

**The Hague University of the Arts**  
**Royal Academy of Art (KABK)**

**Advisory report to NVAO**

**Bachelor Fine Art (CROHO 39110)**

**Bachelor Design (CROHO 39111)**

**March 2022**



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## **Summary Judgement**

This document reports on the external assessment of the bachelor degree Fine Art and the bachelor degree Design at the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague (KABK). Students in the bachelor Fine Art follow either the ArtScience or the Fine Arts programme; Design students enrol on one of five programmes: Graphic Design, Interactive/Media/Design, Interior Architecture & Furniture Design, Photography and Textile & Fashion. Every four-year 240 ECTS programme is offered by a dedicated department at KABK.

The panel performing the assessment consisted of international experts who covered the breadth of the disciplines that make up the two degree programmes. As KABK is participating in a pilot of the Dutch Ministry of Higher Education, the panel only assessed the programmes' intended and achieved learning outcomes. The panel visited the programmes at KABK from 22 until 24 February 2022 and appreciated the open atmosphere during the discussions.

In so far as the intended learning outcomes of the programme are concerned, the panel considers that the seven departments at KABK all have a well-defined and specific profile. The Academy and the University have a clear vision on art and design education, which the departments implement in their own way with much room for autonomy and responsibility. The intended learning outcomes are formulated adequately and reflect not only the nation-wide professional and educational frameworks but also the specific characteristics of the respective programmes. The professional field in general and the recently created Professional Advisory Committees ensure the actuality of the educational offer. According to the panel, certain elements in the profile of the institution and the programmes – such as internationalisation, diversity, inclusiveness, interdisciplinarity, etc. – can be addressed more prominently in the learning outcomes.

In so far as the achieved learning outcomes of the respective programmes are concerned, the panel considers that students who pass the programmes' respective graduation trajectories have indeed achieved the intended learning outcomes and demonstrate a level of competency that can be expected of a bachelor Fine Art or Design. Across the board, the panel found the quality of the graduation projects to be good. In several cases, these projects demonstrate qualities and features – communication abilities, social and political sensitivity, artistic research, etc. - that alumni consider to be core elements in their professional practice. Furthermore, the discussions with recent graduates, alumni and the professional field show that Fine Art and Design alumni find a relevant position of their own in the professional field.

Furthermore, the panel addressed two issues that have been of key importance for the degree programmes and KABK in the recent past. In so far as COVID-19 is concerned, the panel found that the pandemic has certainly had an impact on the practical and community-building aspects of education, as well as on the mental wellbeing of students. However, the pandemic did not seem to have a major negative influence on the didactic set-up of the programme nor on the quality of the student work.

With regard to social safety, the panel noticed that the revelations on transgressive behaviour in the Academy have led to intensive discussions among students and staff, as well as to the creation of services that is meant to manage social safety professionally. The panel acknowledges that social safety is (to be understood as) a much broader concept that should therefore be addressed in a much more integrated way and linked to the educational process. In order to re-establish trust among students and staff, a reconsideration of the culture and the communication within the organisation is necessary, but also the general mind-set around social safety, and the responsibility of the organisation within this matter. Initiatives in this regard that have been taken and will be taken in the future should be transparent, involve all stakeholders and especially students, and should also affect the way in which KABK and its departments are delivering education. According to the panel, a general environment of trust and openness needs to be created and nurtured to address systematically and regularly issues of social safety in the future.

Based on the written information and the discussions during the site visit, the panel considers that the two degree programmes meet the quality requirements set by NVAO's Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands for limited programme assessments and relevant for this particular external assessment visit: intended learning outcomes and achieved learning outcomes. The panel therefore issues a positive advice to NVAO on the quality of the bachelor programme Fine Art and the bachelor programme Design submitted for accreditation by the Royal Academy of Art The Hague.

The chair and the secretary of the panel hereby declare that all panel members have studied this report and that they agree with the judgements laid down in the report. They confirm that the assessment has been conducted in accordance with the demands relating to independence.

On behalf of the assessment panel,

Edwin Jacobs  
Chair

Mark Delmartino  
Secretary

Date: 21 March 2022

## **Introduction**

This document reports on the assessment of the Bachelor degree Fine Art (CROHO 39110) and the Bachelor degree Design (CROHO 39111) offered by the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague (KABK). Students in the bachelor programme Fine Art follow either the ArtScience or the Fine Arts programme; Design students enrol on one of five programmes: Graphic Design, Interactive/Media/Design, Interior Architecture & Furniture Design, Photography, and Textile & Fashion. Each programme is offered by a dedicated department at KABK. The administrative data on institution and programmes are presented in Annex 1.

To establish the quality of the two bachelor programmes, the panel has followed the Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands, which is described in the NVAO publication of September 2018. As KABK, under the umbrella of University of the Arts The Hague, obtained accreditation at institutional level, its programmes can be assessed according to the limited evaluation framework of NVAO, which consists of four standards. Moreover, the university's participation in a pilot of the Dutch Ministry of Higher Education allows its programmes to follow a different accreditation process: the external assessment on standards 1 (intended learning outcomes) and 4 (achieved learning outcomes) needs validation by NVAO, while standards 2 (teaching-learning environment) and 3 (student assessment) can be assessed by an external panel without the involvement of NVAO. In the underlying document, the panel gives a substantiated judgement on NVAO standards 1 and 4 on a three-point scale: meets the standard, partially meets the standard or does not meet the standard. The panel subsequently recommends a final conclusion regarding the Fine Art and Design programmes on a three-point scale: positive, conditionally positive or negative. This weighted and substantiated appreciation serves as advice towards NVAO when taking a decision on the re-accreditation of the bachelor programmes Fine Art and Design at KABK.

The assessment visit took place at KABK from 22 until 24 February 2022. The assessment was performed by an independent panel of peers, which was approved by NVAO and consisted of:

- Edwin Jacobs (NL), chair
- Sarah Bennett (UK), member
- Anne Nigten (NL), member
- Rathna Ramanathan (UK), member
- Bertan Selim (NL), member
- Benedikt Rittger (DE), student-member

The panel was accompanied by Mark Delmartino (BE), an external secretary who liaised between the panel and the Quality Assurance team at KABK and ensured that the visit complied with NVAO procedures. All members and the secretary signed a statement of independence and confidentiality. Annex 2 contains a brief presentation of the panel members.

Prior to the visit, the panel chair and the external secretary discussed the set-up of the assessment, as well as the role of the chair and the site visit programme. The secretary was in contact with KABK representatives to work out the programme of the site visit (presented in

Annex 3) and agree on the materials to be made available (listed in Annex 4). The final arrangements were validated by the panel chair. In order to allow the panel to prepare for its tasks, the programmes under review produced a common Self-Evaluation Report providing relevant background information on the programmes and addressing extensively the issues covered by the NVAO standards under review. Moreover, the panel had access to a digital folder with background information on each of the seven programmes / departments. The panel wants to thank the quality assurance team at KABK who has been instrumental in ensuring a good and timely information flow from the programmes to the panel.

When putting together the panel, the KABK explicitly aimed at finding experts with a broad view on Art and Design education who could speak out on both degree programmes and the seven dedicated specialisations. Hence, rather than focusing on one (degree) programme, each panel member studied all the information made available by KABK and looked into graduation projects across all departments. Similarly, several sessions during the visit addressed all (degree) programmes together; in parallel sessions, the panel ensured that there was consistency in the topics it addressed with the respective programme stakeholders.

The NVAO standard on achieved learning outcomes is tested among others by examining a sample of end level products. The panel secretary organised the graduation project review with KABK and supported the panel members in their work. In line with NVAO requirements, the panel reviewed the final projects of 45 students who graduated between September 2019 and August 2021. Based on a list of 318 student numbers, the chair and the panel secretary selected 15 Fine Art and 30 Design graduation projects. The selection consisted of projects representing the different programmes, with a variety of scores supervised by different tutors. Each panel member reviewed at least one graduation project for each of the seven programmes.

In the run-up to the visit, the panel members attended the KABK Open Days, which were held online on 22 January 2022. In this way the panel was introduced to the different programmes and departments and got a grasp of the atmosphere at KABK. Moreover, each panel member studied the self-evaluation report, reviewed a sample of graduation projects and reported on their findings. The secretary compiled the findings in a discussion note which was used at the preparatory panel meeting on site. The programme schedule also featured an open consultation hour for students, teaching and support staff; eventually five people spoke individually and confidentially with the panel. Furthermore, KABK decided not to hold a separate development dialogue during the site visit but to organise it at a later stage.

Together with KABK, it was agreed that the panel would issue one report on its assessment of the two bachelor programmes Fine Art and Design. After the site visit, the secretary wrote a draft version of this report and circulated it to the panel members for review and feedback. Their comments were incorporated in a pre-final version, which was validated by the chair. The final draft was sent to KABK for a check on factual errors on 22 March 2022. Their feedback was discussed in the panel that modified the text where it thought this was appropriate. The chair then established the final version of this report, which was sent to KABK on 4 April 2022.



## Programme Assessment

### Standard 1 – Intended learning outcomes

*The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements.*

#### Profile

The panel gathered from the informative self-evaluation report and the discussions on site that the two degree programmes and the seven ‘specialisations’ offered by the respective departments have much in common in terms of profile, learning objectives and professional field. At KABK the two degree programmes are viewed as two more or less stereotypical ends of a continuum, defining a bandwidth for artists and designers to take their own positions as their main points of departure for their professional practice. Most students tend to feel more connected with either a mainly autonomous or a mainly design-oriented practice, but hardly anyone ends up in the extremes of the bandwidth. The panel noticed that this approach is in line with the programmes’ learning objectives that have been specified at national level for all Fine Art and Design programmes (see section below on intended learning outcomes).

The materials and discussions also showed that KABK has always focused on giving students a strong basis in a specific discipline as the starting point for their artistic and personal development, and continues to do so. Hence, the curricula, learning objectives and teaching practices are primarily organised along the lines of seven departments, which have their roots in specific fields of artistic practice. Prospective students apply for admission in one of these departments and upon enrolment, they get an introduction in their chosen specialisation and are challenged to explore how they can and want to connect with other disciplines in later years. Because the departments are embedded in the two degree programmes, structured in the same academy and housed under the same roof, there are many opportunities for encounters, collaborations and crossovers between students and teachers of various art and design disciplines. It is the task of the departments to encourage and inspire students in this discovery and to give feedback and guidance where necessary; it is up to the students to eventually find their own direction and shape their learning process accordingly. The panel noticed during the discussions that the physical organisation of KABK with its departments, studios and workshops invites students and staff to encounter each other across department walls; however, alumni, students and staff indicated that in many cases it is not easy to pursue such cooperation in the framework of individual study programmes.

Students and alumni from all over the world mentioned to the panel that they knew - more or less - what they signed up for when enrolling at KABK: they appreciated the clear information on the website, the straightforward application procedure, the attractive Open Days, and in some cases they were attracted by the word of mouth reputation of KABK. In case the programme delivery was somewhat different from the initial expectations, the unexpected strengths far outweighed the unexpected challenges.

During the discussions on site, several stakeholders referred to the metaphor of one tree and several branches who are separate and entangled at the same time. According to the panel, this is an accurate way of describing the position of the respective programmes within KABK.

The KABK and the Royal Conservatoire together form the University of the Arts The Hague. According to the Institutional Plan of the University of the Arts The Hague, “the dynamic in society and the arts calls for artists who are able to combine high artistic values with an open and inquisitive mind (...) We train students who are aware of what is happening in society, who reflect on the causes and consequences of events, explore the position they wish to take in relation to those events as artists or musicians, and accept responsibility for their decision.” This attention to developments in society and the ambition to have its students take position require the programme curricula to be representative of the issues and challenges today’s worldwide society is facing. The panel understood from the materials that such representation implies among others diversity and inclusiveness, two values KABK considers to be crucial for its mission as an art academy. The panel noticed during all the discussions on site that equity, diversity and inclusiveness are on the minds of the different stakeholders – students, tutors, department heads, institutional management, alumni and professional field. The discussion with the internationalisation director and the recently hired diversity officer confirmed the panel’s observation that the growing diversity (in the broadest sense) of the student population at KABK requires ongoing and comprehensive action, as well as clear and transparent communication to staff and student community.

The panel is aware that several initiatives have been and are being taken to make diversity and inclusiveness an integral part of what the Academy stands for. These interventions deserve continued attention and expansion in the future. According to the panel, the Academy and its departments could go further and structurally embed these principles in the learning outcomes of the respective programmes. Similarly, other features – such as internationalisation, interdisciplinarity, decoloniality, personalised learning trajectories - that KABK claims to be distinctive for its educational model, could also be reflected more explicitly in the intended and achieved learning outcomes.

### **Intended learning outcomes**

The programmes under review are offered already for more than twenty years. The previous accreditation panel performed an external assessment of the two degree programmes at the end of 2013, which resulted in a positive decision by NVAO early 2014. Around that time, the institutions offering Fine Art and Design programmes in the Netherlands were producing, under the umbrella of the *Vereniging Hogescholen* and with the support of the professional field, common professional and educational profiles for bachelor and master programmes in Fine Art and Design. This resulted in December 2014 in an official publication: *Beroepsprofiel en opleidingsprofielen Beeldende Kunst en Vormgeving*. In this document, the profiles are linked to the European-wide Dublin Descriptors, which in turn ensures that the competencies

established at programme level are in conformity with international standards as agreed in the Bologna process and the European Qualification Framework.

The intended learning outcomes for all Art and Design programmes in the Netherlands are formulated as seven competences which students should have achieved by the end of their bachelor or master programme: (i) creative ability; (ii) ability for critical reflection; (iii) ability for growth and innovation; (iv) organisational ability; (v) communicative ability; (vi) contextual awareness; (vii) collaborative ability. The panel was informed that still today, this professional and educational profile is the leading document for calibrating the learning outcomes of the Fine Art and Design programmes offered at KABK and all other art and design academies in the Netherlands.

While the national reference document and competence framework have not changed over the past seven years, the panel gathered from the extensive and highly informative section in the self-evaluation report that over the years KABK and its respective departments have gone at lengths to apply this educational framework to its daily educational practice of teaching and assessment in the different programmes. First, the generally formulated learning objectives were slightly adapted to better reflect the educational and artistic vision of KABK; then, these “KABK qualifications” were tailored to the specific needs and requirements of the respective departments. This means that in line with their autonomy and responsibility to design and implement curricula that enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes, each department has adjusted the learning outcomes according to its own flavour and in a way that befits the specific programme.

The panel noticed in the programme-specific materials that all departments share common learning outcomes (as defined nation-wide) but indeed apply these in their own specific context. Some departments have rigorously rephrased the seven competencies while other departments have included more straightforward changes that remain closer to the original formulation. In all cases, the resulting learning outcomes constitute programme-specific reference frameworks that students and teachers follow during the respective four-year bachelor programmes.

The panel thinks highly of both the KABK approach to setting programme learning outcomes and the resulting sets of learning outcomes in the different departments/programmes. The panel acknowledges first of all that adhering to the common national framework ensures that the learning outcomes of all seven programmes comply with both national and international requirements regarding domain, level and orientation. Moreover, the panel establishes that the department-specific translation of the national framework is done properly in all seven programmes. This results in learning outcomes that do justice to the profile of art and design education at KABK and to the history, conventions, discourse, vocabulary and idiom of the respective disciplines at KABK.

Further to its suggestion under profile, the panel advises KABK and its departments to consider reflecting the values of equity, diversity and inclusiveness more explicitly in the learning outcomes of the respective programmes, as well as the features that are distinctive for its

educational delivery: internationalisation, interdisciplinarity, personalised learning trajectories. Society is changing, the perspective on art and design is developing, and also the composition of the student body is more diverse than ever: KABK and its departments could capture these changes and developments more explicitly and make these an integral part of their educational objectives.

### **Professional field**

The panel learned from the self-evaluation report, the programme-specific materials and the discussions on site that the professional field plays an important role in the strategic choices of the KABK, its departments, staff and students. Most teaching staff have an active professional practice outside KABK, while other practitioners share their expertise with the programmes and the students during guest lectures, as internship providers or external examiners. Each department has installed a Professional Advisory Committee to share in a structured way the latest developments in the field and advise on the consequences of these changes for the curricula and the learning outcomes. External examiners are asked to comment on the (end) level of the students.

The discussions with representatives of the professional field showed that there is regular interaction between the field and the Academy and that the needs and expectations of the professional field are taken on board in the respective programmes. The panel noticed that most interactions happen rather informally, also at the level of the Advisory Committees. Moreover, several representatives of the professional field indicated to the panel that they were not aware of the existence of Advisory Committees and would be willing to join these.

Hence, the panel thinks there is room for more structural input from the professional field in general and of the Advisory Committees in particular. The level of expertise among the professional field representatives the panel spoke to is very high; their input would certainly be valuable when discussing the actuality of the learning outcomes. Moreover, their commitment to KABK and its departments is a very strong asset for the programmes and should be cherished and used by the entire departments, i.e. not only by the Heads of department, but through joint meetings involving also the teachers/tutors, students and alumni.

### **Considerations**

The panel considers that the two degree programmes offered by seven departments at KABK all have a clear and specific profile that can be described as individual branches of one tree. The KABK-tree has a clear vision on art and design education, which the department-branches implement in their own way with much room for autonomy and responsibility.

According to the panel, the intended learning outcomes are formulated adequately and reflect not only the nation-wide professional and educational frameworks but also the specific characteristics of the respective programmes. The panel thinks highly of the way in which some

departments have translated this common framework and assume responsibility for their own sets of learning outcomes. The panel encourages the sharing of good practice across the programmes.

Furthermore, the panel appreciates the efforts of KABK and its departments to involve the professional field in its programmes. The panel thinks that the revitalisation of the Professional Advisory Committees is a very relevant initiative that – at least in certain programmes – require some more dissemination and structured follow-up.

The panel considers that at the time of the site visit early 2022 the intended learning outcomes of the degree programmes and their specialisations are adequate. In so far as the future development of the programmes is concerned, the panel noticed that certain elements that KABK claims to be in the profile of the institution and the programmes – such as internationalisation, diversity, inclusiveness, interdisciplinarity, etc. – can be crystallised further and taken on board more prominently in the learning outcomes. This rigorous exercise is likely to take time and ideally involves a broad set of stakeholders including tutors, students, alumni and professional practitioners.

## **Conclusion**

In sum, the panel considers that the intended learning outcomes are formulated in such a way that they align well with the objectives of the programmes and the profile of the institution. Moreover, the intended learning outcomes are sufficiently concrete with regard to content, level and orientation. As a result, **the panel judges that the bachelor programmes Fine Art and Design meet standard 1, intended learning outcomes.**

## **Standard 4 – Achieved learning outcomes**

*The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.*

### **Quality of end level products**

In line with NVAO requirements, the panel reviewed a representative sample of 45 graduation projects, i.e. the set of products presented by students who graduated between September 2019 and August 2021. In order to make a valid selection of the graduation projects, the degree programmes provided an overview of all 318 students whose graduation file had been submitted and accepted in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. In their selection, the chair and panel secretary ensured that the selected sample represented a wide range of scores, different graduation years and possibly programme variants. It was agreed with KABK that the panel would review 5 ArtScience and 10 Fine Arts projects, as well as 6 projects from each of the five Design disciplines. The internal allocation of the projects ensured that each panel member would review at least one project from each of the seven programmes.

Prior to the site visit, the panel members reviewed and reported on the quality of the end level products. For each student the experts answered three questions: (i) Is the graduation project of sufficient quality to pass? (ii) Do you agree to the score (and constituent criteria) given by the tutors? (iii) Is the score adequately motivated in the evaluation form? Furthermore, panel members were asked to report on their impressions regarding the overall quality of the sample they had reviewed. Once all contributions were gathered, the secretary drafted a note on the graduation project review which was discussed at the preparatory meeting.

Overall, panel members indicated that 43 out of 45 graduation projects definitely were of (more than) sufficient quality: in two cases relating to different Design disciplines the projects had received the lowest possible pass score and the panel only questioned one component of the graduation project. Furthermore, the panel agreed to the scores of 41 out of 45 projects: the four other cases related to the three Design disciplines that issue scores rather than pass/fail marks.

Based on the individual review of graduation projects and their discussion in the preparatory meeting, the panel established that the overall quality of the graduation projects was good. In their feedback on the review, panel members noticed:

- a strong diversity in the works, with some surprises by fresh and unique talents who will certainly find their way in the professional field;
- clear thematic interconnections between the projects and the theses, which are both of good quality and demonstrate that the graduation looks holistically at student learning;
- that the projects show the curiosity and self-development that is required to pass from the academy to the professional world;
- that student communication is of high level and articulates the work and its relevance;
- that students were able to find and follow their interest and express and communicate this in their graduation project;
- that several works show a thorough sense of social, economic and political sensitivity;
- that high scoring students deliver projects and theses of an exceptional standard.

All in all, the reviewed graduation works confirm the reputation of KABK as one of best quality Art Academies in The Netherlands. Moreover, the panel established that the graduation projects – whether realised during the initial stages of the lockdown (2019-2020) or after a whole year of COVID-19 restrictions (2020-2021) – demonstrate that students invariably achieve the final qualifications of the respective programmes.

Although it is not part of the assessment standards in this accreditation exercise, the panel wants to indicate – and informed the departments and the Examination Board accordingly – that the comments made by the assessors in the evaluation forms of the graduation projects were not always constructive or helpful to the student. Across all programmes and their respective graduation trajectories the panel found that most evaluation forms had been completed in an insightful and critical manner. However, in one third of the cases – and spread over all seven programmes – the feedback was not up to the level expected: amount, detail and quality varied

largely. In these cases the panel found that assessments contained mainly informal and descriptive feedback, that the feedback was not linked to the criteria and competences, and/or that the motivations were based on the subjective appreciation of the assessor. Overall, the format of the feedback as well as the feedback itself given across the programmes was inconsistent: while there were several examples of good practice, the panel was taken aback by some of the feedback and comments where assessors used personalised language, subjective commentary and provided no critical or constructive direction for the student to pursue. In these cases, it was unclear as to how assessors understand the student journey, how this assessment is passed on to students, and whether assessors are supported to develop inclusive and constructive forms of assessment. Confronted with these findings during the site visit, the Examination Board indicated that they were aware of the situation and had taken the issue up with the Heads of department. The panel was assured that as of the current academic year 2021-2022, assessors will be informed explicitly about what is expected in terms of feedback; programme staff in charge of the respective graduation trajectories will review the completed evaluation forms prior to finalising the assessment.

### **Performance of graduates**

Another way to demonstrate the achievement of the learning outcomes is to look at the professional whereabouts of the graduates. The information provided in the self-evaluation report indicates that graduates find themselves in a professional practice and a labour market that is very diverse and dynamic. During the visit, alumni confirmed the statements in the report that the Fine Art and Design programmes do not train students for jobs with well-defined sets of knowledge and skills, but support students in articulating their own role and place in the field and in developing their capacity and attitude to enter the labour market as starting professionals.

During the visit, the professional field shared their experiences and spoke highly of the students and graduates. As a recommendation they stressed the importance to provide space in the programme to provide more opportunities to train the students for an increased fluid or hybrid practice.

The panel gathered from data provided by KABK and taken from *Kunstenmonitor*, a national alumni survey carried out 18 months after graduation, that Fine Art graduates from KABK tend to work more often than their peers from other Art Academies entirely within their own discipline, that the level of their function more often matches their level of education and that they include more often teaching activities among their professional endeavours. The Design graduates from KABK consider themselves to be better prepared for professional practice than their peers across the Netherlands; one out of four KABK Design graduates who participated in the 2020 survey mentioned that their professional activities include teaching.

On request of the panel, the Quality Assurance team at KABK provided data on the Fine Art and Design graduates who continue to study. Overall, about 20% of the bachelor graduates decided to start a new study programme (almost) immediately upon graduation. Although

shares tend to vary considerably across years and programmes because of the limited number of students, the data show that graduates from Textile & Fashion, ArtScience and Interactive Media Design engage more often than their peers in a follow-up study. Although it transcends the remit of this assessment and should be addressed at a much higher – political – level, the panel wants to express the message of several students and alumni who indicated that for students from outside the EU, enrolling for a follow-up programme is often the only way to remain legally in Europe.

Finally, the panel obtained an interesting qualitative insight in the professional development of KABK graduates through written interviews with 32 alumni from the years 2015-2021 and across all seven departments. These interviews, as well as the discussions with graduates on site, confirm that most alumni eventually found their position and role in professional practice and in society. They very often work as creative or performing artists or designers, and a large majority is working partly or exclusively within their own disciplines. The interviews and discussions showed that alumni very often follow quite personal routes after their graduation developing a diversity of professional practices and fulfilling different roles within their practices. In this practice they often combine commissioned and independent work and usually transgress the borders between traditional art and design disciplines. Graduates appreciate in particular the attention of the KABK programmes to networking, to teaching students how to communicate about their work, and to developing a certain work ethic and professional attitude that now serves them well in their professional life. Finally, many graduates define their artistic practice as a form of (artistic) research, express a strong social engagement in their practice and are concerned with themes that are at the heart of current discourse in society.

In sum, the panel thinks that the professional whereabouts of the respective programme alumni confirm that students who graduate have indeed achieved the final qualifications of a bachelor Fine Art and Design, KABK style.

### **Considerations**

In order to establish whether the programme learning outcomes have been achieved, the panel has performed a quality review of the final products and checked what graduates were doing after they had finished the Fine Art and Design degree programmes at KABK.

Based on its review of 45 graduation projects, the panel considers that students who pass the programmes' respective graduation trajectories have indeed achieved the intended learning outcomes and demonstrate a level of competency that can be expected of a bachelor Fine Art or Design. Across the board, the panel found the quality of the graduation projects to be good. In several cases, the graduation projects demonstrate qualities and features – communication abilities, social and political sensitivity, artistic research, etc. - that alumni consider to be core elements in their professional practice.



Furthermore, the written information as well as the discussions with recent graduates, alumni and the professional field demonstrate according to the panel that the different departments prepare students well to find and articulate their own role and place in the field.

Having established that students achieve the learning outcomes of the respective degree programmes and their specialisations, the panel noticed that the feedback in evaluation forms can be more insightful. While the majority of forms are completed in an adequate or exemplary way, one third of the evaluations proved to be merely descriptive and/or subjective. Following its discussions with the Heads of department and the Examination Board, the panel is assured that this issue will receive proper attention as of the next graduation phase.

### **Conclusion**

In sum, the panel considers that students who pass the graduation project invariably achieve the intended learning outcomes and are therefore entitled to graduate. Moreover, graduates eventually find their position in the professional field or engage in a follow-up study. As a result, *the panel judges that the bachelor programmes Fine Art and Design meet standard 4, achieved learning outcomes.*

### **Additional topics: COVID-19 and social safety**

Although the panel is formally expected to assess only the intended and achieved learning outcomes of the Fine Art and Design programmes, important developments in the recent past require specific attention in this report.

#### **COVID-19 pandemic**

At the start of the pandemic in March 2020, the KABK buildings were locked and education temporarily moved to online environments. While the programmes in normal circumstances place great emphasis on working in studios, one-to-one guidance and peer feedback, the unforeseen emergency situation did not make it impossible for students to complete their projects in time and within the applicable quality criteria. This required a good deal of flexibility and improvisation from both students and tutors. Once the Government regulations gave the opportunity to open buildings for practice-based education, graduates were allowed to make use of the workshops and studios to complete their graduation projects. Students and recent graduates confirmed to the panel that everyone involved has made an effort in dealing with the special and challenging situation. Reviewing a sample of end level products, the panel established that the quality of the 2019-2020 graduation projects was not affected by the pandemic.

At the start of the academic year 2020-2021, the KABK reopened as the Academy was recognised to provide practical education. This meant that students could work at least part of the time in the studio space again. However, structural contacts with other departments, with fellow students from other programmes and even with other cohorts of Fine Art and Design students were not possible. While KABK students are aware that they were better off than students in non-practical education and acknowledge the efforts of KABK management, teachers and tutors to keep the education process going in the best possible way, they also reported that conditions for on-site teaching and learning were not comparable to the pre-COVID phase. Moreover, the ongoing pandemic with its periods of severe and mild lockdowns started to impact considerably on the wellbeing of students. This applied in particular to the many international students who either returned home (and only participated from a distance) or stayed in The Hague but were regularly confined to their student dorms. The longer periods of isolation made it clear to both students and staff that studying, and in particular the structure and community that comes with education, plays an important role in the lives of most students. In times of lockdown it was important for everyone to feel connected to their surroundings and for many (international) students the only connection they had was KABK.

At the time of the assessment visit early 2022, the current academic year has seen another period of lockdown. The panel noticed that by now, students and staff have come to accept the pandemic as a kind of permanent condition that on the one hand complicates education and prevents certain forms of community building (parties!), but on the other hand does not refrain students and staff from getting as much as possible out of their education and teaching. The COVID-19 pandemic has led departments to explore new modes of teaching and collaboration, rethink assignments and assessments and reach out to new partners and venues for cooperation. By now, students and staff are focusing on what is possible under the circumstances rather than on what they cannot do anymore. departments intend to integrate many of the new insights, including on the use of new technologies, in the delivery of their education in the coming years.

Besides the overall negative effects of studying online due to Covid measures, several conversations also underlined the positive effects of online learning for students with special needs such as dyslexia and autism. It is recommended to consider the continued implementation of some of these positive lessons learned in the regular programme.

In sum, the panel gathers from the self-evaluation report and the discussions on site that the pandemic has certainly had an impact on the practical and community-building aspects of education, as well as on the mental wellbeing of students. However, there does not seem to be a major negative influence on the didactic set-up of the programmes, nor on the quality of the student work.

### **Social safety**

Both in the student contribution and in the reflective chapter of the self-evaluation report, the issue of social safety is mentioned. A newspaper article from 2020 about transgressive behaviour at KABK led to a wave of personal experiences, revelations and accusations, and an

independent investigation into the safety culture of/at the academy. Following the publication of the report on this investigation in March 2021, the KABK director and the chairperson of the Supervisory Board resigned.

From the self-evaluation report and the discussions during the site-visit, the panel gathers that the programmes and the academy as a whole acknowledge that these issues have received too little attention for a long period of time, and take this critique very seriously. The newspaper article and the independent report have led to intensive discussions among students and staff about behaviour and educational approach, to personnel changes at institutional and departmental level, to the renewal of the code of conduct and the appointment of a new confidential advisor.

Although it is beyond the scope of the panel's assessment tasks, it welcomes this growing awareness of the importance of social safety in the learning-teaching environment and the steps taken so far towards improvement. The panel encourages the creation of an action plan by KABK and its departments to address deeper causes they have noted, and their impact on pedagogical principles and the organisation of their education. This action plan once agreed, and its progress could be regularly communicated as a part of regular executive and departmental meetings.

## **Overall judgement**

In sum, the panel considers that both degree programmes meet the two NVAO standards under consideration: intended learning outcomes and achieved learning outcomes. **The panel therefore issues a positive advice to NVAO on the quality of the bachelor programme Fine Art and on the bachelor programme Design submitted for accreditation by the Royal Academy of Art The Hague.**



## Annexes

### Annex 1 – Administrative data on institution and programme

#### Administrative data on the institution

Name of the institution:	The Hague University of the Arts Royal Academy of Art The Hague
Status of the institution:	publicly funded
Result of the institutional quality assurance assessment:	positive (2020)
Contact person:	Leo Capel (l.capel@kabk.nl)

#### Administrative data on the programmes

Degree programme:	Fine Art
CROHO:	39110
Programmes:	ArtScience Fine Arts*
Degree programme:	Design
CROHO:	39111
Programmes:	Graphic Design Photography* Interactive / Media / Design Interior Architecture & Furniture Design Textile & Fashion
Level:	bachelor
Orientation:	professional
Credits:	240 ECTS
Location:	The Hague
Mode of study:	full-time (* and part-time)
Language:	English

## **Annex 2 – Assessment panel**

### **Edwin Jacobs, panel chair**

Edwin is director of the Maastricht Institute of Arts at Hogeschool Zuyd, which offers among others bachelor programmes in Fine Arts, Design, Architecture and Interior Design, Visual Communication, and Communication and Multimedia Design.

### **Dr. Sarah Bennett, member**

Sarah is visiting fellow at Kingston University (UK) and worked as programme director and external examiner for different Fine Art programmes. She has extensive accreditation expertise and is board member of the evaluation agency EQ Arts.

### **Dr. Anne Nigten, member**

Anne is director/owner of The Patching Zone, a transdisciplinary R&D media lab. Anne has a helicopter view on art education programmes in the Netherlands and is currently developing a centre of expertise for Art and Education at the Amsterdam University of the Arts.

### **Dr. Rathna Ramanathan, member**

Rathna has a background in graphic design and typography and is currently Dean of Academic Strategy at Central Saint Martins (UK). She has extensive work experience in different cultural, organisational and professional contexts.

### **Bertan Selim, member**

Bertan has roots in Macedonia, a background in Photography and an MA European History and Culture (University of Amsterdam). He is an experienced manager in arts and creative industries at international level and currently Head of Fundraising and Communications at the Prince Claus Fund.

### **Benedikt Rittger, student-member**

Benedikt was born in Germany and studies at the Willem De Kooning Academy. He is enrolled in a Dual Degree at the Rotterdam Arts and Sciences Lab (RASL) involving Codarts, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Erasmus University College and WDKA.

### **Mark Delmartino, secretary / process coordinator**

Mark is managing director of MDM Consultancy in Antwerp, Belgium. He is certified by NVAO since 2010 and regularly accompanies panels on assessment visits.

All panel members and the secretary have signed the NVAO Declaration of non-disclosure and independence.

## **Annex 3 – Site visit schedule**

**Venue:** KABK, Conference Room & Gispenzaal

### **Tuesday 22 February 2022**

11h00 Arrival panel chair and secretary – internal meeting  
12h00 Arrival panel members, lunch, internal meeting and open consultation hour  
15h00 Meet and Greet, guided tour of KABK departments  
16h30 Session with Heads of department  
18h00 Internal panel meeting  
18h30 End of day 1

### **Wednesday 23 February 2022**

08h30 Arrival panel – internal meeting  
09h00 Session with Fine Art students  
10h00 Break  
10h30 Parallel sessions with Design students  
11h30 Break  
12h00 Parallel sessions with Fine Art and Design alumni  
13h00 Lunch and internal panel meeting  
14h00 Parallel sessions with professional field representatives Fine Art and Design  
15h00 Break  
15h30 Parallel sessions with Design teachers/tutors  
16h30 Break  
17h00 Session with Fine Art teachers/tutors  
18h00 Internal panel meeting  
19h00 End of day 2

### **Thursday 24 February 2022**

08h30 Arrival panel – internal meeting  
09h00 Session with Examination Board, Study Programme Committee and Academy Council  
10h00 Break  
10h30 Session with Heads of department  
11h30 Break  
12h00 Session with institutional management  
12h30 Lunch and internal panel meeting  
13h00 Session with KABK internationalisation director and diversity officer  
13h30 Internal panel meeting  
14h30 Feedback to programme stakeholders  
15h00 End of site visit

An overview of the persons interviewed is available on request.

## **Annex 4 – Materials reviewed**

The panel studied first and foremost the following document:

- Academy in Transition in a World in Transition, Self-evaluation Bachelor Fine Art and Bachelor Design, Royal Academy of Art The Hague, January 2022. Students from the two programmes produced a Student Contribution, which was integrated in the self-evaluation report as a self-standing chapter.

Moreover, the departments put at disposition a digital folder featuring background information per programme. Each department provided materials on:

- the profile of the discipline
- the learning outcomes
- the curriculum with an overview of courses and study credits
- the graduation trajectory
- professional practice including portraits of alumni
- a reflection from the department

The QA team also provided the panel with:

- Education and Examination Regulations 2019-2020 & 2020-2021
- *Beroepsprofielen en Opleidingsprofielen Beeldende Kunst en Vormgeving* (2014)
- An overview of the follow-up study programmes of KABK Fine Art and Design graduates

Prior to the site visit, the panel reviewed a representative sample of 45 graduation projects (15 in Fine Art and 30 in Design) and their evaluation forms selected among the 318 students who graduated the two degree programmes between September 2019 and August 2021. A list of the selected student numbers and their graduation projects is available on request.

The panel was invited to attend the KABK Open Days 2022 on 22 January 2022. All panel members attended the online event.