Assessment Report

Study programme group of Arts

PhD studies

Estonian Academy Arts

2019

Contents

Introduction

Quality assessment of a study programme group involves the assessment of the conformity of study programmes and the studies and development activities that take place on their basis to legislation, national and international standards and developmental directions with the purpose of providing recommendations to improve the quality of studies.

The goal of quality assessment of a study programme group is supporting the internal evaluation and self-development of the institution of higher education. Quality assessment of study programme groups is not followed by sanctions: expert assessments should be considered recommendations.

Quality assessment of a study programme group takes place at **least once every 7 years based on the regulation approved by EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education** _Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups at the Level of Doctoral Studies_.

The aim of the assessment team was the evaluation of the Study Programme Group (SPG) of Arts at the level of doctoral studies at the Estonian Academy of Arts.

The assessment team was asked to assess the conformity of the study programmes belonging to the study programme group and the instruction provided on the basis thereof to legislation and to national and international standards and/or recommendations, including the assessment of the level of the corresponding theoretical and practical instruction, the research and pedagogical qualification of the teaching staff and research staff, and the sufficiency of resources for the provision of instruction.

The following persons formed the **assessment team**:

Bruce Brown (_Chair of the panel)_	Research Professor, Royal College of Art, London (United Kingdom)
Anna-Mari Almila	Research Fellow in Sociology of Fashion, London College of Fashion, University of the Arts London (United Kingdom)
Ankna Arockiam	PhD student; Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (United Kingdom)
Hans Hellsten	Professor, Quality assurance coordinator for the Faculty of Fine and Performing Arts, Lund university (Sweden)
Laura Lūse	Head of Art Research Department, Rundale Palace Museum (Latvia)
Anu Vehviläinen	Lecturer, DocMus Doctoral School, Sibelius Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki (Finland)

The assessment process was coordinated by Tiia Bach (EKKA).

After the preparation phase, the work of the assessment team in Estonia started on Monday, 3rd of December 2018, with an introduction to the Estonian higher education system as well as the assessment procedure by EKKA, the Estonian quality assurance organization for higher and vocational education. The members of the team agreed the overall questions and areas to discuss with each group at the universities that were assessed. The distribution of tasks between the members of the assessment team was organised and the detailed schedule of the site visits agreed.

During the following days, meetings were held with the representatives of the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre on the 4th of December, and with the representatives of the Estonian Academy of Arts on the 5th and 6th of December. The schedule for discussion on site for each of the various study programmes only allowed for short time slots to be available for team members to exchange information, discuss conclusions and implications for further questions.

On Friday, December 7, the team held an all-day meeting, during which both the structure of the final report was agreed and findings of team meetings were compiled in a first draft of the assessment report. This work was executed in a cooperative way and the members of the team intensively discussed their individual views on the relevant topics.

In the following sections, the assessment team summarise their general findings, conclusions and recommendations which are relevant across the assessed programmes. In so doing, the team provides an external and objective perspective on the programmes and the contexts within which they are delivered. Ultimately, the intention is to provide constructive comment and critique which may form the basis upon which improvements in the quality of the programmes may be achieved.

1. Assessment report on the study programme group of Arts at the Estonian Academy of Arts

1.1.1 Introduction

The Estonian Academy of Arts (EKA) is the only public university in Estonia that provides higher education in architecture, design, fine art and art culture, and it has operated continuously since 1914. The Academy has four faculties – Fine Arts, Architecture, Design, and Art and Culture - that train artists, architects, designers, art historians, art teachers and heritage protection specialists and conservators. Studies are conducted on more than 30 study programmes. Many of the Academy's curricula are the only ones that offer higher education in Estonia, at the bachelor's degree, master's degree or doctoral level.

The study programme group of Arts includes 3 doctoral programmes:

- Art History and Visual Culture – the curriculum is implemented by the Institute of Art History and Visual Culture (KVI).
- Cultural Heritage and Conservation – the curriculum is implemented by the Department of Cultural Heritage and Conservation in the Faculty of Art and Culture.
- Art and Design– curriculum implemented by EKA's Faculty of Fine Arts and Faculty of Design, the responsible unit being the EKA Doctoral School.

The Estonian Academy of Arts is the only university in Estonia with a doctoral programme in the Art and Design curriculum and the Cultural Heritage and Conservation curriculum, and the only university with specialized doctoral study in the Art History and Visual Culture curriculum.

Statistical data about study programmes

Total number of doctoral students, including the number of doctoral students who work in the same university

Curriculum	2013		2014		2015		2016		2017	
	Total	Those working at EKA	Total	Those working at EKA	Total	Those working at EKA	Total	Those working at EKA	Total	Those working at EKA
Art and Design	22	2	19	2	18	2	19	3	18	3
Art History and Visual Culture	18	4	16	3	17	4	15	4	13	5

Cultural Heritage and Conservation	10	2	10	2	12	3	14	3	16	3
Doctoral studies total	**50**	**8**	**47**	**7**	**53**	**9**	**58**	**10**	**57**	**11**

Number of international doctoral students

Curriculum	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Art and Design	3	2	2	2	1
Art History and Visual Culture	0	0	0	0	0
Cultural Heritage and Conservation	2	2	1	1	1
Doctoral studies total	**5**	**4**	**3**	**3**	**2**

Admissions, including the number of those who directly enrolled from the 2nd cycle of studies of the same university

Curriculum	2013/14		2014/15		2015/16		2016/17		2017/18	
	Total	Those continuing at EKA	Total	Those continuing at EKA	Total	Those continuing at EKA	Total	Those continuing at EKA	Total	Those continuing at EKA
Art and Design	2	0	2	0	2	1	2	0	3	1
Art History and Visual Culture	2	0	1	0	2	0	2	0	2	2
Cultural Heritage and Conservation	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	0	2	1
Doctoral studies total	**7**	**1**	**6**	**1**	**8**	**2**	**8**	**0**	**8**	**4**

The number of dropouts, including voluntary withdrawals

Curriculum	2013		2014		2015		2016		2017	
	Total	On student's request	Total	On student's request	Total	On student's request	Total	On student's request	Total	On student's request
Art and Design	0	0	5	0	2	1	1	0	3	0
Art History and Visual Culture	0	0	3	1	1	1	4	0	3	0
Cultural Heritage and Conservation	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Doctoral studies total	**2**	**0**	**9**	**1**	**3**	**2**	**5**	**0**	**6**	**0**

The number of doctoral theses defended, including the number of dissertations defended within the standard period +2 years

Curriculum	2013		2014		2015		2016		2017	
	Total	In 4+2 years	Total	In 4+2 years	Total	In 4+2 years	Total	In 4+2 years	Total	In 4+2 years
Art and Design	1	1	0	0	2	0	1	1	3	1
Art History and Visual Culture	1	0	2	0	0	0	2	1	0	0
Cultural Heritage and Conservation	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Doctoral studies total	**3**	**1**	**2**	**0**	**2**	**0**	**3**	**2**	**3**	**1**

International mobility of doctoral students
(long-term mobility, i.e. spending at least three months or the whole semester abroad, based on the attestation reports)

Curriculum	2013/14		2014/15		2015/16		2016/17		2017/18	
	PhD students	Mobility	PhD students	Mobility	PhD students	Mobility	PhD students	Mobility	PhD students	Mobility
Art and Design	22	2	19	0	18	1	19	0	18	0
Art History and Visual Culture	18	1	16	0	17	1	15	1	13	0
Cultural Heritage and Conservation	10	1	10	0	12	1	14	1	16	0
Doctoral studies total	**50**	**4**	**47**	**0**	**53**	**3**	**58**	**2**	**57**	**0**

Statistical data is taken from the Self-Evaluation Report of the Academy.

1.1.2 General findings and recommendations at study programme group level

In exercising its professional judgment the Assessment Committee concluded that the Arts Study Programme Group at the Estonian Academy of Arts had met the requirements for all of the standards set out for doctoral programs in Estonia. In so doing the Academy had also evidenced good practice in some areas as there were others where continuous improvement had either been highlighted in the institution's own Self-Assessment document or had emerged during the assessment visit.

Areas of strength

- Doctoral programmes at the Academy are well established and vibrant with new departures in design (having the potential to directly contribute to national priorities in Estonia) being under consideration. Over the last decade these programmes have been physically disparate due to the fragmentation of the Academy's buildings that were distributed across Tallinn. This assessment visit took place only six months after all parts of the Academy had been consolidated onto a new site that now houses all of its activities under one roof. The committee was impressed, both by these new facilities, and the high level of planning that had underpinned the move so that the prevailing mood in the Academy was one of confidence and optimism.

- Above all, the Academy's move to a coherent site creates the conditions for a new start that can harness some of the opportunities missed during the decade of physical fragmentation and to open up new opportunities — especially where cross subject collaboration, interdisciplinary approaches and common practices that underpin the student experience can be further enhanced and better shared.

- The programmes benefits from the support of a Doctoral School which, in turn, has effective and committed leadership. Additionally, the three curricula Heads bring considerable experience to the School's work. Together they constitute a senior leadership team of considerable experience and expertise.

- There is a broad range of expertise available through supervisors, many of whom are at the forefront of their disciplines within the international context.

- The Doctoral School has developed a strong regulatory framework for its programmes that is made accessible to all students and supervisors through a general handbook. In setting out entitlements and obligations in this way it seeks to ensure that all students are treated equally and fairly. Additionally, the doctoral framework provides a scholarly environment through which all students are helped to achieve their maximum potential.

- There is a strong network of research links with alumnae and employers and with other researchers both in Estonia and abroad. Both students and their supervisors benefit from outward international experiences that expose them to other researchers who are at the forefront of their discipline.

- The academic communities are strong with fresh opportunities provided by the new building for collaboration and co-operation across the specialist disciplines. There is an excellent rapport between the institution, supervisors and doctoral students with good feedback mechanisms that are taken into account.

Areas for continuous enhancement

- Future strategic planning could more systematically consider the contribution of research to the institution's overall academic shape and reputational standing along with its role in both supporting and nourishing the undergraduate curriculum. In this respect, during the assessment visit, it was generally agreed that the critical mass of doctoral research was currently not sufficient to support the range of investment and intellectual infrastructure needed. This is not a question of being big, or being small, but of sufficient size to be efficient in the use of resources along with the capacity to invest in fresh initiatives. More generally, the Academy has all of the potential to be considered an international leader in research in the creative arts and design, amongst other leading research universities, if that were to be its strategy over the next decade or so and grew the critical mass to realise it.

- It is essential that the next generation of researchers are well trained and prepared for the supervision of doctoral students and that supervisory teams are constituted so as to assist this aim. In this respect there are a number of critical issues that emerged during the assessment visit (these being common to many institutions in the creative arts and design). Firstly, it cannot be assumed that an excellent practitioner will, by virtue of this experience, automatically transform into an excellent research supervisor. Secondly, early career researchers need the opportunity to gradually gather experience of

supervision through membership of supervisory teams led by more experienced supervisors. In this respect the institution may consider developing a more systematic approach to the formation of supervisory teams and the training of both current and future supervisors.

- The two doctoral programmes (in *Art and Design* and in *Art History and Visual Culture*) employ different research methodologies. *Art History and Visual Culture*, generally, employs a traditional scholarly model with a deep understanding of the traditions of research rigour being evidenced in textual forms such as monographs and journal papers. The research outputs of *Art and Design* are, generally, in a non-text format (artifacts or systems). They employ different methodological approaches and criteria for the assessment of research rigour. Though a "White Paper" on artistic research is being prepared in collaboration with the Estonian Academy Music and Theatre this was not available to the Assessment Committee and there is still work to be done to establish the defining characteristics of artistic research where the outputs are non-text.

- Current plans to develop research, and a doctoral programme, in the area of design recognise the opportunity to attract high quality international students to this rapidly growing area, globally, as well as to undertake research that may have positive impacts upon society, the economy and the environment. Generally, the Academy's academic delivery of doctoral studies is predominately through a traditional scholarly model of good scholarly research that is, understandably, more inward looking than it is public facing. Consequently, there could be enhancements made in areas of outward facing activities such as, for example:

  o Working more closely with a committed group of employers and alumnae that could be of greater assistance in helping to shape opinions outside the academy concerning the value of arts and design research more broadly within society and the economy.

  o An open access section of the Academy's website could be developed to mount impact case studies showing

  o examples of research that has served to benefit a wide range of communities outside of academia.

- o Doctoral students may benefit from training, when on the program, on how to manage the future impact of their research and how to gather the material needed to evidence this.

- More opportunities to diversify financial support for doctoral studies could be explored. Whereas Estonian state funding for doctoral studies is the major source of financial support, research grants funded by the EU Horizon 2020 program, for example, can incorporate doctoral scholarships and so bring additional funding. Such grant applications would also require the inclusion of a research impact plan as mentioned above. Also, the possibility of recruiting international students (i.e. non-EU) at full cost could be more fully explored.

External Challenges

- The Assessment Committee heard that most doctoral students in Estonia have to undertake other paid work in order to supplement the State's doctoral stipend which is thought to be well below the living wage. This impacts both on their quality of life as well as completion rates and time to completion. The state could explore raising the level of this stipend either through additional funding to support the same number of doctoral stipends or by reducing the number of places to which the existing level of resources is then directed.

- The Assessment Committee heard that Estonia's national indicators for research are based on the assessment of text-based outputs and, therefore, exclude the creative and performing arts and design from research assessment where the outputs are non-text. Furthermore, this removes the possibility of artistic research receiving performance-based research funding. It is now a standard in the international research community to consider artefacts and performances as legitimate outputs where the research component has been made discoverable and accessible in the public domain. Generally, most nations now consider research, innovation and creativity to be key drivers to national prosperity and well-being and this is certainly so in the EU research framework. The Assessment Committee encourages the Estonian research councils and/or relevant government agencies to consider extending the assessment of research to include non-text outputs so that a balance between research in the sciences and the arts may help to stimulate the kinds of innovation and interdisciplinarity that are needed to deal with significant social challenges we face. In this respect the Academy's wealth of talent could help to position it as an international leader in the area of research and innovation.

1.1.3 Strengths and areas for improvement of the study programmes by assessment areas

Art and Design (PhD); Art History and Visual Culture (PhD); Cultural Heritage and Conservation (PhD)

Overall

The Assessment Committee concluded that the doctoral programmes in *Art and Design, Art History and Visual Culture*, and *Cultural Heritage and Conservation* at the Estonian Academy of Arts were now located in a new academic environment that provided significant opportunities to develop the strong foundations of excellence already in place and to extend these into fresh departures. In the judgement of the assessment committee the programmes complied with all of the standards set for doctoral programs in Estonia with some areas of excellent practice and others where continuous enhancement was still possible. These areas are highlighted in the following sections for each assessment area. Unless specifically identified with one of the programmes then the comments refer to all programmes alike.

Study programme

Standards

- ✓ The launch and development of the study programme are based on the Standard of Higher Education and other legislation, national strategies, university development plans, the effectiveness of research and development, various analyses (including labour market and feasibility analyses); striving for the best overall programme quality.
- ✓ Doctoral programmes contain at least 70% research, development or other creative work by doctoral students, making the results thereof public in international peer-reviewed research journals or in other ways that have international dimensions.
- ✓ Study programmes incorporate doctoral student participation in conferences and/or other professional activities, and are counted towards completion of the study programme.
- ✓ Doctoral programmes enable doctoral students to acquire leadership and teamwork skills, develop coaching and teaching skills as well as a proficiency in foreign languages at the level needed for successful participation in international working environments.
- ✓ Different components of a doctoral programme form a coherent whole supporting

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> the personal development of each doctoral student.
> ✓ Study programme development takes into account feedback from doctoral
> ✓ students, supervisors, employers, alumni and other stakeholders.

Comments

The doctoral programmes aim to ensure that all students are able to achieve their maximum potential. They are based upon good international practices in terms of supervision and take account of both strategic needs within the Academy and the expectations of professional and community stakeholders outside the Academy.

There is a good understanding of social and economic needs as evidenced by the development of a new programme in design. There is, however, less emphasis on systematically promoting the beneficial impacts of research on society, the economy, culture and the environment when there are significant opportunities to do so. There are open access repositories that help to ensure the outcomes of research may be discoverable and accessible in the public domain.

There are excellent practices for engaging students in the doctoral programmes and the feedback they give is taken into account. Students are involved in the organisation of seminars and take the opportunity to identify and invite eminent speakers and contributors. Through this, and the programmes more broadly, doctoral students are helped to acquire leadership and teamwork skills as well as the experience of working in an international context.

The programmes benefit from experienced leadership and are well managed so that that the student experience is coherent. There are very good feedback mechanisms with students that are permanently built into the administrative infrastructure of the doctoral school. There also is a good relationship with alumnae and employees who hold influential positions in their respective sectors and are supportive of the Academy. More could be made of this commitment and loyalty to help establish the Academy's leadership role and to influence opinion concerning national policies for the creative arts and design. This is especially so if a new programme in design research is to be established so that it delivers the promise to have beneficial impacts in the world outside of academia.

Strengths

- A well established and vibrant academic community.
- New buildings that consolidate all work in one place so offering the opportunities for greater collaboration.
- Experienced senior leadership through the head of the Design School and curricula heads.
- A good academic infrastructure for the doctoral programmes with entitlements and obligations clearly documented.
- The academic priority to ensure that all students are able to achieve their maximum potential.
- Good relationships between the Doctoral School, doctoral students and supervisors with excellent feedback mechanisms that are taken into account.

- A vibrant seminar programme that offers opportunities for students to gain experience in the management of research and exposure to international debates and practices.
- Positive relationships with alumnae and employers, many of whom hold influential positions in sectors outside of academia.

Areas of enhancement and recommendations

- There could be a more systematic approach to developing and promoting the beneficial impacts of research in the creative arts and design outside of the Academy.

- In helping to prepare the next generation of researchers, current doctoral students could be offered workshops on the development of their impact portfolios along with the skills needed to systematically collect the material needed to evidence such impacts.

- The current doctoral programme does not seem to have sufficient of a critical mass to fully realise the intellectual and creative ambitions that drive it and to ensure that available resources are used to maximum effect.

- The good relationships with, and evident support from, alumnae and employers could be used more strategically to help develop policy and strategic debates outside the Academy and to help advance the contribution of research in the creative arts and design so that the Academy is recognised as a leader.

- The degree to which the intellectual and reputational strengths of the doctoral programme may be central to the Academy's reputation as a leading international research institution could be more fully considered within a ten-year planning cycle.

Resources

Standards

- ✓ In conducting doctoral study programmes, an adequate number of teaching staff and researchers participate, who hold the appropriate qualifications required to carry out doctoral studies and supervise doctoral theses in a given study programme.
- ✓ Universities shall ensure that sufficient funds are available to conduct doctoral studies, to provide development activities associated with doctoral studies and research, and to support the professional development of teaching staff and researchers.
- ✓ Resources (teaching, learning and research environments; libraries; resources required for teaching, learning and research) support the achievement of objectives set out in study programmes as well as the actual teaching, learning and research at the level of doctoral studies. Resource development is sustainable.
- ✓ Trends in the numbers of current learners, admitted learners and graduates (by study programme) in doctoral studies under the study programme group during

the last five years indicate sustainability.

Comments

As mentioned in the previous section the move of the Academy to a single site in one complex of buildings is a major achievement that will offer the opportunity for a new start that is built on long-standing academic strengths. Alongside this the intellectual resources held in the library and with supervisors are considerable. Overall, these resources and facilities are amongst the very best.

In terms of the three existing programmes there is sufficient supervisory expertise available (this may need to be reviewed when, and if, a new programme in design is launched) with many of the supervisors being at the forefront of their disciplines. There may, however, be some pressure with the allocation of experienced supervisors and if there are sufficient available. In one instance, the committee noted that a supervisor had no previous completions yet was the sole supervisor — also that this supervisor had a background in art history yet was supervising a predominately practice-based PhD.

Whereas it is important that the next generation of doctoral supervisors are prepared for this work (without having to 'learn on the job') there may be a need to have a strategy for convening supervisory teams to ensure that the lead is always an experienced supervisor with an early career researcher in membership of the team. Also that the balance of expertise between traditional scholarship and practice-based research is appropriate within the supervisory team.

Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that eminent practitioners (in some areas of the creative arts and design) will have the experience that automatically makes them excellent supervisors. This is especially so in areas of design where the high demands of professional practice are not always co-terminus with the types of intellectual rigour to be fostered through a programme of doctoral research. In this respect it may be helpful if the Doctoral School were to consider a process for the formal approval and configuration of supervisory teams so that early career researchers and those based in professional practice have the opportunity to gain experience of doctoral research from an experienced lead supervisor.

The doctoral programmes have sufficient funds to ensure their sustainability. However, together, they may not have sufficient critical mass to ensure that academic environment can be advanced and sufficient supervisory and intellectual expertise is available. Here, the Academy could consider other streams of funding such as EU research grants that include doctoral scholarships and/or the recruitment of international students (i.e. non EU) at full cost. The latter is a particular opportunity in the area of design which is a rapidly growing area internationally.

Strengths

- A coherent academic environment in new and refurbished buildings where physical and intellectual resources and the library are outstanding.

- There is a good range of supervisors, many of who are at the forefront of their discipline internationally.
- The doctoral programmes have sufficient resources to ensure their sustainability.

Areas of enhancement and recommendations

- The preparation of early career academics to develop as doctoral supervisors could be more strategically managed to ensure they are prepared for this work through inclusion on supervisory teams led by an experienced supervisor.
- Greater oversight on the formation and approval of supervisory teams through the Doctoral School would ensure appropriate expertise and disciplinary range, especially between practice-based areas and other forms of traditional scholarship.
- Growing the critical mass of doctoral research could be explored through other streams of funding through research grants that have scholarships built in (EU) and the recruitment of international doctoral students (non-EU) for full cost.

Teaching, learning, research and/or creative activity

Standards

- ✓ Uniform principles, based on best international practices and agreed upon at the university level, shall be followed while implementing doctoral programmes and assuring the quality of the doctoral studies (including supervision of doctoral theses).
- ✓ Doctoral studies support students' personal and social development, including creating an environment which will prepare them to successfully participate in international working environments at research and development institutions, as well as in the business and public sectors.
- ✓ Supervision of doctoral theses; modern methodology used in teaching and research; organisation of studies; and doctoral students' professional research, development and/or other creative activities all support achievement of the objectives and learning outcomes of doctoral studies.
- ✓ Assessment of outcomes of the learning, research and creative work done by doctoral students is relevant, transparent and objective, and supports the development of doctoral students.
- ✓ Doctoral students are asked for feedback regarding supervision on a regular basis and the results of these surveys are taken into account for quality improvement activities.
- ✓ Effectiveness of the doctoral studies is analysed and such analyses serve as a basis for planning quality improvement activities.

Comments

The Academy and the Doctoral School are well connected to, and conversant with, international practices for doctoral supervision. The assessment committee heard that the Academy was in collaboration with the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre on the production of a 'White Paper' addressing the characteristics of research in the creative and performing arts and design. Though this White Paper was not available for the visit it nevertheless was clear to the assessment committee that the clarification of methodologies between traditional forms of research scholarship and areas of practice-based research, such as design, do need further clarification and development for them to fully mature.

Indeed, the Academy has developed considerable strengths in areas of traditional research scholarship (e.g. forms of historiographical research where the outcomes are textual in form and underpinned by a clear understanding of academic rigour). Alongside this the defining characteristics of practice-based research in the creative arts and design are still being clarified so that to be rigorous and scholarly in these disciplines does not mean that they have to ape the science model or the more traditional humanities that readily accommodate history and conservation. Furthermore, it is important that, within the national infrastructure for research, the case is made for non-textual research outputs so they become accepted within framework for research assessment and grant applications.

This is, of course, a current topic of international debate in which it may not be productive for the Academy to try and 'reinvent the wheel' but rather to connect with those institutions/organisations on top of this debate internationally. This is especially so if a new programme in design is to be launched where there has been much activity over the last decade in terms of developing design research and doctoral supervision. The excellent connections that the Academy has already built with overseas institutions could be used to facilitate this work.

The Doctoral School operates an excellent framework for quality assurance with good feedback mechanisms and a process for reflective analysis. There is direct input from doctoral students on the quality of their experience with some evidence that this had led to changes or modifications where it was agreed there was a need. The School may wish to consider refining the quality assurance process so it is less opaque and based on annual reflections that can more frequently identify, successes, areas for correction and enhancement and then track progress on these.

The excellent seminar programme exposes doctoral students to quality academic debates so helping them to prepare for research in an international environment. Whereas the focus is, naturally, on the debates of scholarly research and advanced knowledge in a specialist discipline there appears to be less emphasis placed on the role of a PhD as helping each student to build the intellectual scaffolding that will help them deal with complexities over a sustained period in a changing world. Though this does happen as a by-product there could nevertheless be a more systematic emphasis on the PhD as a rigorous training of the mind as well as it being an exposure to advanced knowledge in a specialist disciple. Students reported this to be a valuable part of their experience on the doctoral programmes and an important

transferable skill upon graduation. The School may also wish to consider the provision of training for supervisors that helps to embed good pedagogic practices for the development of each student as an independent learner.

Students suggested they would benefit from training that helped them with the bridge between study and work. Also, that the opportunity to have training in the management of the impact of research, how to write research grant proposals that included an impact plan, and the skills needed to collect evidence of impact would be valuable.

Strengths

- The driving principle that all doctoral students will be helped to achieve their maximum potential.
- High quality research supervision that is well embedded in traditional scholarly areas and has continuous development for more recent areas of research in practice-based disciplines.
- There is a good relationship between students and supervisors with students, overall, expressing satisfaction at the amount of supervisory time they received each year.
- Well connected to the international research community with knowledge of current debates concerning best practices for research in the creative arts and design.
- Long standing strengths in areas of text-based traditional research scholarship with plans to advance the debate concerning non-text outputs in disciplines such as design and visual fine arts.
- There is a good system in place for quality assurance in which student feedback is an essential part and is acted upon.
- Excellent seminar programme that exposes students to the international research environment and provides opportunities to acquire organisational skills.

Areas of enhancement and recommendations

- Clarification of the defining characteristics of research scholarship and intellectual rigour in practice-based areas where the outputs may be non-text (e.g. the 'White Paper').
- Ensure that the above characteristics for practice-based areas are clearly articulated in, for example, entry and assessment criteria.
- Ensure that academics whose professional life is embedded in practice-based areas are supported into their role as supervisors so that the rigour and scholarship expected of research in a doctoral programme is sustained.
- Consider support for academic training that is focussed on the pedagogic principles that will help each student to build their own intellectual scaffolding sufficient to help them deal with major complexities in professional life. Also that this 'training of the mind' forms part of the student experience alongside engagement with the advanced knowledge of the specialist discipline in which they are based.
- Where doctoral students have not yet been embedded in some sector outside of academia the opportunity for guidance on the bridge between academic research and professional practice.

- The Doctoral School may wish to consider developing a strategy for enhancing awareness and skill in managing the translation of research into areas of society and business where it can have a maximum impact for the better.

Teaching staff

Standards

- ✓ Teaching staff participate in research, development and/or creative activity at the level of and to the extent sufficient to conduct doctoral studies in the curriculum group and to supervise doctoral theses.
- ✓ Teaching staff develop their supervisory competences and share best practices with one other.
- ✓ Teaching staff collaborate in fields of teaching, research and creative work within the university and also with stakeholders outside the university (public sector organisations, enterprises, other research and development institutions).
- ✓ Teaching staff further their skills at foreign universities or other research institutions, participate in international research and creative projects, and present papers at high-level conferences.
- ✓ Qualified international and visiting teaching staff are involved in conducting doctoral studies, participating in doctoral thesis defence panels and/or reviewing doctoral theses.
- ✓ When assessing the work of teaching staff (including their evaluations), the effectiveness of their teaching as well as of their research, development and creative works is taken into account; including the effectiveness of their student supervision, development of their teaching and supervisory skills, and their international mobility.

Comments

Academic staff are fully involved in areas of research and/or professional practice that are directly related to their disciplines and they sustain good international contacts with other research departments and with individual researchers. The programme of international visiting academics is very strong and well organised.

Many of the academic supervisors are at the forefront of their respective disciplines and have excellent networks within the international research community. The majority of supervisors have sufficient expertise and experience to undertake supervision at doctoral level. Two areas where the committee would recommend that the Doctoral School gives further consideration in terms of support and training, are with early career academics, who are in the process of developing their research competencies, and professional practitioners who have been, or continue to be, based in another sector for the larger part of their employment.

Previously, the fragmentation of the Academy across a number of sites, for over a decade, had made it difficult for academics to share their experiences and good practices concerning doctoral supervision and research. Now, on a single site, there is an opportunity for greater collaboration and partnership between the

disciplines in order to enhance the framework for doctoral studies. Whereas there is considerable scholarly depth within each of the disciplines their relative isolation from each other has meant that horizontal relationships between them has been difficult to sustain. Therefore, there has been less cross disciplinary research and sharing of good practice than one might have expected though this has now been made possible by the consolidation of all disciplines onto one site.

Whereas the institution does have an interest in academic pedagogy at the undergraduate level this has yet to be systematically developed at doctoral level where the skills needed to support students as autonomous learners and proto-researchers are quite specialised, bringing a different sets of requirements. This is particularly so in the practice-based areas where is still a need for greater clarity between advanced practice and rigorous research.

The assessment committee heard that professors were reviewed on a five yearly cycle with account being taking of their doctoral supervisions and doctoral completions. This seems to be a retrospective review that does not, by its nature, identify issues prior to the commencement of supervision or at an early stage. Nor is it clear how supervisors who are not professors are included in this process. Taking this into account the committee would recommend that the Academy considers separating this five year performance review of an individual from an annual review of the programmes where any matters needing attention may be identified at an early stage.

Strengths

- A strong community of academic supervisors, many of whom are at the forefront of their disciplines internationally.
- There is a good network of academic links with international research departments and individual researchers.
- The programme of visiting academics is excellent.
- There is considerable scholarly depth within each of the specialist disciplines.

Areas of enhancement and recommendations

- Consider creating further opportunities for the sharing of good practices between disciplines/departments and enhancing the opportunities for cross disciplinary collaboration.
- Consider further support and training for early career researchers with little experience of doctoral supervision and for academics for whom the majority of their experience has been, or continues to be, based in professional practice.
- Consider the development of pedagogic workshops specifically directed at the expertise needed to support higher degrees. Here the development of doctoral students as autonomous learners having the intellectual scaffolding to support a lifetime career is of primary importance.
- Ensure that the quality assurance process operates on an annual cycle in order to identify and respond to issues as they emerge rather than wholly relying on a five year cycle.

Doctoral students

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Standards

- ✓ When admitting students to doctoral study, their suitability for successful completion of their studies is assessed on the basis of transparent criteria.
- ✓ Doctoral students plan their studies as well as research and development activities in collaboration with their supervisor(s), setting out specific objectives for each year and taking responsibility for achieving these objectives.
- ✓ Evaluation of doctoral students is transparent and impartial. Its purpose is to support development of the doctoral students, provide an opinion regarding the effectiveness of their work to date, and assess their capabilities to complete their studies on time and successfully defend their doctoral theses.
- ✓ Universities offer doctoral students counselling on completing their studies and planning their further careers.
- ✓ Doctoral students' extracurricular teaching, research and/or creative activities or other work-related activities at the university support successful completion of their doctoral studies.
- ✓ Doctoral students participate in international mobility programmes or take advantage of other opportunities for learning or research at foreign universities and/or research and development institutions[1].
- ✓ Alumni are regularly asked for feedback on the quality of the doctoral study, and employers are asked for feedback on the preparation of the graduates.

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Comments

There is a vibrant community of doctoral students who are appreciative of the support they receive from the doctoral school and their supervisors. The consolidation of all doctoral programmes onto one site should create new opportunities to keep building the academic community. Students also have access to an excellent international mobility programme that is effectively managed

The process for admitting doctoral students is clearly set out and well understood. There may be a need to review this in areas of practice-based research and especially if a new programme in design is launched. Students with their supervisors plan annual work schedules and objectives. This approach is relatively informal and intimate and, where it works well, is very effective. The assessment committee heard that students felt that the engagement of supervisors could be variable. Mostly there was considerable support from supervisors throughout the learning process whereas some were said to only engage at the point of attestation where criticism at a late stage was very difficult to deal with. Having noted these observations the assessment committee felt that the allocation and delivery of supervisory hours may need to be reviewed and that the learning agreement for each student's annual work plan could clarify this expectation if not already doing so.

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[1] In the context of this document, 'research and development institutions' denote both research institutions and research-intensive companies.

Many of the doctoral students enter their programme with substantial existing experience of professional practice. Indeed, some students are maintaining excellent professional careers while, at the same time, studying for a doctorate in the Academy. For other students without such experience there was a desire for some further training that would facilitate the bridge between doctoral research and professional practice. Many of the students also expressed the view that they would appreciate some training that could help prepare them to manage the impact of their future work and/or research on communities outside the university. This includes the skills needed to collect the materials and date that could evidence impact as well as the ability to write impact plans for grant proposals.

There is a good range of extra curricular activities that students can engage with and these should be easier to manage from a single site academy. Work placements are also available though there is some concern that such activities extend the time to completion. Alumnae are sent a questionnaire at the end of each year; however, both alumnae and employers could be more fully engaged with the programmes as their strong commitment and willingness to engage was evident.

Strengths

- There is a vibrant community of doctoral students.
- The consolidation of all doctoral programmes onto one site should create new opportunities to keep building the academic community.
- There is an excellent international mobility programme that is effectively managed.
- Overall, there are good working relationships between doctoral students and their supervisors of whom many give more than the annual entitlement to supervisory hours.
- Many of the doctoral students enter the programme with substantial existing experience of professional practice.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular activities and work placements that students can engage with.

Areas of enhancement and recommendations

- In practice-based research (e.g. creative arts and design), keep under review the criteria for admission and assessment. Articulate these criteria clearly so that all supervisors apply them consistently and equally.
- Given that the work is heavily student-directed the committee would recommend that some form of 'learning agreement' is approved annually and lodged in the Doctoral School so that all parties are clear on expectations and obligations each year.
- Ensure that the loading of supervisory hours between supervisors does not advantage or disadvantage any doctoral student.
- Consider offering support and training on the bridge between research study and professional practice as well as managing the impact of research on communities outside of the academy.

- Consider opportunities to more fully engage alumnae and employers in the development of doctoral programmes and promoting the Academy's good reputation, and strategic leadership in the arts and design, both at home and abroad.