely involved with the KVI's staff and its research activities, and motivates them more than before to complete their doctoral studies in nominal time. **To support the progress of** doctoral candidates, an evaluation report form has been created to accompany the Doctoral Study Regulations (Annex 4) **with schedule indicators to support the completion of the text-based doctoral thesis** which is monitored during the evaluation. A Good Supervision Practice has been established, which can be found in the Doctoral Study Regulations, as well as a practical guide on how to turn a written manuscript into a book (Doctoral Study Regulation Annex 5).

It is also important to **raise awareness of the need for a doctoral degree in society at large**. Good job prospects already exist at other levels of study and a doctoral degree is mostly needed for an academic career. One way out would be to have a **closer dialogue with employers** and to introduce an advantage to candidates with a doctoral degree in competitions for management positions (including outside academia).

Strengths

Small groups, tailoring studies to the individual needs of the doctoral student.

A well-functioning evaluation system that measures and supports doctoral students' progress.

Integration of doctoral students in KVI research topics.

Supervisors working closely and individually with the doctoral students.

The recently introduced system of junior researchers.

Areas for improvement

Increasing the number of graduates with nominal time (supporting doctoral students in moving on to different phases of their work).

Provision of wider information on international admission.

Seeking additional funding opportunities for PhD students.

Raising awareness of the need for a doctoral degree in society at large.

4.5.3 Development, cooperation and internationalisation of teaching staff

The PhD curriculum **is taught by leading researchers in their field** who hold doctoral degrees and are actively involved in research at the international level (see attached table of teaching staff; Appendix 22). The **high standard of teaching staff is ensured** by the requirements for staff at the relevant level of study set out in EKA's Rules on Employment Relations with Academic Staff Members and by their regular reporting, performance development reviews and evaluation. If necessary, staff with a lower degree are also included in teaching roles; in this case, the co-supervisor or co-teacher holds a doctoral degree.

Systematic support for academic staff development has been an important priority for EKA. Teaching and supervising skills are supported through EKA's Good Teaching Seminars, training in teaching skills and generic competences, e-learning consultancy and international exchange of experience.[104] In the previous academic year (2022/23), the EKA Doctoral School organised e.g. **training workshops** How to Write an Abstract and How to Publish a Monograph? to encourage research staff and doctoral students to publish in top publishing houses and journals. In order to carry out individual research and for the purpose of personal development, teaching staff are entitled to a **sabbatical semester** once every five years. Alongside professional travels, conference visits etc., a system of KVI research **seminars** has been set up as a platform for substantive discussion among each other: every couple of months, a faculty member from the KVI or an invited external lecturer will hold a seminar for colleagues and doctoral students on their ongoing research. This format helps faculty members stay updated to their colleagues' latest discoveries and approaches, and provides an opportunity to discuss them together, offering valuable insights for PhD students and others. International colleagues are also invited to give public lectures in KVI.

The Higher Education Act obliges academic staff members to **undergo evaluation** at least once every five years. In 2020, a new career model came into force and permanent academic staff started to be evaluated in accordance with EKA's Rules on Employment Relations with Academic Staff Members. For a more detailed overview of EKA's policies and practices in this regard, please refer to section 3.6.3 "Recruitment and evaluation of academic staff".

Compliance with the principles of academic ethics (including the Ethics Committee, relevant guidelines, etc.) is centrally organised at EKA[105]. As a preventive measure against textual creative theft, EKA used Ouriginal, a plagiarism detection software that checks all theses, until July 2023. The platform currently in use is Strike Plagiarism/Plagiat.pl. Avoiding academic fraud, including improper citation, is taught in the doctoral Academic Writing courses, training workshops and discussion groups. The Academic Writing course also covers topics such as time planning, research ethics, data gathering, data analysis tools, publishing, combining text with

[104] For a more detailed description of these activities, see section 3.6.4 "Developing teaching skills".

[105] Further details are available in section 3.4 "Academic ethics".

creative practice etc. EKA has recently developed initial guidelines for the use of AI. In the academic year 2023/24, EKA Doctoral School conducted a very popular elective course Ethics of Science, taught by the leading Estonian specialists (visiting teaching staff), covering issues such as the processing and storage of personal data, scientific open data and data protection. A training course on the same topic for teaching staff is planned for 2024.

International mobility of teaching staff is good. Our academic staff members have been visiting researchers at the Getty Research Institute (Krista Kodres), Yale University (Kristina Jõekalda, Ingrid Ruudi), University of Jena (Andres Kurg), The Academy of Fine Arts and Design of the University of Ljubljana (Virve Sarapik) in the last five years. Teaching staff regularly gives presentations at international conferences and seminars, which is an essential form of self-development. The curriculum has regularly involved international teaching staff in the delivery of elective courses: e.g. Anthony Gardner (Oxford University), Klara Kemp-Welch (Courtauld Institute) and Dan Karlholm (Södertörn University) over the last five years. The aim is to establish longer-term relationships with international teaching staff, who would, among other things, monitor the quality of the programme and the progress of students and provide the necessary feedback (e.g. Gardner will be a visiting lecturer again in 2024, Kemp-Welch again in 2025). For doctoral theses in English, the thesis usually has one preliminary reviewer from abroad (lately e.g. Vladimir Kulic, Iowa State University; Jörg Hackmann, University of Greifswald/University of Szczecin). The criteria for the selection of both international teaching staff and external reviewers are the closeness of their research topics to those of the KVI and their high academic level. The comments on the students' work by the members of the doctoral council and the preliminary reviewers and opponents are also an important tool for mapping curriculum development trends and providing input.

The **teaching staff receive feedback on their work** from the head of the curriculum. The feedback surveys carried out in Tahvel are visible to the person conducting the course. The curriculum **teaching staff work closely together** on the content of the course. Both the English and the Estonian doctoral seminars are conducted by two members of teaching staff, one of whom is the head of the curriculum. The head of the curriculum also coordinates the visiting teaching staff's courses – who to invite, during what period and in what format the course should be conducted – based on the doctoral students' research topics and needs, and the recommendations of other curriculum teaching staff and supervisors. As an important platform for discussing and providing feedback on the content of doctoral studies, bi-annual meetings of the Evaluation Committee are held (see attached minutes). In addition, the head of the curriculum discusses students' progress informally with their supervisors.

The curriculum's teaching staff and researchers **actively collaborate** with various departments of EKA, the humanities departments of Estonian universities and international networks. Every year they participate in the **organisation of summer universities of research councils of Tallinn University and EKA's KVI**. The Personal Research Grant Patterns of Development in Estonian Culture of the Transition Period brings together researchers and doctoral students from three universities, offering various cooperation opportunities for DKT doctoral students (joint seminars and conferences). The DKT curriculum works in close cooperation with the **Estonian Society of Art Historians and Curators**, the leading professional association in Estonia. Together, they organised a celebration of the centenary year of **Estonian Art History 100**, which included lectures by PhD alumni who have defended their doctorates in recent years, helping to introduce their work to a wider audience. The society's journal Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi/Studies on Art and Architecture has been a very important publication venue for both teaching staff and PhD students.

All teaching staff belong to various different **international organisations** according to their specific research interests. DKT teaching staff have been active participants, **including as board members** of the following associations and as editors of publications in their journals: European Architectural History Network (EAHN), Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies (AABS), the European Society for Aesthetics (ESA), Memory Studies Association (MSA), International Association of Research Institutes in the History of Art (RIHA), International Committee for Art History (CIHA), Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO), Böckler-Mare-Balticum Foundation.

Strengths

Internationally well-integrated teaching staff.
Excellent cooperation with other higher education institutions in Estonia.
A well-functioning system for the evaluation of academic staff.
Teaching staff who are passionate about their profession.
Flexibility in the use of different types of researchers and teachers as supervisors.

Areas for improvement

Make better use of the KVI's membership in RIHA.
Even greater visibility internationally.
Better visibility of the doctoral studies website.