


# MASTER IN DANCE & MASTER IN DE DANS

ARTESIS PLANTIJN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

CONDUCT-TAILORED ACCREDITATION • ASSESSMENT REPORT

12 JUNE 2023



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## Table of contents

1	Executive summary .....	4
2	Examination of the panel .....	6
2.1	Introduction .....	6
2.2	Preparation .....	6
2.3	Initial findings.....	6
2.4	Context and ambition of the programme .....	7
2.5	Concept and design of the programme .....	8
2.6	Admissions and bridging/preparatory programme .....	11
2.7	Support for students .....	11
2.8	Infrastructure .....	12
2.9	Assessment .....	13
2.10	Organisational embedding and quality culture.....	14
3	Judgement.....	16
4	Review process.....	18
	Annex 1: Administrative data regarding the institution and the programme .....	19
	Annex 2: Programme-specific learning outcomes.....	20
	Annex 3: Composition of the panel .....	21
	Annex 4: Schedule of the site visit.....	22
	Annex 5: Overview of the material studied.....	23
	Annex 6: List of abbreviations .....	24

## 1 Executive summary

The master's programme in Dance / in de Dans at Artesis Plantijn University College combines academic and artistic research, in alliance with a major cultural house DE SINGEL, and provides an entry into the professional field through multiple facets of the dance discipline. The panel observed a clear sense of identity and strong ethos for the programme, particularly the emphasis on Embodied Artistic Research, which provides a uniqueness to the programme. The learning outcomes are related to the overall concept of embodiment, artistic practice and research.

Based on the open dialogue with the ambitious programme, the panel arrives at a positive accreditation advice. According to the panel, the programme has shown that it fulfils a demand for decentralisation of dance research and education in Belgium. Moreover, it has clear potential to articulate itself beyond European dance, thus fulfilling its ambitions as an international programme. The panel highly values the openness, strong commitment, self-reflexivity and willingness to learn of the programme staff. There is coherence, synergy and structure across the board, leading to the programme fulfilling its didactic and artistic mission. In the eyes of the professional field as well as the panel, the programme represents growth, empathy, freedom and autonomy.

Appreciation is also in order for the small-scale character of the programme, with an intensive artistic guidance of students; the half-time concept, ensuring a direct link with the professional field; the dedicated faculty and supportive management system; the strong interaction between staff and students; the feedback methods; the holistic approach to assessment; the connection with DE SINGEL and the residency concept, and the connections with the professional field as a whole. The attention for personalised education is also valued, as is the balance sought between autonomy and support. Teachers have an important role in the development of the programme, though the drawback is a high workload.

The panel is impressed by the awareness of (potential) areas for improvement and by the progress already made. It encourages the programme to continue to invest in this development, to further enhance opportunities for students. Adequate facilities are central to this: it is important that students are provided with sufficient space and budget during residency time. The panel also urges the programme to continue the discussion on the form and level/complexity of the master's project.

In view of the further development of the programme, the panel recommends to:

- consider how to showcase and actively advertise the programme with its unique identity, involving the professional field and alumni;
- consider how an archive of students' work can be documented and made available to both students and the broader public, enhancing the visibility of the programme;
- keep track of the needs of students and supervisors with regard to supervision hours;
- continue to work on ensuring and embedding an inclusive environment/culture;
- document and clarify the process regarding resits;
- continue to evaluate how the collaborative nature of the programme is supported and assessed;
- formalise and increase the connection with the professional field, including alumni.

The Hague, 12 June 2023

On behalf of the expert panel convened to assess the Master in Dance / in de dans:

Kris Rutten  
(chair)

Carlijn Braam  
(secretary)

## 2 Examination of the panel

### 2.1 Introduction

This assessment report was produced in the context of the conduct-tailored programme accreditation of the 'Master of Arts in Dance' (programme in English) and the 'Master of Arts in de dans' (programme in Dutch), commissioned by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO), by a review committee of external experts at Artesis Plantijn University College (AP). Both programmes were assessed through one accreditation procedure, as the curricula of the two programmes are completely identical. The report aims to create added value for the institution in the light of continuous quality improvement. It includes the impressions from the site visit, and the panel's findings and considerations regarding the integration of the quality characteristics from the NVAO's assessment framework. The draft report was submitted to the panel members for comments, after which the chair adopted the final version.

### 2.2 Preparation

In preparation for the site visit, the panel members took note of the self-evaluation report and additional documentation and shared their impressions. These initial findings were discussed in a preparatory meeting, based on which the main themes and questions were compiled. The inventoried strengths and exploration points were used as a guideline during the site visit on 2 May 2023. During this visit, the panel checked whether its first impressions were correct through discussions with all relevant stakeholders, and ascertained whether quality assurance is working within the programme. The panel discussed in detail all information gathered and weighed up the additional impressions. At the end of the visit, the committee shared its conclusions. The schedule of the site visit is included in annex 4.

### 2.3 Initial findings

In preparation for the site visit, the panel members identified a number of strengths of the master's programme. Without being exhaustive, the committee had a positive perception of:

- the clear mission which relates to the overall educational concepts;
- the distinctiveness of the programme, with its focus on Embodied Artistic Research;
- the integrated didactic concept connecting embodiment, artistic practice and research with the artistic field, the live performing arts context and society;
- the balance between theory and physical engagement;
- the excellent faculty, which includes both local and international artists and experienced educators;
- the modular structure of the small-scale programme and the individual trajectories;
- the collaboration with the international arts centre De SINGEL, and with other programmes and (international) artistic institutions, providing students with different perspectives;
- the innovative Master in Dance Residency, which offers opportunities for synergy and development;
- the solid infrastructure;
- the collaboration with the transdisciplinary research group CORPoREAL and other research groups;
- the creation of an international joined master's programme;
- the strongly developed assessment and feedback procedures, adopting a holistic, competency-based approach;

- the added value of the concept of ‘feedback literacy’;
- the awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the (structural aspects of the) programme.

The panel had a positive impression of the solid, well-designed structure of the programme, the visible evolution and potential to grow, and of the honest, self-critical approach in the self-evaluation report. At the same time, the panel observed that in the report, many elaborations were on a conceptual level, and was interested to see how this translates into practice. Some topics for further discussions emerged from the initial findings, about which the panel was keen to gain more insights during the site visit. These topics concentrated around the themes of context and ambition of the programme; concept and design of the programme; admissions and bridging/preparatory programme; support for students; assessment; organizational embedding and quality culture; and infrastructure. Furthermore, the committee was curious to learn how the programme management guarantees that students can also follow the programme in Dutch.

## 2.4 Context and ambition of the programme

The master’s programme was established in 2019, as the first level 7 (EQF) Master in Dance programme in Flanders, combining academic and artistic research. It is part of the educational programme of the Royal Conservatoire of Antwerp (RCA). Structurally, the RCA is hosted under the umbrella of AP University College, within a School of Arts, the Royal Conservatoire for the performing arts.

Since January 2021, there is an intensive collaboration between the master’s programme and the international arts platform DE SINGEL, providing the necessary infrastructure and a chance for students to position themselves. The Master in Dance is developed in close partnership with DE SINGEL’s artistic programming, to integrate the institutions more. An artistic team oversees the co-curation of the programme, consisting of the artistic coordinator of the master’s, together with members of DE SINGEL’s programming team. The artistic coordinator acts as a bridge figure between both institutions and guards the content and coherence of the courses. Although the collaboration is still young and needs to develop further, and may be constraining at some level, the panel sees it is a valuable asset.

Through the transdisciplinary research group CORPoREAL (Collaborative Research in Performance Re-imagining Embodiment, Art and Learning), RCA also provides a PhD programme in the arts. This PhD programme is organised in collaboration with the University of Antwerp and ARIA (Antwerp Research Institute for the Arts), the latter of which serves as a contact point. Again, the artistic coordinator is the linking pin between the programme, CORPoREAL and ARIA. Although the collaboration could be expanded, the panel is of the opinion that CORPoREAL and other research groups demonstrate a commitment to ensuring research enriched learning on the programme. During the interviews, the panel learned that the direct link with research is an inspiring benefit. Firstly, during the programme, there is ample focus on research and research skills. Not only during classes, but also through separate meetings where both internal and external researchers are invited. Secondly, support is provided after the programme in obtaining funding for research, with applications for PhD’s, etc.

Of the 710 students in the Conservatoire, the dance department counts 80 students in 2021-

2022: 11 in the Master in Dance, 44 in the Bachelor in Dance, 13 in the bridging programme, and 25 in the educational programmes in dance. The Master in Dance programme provides an entry into the professional field through multiple facets of the dance discipline. Alumni of the first two generations of students work in the field as dancers, choreographers, teachers, etc. Many of the current students and alumni with whom the panel spoke are pursuing further careers in research. The professional field observes that the master's programme offers students a broad perspective.

The panel values the uniqueness of the programme, with its combination of academic and artistic research, and the excellent collaboration between RCA and DE SINGEL's artistic programme. The critical reflection on the collaboration with DE SINGEL and the challenges of its nature is also appreciated, and demonstrates good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the structural aspects of the programme.

The panel observed that the self-evaluation report projects a clear sense of identity and strong ethos for the programme, particularly the emphasis on Embodied Artistic Research. Furthermore, the learning outcomes are related to the overall concept of embodiment, artistic practice and research. There is a good alignment between the programme learning outcomes and objectives at course level. In addition, the mapping of how students achieve the learning outcomes across the course content is generally convincing.

The name of the programme was also addressed during the dialogue; the panel was curious to know how it covers what the programme is aiming for. It was clarified that the programme is centered around the notion of embodiment, as a 'master in embodied practices', and recognises dance practice anchored in the physicality of the human body. At the same time, the pedagogical approach tries to focus on a differentiated approach to the expressive possibilities of the body. The staff feels it is important to expand established concepts, to be open to other forms and artists from other practices, and invest in this. In their opinion, dance offers more possibilities in this regard than choreography, since the latter is more rigid and has a more specific (written) format or set of rules. During the dialogue, the vision behind the programme has become clear to the panel; the choice to focus on embodied practice is convincing and entails much more than dance. Thus, the master's programme is positioned in a broader context of the (research) field and distinguishes itself from other programmes.

The panel believes that the programme reflects its clear role in dance education and research in Belgium, as it provides a counterbalance to the country's centred artistic scene in cities such as Brussels. In this sense, the programme understands the importance of providing alternatives and contributing to the expansion of knowledge construction in dance for students, for the local and national dance community and for the community in general in Antwerp and Belgium as a whole. The visibility of the young programme is an area for improvement, of which the staff is well aware. Alumni already appear to be strong promoters of the programme, as the panel noted.

## 2.5 Concept and design of the programme

As the panel gathered from the documentation and dialogue, the two-year programme combines theory and practice. The default programme comprises 30 credits in the first year and another 30 credits in the second year and is offered in both Dutch and English. Each year consists of three mandatory modules of 2 to 3 weeks, in October, February and May; students



are expected to spend these periods, 7 weeks in total, in Antwerp. These clusters work very well according to alumni and give students the opportunity to reflect and digest in between modules. They focus on Embodiment, Artistic practice and Research respectively, and include three perspectives: the Art scene, Artist and Society. Each module is focused on collective time, guided by guest teachers and artists. The modules propose interdisciplinary dialogues between dance and other related fields such as dramaturgy, curation, and scenography. Thus, starting from an engaged learning environment, the intention of the programme is to diversify and to give students a wide perspective on these practices, enabling an expanded notion of dance. This trans-disciplinarity is an aspect that is recognised by the professional field as a strong component of the programme. Other important components of the curriculum are reflection and the exchange of ideas.

In between the clusters, students are supported through residency time to work on their individual research questions, and are able to work in collaboration with a supervisor. During residency time, the team and artistic advisors follow students' process and give feedback. A presentation of their work is also included: this year, there is a pilot with a festival in May; next year, the Radiant Nights festival of DE SINGEL will be focused on the master's in Dance projects. As residents, students can use all facilities and receive a small budget of 400 euros per master's student. This budget for production/research, although a positive first step, still seems to be insufficient and has the attention of the programme management. The panel understands the difficulties of acquiring funds, but encourages the programme to focus on increasing the budget for students in the coming years.

The panel finds the residency approach an innovative way to secure the relationship with DE SINGEL; it is interesting that students are expected to have a professional career as a basis to further develop their research and ground their research questions. The panel finds the different approaches to practice within the programme convincing, as well as the reflection on the concept of artistic academic research. It values the integrated didactic concept with the different perspectives, and the cornerstones of autonomy, reflections and theory in practice, with a balance in theory and physical engagement. This is accompanied by a variation in teaching models, and an emphasis on collaboration and feedback skills.

Since the programme focuses on supporting individual trajectories, a conscious choice was made to run a small-scale programme. The panel is of the opinion that the modular structure of the programme offers opportunities for concentrated engagement and allows students ample room to work on their research and practice. At the same time, the individual trajectories pose a challenge in monitoring students. Teachers confirmed this during the dialogue, but indicated to the panel that it is manageable. For students, the modular structure of the programme, although intensive, works well and allows for flexibility. They feel that the first-year courses are quite theoretical but provide an important common base, whereas the second year offers more time for reflection, for sharing ideas, and for connecting theory and practice, which is a valuable integration.

The representatives of the programme see the intensive artistic guidance and tight feedback loop as an absolute strength of the programme; students are strongly guided individually in small classes to develop their own practices. Other strengths in their eyes are the critical focus on embodiment, the half-time concept, ensuring a constant link with external practice, and the strong connection with DE SINGEL, guaranteeing students' access to studios, the

possibility for students to present their work, and a readily available network of artists. The panel fully endorses these strengths, as does the professional field. When asked by the panel to translate the qualities of the programme into a single word, the representatives of the field mentioned empathy, autonomy, freedom and growth, with students at the forefront. The panel also appreciates the excellent faculty, which includes (international) working artists and experienced educators. According to the panel, there is a sound awareness of the administrative load involved in organising a large group of fractional staff. Good systems are either in place or being developed to support the management of this process, and contact between teachers. Despite these measures, the workload of all staff seems to be quite high, and efforts are ongoing to find a balance within the department structure.

The panel was curious how diversity is addressed in the programme and noticed that it is an important focal point that needs further attention, both at programme and institutional level. Steps in the right direction involve the bridging programme, added elements in the admission and recruitment policy, social safety guidelines, quota for course content, and an inclusive language policy (e.g. choice to use other languages than English in written assignments, or to present work in a preferred form). According to the professional field, language competencies should not affect grades, as long as the academic level is reached. As the dance field is mainly English-oriented, Dutch competencies are not necessary. Requirements need to be clear for students though, and the connection with verbal language is important. The panel concludes that students benefit from the existing flexibility and is interested to see how the programme will move forward with regard to language skills while maintaining an academic level.

A recurring question was how the international programme copes with an increasingly diverse society, permeated by many demands for a non-Eurocentric education. It is visible that there is an effort on the part of the staff to deal with such demands. Teachers indicated that the approach taken is flexible and a recurrent point of discussion; there is room for experimentation and Eurocentric boundaries are questioned. The inclusive vision is also embraced by the Conservatoire. For example, within the Conservatoire, there is a project on diversity and inclusion, with a responsible project manager. Across the board, the staff recognises an awareness among teachers and students, and a willingness among teachers to actively pay attention to inclusivity, and to take into consideration the backgrounds of students. However, the programme is aware that more steps are needed to reach a higher degree of inclusiveness, such as more attention for scholarships to reach more diverse students and more clarity on course outlines. The field sees inclusivity as an inherent part of the programme, while there is much potential to grow. The fact that the programme is not based on a certain practice, allows for openness and draws students from different cultural backgrounds, which in turn reinforces the diversity aspect.

In terms of partnerships, there is a collaboration with the curatorial studies course at KASK and the School of the Arts in Gent. Students from both institutions are working together on a project in which they curate performance interventions during the Radiant Nights festival at DE SINGEL. Moreover, the panel learned that there is an Erasmus project until 2025 for a joint master's programme with four international institutions (Lyon, Stockholm, Senegal) and three professional partners, including DE SINGEL, on which the programme intends to build in the future. This will be an interesting opportunity for students and staff of the existing master's programme.

## 2.6 Admissions and bridging/preparatory programme

During the dialogue, the panel inquired about how the selection process works in practice, and what the bridging/preparatory programme entails. In the documentation, the panel found interesting reflections on admissions. To remain small-scale, the programme explains to aim for ten students per year, with a diverse background. Most candidates already have dance training and want to progress in this, while integrating artistic perspectives and expanding their creativity. Students are selected through a two-step admission procedure in which the candidate's artistic suitability and experience as a dancer/embodied artist are assessed. The professional field describes the process as rather open and straightforward. Candidates need to do a presentation/dialogue and an assignment. They do not need to have a professional practice but must demonstrate a potential for growth, a clear artistic vision and a capacity to articulate their research proposal. The admissions are selected by a well-balanced jury that includes the artistic coordinator, the co-curators, the Head of Dance and internal and external jury members. The aim is to keep consistency in the selection process over the years. Applications clearly show that most students choose this programme to do artistic research, after first having gained work experience. Meanwhile, the international cohort is good evidence of the programme's great reputation.

The staff responsible for the programme clarified that they would like to attract more candidates through wider publicity. More candidates would mean more freedom to choose the preferred profiles that fit the programme and the support that can be offered. Although the visibility of the programme is a point of attention for the young programme, one is also aware of the benefits of the small-scale education and is not pursuing a major promotional campaign.

Since this year, the bridging programme is obligatory for Belgian and Dutch students with a professional bachelor's degree in Music and Performing Arts, as is the preparatory programme for graduates from other countries. The programmes are designed to create a common theoretical knowledge base for all students, considering the fact that they come from different backgrounds. Combined with the bridging programme, the first year encompasses 45 extra credits, adding up to 75 credits in total. Incidentally, students can choose to spread these credits over two years, and/or the study load of the preparatory programme can be reduced depending on the student's prior education. Students find the bridging programme valuable, and express a preference for flexibility to the panel, with fewer courses continuing throughout the year. The full programme is rather heavy according to both staff and students. It entails 6 courses, focussing on writing and presenting skills, research methodology, philosophy and history of art, etc. Based on students' feedback, the preparatory programme will be modified next year, to reduce the programme load and make it more focused and efficient. The intention is to better distribute the study load between modules and semesters, and to avoid overlap between modules.

## 2.7 Support for students

As mentioned earlier, strong student support and study guidance are central to the programme and the Conservatoire. Support is provided in various ways, both at a practical level (e.g. student accommodation, scholarship applications) and at psychological/mental level, through student counsellors etc. A preparatory programme is offered to equip students with the necessary skills. To further accommodate students, they have the option to do the

programme in both Dutch (currently one student) and English, and can do assignments in several languages.

The programme sees room for improvement in terms of financial support for international students and is actively working to expand opportunities. After two years of running the programme, the faculty feels it is also time to evolve in dealing with students with disabilities and are looking for ways to achieve this. The topic is being explored in an international research project as well, with the involvement of guest teachers and students. However, there are limitations and requirements to consider. The level of inclusiveness of the undergraduate education also plays a role. A symposium that was held last year on embodiment and diversity, as a joint effort with the bachelor's programme, is seen as a good start in this respect; the idea is to forge connections between the various programmes that address shared interests, and to repeat this symposium every two years, if possible.

Students have indicated to the panel that they feel well informed. The lines of communication with teachers are good; they are approachable and quick to reply to requests. Information on courses is available via the study guide Trotter, which is introduced at the beginning of the year, and via a digital platform. Students receive reminders on deadlines and find expectations to be clear and explicit. Nevertheless, it is important to be organised as a student, especially if you are away from campus between courses; the amount of (creative) work requires to plan ahead and set the right priorities. At times, a contact point is missed by the students due to part-time working teachers, but this is known to the staff. Also, students felt there were too few supervision hours for their master's project. As a result, the programme decided to extend these hours; both students and the professional field feel this is a great improvement, as the mentorship helps to learn how to formulate their ideas.

## 2.8 Infrastructure

The centralisation of administration and the relocation of the student centre have had an impact, according to the programme management. Currently, communication is not very efficient, but the programme expects this to evolve and improve. Through the connection with DE SINGEL, the facility problems that existed before have been partly solved, despite limited resources. Previously, students had to look for suitable facilities (residencies) to practise elsewhere. This is still the case for some students, for example when they do not live in the proximity of Antwerp. Students feel prepared by the programme to draft residency applications. Alumni told the panel though, that they would advise students to live near the campus, since this helps to be connected with other students, teachers and artists.

Current students have access to additional infrastructure; dance studios and classrooms are supplemented by two theatre spaces from the Conservatoire and a theatre and dance studio from DE SINGEL. Furthermore, DE SINGEL's involvement facilitates a better outreach to the professional field. Students highly appreciate the intensive collaboration, the increased opportunities for visibility and the modest budget they receive.

The lack of studio spaces has not yet been fully resolved, however, as studio spaces are still limited and have to be shared with bachelor's students, which means they are often fully booked during working hours. This has the undivided attention of the ambitious staff responsible for the programme, and has led to the current construction of a new studio space for the Dance department. This studio will be dedicated primarily to the master's students

and will be available from the start of the new academic year. The panel considers the investment in renovating a space to accommodate the programme on the Conservatoire's premises as a sign of the ability of this relatively small programme to assert itself.

## 2.9 Assessment

Based on the documentation, the panel found the assessment policy to be well-articulated and seemingly balanced. The panel appreciates the holistic approach to assessment, based on a strong vision. Central to the competency-based assessment approach are the principles that the assessment is pluralistic (different forms of assessment), authentic and a learning tool, and both process and product are reflected in the assessment. The emphasis in the programme is on the integrated, more complex forms of testing such as project assignments and artistic practice assessments, whereas reflection forms the basis of the entire professional development of the master student.

One of the teachers, an alumna herself, is the regular supervisor of the first-year students, with three hours per student. For second year students, another three hours will be included as of next academic year. The panel learned that the supervisor is also active in the admission and assessment process, and monitors learning outcomes to ensure a continuous learning line. A second teacher is also involved from start to finish, providing feedback and guidance to students. In addition, the artistic coordinator and co-curator of DESINGEL provide feedback during showings and have a complete overview of the learning process. Part of the learning trajectory of students is to find their autonomy. Thus, for the programme, it is a matter of finding a balance between autonomy and guidance.

During the dialogue, the panel observed that there is a strong sense of the challenging nature of assessing dance. To determine the validity of the assessment programme, the coverage of the OLR by the set of learning objectives and the level/complexity of the assessment programme have been analysed. To help ensure a fair assessment, there are learning trajectories and study guides for every course. The content of courses, evaluation criteria, deadlines and so on are clearly communicated to students. Furthermore, in evaluation criteria, a distinction is made between tasks and permanent evaluation (participation, engagement, etc.), and there is a close feedback loop, allowing students to implement feedback in assignments. Lower grades are actively followed up and discussed by teachers. A grading plan has been developed as a guideline for (guest) teachers. Since assessment is also individual, teachers stress that it is important to know each student. Whenever there are challenges, this is discussed as well; at the beginning and end of each semester, teachers meet to discuss the content and other aspects of courses and to reach alignment.

For the master's project, different topics and forms are possible. The panel finds it interesting that students can opt for a practice-based or a practice-led research project. Students first and foremost work solo. They can also choose to collaborate with others, in consultation with the programme staff, although the time for collaboration is limited for part-time students and they will have to prove which part of the research is their own. Students have individual meetings with their supervisor and write a reflection individually.

During the dialogue, the panel was looking for clarity on pass/fail criteria and possibilities for resits. The students with whom the panel spoke felt well prepared for their exams and found it clear what is expected of them in the assessments. To pass a course, there are multiple

assignments that do not all have to be passed. Modules require 80% attendance. If a module is not passed, a resit in the following year is required.

Master's projects can be completed once a year. Since this year, it is possible to do a resit for the research paper (30% of the master's project). The other components of the master's project, the performative event (60%) and oral presentation (10%), have to be passed in one go, since it takes a lot of effort to get a jury of eight together. Juries include members of the professional field, who are involved in judging the creative part. The jury has lengthy discussions on the quality and academic level of individual work. The panel learned that this is a demanding, holistic exercise, where an overall, consistent view is important. Throughout the year, the process of the student is intensively guided and taken into account, though the focus of the Master project is on the outcomes. Thus, grades are based on various forms of oral and written feedback and a consultation between faculty, as well as with field representatives. Without losing sight of the personal level, the assessment is based on fixed parameters (e.g. interaction, reflection). The assessment results in written, constructive feedback. To students, the retrospective, mutual moments of reflection give clarity.

The panel observed that the assessment system is very flexible and takes into account personal circumstances. In case a student disagrees with the jury's decision on the master's project, he or she may file a formal complaint. As for the number of graduates, all eight students who started in 2021 passed their exams; of the five students who started in 2022, two passed, two decided to extend their studies by one year and one failed.

According to the panel, the assessments and feedback procedures are strongly developed, and the emphasis on reflection and giving feedback in a considerate and well-rounded way is very positive. The concept of 'feedback literacy' offers an added value to the assessment procedure. There are useful guidelines for the faculty on assessment processes. In addition, there is a critical reflection on the reliability of the assessment procedure, specifically in relation to non-measurable outcomes. With regard to supervision hours for master's projects, the panel believes that the expansion of these hours is positive, but that it is important to manage this intensively, taking into account the requirements of students and the workload and possible support of supervisors.

Archiving dance is still work in progress; the programme is thinking of making a thesis library available online. The panel notes that it would be interesting in the medium and long term, for the programme to invest in the documentation of the work and research performed by students, and make these available on the institution's website. This can be seen as a way of advertising the programme as well as making available a public archive.

## 2.10 Organisational embedding and quality culture

The PDCA cycle gives direction to the quality culture for students, teachers, alumni and the working field. The panel observed that the PDCA-cycle document is very comprehensive and helpful in setting out the future plans. The panel highly appreciates the transparency, structural feedback sessions and openness to feedback and critical perspectives of the programme. Also, the Wellbeing Sounding Board seems to be a very good system.

The professional field appears to be structurally involved in the quality of the programme,

through their participation in juries and adding perspectives in that sense, but also via discussions on the content of the programme (e.g. on how to shape reflection in the programme). Also, feedback on feedback has been collected, looking at how to evaluate, with what parameters. The panel notes, however, that this involvement could be more formalised.

Students are aware of the evaluation processes in the programme and are able to evaluate the opportunities and gaps in the programme. They regularly share feedback on courses, both through written evaluations after every module and informally with the artistic coordinator (“it is ingrained in students' DNA”). The panel observed that students feel valued; they find that their feedback resonates, and their perspectives are taken serious in adapting the programme. The panel was also pleased to hear that students have been involved in the writing process of the self-evaluation report. Students clearly feel connected to the objectives of the programme.

There is work to be done with regard to a formal alumni structure, as the programme staff is well aware of. Alumni do receive communication on events, and maintain close relationships with each other and with the programme. Some of them, who work in artistic research, retain professional links with teachers from the master's programme. Across the board, the panel heard very similar reflections and noted a healthy self-awareness and open lines of communication. Feedback is clearly taken up and improvements are visible, attesting to the proper functioning of the quality system.

During the dialogue, the representatives of the professional field mentioned several opportunities for development of the programme. They stressed that these are known to the programme management and there is a great willingness to tackle these issues. First of all, according to them the academic knowledge in the programme can be strengthened. Secondly, a deeper relationship with the working field in Flanders and Belgium can be established. Thirdly, a wider audience can be reached, both in terms of new students and in terms of visibility and publicity of presentations to the general public. And finally, the residency programme can be developed further, by further exploring the full potential of collaboration with DE SINGEL and the rest of the field.

### 3 Judgement

Based on the open dialogue with the ambitious programme, the panel arrives at a positive accreditation advice on the quality of both the master's programmes, the 'Master of Arts in Dance' and the 'Master of Arts in de Dans', at Artesis Plantijn University College. First and foremost, the panel was positively struck by the openness, strong commitment, self-reflexivity and willingness to learn from the programme representatives. There is coherence, synergy and structure across the board, leading to a functional programme, which succeeds in fulfilling the didactic concept with its focus on embodiment, and the social, cultural and artistic mission it pursues. The working field values the programme, since it meets a clear need. In the words of this field, which the panel can only agree with, the programme represents growth, empathy, freedom and autonomy.

Despite apparent constraints, the programme is making great strides. Positive aspects that the panel identified are, amongst others, the small-scale character of the programme, with an intensive artistic guidance of students; the half-time concept, ensuring a direct link with the professional field; the dedicated faculty and supportive management system; the strong interaction between staff and students; the feedback methods; the holistic approach to assessment; the connection with DE SINGEL and the residency concept, and the connections with the professional field as a whole.

The panel appreciates the fact that the programme is thinking about personalised education. Students can translate theory into practice and are positive about the balance sought between autonomy and support. Teachers have a clear, important role in the development of the young programme, though the drawback is a high workload and a struggle to meet all demands, for example on diversity. The panel encourages the programme to continue to be proactive in creating an inclusive environment. This includes thinking about what inclusion means, how to share this awareness and how to provide support and expertise.

The panel is impressed by the omnipresent awareness of (potential) areas for improvement and by the progress already made. This gives the committee confidence that the programme will continue to take up its working points with great responsibility. It encourages the programme to continue to invest in the process of improvement and the further development of partnerships, to achieve all possible opportunities for students. Adequate facilities are central to this: it is important that students are provided with sufficient space and budget during residency time. The panel also urges the programme to continue the discussion on the form and level/complexity of the master's project.

In view of the further development of the programme, the panel recommends to:

- consider how to showcase and actively advertise the programme with its unique identity, involving the professional field and alumni;
- consider how an archive of students' work can be documented and made available to both students and the broader public, enhancing the visibility of the programme;
- keep track of the needs of students and supervisors with regard to supervision hours;
- continue to work on ensuring and embedding an inclusive environment/culture;
- document and clarify the process regarding resits;



- continue to evaluate how the collaborative nature of project work on the programme is supported and assessed;
- formalise and increase the connection with the professional field, including alumni.

## 4 Review process

The assessment was carried out in line with the 'Assessment framework programme accreditation customised to own conduct – June 2020', as ratified by the Flemish Government on 27 November 2020.

The panel prepared itself for the assessment on the basis of the information file submitted by the institution when applying for accreditation. Prior to the preparatory meeting of the panel, each panel member formulated initial impressions and questions were listed. During a preparatory online meeting on 20 April 2023, the panel discussed all information received in the application file and also prepared the virtual dialogue with the programme (institution). Impressions and questions were updated before the first dialogue with the institution.

A site visit took place on 2 May 2023, where the panel visited the campus in Antwerp and had a dialogue with the programme management, staff, students, alumni and representatives from the professional field. During the dialogue the panel investigated the context of the programme and the institution and collected all required information to make a judgement on the quality of the programme.

During a closed meeting of the panel on 2 May 2023 the panel discussed all information obtained and translated it into a holistic judgement. The panel took this conclusion in full independence.

All information obtained led to a draft assessment report that has been sent to all panel members. The feedback from the panel members has been processed. The assessment report adopted by the chair was submitted to NVAO on 12 June 2023.

## Annex 1: Administrative data regarding the institution and the programme

Institution	Artesis Plantijn University College
Address, institution website	Lange Nieuwstraat 101 2000 Antwerpen, Belgium www.ap.be
Status institution	Accredited
Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master in Dance</li> <li>• Master in de dans</li> </ul>
Level and orientation	Master of Arts
(Additional) title	-
(Parts of) field of study(s)	Music and performing arts (ISCED:0215)
Specialisations	-
Programme routes	-
Location where the programme is offered	Artesis Plantijn Hogeschool Antwerpen, Royal Conservatoire Antwerp, Campus deSingel Desguinlei 25 2018 Antwerpen, Belgium
Teaching language	English, Dutch
Study load (in credits)	60 ECTS
New training in Flanders	No
Admission requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A professional bachelor's diploma in Dance or in Performing Arts or equivalent, on the condition that the candidate-student passes the artistic entrance examination and follows a bridging programme.</li> <li>• An academic bachelor's diploma in Dance or in Performing Arts, a master's diploma in Performing Arts, or equivalent, on the condition that the candidate-student passes the artistic entrance examination and follows a preparatory programme.</li> </ul>

## Annex 2: Programme-specific learning outcomes

1. Develops and articulates their bodily craftsmanship through acquired tools and techniques.
2. Organises a sustainable artistic practice to expand their embodied practice.
3. Reflects and investigates on questions and experiential knowledge to deepen their artistic practice.
4. Shares embodied craftsmanship within the artistic field.
5. Builds, through dialogue and transmission, a sustainable practice in an artistic environment.
6. Can research the artistic field to feed their practice and position themselves accordingly.
7. Engages their craftsmanship and embodied knowledge in other settings.
8. Constructs, through translation to and interaction with society, a developing practice.
9. Invests, through resonating within the socio-political and economic climate, in the reciprocal relationship between their artistic practice and society.

## Annex 3: Composition of the panel

The assessment was made by a panel of experts convened and appointed by the NVAO. The panel is composed as follows:

**Prof dr Kris Rutten** (*chair*), Senior Lecturer in Culture & Education, Ghent University, Belgium;

**Prof dr Sarah Whatley** (*panel member*), Director Centre for Dance Research, Coventry University, UK;

**Leontien Wiering** (*panel member*), Operations director Amare, House for culture, education, events and encounters, The Hague, the Netherlands;

**Leandro de Souza** (*student panel member*), Master student in the Das Choreography programme in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

The panel was assisted by:

- **Veerle Martens**, policy advisor Flanders NVAO, process coordinator;
- **Carlijn Braam**, secretary.

All panel members and the process coordinator and secretary have signed NVAO's code of deontology.

## Annex 4: Schedule of the site visit

2 May 2023 - Campus deSingel

Time	Meeting
08:15 – 08:30	Welcoming the panel
08:30 – 09:00	Internal panel meeting
09:00 – 10:00	Dialogue with staff responsible for the programme
10:00 – 10:30	Internal panel meeting
10:30 – 11:30	Dialogue with teachers
11:30 – 12:00	Internal panel meeting
12:00 – 12:30	Tour of the campus
12:30 – 13:00	Lunch
13:00 – 13:45	Dialogue with students
13:45 – 14:15	Internal panel meeting
14:15 – 15:00	Dialogue with professional field representatives
15:00 – 15:30	Internal panel meeting
15:30 – 16:15	Dialogue with alumni (online)
16:15 – 16:45	Spare free moment
16:45 – 17:30	Internal panel meeting
17:30 – 18:00	Closing reflections with the staff responsible for the programme

## Annex 5: Overview of the material studied

### *Information file*

- Self-Evaluation Report

### *Annexes to the information file*

- Vademecum Master Project
- Trotter Master Dance 22-23 (teaching guide)
- Welcoming email teachers Master Dance
- Master Dance team 22-23
- Supervisor suggestion per student Master Dance
- Supervisors list 23-24
- Self-evaluation report
- Master Dance Residency
- Research papers
- Report Programme Committee Master Dance
- Report Artistic Council Dance
- Quality culture at RCA/Master in Dance
- Synthesis course evaluations Master Dance 2022
- Analysis Master Dance student profile
- Focus Group Master Dance
- Q Feedback staff MA Dance 2022
- Q Report Alumni Survey Master in Dance RCA 2022
- Bachelor Transfer Students 2022-2023
- Organigram RCA 2022
- Master in Dance 22-23 list and matrix
- Mission deSingel
- Methods for feedback
- Master in Dance clusters, project and programme
- Master Dance programme spreadsheet
- Master Dance OLR-DLR
- Master Dance clusters and learning outcomes
- IMPACT Erasmus application
- OLR Master Dance
- Feedback and grading system - student's guide Master Dance
- Feedback and grading system - teacher's guide Master Dance
- Facilities RCA
- Evaluation form Master Project jury example
- Evaluation form Master Dance Master template
- Embodied Artistic Knowledge: Kathleen Coessens
- Assessment policy Master Dance
- Application form Master Dance
- Administrative records MA Dance / MA Dans
- Courses MADA
- PDCA Cycle
- Course outline example
- Feedback and grading guidelines
- Analysis curriculum Ma Dance 2021-2022
- Q Feedback staff MA Dance 2022
- Q Analyses artistic entrance exams MA-DANCE
- Q Analyses artistic entrance exams MA-DANCE (ppt)
- Q Study efficiency MA-DANCE

## Annex 6: List of abbreviations

ARIA	Antwerp Research Institute for the Arts
CORPoREAL	Collaborative Research in Performance Re-imagining Embodiment, Art and Learning (research group)
ECTS	European Credit according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
NVAO	Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie)
RCA	Royal Conservatoire Antwerp



