

## Arts Study Programme Group assessment decision Pallas University of Applied Sciences

**02/02/2018**

**The Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA) decided to approve the report of the Assessment Committee and to carry out the next quality assessment of the first level of higher education of the Arts Study Programme Group of Pallas University of Applied Sciences in seven years.**

Pursuant to clause 41.1 of the document “Quality Assessment of the Study programme Group at the First and Second Levels of Higher Education” established on the basis of the authorization contained in § 21<sup>1</sup> (2) of the Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act, § 10 (4) of the University Act and clauses 3.7.3 and 3.7.1 of the Statutes of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education, the Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (hereinafter the Council) states the following:

1. Pallas University of Applied Sciences coordinated the quality assessment period of the study programme group with EKKA on 15.11.2016.
2. The Director of EKKA approved with the order of 27.09.2017 the quality assessment committee (hereinafter committee) for the first and second levels of higher education of the Arts Study programme Group of the University of Tartu, Tallinn University and Pallas University of Applied Sciences and the Health Care Study programme Group of Tallinn University, in the following composition:

<b>Mark Dunhill</b>	Chairman of the Committee, University of Arts London (UK)
<b>Hanke Leeuw</b>	University of the Arts Utrecht (Holland)
<b>Kari Bjørgo Johnsen</b>	University of Bergen (Norra)
<b>Barbara Ābele</b>	Art Academy of Latvia (Latvia)
<b>Tom McGorrian</b>	Middlesex University London (Great Britain)
<b>Žilvinas Lilas</b>	Academy of Media Arts Cologne (Germany)
<b>Andres Tali</b>	Freelance artist (Estonia)
<b>Clara van Wijk</b>	VU University Amsterdam, The Netherlands
<b>Kristīne Mārtinsone</b>	Rīga Stradiņš University

3. Pallas University of Applied Sciences submitted the following curricula for assessment in the Arts Study programme Group:

**Painting and Restoration (professional higher education)**

**Textiles (professional higher education)**  
**Sculpture (professional higher education)**  
**Furniture Design and Restoration (professional higher education)**  
**Leather Design and Restoration (professional higher education)**  
**Photography (professional higher education)**  
**Media and Advertising Design (professional higher education)**

4. Pallas University of Applied Sciences submitted a self-analysis report to the EKKA office on 6.09.2017, which was sent to the committee by the assessment coordinator on 20.09.2017.
5. The evaluation visit to Pallas University of Applied Sciences took place on 16.11.2017.
6. The Committee sent the draft assessment report to the EKKA office on 10.01.2018, which EKKA forwarded to the institution of higher education for comment on 10.01.2018 and to which Pallas University of Applied Sciences submitted a reply on 19.01.2018.
7. The Committee submitted the final assessment report to the EKKA office on 22.01.2018. The assessment report is an integral part of the decision. The report is available on the EKKA website.
8. The Secretary of the Assessment Council forwarded the final assessment report and self-analysis report to the members of the Assessment Council on 22.01.2018.
9. The Assessment Council discussed the received documents at the meeting of 02.02.2018 with the participation of nine members and decided to highlight the following strengths, recommendations, and areas for improvement concerning the first and second levels of higher education of the Arts Study Programme Group of Pallas University of Applied Sciences.

### **General recommendations of the Committee regarding the Arts Study Programme Group at the University of Tartu, Tallinn University and Pallas University of Applied Sciences**

- 1) It is recommended to conduct a review of arts, crafts, and design curricula at the national level in order to better understand the connections between the four main art education providers in Estonia. This would allow each institution of higher education to share its best practices and better understand how the choice of curricula on offer contributes to a holistic and balanced approach to the fields of study in the higher education sector.
- 2) Due to the low competition for academic positions, lecturers' salaries should be critically reviewed and, if necessary, increased in order to recruit qualified and experienced international talents to higher education institutions.
- 3) Given that entrepreneurship education is a relatively recent addition to the curricula, the Assessment Committee recommends that educational institutions compare their results so far in order to share experiences and consolidate existing practices. As cultural entrepreneurship is an important prerequisite for creating new public platforms for arts and cultural activities, other educational institutions, such as EBS, could be involved.

### **Study Programme Group strengths**

- 1) Students, teachers, and employers feel that their opinions and suggestions are valued and taken into account.

- 2) Curricula remain modern thanks to close direct contact with partners and dedicated, practicing professional lecturers. Students' exposure to high-level technology, both on-site and in internship placements, is also beneficial.
- 3) The structure and content of curricula are coherent, relevant, and flexible, and allow the intended learning outcomes to be well achieved.
- 4) Continuing education programs are well integrated into the learning environment and form an important part.
- 5) Study programme development and feedback mechanisms are effective and systematic. Study programme development involves non-university professionals and employers through study programme councils and takes into account formal requirements, professional standards, societal needs, and a modern approach to learning and teaching.
- 6) Supporting students is at the heart of management and faculty. Regular personal contact ensures successful communication and allows the provision for comprehensive feedback effectively.
- 7) As far as possible, all study buildings of Pallas University of Applied Sciences are equipped with ramps and wheelchair accessible lifts and toilets and are therefore accessible to people with special needs.
- 8) Pallas University of Applied Sciences maintains the well-known Gallery Noorus in Tartu, where university students and lecturers can exhibit their works.
- 9) Thanks to close links with partners, practitioners, and local cultural traditions, the curricula have strong support from the local community.

### **Areas for improvement and recommendations related to the Study Programme Group**

- 1) The study modules should continue to broaden the treatment of contemporary art and design theories in order to raise the theoretical and contextual level of studies. To this end, more suitably qualified external experts should be involved in teaching.
- 2) It is not clear from the rules governing the activities of study programme councils how many of their members are selected from among non-university experts and employers and how the selection process takes place (whether candidates are invited or nominated, etc.). It is recommended to involve non-university members in study programme councils to the extent of at least 50%.
- 3) Pallas University of Applied Sciences would be able to take a leading role in developing new hybrid curricula that combine contemporary art and design practices. This would help strengthen the position of Pallas University of Applied Sciences in the field of higher art and design education and diversify its offer in Estonia. In addition, it is desirable to develop new curricula/modules to guide students to discover interdisciplinary (or even transdisciplinary) disciplines.
- 4) It is advisable to ask students for feedback in a more formal and structured way in order to get a longer-term overview of their opinions and suggestions.
- 5) It would be advisable to strengthen cooperation with the Tartu Center for Creative Industries within the framework of entrepreneurship education.
- 6) Internships in the professional industry could be better linked to teaching. The share of internships in the Photography Study programme could be strengthened.
- 7) The university would benefit from greater internationalization, and to achieve this, an English-language professional higher education study programme could be opened, combining relevant aspects of different curricula (e.g., Media and Advertising Design) into a transdisciplinary whole.

**PAINTING AND RESTORATION (PHE), TEXTILES (PHE), SCULPTURE (PHE), FURNITURE DESIGN AND RESTORATION (PHE), LEATHER DESIGN AND RESTORATION (PHE)**

#### **Strengths**

- 1) The curricula of Pallas University of Applied Sciences are clearly structured and interconnected, offering high-level specializations in art, design, and conservation/restoration.
- 2) It is impressive that within three years of graduation, 80-90% of the graduates of Pallas University of Applied Sciences will find work in their chosen field. These statistics show that the right balance between practical and creative skills, research-based academic knowledge and work-based and entrepreneurial learning provides students with sufficient challenges in the learning process and prepares them well for the labor market. Employers are very satisfied with the motivation of graduates and their practical and theoretical competencies.
- 3) In all departments, students have the opportunity to work with modern technologies and materials. The workshops are open to students even after the official end of studies.
- 4) Income from foreign projects is used effectively to supplement the resources of the university.
- 5) The international dimension in the curricula is combined with national and regional needs, which are highly valued by students.
- 6) Students are encouraged to initiate foreign exchanges and to actively participate in internships, extracurricular projects, and commissions.
- 7) The high-quality study environment of the university creates an atmosphere of cooperation that promotes learning from each other.
- 8) Younger lecturers who have a clear understanding of the broader context of their subjects and modern teaching methods have recently been recruited for the curricula.
- 9) The intense competition for admission allows the selection of the most talented and motivated students for the curricula of Pallas University of Applied Sciences, which helps to maintain the reputation of the higher education institution and the quality of education offered.
- 10) Students are offered comprehensive support in participating in foreign exchanges and mobility programs, and lecturers also go on internships abroad.

#### **Areas for improvement and recommendations**

- 1) Study programme development takes place in accordance with the development plan, which mainly contains quantitative quality criteria. This can be interpreted as an instrumental approach to higher arts education (which is probably not the intention). It is advisable to consider the possibility of developing appropriate qualitative criteria as well.
- 2) General subjects should be reviewed to ensure that all lecturers have a common understanding of the aims and content of the theory modules and of the contemporary context in which they shape students' critical thinking.
- 3) The assessment process should be made more transparent, with a clear distinction between formative and summative assessment. Assessment criteria should be based on learning outcomes and be publicly available to all. At present, student assessment is based too much on oral feedback - it is also advisable to give students more formal written feedback, which would allow them to analyze their strengths and weaknesses even after assessment.
- 4) Cooperation between different departments should be improved in order to provide students with more opportunities for inter- and transdisciplinary learning.
- 5) The content of the modules on entrepreneurship and professional practice should be further developed and increased in curricula.
- 6) It is recommended that the curricula study and follow the example of professional developments at the international level (including other foreign higher education institutions) that expand the concept of traditional applied arts and crafts, such as spatial design, surface design, bio-textiles, art and science or art cultures.
- 7) It is recommended to develop a broader understanding of modern teaching methods in higher education in curricula.

- 8) There should be a public debate on how to make learning more science-based, both at university and at the departmental level.
- 9) It is recommended to involve more international visiting lecturers in teaching.

## **PHOTOGRAPHY (PHE), MEDIA AND ADVERTISING DESIGN (PHE)**

### **Strengths**

- 1) The curricula have a clear link with local cultural institutions and the labor market, and they correspond to the country's main economic and cultural priorities.
- 2) The curricula meet the needs of employers and also prepare students for an independent career as an artist as well as for continuing their studies at the Master's level.
- 3) The Department of Photography has a partnership with a company that allows students to use the necessary equipment (e.g., camera equipment) for free for two weeks, provided they later write a relevant product review. Thus, the scarcity of funds has been approached creatively.
- 4) The workshops are well equipped, and students have the right to use them for side projects or personal work. Existing resources allow students to practice working with new technologies and materials.
- 5) The practical training is of a very good standard. Students learn to work with a variety of devices and media and gain valuable experience through custom projects. Last year's students collaborate with non-university employers and the community on project work.
- 6) Assessment methods are introduced to students at the beginning of each academic year. According to the students, the assessment is fair and transparent.
- 7) The lecturers have very good connections with the professional industry and media practice.
- 8) Alumni are involved in teaching as visiting lecturers.
- 9) Students are highly motivated and committed to the university and the studies. Students appreciate the friendly learning environment prevalent in the university, as well as good access to learning resources. According to employers, graduates of Pallas University of Applied Sciences are motivated, professional, well-skilled, flexible, creative, and are familiar with new technologies.

### **Areas for improvement and recommendations**

- 1) As the Media and Advertising Design Study programme deals extensively with film and video, there is a risk of being overshadowed by BFM curricula that completely and deeply deal with film and television topics. The Media and Advertising Design Study programme could further address new media, such as composite and virtual reality and 3D design, and the implementation of the latter two on interactive platforms, such as Unity 3D and/or UnrealEngine. It could also delve into other interactive platforms (such as Arduino or LilyPad, which combines interactive media and textiles), real-time image processing (VVVV, MaxMSP, etc.) and audio, the latter of which is currently represented in the study programme with only one 3-credit point subject.
- 2) The learning process would benefit from giving students unrestricted access to at least some studios where they could work on their projects without interruption.
- 3) According to students, stricter rules could be established for participation in studies. At present, participation in studies is not compulsory, and the lack of a "critical mass" of students can lead to problems in studies.
- 4) The content of curricula could pay more attention to the user experience.
- 5) Clear procedures, criteria, or rules for the involvement of part-time and full-time lecturers in R&D should be developed.

10. Clause 41 of the document “Quality Assessment of the Study Programme Group at the First and Second Levels of Higher Education” stipulates that the Assessment Council shall approve the assessment report within three months after its receipt. The Council will consider the strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations identified by the Assessment Committee and decide to carry out the next quality assessment of the study programme group in three, five, or seven years.
  
11. The Council considered the strengths, areas for improvement and recommendations set out in clause 9 and found that the study programme, the studies provided on it and the development activities related to the studies meet the requirements and:

#### **DECIDED**

**To approve the assessment report and to carry out the next assessment of the quality of the first level of higher education of the Arts Study Programme Group of Pallas University of Applied Sciences in seven years.**

The decision was adopted by nine votes in favor. None opposed.

12. The Assessment Council proposes to Pallas University of Applied Sciences to submit to EKKA no later than 02.02.2019 an action plan on taking into account the areas for improvement and recommendations presented in the report.
  
13. A person who considers that the decision has violated his or her rights or restricted his or her freedoms may file a challenge with the Assessment Council of EKKA within thirty (30) days after the appellant became aware of or should have become aware of the contested act.

The Assessment Council shall send the challenge to the challenge committee of the Assessment Council of EKKA, which shall submit a written, impartial opinion to the Assessment Council on the reasoning of the challenge within five (5) days of receipt of the challenge. The Assessment Council shall resolve the challenge within ten (10) days of receipt, taking into account the reasoned position of the appeal committee. If the challenge needs to be further investigated, the Assessment Council may extend the term for reviewing the challenge by up to thirty (30) days.

Contestation of a decision in court is possible within thirty (30) days as of its service by submitting an appeal to the Tallinn Courthouse of the Tallinn Administrative Court pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Administrative Court Procedure Act.

**Tõnu Meidla**  
**Head of the Council**

**Hillar Bauman**  
**Secretary of the Council**