

**Assessment decision of the Performing Arts Study
Programme Group
University of Tartu**

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 level of education of the Performing Arts Study Programme Group of the University of Tartu 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. The University of Tartu coordinated the quality assessment period of the study programme group with EKKA on 10.11.2016.
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 Performing Arts Study Programme Group of the University of Tartu, Tallinn University and Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre in the following composition:

Hannu Apajalahti	Chairman of the Commission - Lecturer, Sibelius Academy / University of the Arts Helsinki (Finland)
Gretchen Amussen	Director of External Affairs and International Relations, Paris Conservatoire (France)
Paula Tuovinen	Vice-rector University of the Arts Helsinki (Finland)
Anthony Dean	Dean of Cultural Engagement/Professor of Performing arts, University of Winchester (UK)
Ildikó Sirató	Associate professor, Institute for Literary and Cultural Studies, University of Pannonia (Hungary)
Sue Dunderdale	Director, writer, producer (UK)
Ankna Arockiam	Student; Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (UK)

3. The University of Tartu submitted the following curricula for assessment in the Performing Arts Study Programme Group:

Music (professional higher education)

Folk Music (Master's study; joint study programme with the Estonian Academy of Music and Theater)

Dance Art (professional higher education)

Theatre Art (professional higher education)

Theatre Technical Arts (professional higher education)

4. The University of Tartu submitted a self-analysis report to the EKKA office on 4.08.2017, which was sent to the committee by the assessment coordinator on 8.09.2017.
5. The assessment visit to the University of Tartu took place on 31.10. – 01.11.2017
6. The Committee sent the draft assessment report to the EKKA office on 8.01.2018, which EKKA forwarded to the institution of higher education for comment on 9.01.2018 and to which the University of Tartu 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 eight members and decided to highlight the following strengths, recommendations, and areas for improvement concerning the first and second levels of higher education of the Performing Arts Study Programme Group of the University of Tartu.

The Committee's general recommendations regarding the Performing Arts Study Programme Group at Tallinn University, the University of Tartu and the Estonian Academy of Music and Theater

- 1) Taking into account interviews conducted with teachers, students, alumni, and employers, the Assessment Committee recommends organizing a national (including between different universities) discussion on different roles and goals of music and theater art curricula in the Estonian higher education and cultural landscape at the initiative of professional networks. Consolidation of Estonian folk dance and music curricula could be considered.

Study programme group strengths

- 1) The energetic and proactive management of the Academy has a clear vision for the further integrated development of curricula.
- 2) The renewed structure of the curricula makes it possible to conduct broad-based theoretical and practical studies that support in-depth professional studies.
- 3) The strategy of the Academy is to develop alternative study paths and forms of study that differ from other Estonian higher education institutions, which would offer entrants more choices.

- 4) Mutual respect between the Academy's lecturers, students, alumni, and stakeholders is a good starting point for consistent study programme development. Employers contribute to study programme development in different ways.
- 5) The well-located campus creates a pleasant learning environment for students, which facilitates communication and cooperation between them.
- 6) The Academy has the support of professional theaters and other regional cultural institutions.
- 7) The comprehensive projects organized at the Academy bring together teachers and students from different disciplines and departments.
- 8) The integrated nature of the curricula creates good conditions for collaborative projects and enables students to transition smoothly to professional work.
- 9) The university offers consistent support to teachers in developing their teaching skills.

Areas for improvement and recommendations related to the Study Programme Group

- 1) Management should ensure the smooth operation of the formalized feedback system for students and alumni.
- 2) The continuous maintenance of critical technical resources in terms of teaching should not depend on the resources allocated to the Viljandi Culture Academy at the university level on an annual basis, which may fluctuate from year to year. It would be advisable to provide specifically targeted resources for the continuous updating of equipment.
- 3) The Academy should deal extensively with internationalization (including a review of its language policy) in order to further develop curricula and provide better mobility opportunities for teachers and students.
- 4) There are problems with the technical side of RPL implementation. It is recommended to update the corresponding electronic environment.
- 5) The salaries of lecturers are currently at the UT minimum level, which reduces the Academy's opportunities to involve the best professionals in teaching.
- 6) The Academy should consider ways to open access to curricula to students with special needs.
- 7) It would be advisable to set up a mentoring system between alumni and students of the curricula.
- 8) The system for dealing with confidential complaints could be clarified, and students and teachers should be better informed about its existence.

MUSIC (PHE)

Strengths

- 1) The strength of the study programme is the combination of four branches of music into one study programme and the integration of school music and sound technology modules into the rhythm music module.
- 2) The study programme is flexible and also allows for part-time study.
- 3) Feedback is mandatory at the end of each semester, and small study groups and efficient teaching arrangements facilitate communication between faculty and students. The collected feedback is discussed with the students.
- 4) The study programme develops, among other things, students' digital competencies and entrepreneurial skills and their knowledge of sound technology. Largely internship-based learning provides students with good preparation for professional work.
- 5) The lecturers are professionally active, and a large number of visiting lecturers are involved in the teaching.

- 6) Lecturers are provided with support and training in developing assessment criteria for instrument and ensemble playing.
- 7) Teachers give each other feedback on their studies.
- 8) Many (including recent) alumni who are also creatively active teach at the Academy. It creates an important link between learning and the world of work and helps to keep in touch with former students.
- 9) Lecturers participate in international networks.
- 10) There is a sense of community between students and faculty.
- 11) Students are encouraged to actively participate in student exchanges and share their experiences with others.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) It is not always clear to students how the general subjects of the study programme relate to the objectives of the study programme. It is recommended to make the connection between general subjects and learning objectives clearer.
- 2) The development of lecturers' skills in using e-learning tools and methods must be a priority.
- 3) There are not enough opportunities for foreign mobility for lecturers.
- 4) Lecturers should provide students with regular written feedback on their progress in a harmonized format.
- 5) According to the students, changes are constantly made in the timetable, which makes it difficult for them to plan their time.
- 6) The Academy could guide students to gain practical experience in rental companies and commercial studios.
- 7) Pianos should be regularly maintained and tuned.

FOLK MUSIC (MA), joint study programme with the Estonian Academy of Music and Theater)

Strengths

- 1) Folk music has a strong position in Estonia, and the graduates of the study programme have many job opportunities.
- 2) Cooperation with the partners in the field and international partners is strong.
- 3) As a joint study program, the Master's study program in Folk Music can use the resources, including lecturers, of two higher education institutions. At the same time, lecturers are also active practitioners.
- 4) Students and alumni appreciate the flexibility of teaching. According to the students, it is easy for them to communicate with the lecturers.
- 5) Graduates have a good employment rate and often find work before graduation. Study programme alumni are valued in the job market.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) It would be advisable to re-examine the profile and role of the Folk Music Joint Study programme. To this end, public debate should be held on the role of the folk music study programme in the 21st century.

- 2) It is recommended to study what causes the low attractiveness of the study programme and the consequent significant decrease in the number of entrants and the non-existent admission competition.
- 3) The strong centrality of the Estonian language in the study programme may prove to be an obstacle to cooperation with the international folk music community. The internationalization strategy of the study programme should be more supported at the university level.
- 4) There is insufficient funding to conduct process-based learning and to involve foreign lecturers and artists in teaching.
- 5) The Academy could actively explore what learning and teaching opportunities are offered to lecturers and students through international networks.
- 6) It is recommended to apply RPL also for non-university projects.
- 7) It is advisable to create a platform where alumni and current students can work together.

DANCE ART (PHE)

Strengths

- 1) The Dance Art Study programme benefits from the organic cooperation taking place in the interdisciplinary creative laboratory with other music and theater arts curricula of the Viljandi Culture Academy.
- 2) There is a multimedia center with multifunctional studios and modern technical equipment.
- 3) The study programme has good practice and cooperation opportunities with local schools, communities, and institutions.
- 4) The study programme is taught by dedicated lecturers.
- 5) The cozy study environment allows students to commit to their studies and receive consistent feedback from faculty.
- 6) Creative and collaborative teaching develops students' (self) management and entrepreneurial skills.
- 7) Combining creative and pedagogical courses with dance techniques enables cooperation with many foreign universities.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) The English name of the Dance Art Study programme should be clarified - although the study programme focuses on training dance teachers and dance entrepreneurs, the Academy trains dancers and choreographers who practice contemporary dance. In the title of the study programme, the acquired pedagogical competencies and community work could be combined with its holistic and interdisciplinary nature. For dance teachers, dance creators, and dance entrepreneurs, the English name '*Dancemaker*' could be considered, following the example of several European countries.
- 2) The study programme could place more emphasis on basic techniques and more clearly link dance technical, theoretical, pedagogical, and creative subjects.
- 3) It is recommended to complete the construction of the dance hall and studios with a special floor as soon as possible.
- 4) Study programme development could be more coherent than before. There is currently a large number of small-scale courses in the study programme (such as film analysis and fitness training), the relevance of which is not clear in the context of dance education at the professional higher education level. It is recommended to integrate rhythm and coordination courses into the teaching of dance techniques.
- 5) More international specialty lecturers could be involved in teaching.

- 6) It is recommended to consistently recruit pedagogically competent creative practitioners of the younger generation for the study programme.
- 7) The student feedback system needs to be further developed.
- 8) The reasons for frequent drop-outs should be examined in more detail.
- 9) It is recommended to give potential entrants the most realistic picture possible of the content of the Dance Art Study programme.

THEATER ART (PHE)

Strengths

- 1) The study programme allows students to choose subjects in such a way that the study programme reflects their individual needs (for example, in the field of directing and acting), on the basis of which they can design their own study path in accordance with their professional ambitions.
- 2) Employers play an important role in shaping study programme content, delivery, and learning outcomes to ensure that the study programme meets their needs. Within the framework of the study programme, several cooperation agreements have been concluded with various theater and cultural institutions, which provide students with extensive access to various theater resources. International communication is active.
- 3) There is a positive and productive relationship between teachers and students, which allows students to feel like an equal partner in their studies. The studies strongly support student-led initiatives.
- 4) The study programme is carried out by a team of lecturers who communicate closely with each other, who are united by a passion for their field and a coherent methodological and philosophical approach to teaching, which is clearly reflected in the planning of study modules and the development of learning outcomes.
- 5) There is a constant intense competition for the study programme, which allows recruiting the most capable and better-motivated students to study.
- 6) Students' satisfaction with both their study experience and preparation for professional work is high.
- 7) Students have definite plans to start work in regional theaters and to create new companies in the area.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) It should be ensured that informal feedback from employers and other external stakeholders is recorded and passed on to the whole study programme team.
- 2) The study programme should better align traditional and contemporary approaches to the performing arts, dynamically combining both established and experimental practices.
- 3) It is recommended to develop English-language subjects to support the internationalization of the study programme.
- 4) The Academy should more effectively support the mobility of teachers abroad and other international activities.
- 5) Students should be encouraged to explore all possibilities for international mobility, and the Academy should find ways to support students who want to develop their international profile as artists.
- 6) The study programme manager, lecturers and the study programme council would benefit from a regular and accurate overview of the employment of alumni.

TEATHRE TECHNICAL ARTS (PHE)

Strengths

- 1) Graduates of the study programme are valued in the professional labor market.
- 2) Following the study programme integration process, students have been granted wider access to a variety of technical resources and workshops. Within the framework of the study programme, several cooperation agreements have been concluded with various theater and cultural institutions, which provide students with extensive access to various theater resources.
- 3) An integrated approach to teaching allows students to tailor their learning paths to their individual professional ambitions.
- 4) Throughout the study programme, emphasis is placed on the development of entrepreneurial skills.
- 5) Employers play an important role in shaping study programme content, delivery, and learning outcomes to ensure that the study programme meets their needs.
- 6) Students' satisfaction with their learning experience, teachers' teaching skills, and preparation for professional work are high.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) The integrated study programme combines different subjects that more or less overlap in terms of the knowledge and skills required in the field. This approach carries the risk that the broad nature of the study programme does not allow the student to delve deeper enough in a narrower field. The study programme should be reviewed to ensure that students have a coherent, sufficiently focused, and professionally relevant learning experience.
 - 2) Moving towards the strategic goal of the qualifications of the University of Tartu lecturers, according to which all lecturers working at least as lecturers must have a doctoral degree by 2018, it must not be overlooked that lecturers of professional higher education curricula must have the professional experience to prepare students well enough to take up employment in their chosen field. It would be advisable to study how the experience of lecturers' professional work in other countries' higher education systems is compared with their qualification levels in order to assess its substantive compliance with academic degrees.
 - 3) The Academy should support student mobility abroad and the international activities of lecturers more than before.
 - 4) The study programme manager, lecturers, and the study programme council would benefit from a regular and accurate overview of the employment of alumni.
 - 5) Commencement of professional work by students even before graduation has led to frequent interruptions of studies and their extension beyond the nominal period. It would be advisable to create opportunities to take into account the students' professional work experience as part of their studies.
- 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 and second level of higher education of the Performing Arts Study Programme Group of the University of Tartu in seven years.

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

12. The Council proposes to the University of Tartu 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