

Arts Study Programme Group assessment decision Tallinn University

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 and second levels of higher education of the Arts Study programme Group of Tallinn University 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 § 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. Tallinn University 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 level 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:

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

3. Tallinn University submitted the following curricula for assessment in the Arts Study Programme Group:

Craft technologies and design (professional higher education)

Integrated Technologies and Crafts (Bachelor's Study)

Film Art (professional higher education)

Audiovisual Media (English as a language of instruction, Bachelor's study)

Audiovisual Media (English as a language of instruction, Master's study)

Audiovisual Media: Television/Documentary (English as a language of instruction, Master's study)

Integrated Arts, Music and Multimedia (Bachelor's study)

Cross-media in Film and Television (Bachelor's study)

Television: Directing, Editing, and Production (Master's study)

Contemporary Media (Master's study)

4. Tallinn University submitted a self-analysis report to the EKKA office on 15.09.2017, which was sent to the Committee by the assessment coordinator on 20.09.2017.
5. The assessment visit to Tallinn University took place on 14. – 15.11.2017.
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 Tallinn University 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 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 Tallinn University.

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) Curricula related to teacher training needs to be reviewed in order to train inspired, energetic and motivated teachers with modern art and design knowledge and skills, including digital media skills. Opportunities for collaboration with partner institutions in various fields could also be explored. It is important that teachers are able to inspire more graduates to pursue higher education in creative disciplines related to the evolving modern global creative industry.
- 3) 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.

- 4) 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.
- 5) It should be analyzed how the research and creative work trends of institutions of higher education coincide with the development of creative research in internationally recognized art colleges.

Strengths of the Arts Study Programme Group of Tallinn University

- 1) The university's student-centered support systems (incl., SIS, e-learning environment, and student counseling service) work effectively.
- 2) Students have good, sometimes even great, opportunities to participate in real projects and internship placements as part of their studies. These opportunities are supported by addressing entrepreneurship as a concrete and important part of the study programme, which is valued by both students and employers.
- 3) The introductory study module "Academic Learning and Expression Skills" introduces students to the university and provides them with useful tips for making the most of existing study resources.

Areas for improvement and recommendations related to the Arts Study Programme Group of Tallinn University

- 1) There is no clear distinction between formative and summative assessments in the assessment process. There is also some uncertainty for some teachers about the application of formal assessment criteria for creative work. At present, assessment is often oral - it would be advisable to give students written feedback on their progress, including tips on how to improve the quality of their work. It would be advisable to set up a lecturers' forum where they could discuss assessment issues with colleagues.
- 2) In the case of BFM, a strategic plan should be developed that describes the differences and relationships between the different curricula. In the case of Craft Technologies and Design and Integrated Technologies and Craft curricula, the definitions of "craft" and "integrated craft" should be clarified so that students (including international students) clearly understand the difference between the two and what learning one or the other actually means. As the curricula of the Arts Study programme Group are located in different departments, general management is lacking at the level of the study programme group as a whole.
- 3) Dropouts should be addressed. Although dropout rates vary from study programme to study programme, it would be useful to develop dynamic learning communities in which fellow students can support each other's individual learning outcomes. The study programme "Craft Technologies and Design" has been successfully developed in this direction, thus being a potentially good example for other curricula as well.
- 4) Student participation in Erasmus mobility is low. It is recommended to also offer students who are involved in other responsibilities in Estonia shorter-term mobility opportunities.

CRAFT TECHNOLOGIES AND DESIGN (PHE), INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGIES AND CRAFTS (BA)

Strengths

- 1) Students and alumni are satisfied with the choice of the curricula and have a clear idea of the role of modern handicrafts in society.
- 2) Teaching is flexible and student-centered.
- 3) Dedicated and experienced teachers share good practices and have close contact with students. Lecturers also collaborate with external partners and stakeholders. Students, alumni, and partners provide positive feedback on lecturers
- 4) Students, alumni, and partners find that their feedback has been taken into account in planning improvement activities.

Strengths of the Integrated Technologies and Crafts Study programme

- 5) The integration of the previously separate Crafts and Home Economics and Crafts and Technology Education into one study programme is a progressive step, both academically and culturally, offering students a wider range of roles and operating models in both craft and craft teaching.
- 6) The study programme includes relevant state-of-the-art general competencies such as digital literacy, business communication, and teamwork.
- 7) A wide range of electives allows students wide access to other resources and technical equipment of Tallinn University.
- 8) Students value the clear focus of the study programme on the application of practical skills in the context of real, vital projects.
- 9) Students are satisfied with the preparation and support they receive for writing scientific texts, which is directly related to the current practical projects.

Strengths of the Craft Technologies and Design Study programme

- 10) The content of the subject syllabus is very clearly oriented and approaches the subject area holistically. The study programme places a strong emphasis on consumer design and practical craftsmanship in a real, vital context.
- 11) The study programme successfully combines traditional handicrafts with modern technology and business culture.
- 12) The strategic collaboration of the study programme carried out at TU Haapsalu College with regional partners works well, benefiting all parties. A good example is students' socially responsible design projects at a local health center.
- 13) The quality of the learning environment and technical equipment promotes the development of skills and creative practice at a particularly high level.
- 14) The study programme actively encourages cooperation and teamwork, which helps to build group dynamics between students.
- 15) The study programme has an important regional impact, as it is attended by older students who are interested in strengthening their design thinking and entrepreneurial skills through close collaboration with regional companies.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) Methods must be found to reduce dropouts.
- 2) The strategic goal should be the integration of research and creative work and teaching and innovation, which could also open up new opportunities in study programme development.
- 3) The criteria for evaluating creative work should be clarified.

- 4) National and international student mobility should be encouraged and increased. The international dimension of curricula could be extended beyond the Nordic and Baltic regions.
- 5) It is recommended to involve more international visiting lecturers and practitioners in teaching.
- 6) It would be advisable to monitor and measure the progress of alumni in the labor market.
- 7) The volume and duration of internships in real working conditions could be increased.
- 8) In order to increase the interest of entrants in curricula, a stronger emphasis on individual creative practice could be considered.
- 9) The cross-departmental use of university resources should be expanded in order to foster interdisciplinary cooperation habits and thus better prepare students for the labor market.

Areas for improvement and recommendations for the Integrated Technologies and Crafts Study programme

- 10) The name of the study programme should be reconsidered. Although there is a clear desire behind the current title to list all the topics covered, the resulting combination (at least in English) is cumbersome and culturally misleading. For example, the name "*Integrated Crafts and Technologies*" or "*Domestic Crafts and Technologies*" could be considered. In general, the Committee recommends reviewing the teacher training part of the study programme to ensure that as flexible and modern as possible approaches to art and design in the basic school study programme. At present, too much attention seems to be focused on traditional crafts and technologies. Although digital media technologies are covered in electives, the Committee recommends that audiovisual media, as a creative field be given a more prominent place in the study programme.
- 11) A challenge that needs careful attention is to recruit students for the Integrated Technologies and Crafts study programme, which is likely to require a major overhaul of the study programme profile. It would also be necessary to further rethink the link between the study programme and the basic school study programme and its impact. A clear vision for the further development of the study programme should be established in cooperation with all stakeholders, especially students. In addition to schools, the skills taught in the study programme could also be applied in various cultural fields, including museums, art centers, galleries, festivals, etc.
- 12) Study programme leaders could consider closer integration of subjects on design thinking, design processes, and methodologies to develop a more comprehensive understanding of design in the context of applied arts. A broader approach to contemporary design theories and practices would be in line with the needs of a rapidly changing labor market and could increase the interest of potential students in this study programme.
- 13) Consideration should be given to broadening the focus of the study programme to include clearer attention to issues of public space comfort, sustainability, and ecology, which would require an alternative experimental learning environment.
- 14) In order to increase the number of entrants, a more lively and inspiring learning environment should be created, and closer contact with the public should be sought by introducing the creative activities taking place in the school through various media. In a more inspiring learning environment, more modern learning can take place, and a more modern understanding of crafts and household skills and technologies can emerge.
- 15) A strategy should be developed to raise additional funding - for example, classrooms could be rented out for community lifelong learning, craft circles, summer schools, etc.

Areas for improvement and recommendations for the Crafts Technologies and Design Study programme

- 16) More detailed information on the structure of the study programme and the content of the study programme could be available to students.
- 17) Consideration could be given to providing access to laboratories and workshops on non-lecture days.
- 18) It would be advisable to share a number of teaching methods and modern expertise developed in the Craft Design and Technology curricula with the Integrated Technology and Craft Study programme.

FILM ART (PHE), AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA (BA and MA WITH ENGLISH AS THE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION), AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA: TELEVISION / DOCUMENTARY FILM (MA WITH ENGLISH AS THE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION), DOCUMENTARY FILM (MA WITH ENGLISH AS THE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION), INTEGRATED ART, MUSIC, AND MULTIMEDIA (BA), CROSS-MEDIA IN FILM AND TELEVISION (BA), TELEVISION: DIRECTING, EDITING, AND PRODUCTION (MA), CONTEMPORARY MEDIA (MA)

Strengths

- 1) The curricula and content of the curricula of the Baltic Film, Media, Arts, and Communication School (BFM) are of a high standard and correspond well to the needs of the modern labor market and the country's economic and cultural priorities.
- 2) Extensive in-service training courses are systematically offered, with many participants from different segments of society.
- 3) Study programme development is flexible, operative, and systematic.
- 4) BFM is closely connected with the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival and the Pärnu Film Festival with a long tradition.
- 5) Students have good access to a wide range of audiovisual equipment (such as cameras and editing equipment), which they are only allowed to use if they have been trained and approved by the lecturers. The studios are of an excellent standard.
- 6) The training is conducted by highly qualified, motivated, and proactive professionals who are receptive to feedback and well versed in the needs of the media industry.
- 7) Students' practical work and learning outcomes (films, cross-media products) are widely presented to the public in the local media and at international film festivals, and their technical and artistic quality is highly valued.
- 8) Learning methods allow students to plan their time flexibly, which in turn helps to reduce dropouts.
- 9) The teaching staff has a good balance of lecturers with creative, research, and teaching backgrounds.
- 10) BFM supports the professional development of teachers by organizing pedagogical training for them and enabling them to participate in conferences, publish articles, compile exhibitions, etc.
- 11) Lecturers participate in international and national mobility.
- 12) Students are highly motivated and committed to learning and BFM.
- 13) Graduates will find work in the media industry. Both employers and alumni are satisfied with the professional, technical, and creative skills of the graduates.
- 14) The strength of the Study programme of Cross-Media in Film and Television is its broad-based nature, which extends from basic transmedia courses to creative thinking, computer games, and virtual reality. The study programme combines all these specializations into a clear conceptual whole. Flexible elective policies foster innovation and transdisciplinary activities.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) Although curricula cover the vast majority of artistic practices in the audiovisual sector, there are some overlaps between these profiles. The constant renaming of curricula, as well as their frequent start-up and closure, are also confusing. It would be useful for the BFM to draw up a strategic plan to systematically monitor and coordinate the various curricula and the relationships between them.
- 2) Internships in the professional industry could be better coordinated with teaching. It would be necessary to set up a formalized mechanism for assessing the skills acquired during the internships.
- 3) It would be advisable to explore further possibilities for participating in international festivals, such as the Sundance Film Festival.
- 4) The Professional Higher Education Study programme for Film Art and the Master's program for Audiovisual Media: Television/Documentary could offer students more electives to enable them to tailor their studies to their personal interests and needs. This would support their creative development and foster transdisciplinarity and innovation. Special electives could also be allocated to individual student projects on a larger scale than before.
- 5) Innovation and designer thinking could be addressed in undergraduate studies, at least as an elective, to support students' problem-solving and creative skills.
- 6) According to the Assessment Committee, the focus of the Audiovisual Media Study programme is too narrow and could cover the field of media more broadly than before.
- 7) The Integrated Bachelor's Program in Art, Music, and Multimedia would benefit from an increase in the study programme from 180 credits to 240, which would mean four years of study instead of three. This would make it possible to allocate 60 additive credit points for an in-depth study of specializations.
- 8) Students are offered practical training in film techniques only within the framework of elective modules in the specialty, the volume of which is just over ten percent of the total volume of credits. In order to deepen students' professional competence, it is recommended to increase the volume of internship-based subjects in curricula.
- 9) The aim of the Master's program Television: Directing, Editing, and Production, according to which the graduate is able to critically evaluate the most important social and cultural processes and media approaches, could also be better reflected in the content of the study modules. For example, it would be desirable to delve deeper into the methodology of critical media (e.g., McLuhan, Kittler, Deleuze) and to introduce students to phenomenology (e.g., Merleau-Ponty) and visual image politics (e.g., Benjamin, Baudrillard).
- 10) About half of the content of the Contemporary Media study programme is directly related to television directing, editing and production, and thus extremely similar to the other Master's program. In the case of the Modern Media study programme, students could be introduced to the media spectrum from a wider angle than before.
- 11) Master's programs should define the paradigm of scientific research and include compulsory research modules in curricula. Master's programs could be linked to an established research network - for example, students' research could be linked to the activities of the TU Center of Excellence in Media Innovation and Digital Culture, as well as to some EU projects to foster interdisciplinary collaboration between lecturers and students.
- 12) BFM is the largest film producer in Estonia - last year, 120 student films were made, whereas in the rest of the Estonian film industry, in the same period, only 60 films were made. In this context, resource allocation and timing will always remain a major challenge. Although there is an improving trend in resource planning, most of the films produced still have problems with budget deficits. The scholarships to be awarded are small and will never be enough for the entire film production process, from scriptwriting to premiere. This problem could be alleviated by

including a co-financing platform such as Hooandja in the financing of all works in the practical module. The university could also provide more support to students in applying for additional funding for film production.

- 13) Partners from local film and media companies should be regularly invited to BFM technical meetings.
- 14) In some places, students would need better guidance in finding internship placements. Managers of internship placement companies should also be better informed about the objectives of the internship.
- 15) It is recommended to develop a system for replacing lecturers who are actively involved in creative processes. As teaching assistants sometimes also play the role of substitute lecturers, their job descriptions should be clarified in this regard.
- 16) International contacts should be strengthened to increase the mobility of Master's students abroad.

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 point 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 and second levels of higher education of the Arts Study Programme Group of Tallinn University in seven years.

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

12. The Assessment Council proposes to Tallinn University 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