CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

––––––––––––––––––––––––––––––

EVALUATION REPORT

MEDIA ART STUDY FIELD

at Vilnius Academy of Arts

Expert panel:

1. **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Peter Purg (panel chairperson),** *academic;*

2. **Prof. Dr. Peeter Linnap,** *academic;*

3. **Ms Viktorija Šiaulytė,** *representative of social partners;*

4. **Ms Andrea Paricio Henares,** *students' representative.*

Evaluation coordinator – *Ms Austėja Pliupelytė*

Report language – English

Vilnius
2023

Study Field Data

Title of the study programme	*Photography and Media Art*	*Animation*
State code	6121PX014	6121PX011
Type of studies	Higher education university studies	Higher education university studies
Cycle of studies	First	First
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full time 4 years	Full time 4 years
Credit volume	240	240
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Bachelor of Arts	Bachelor of Arts
Language of instruction	Lithuanian	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Secondary education	Secondary education
Registration date of the study programme	19 May 1997	14 June 2002

Title of the study programme	*Photography and Media Art*
State code	6211PX008
Type of studies	Higher education university studies
Cycle of studies	Second
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full time 2 years
Credit volume	120
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Master of Arts
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Degree or equivalent
Registration date of the study programme	19 May 1997

CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluations of study fields in Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are based on the Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Studies, Evaluation Areas and Indicators, approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport on 17 July 2019, Order No. V-835, and are carried out according to the procedure outlined in the Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC) on 31 December 2019, Order No. V-149.

The evaluation is intended to help higher education institutions to constantly improve their study process and to inform the public about the quality of studies.

The evaluation process consists of the main following stages: *1) self-evaluation and self-evaluation report (SER) prepared by HEI; 2) site visit of the expert panel to the HEI; 3) production of the external evaluation report (EER) by the expert panel and its publication; 4) follow-up activities.*

On the basis of this external evaluation report of the study field, SKVC takes a decision to accredit the study field either for 7 years or for 3 years. If the field evaluation is negative then the study field is not accredited.

The study field and cycle are **accredited for 7 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as exceptional (5 points), very good (4 points) or good (3 points).

The study field and cycle are **accredited for 3 years** if one of the evaluation areas is evaluated as satisfactory (2 points).

The study field and cycle are **not accredited** if at least one of the evaluation areas is evaluated as unsatisfactory (1 point).

1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The review of the programme was organised by SKVC in its role as the Authorised Agency prescribed by Lithuanian law. The review was conducted in accordance with the prescribed methodology according to the procedures for the external review of higher education in

Lithuania. Vilnius Academy of Arts (hereafter, VAA/Academy) submitted a comprehensive Self-Evaluation Report with annexes.

The expert team visited VAA on November 22, 2022, participating in meetings arranged by VAA. The expert team consisted of team leader Prof. Peter Purg and team members Prof. Peeter Linnap, social partners' representative Ms Viktorija Siaulyte and student representative Ms Andrea Paricio.

The expert panel interviewed the rector and senior administration staff of the Academy and the Department of Photography and Media Art, the authors of the self-assessment report, programme administrators, academic staff, students, alumni and social partners. The SER provided a suitable basis for the evaluation. The evaluation was further informed by the meetings. The expert team provided oral feedback at the end of the evaluation visit. The panel is thankful to all colleagues at VAA, the students, alumni and stakeholders, for their kind help in this process.

The expert panel was assigned according to the Experts Selection Procedure as approved by the Director of SKVC on 31 December 2019, Order No. V-149. The site visit to the HEI was conducted by the expert panel on November 22, 2022.

> **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Peter Purg (Slovenia),** *panel chair*, Dean of School of Humanities at University of Nova Gorica; associate professor at the School of Arts, University of Nova Gorica; President of the Slovenian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.
>
> **Prof. Dr. Peeter Linnap (Estonia),** *panel member – academic*, Head of Photography Department at Pallas University of Applied Sciences.
>
> **Ms. Viktorija Šiaulytė (Lithuania),** *representative of social partners*, producer; curator at Rupert art centre; affiliate at The Art, Culture, and Technology programme at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
>
> **Ms. Andrea Paricio Henares (Spain),** *student representative*, second-year Master's student of study programme Multimedia and Visual Arts at The Polytechnic University of Valencia; member of the ESU Quality Assurance Student Experts Pool.

1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

The documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by SKVC. Along with the SER and annexes, the following additional documents have been provided by the HEI before, during and/or after the site visit:

No.	Name of the document
1.	Graduate survey table broken down by Media Art study programmes

1.4. BACKGROUND OF MEDIA ART FIELD STUDIES AT VILNIUS ACADEMY OF ARTS

Vilnius Academy of Arts is a state university-type higher education institution. The Academy consists of 4 faculties in Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda and Telšiai, offering 49 programmes in the group of fields of study in Fine Arts, Design, Architecture, Media Art, Restoration of Art Objects and 2 programmes in the fields of Art Criticism in Humanities as well as 3 doctoral art and science study programmes. The collegial management bodies of the Academy are the Council, the Senate and the sole management body – the Rector of the Academy. Student representatives delegated by the Student Union participate in all collegial management bodies of the Academy. The Department of Photography and Media Art and the corresponding curricula were established originally in 1996 as part of the Faculty of Visual and Applied Arts that at the time was one of five faculties in VAA. The Department of Photography and Media Art conducts the 3 study programmes that are under evaluation in the study field of media art: the first-cycle Photography and Media Art and Animation and the second-cycle Photography and Media Art, all programmes being run in the Vilnius Faculty. The Department of Photography and Media Art is currently located in the contemporary building *Titanikas* and their programme was designed to meet the country's need for specialists in this subject area.

At present, in Lithuania, first-cycle university-level studies in the study field of media art are implemented by the Vilnius Academy of Arts and Vytautas Magnus University, while the second-cycle university-level studies are conducted only by the Vilnius Academy of Arts. The Department and its programmes collaborate with the Lithuanian Interdisciplinary Art Creators' Union, the Lithuanian Photographers' Union, the Contemporary Art Festival "Virus" and the Media Art Festival "Enter", "Vilniaus Galerijų Savatigalis", public institution INSTITUTO MEDIA (AltLab) among others and a number of foreign partners, such as Helsinki University of the Arts, Aalto University, Estonian Academy of Arts, MPLab at Liepaja University, Westminster

University (UK), as well as different foreign galleries and organisations (e.g., Ars Electronica). During the evaluation period 2018-2021, 14 projects in art, studies and research have acquired funding.

The BA and MA programmes in Photography and Media Art were last evaluated in 2014, Bachelor programme in Animation in 2015. In the last-mentioned evaluation, the review team among other issues strongly suggested "urgent and drastic revision of the programme, programme aims, programme learning outcomes and programme focus" (SER 2015, p. 19) In the current programme these similar issues have been successfully solved. While the evaluation areas in the Photography and Media Department, in general, got all marked 3 in 2014 (SER 2014, p. 23), this year the same areas are evaluated remarkably higher with only marks 4-5. The curriculum in general, in this historical comparison, has got much clearer and simpler, better structured and it indicates among other things much more serious dedication to management, quality culture, equal opportunities and other central issues today.

II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Media Art study field and *first cycle* at Vilnius Academy of Arts is given a **positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	4
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	5
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	5
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
	Total:	30

*1 (unsatisfactory) - the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental shortcomings that prevent the implementation of the field studies.

2 (satisfactory) - the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are fundamental shortcomings that need to be eliminated.

3 (good) - the area is being developed systematically, without any fundamental shortcomings.

4 (very good) - the area is evaluated very well in the national context and internationally, without any shortcomings;

5 (excellent) - the area is evaluated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally.

Media Art study field and *second cycle* at Vilnius Academy of Arts is given a **positive** evaluation.

Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points*
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	4
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	5
3.	Student admission and support	5
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	4
5.	Teaching staff	5
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Study quality management and public information	4
	Total:	31

*1 (unsatisfactory) - the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental shortcomings that prevent the implementation of the field studies.

2 (satisfactory) - the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are fundamental shortcomings that need to be eliminated.

3 (good) - the area is being developed systematically, without any fundamental shortcomings.

4 (very good) - the area is evaluated very well in the national context and internationally, without any shortcomings;

5 (excellent) - the area is evaluated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally.

III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

3.1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

Study aims, outcomes and content shall be assessed in accordance with the following indicators:

3.1.1. Evaluation of the conformity of the aims and outcomes of the field and cycle study programmes to the needs of the society and/or the labour market (not applicable to HEIs operating in exile conditions)

All three programmes are well aligned with the field standards, with good differentiation between BA and MA level, including employability, and social relevance. They conform to the needs of society as indicated by the data introduced in the SER, and confirmed in discussions with the social partners. The realm of photography and media art is absorbing the graduates quite well, offering them a range of possible study-field-relevant career pathways immediately after graduation. Particularly "Table III. The relationships between the learning objective, expected outcomes and study subjects of the MA study programme of the Photography and Media Art" (SER, p. 20) shows a good integration of social-environmental and needs awareness of the programme; this is also consistent with the section "4. Studying, learning achievements and graduate employment" in the SER (p. 79).

The courses offered by the HEI in this study field, such as "Self-curatorship: Research and Writing", "Curatorship with Others: Collaboration" and "Artist's Career Management" prepare the graduates of the study field for the transition to the labour market, developing not only artistic skills but also collaborative and managerial skills. Changes in the study programmes pay attention to the needs of the labour market, whereas social partners are also involved in the study programmes' development to a considerable extent.

Employers expressed a particular need for students to develop self-directed learning and self-management of career development that would comply with the real needs in an artistic freelancer career scenario. This is partly lacking in the provision of subjects, especially in both reviewed BA programmes, and would need to be better aligned with the employment-oriented competencies of both programmes. The MA programme, with its increasing focus on artistic

research, also in its applied forms, appears to be slightly better aligned with the overall aims of the programmes (as being MA-level) in this respect.

3.1.2. Evaluation of the conformity of the field and cycle study programme aims and outcomes with the mission, objectives of activities and strategy of the HEI

All three reviewed study programmes in VAA and their outcomes do well conform to the HEI's mission and strategy (SER, p. 83), and especially the "intense art and research activity" (SER, p. 24) priority, in particular, they positively correspond with the "interaction between art, science and technology" priority of the published vision (c.f. [institutional website](#)). These also conform to relevant projects like "Higher Education for Smart Specialisation" (HESS), Supporting Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Higher Education in Lithuania among others which is well reflected in the HEI's strategy. The artistic profile at VAA, as in Colleges of Higher Education in general, is aligned and shows a cycle-sensitive levelling of competencies, covering artistic applications and interdisciplinary connections with scientific works, experimental development in R&D, the provision of additional and emerging competencies, qualification improvement, consultations and educational and research activities.

For the MA programme this refers particularly to the "Skills to carry out research" (SER, p. 21) while for Animation BA programme it refers to the "Subject-Specific skills" (SER, p. 17) especially C5 - C6.; and for Subject-Specific skills (SER, p. 11), especially C4 - C6. *Note: this finding also links to the section 4.2.3. 'Evaluation of employability of graduates and graduate career tracking in the study field' below.*

3.1.3. Evaluation of the compliance of the field and cycle study programme with legal requirements

The three study programmes under evaluation do comply with legal requirements, including „General Requirements for the provision of studies" from 30 December 2016 No. V-1168; The Descriptor of the Study field of Media Art from 5 May 2021 No. V-717; Law on Higher Education and Research from 30 April 2009 No XI-242; Amending Resolution No 149 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 1 March 2017 on the implementation of the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania. The credit system is in place and well-tracked, according to all legal requirements. The contact hours are implemented according to

the syllabi. Individual learning is conducted correctly, well mentored and reflects the ECTS value. The programmes are fully compliant:

Table No. 1. Media Art study field programmes and their compliance to general requirements for *first cycle* study programmes (BA).

Criteria	General legal requirements	In the Programmes
Scope of the programme in ECTS	180, 210 or 240 ECTS	240
ECTS for the study field	No less than 120 ECTS	171
ECTS for studies specified by University or optional studies	No more than 120 ECTS	24
ECTS for internship	No less than 15 ECTS	15
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 15 ECTS	15
Contact hours	No less than 20%	No less than 20%
Individual learning	No less than 30%	No less than 30%

Table No. 2. Media Art study field programme and compliance to general requirements for *second cycle* study programmes (MA).

Criteria	General legal requirements	In the Programme
Scope of the programme in ECTS	90 or 120 ECTS	120
ECTS for the study field Information Services	No less than 60 ECTS	60
ECTS for studies specified by University or optional studies	No more than 30 ECTS	30
ECTS for final thesis (project)	No less than 30 ECTS	30
Contact hours	No less than 10%	No less than 10%
Individual learning	No less than 50%	No less than 50%

3.1.4. Evaluation of compatibility of aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods of the field and cycle study programmes

The aims, learning outcomes, and teaching/learning are compatible, well-tuned and efficiently monitored. Assessment methods are well-aligned, and implemented in an inclusive and transparent way. The Descriptor of Media Art Studies was observed in the recent review, and since 2019, the programmes under review have all been subject to revision in terms of course changes, additions, and objectives alignment.

The Head of the Department appears to be the main motor behind the integration of the artistic research competencies that provide students with competencies for analysing practical and theoretical contexts of artistic problems. VAA, and in particular the Photography and Media Art (hereafter, PMA) MA programme appear to be in the lead of this trend, not only in Lithuania but in a broader Baltic space, which is a part of their strategy and well-aligned with their national position as the central art academy.

All of the VAA Photography and Media Art Department's study field programmes have a logical curricular setup – they correspond well to the constituted aims of the study programmes. This is confirmed through student feedback in the SER (p. 113-115) among others, where students have examined teaching quality, assessment methods and learning outcomes as well as teaching and studying methods. Learning outcomes, as interviewees agreed, do indeed support the aims of the curriculum, which has been compiled and monitored in detail by the Study Programme Committee (hereafter – SPC). The learning purposes and outcomes were first made to correspond to the old descriptor "fine arts"; today these have been rearranged to the new Descriptor of Media Art Studies that did not yet exist for the field of study Media Art that was created only in 2021.

3.1.5. Evaluation of the totality of the field and cycle study programme subjects/modules, which ensures consistent development of competencies of students

The first cycle programmes have a total of 5 competency groups (21 sub-competencies in total) covering a wide range of variety which is suitable for 4-year studies. In the case of MA, there are also 5 large competency groups, however, this is subdivided into 16 sub-competencies which is understandable due to the shorter duration of this type of studies. The competencies

are both general/soft and specific/hard for degrees in the field of media art. These competencies are divided as an outcome between all subjects, each one of these normally covers several competencies, ensuring the correct acquisition by students throughout the programme.

All three evaluated programmes are structured in a way which is consistent with the foreseen competencies that also clearly respond both to the actual employment market and social needs as well as to the internally recognised relevant competencies, as agreed among the staff, and achieved by students as well as validated by assessment.

3.1.6. Evaluation of opportunities for students to personalise the structure of field study programmes according to their personal learning objectives and intended learning outcomes.

The offer of optional subjects falls within the range limited in the Descriptor of Media Art Studies which set a maximum of 60 elective ECTS. In the PMA BA, students can choose among an offer of 11 elective general subjects and 4 from the field of study (45 ECTS in total). In the case of Animation BA, the number is reduced to 7 elective general subjects and 3 from the study field (30 ECTS in total). It has to be taken into account that in both cases two subjects (6 ECTS in total) of foreign language learning can be chosen. In the case of the PMA MA, it has 6 general optional subjects to choose from and another 6 from the study field.

The SER documentation differs from the curriculum presented (and advertised on the website) as to the number of electives for both BA programmes: "Students of the first-cycle study programmes of media art can choose 10 (3 ECTs each) general university study subjects" (SER, p. 33). This difference may be aligned with some objectives of the programme, however, the SER does not provide a clarification on this. It is therefore recommended to review this difference to confirm whether the fewer electives in Animation BA corresponds to an objective, and if not, to match the number. It is also recommended in both cases to increase the number of optional subjects of study field since the range of possible specialisations within the field of media art is very large.

Personalisation opportunities are very good. Also, the personalisation of the programme's study experience is well promoted in all three programmes, especially the 2nd and 3rd years of the PMA BA programme. Notwithstanding many obligatory subjects, the Animation BA

programme offers enough electives to satisfy this indicator and features just a minor weakness. Overall, the Department offers a lot of electives to the students, international and national opportunities for personalised study experience within the field, and even interdisciplinary combinations, including out–of–school production (for MA also curatorial) experiences that are tailored to the student needs (as confirmed by the social partners) as well as assessed and accordingly awarded.

3.1.7. Evaluation of compliance of final theses with the field and cycle requirements

The principles of final thesis preparation, committee formation and defence are aligned with the field and cycle requirements in all three reviewed programmes, and no students expressed any cases of non-conforming to these procedures. The final theses reviewed show an average to above-average quality in general and with specific positive qualities as follows: PMA BA theses show particular transdisciplinary (expanded media) qualities; PMA MA is starting to show (i.e. the more recent theses feature) clear traces of introducing the methodologies of artistic research; Animation BA final works show particular artistic and fine-arts qualities. The practical parts of the thesis are well presented through the institution's abundant capacities for public exposure of final student work. Still, especially at the MA level, the depth of artistic research is not always presented well, even in the better-graded theses, since the methodological apparatus (sections on methods and tools of research) often lacks sufficient clarity. BA theses show an uneven consistency of bibliographic referencing and lack the depth of connecting theory and practice in a reflective and critical way.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:
1. Good compatibility and stringency of aims, learning outcomes and teaching/learning as well as assessment methods.
2. Most of the theses presented are of above-average quality and the practical parts of the theses get well presented through the institutional capacities for public exposure of final student work.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Employers expressed the need for students to develop self-directed (also non-formal) learning and self-management of the career that would comply with the real needs in an artistic freelancer career.
2. The fewer number of electives in Animation BA does not correspond to the programme objectives; both BA programmes show a number of optional subjects in the study field that do not correspond well with the range of possible specialisations within the plurality of the media field.

3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES

Links between science (art) and study activities shall be assessed in accordance with the following indicators:

3.2.1. Evaluation of the sufficiency of the science (applied science, art) activities implemented by the HEI for the field of research (art) related to the field of study

The part of science/art is well implemented by the Department, being on top of the whole academy (2nd place after Art History Department with its 16% research work quantity in VAA) (SER, p. 52 ff.). Academic research is also successfully integrated into art, creative activities, graduation theses and research activities with outcomes to teaching (ibidem). The Department has 5 doctoral students in addition to the existing 3 PhD owners. In international perspective, the strategies and quality of the research work would still need to be examined more in detail, also proactively by the management, and the SE process.

The studies deliver predominantly image- and photography-based media art studies and offer a reasonably sufficient amount and a good variety of artistic activities related to the field, and supported by a range of relevant theoretical (historical and critical) contents. The current status of media art practice and trends are predominantly well reflected in the programmes, with a slight need for updating in the field of emerging electronic arts such as DIY electronic practices and coding, bio-art, investigative arts, robotics, artificial intelligence (AI) etc. See more in detail (SER, ibidem, p. 58).

3.2.2. Evaluation of the link between the content of studies and the latest developments in science, art and technology

The recent updates are implemented into studies and these appear to be subjects to constant ongoing improvement as well. Within the last three years, a huge update to the technological base has been carried out, allowing students and teachers to work and experiment with the latest technologies. A significant number of doctoral students are involved in teaching in the study field as well as the study programmes maintain sustainable relationships with alumni who visit as guest lecturers.

Additionally to the basic creative articulations in animation, photography and videography, which underpin and shape the specific skills of media artists, contemporary visual expressions and artistic practices are used in both study cycles according to the circumstances and technological possibilities, such as interdisciplinary art, sound art, installation, bio-art, interactive art, media art in public spaces, internet art, mediated performance and other art created using both old and new technologies such as extended reality (XR), i.e. virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR) and the like, artificial intelligence (AI), biotechnology and other (SER, p. 59). Cooperation with external partners in carrying out scientific activities includes the following among other activities. In the spring of 2019, Vilnius University Culture Centre initiated an art and science collaboration project, which aimed to bring together researchers and students from different disciplines to gain unique experience in applied science and interdisciplinary art. The project organisers invited scientists and researchers to take part in creative laboratories together with the VAA's students of the programmes. The students have analysed the possibilities of modern lighting technologies from an artistic perspective, while researchers from the VU Laser Research Centre and the VU Institute of Applied Research have tried to look for technological solutions to realise visual ideas. The Church of St. Johns in Vilnius, its architecture and space became the starting point for the creation of audio-visual and virtual experiences, which were presented to the public in a series of events "Spatial Experiences. On the Seventh Day the Rivers Rested" (2019–2020) (SER, p. 56).

The study field programmes are involved in a significant number of projects with external institutions and partners in the art field.

3.2.3. Evaluation of conditions for students to get involved in scientific (applied science, art) activities consistent with their study cycle

In the specific field of research, it is one of the main objectives of the three programmes, especially in the case of MA. In any case, in all three programmes, there is a group of specific competencies for the development of research work in the artistic field. In the case of BA programmes, a total of 29 subjects in each programme relate in some way to the competencies of the "Research skills" group. In the case of MA, a total of 10 subjects correspond to the competence group "Skills to carry out research". Therefore, it can be deduced that in the three programmes, the research activities are developed in a transversal way within the curriculum.

In the extra-academic environment, or rather outside the classroom, there is a strong motivation on the part of the programmes for students to participate in artistic events, exhibitions and festivals, both in the role of spectators and participants. According to the SER (p. 61 and p. 117-129), a total of 159 undergraduates and 19 postgraduates participated in different artistic events throughout the period between 2018 and 2021. It is more than ⅔ of both graduate and undergraduate students. In the same events the alumni (14) are also participating (SER p. 61). This is one of the great attractions of the first cycle programmes. Students mention that one of the reasons for choosing these programmes is the possibility of participating in artistic projects from the first year. This fact also shows that this type of participation happens at a higher degree in the first cycle programmes than in MA, which is also perceived in the highest percentage of awards received by undergraduate students. This makes sense and fits the goals of each type of degree. In the first cycle programmes, the objective is artistic experimentation and students produce a greater number of projects that allow them to participate in a greater number of events. In the case of MA students, the focus is more on the research and development of a specific line of research, centring more on the theoretical section and, therefore, producing a lower amount of works but of higher research quality. This can be seen in the good quality of the final MA theses.

The panel would recommend working with research topics more carefully to involve students and staff in crucial and socially engaged topics of research work. It could be useful to have systematic plans for future research topics and themes.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

Strengths:

1. The presence of research in most stages of the curricula.
2. High motivation for research among students and teaching staff. Staff's strong mental support for both teachers and students to produce research work.
3. VAA and its Media Department provide researchers with databases, literature, and cover most of the costs of the conferences.

(2) Weaknesses:

No weaknesses have been identified in this evaluation area.

3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

Student admission and support shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:

3.3.1. Evaluation of the suitability and publicity of student selection and admission criteria and process

The publicity for the programmes is sufficient, given the case that they have enough applications to fill the places (state-funded and the non-funded as well).

Admission to the first study cycle of the study programme in the field of media art is performed through general admission to Lithuanian higher education institutions in accordance with the Description of the Procedure for General Admission to First-cycle and Integrated Studies, which establishes the procedure for submitting applications for admission to studies, documents certifying education and other achievements by candidates for admission to Lithuanian higher education institutions, the competition score criteria. The entrance exams are replaced with a portfolio review and an interview, which is a less stressful and simpler way for admission.

Admission to the second study cycle of the media art programme is an open competition of which public criteria are available on the VAA's website. The selection criteria have two parts, one evaluates the creative portfolio and the second part evaluates the potential topics of MA

theses, followed by an admission interview with the student. Also, additional studies are organised for special occasions where the academic background of the student is different than the one of the media art study field 1ˢᵗ cycle programme. Although this has to be paid by the student, the price depends on the scope of the study plan in credits.

3.3.2. Evaluation of the procedure of recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning and its application

The procedure of recognition is appropriate and has not got any complaints. For education completed outside of Lithuania, VAA has the right to recognise these qualifications. The Procedure for the Acceptance of Learning Outcomes approved by an order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania is being followed to accept previous learning outcomes acquired in a formal way. In 2022, the HEI approved the Description of the Procedure for the Evaluation and Recognition of Learning Achievements and Competencies Acquired by Non-formal and Informal Education. The data on the admission of students and procedures that followed with formal foreign qualifications or informal qualifications has been provided.

3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students

The institution provides sufficient opportunities for academic mobility both at European and outside the EU, plus a special programme *Nordplus* for Nordic and Baltic countries (and other international opportunities such as international exhibitions). Students are aware of these types of opportunities as well as the aid to participate in these academic experiences. However, the overall number of participants during the assessment period is low (especially at the MA level), even considering the consequences of the pandemic over the last two years. It is recommended to analyse this situation to identify the key points on which to act to promote greater participation, taking into account the benefits for both students and the programme of this type of academic mobility. Also, it would be useful to consider strategies for acquiring more funding for places (or total funds) for academic mobility, as a problem mentioned in the different interviews.

3.3.4. Assessment of the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support provided to the students of the field

Students in the field of media art receive extensive academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support. Academic Support is ensured by the SPCs and the VAA's Study Quality Division. VAA's Photography and Media Art Department provides strong financial support and as part of VAA, also various scholarships and grants. Scholarships are awarded in accordance with the VAA's Regulations for the Allocation of Scholarships. Scholarships can also be targeted, one-time or incentive-based (SER p. 74-76). This support is stronger in the PMA programmes. Also, students with disabilities can apply for financial support and targeted allowance, the Social Welfare Division of VAA is in charge of this type of support. In terms of psychological support, VAA has a mental health promotion programme. Students can confidently address the VAA's psychologist for consultations. During the on-site visit, it was confirmed that these systems function well.

Additionally, personal support is provided through the coordinator of the Department and academic support is ensured by the SPCs. For this, the coordinator and the Head consult on the drawing-up of individual study plans, selection of study subjects and places of internship as well. Information acquired from on-site visits shows that the major reasons for students drop-outs and quitting are studies abroad, health problems etc.

To sum up, the various forms of support provided to the students of the BA Media Art study programmes are very good and effective, while support for the MA programme students is at an excellent level. It is also recognised and valued by the students during the meetings.

3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling

The programme organises introductory events for first-year students of all programmes to inform them about the specifics of each programme and itinerary. During the rest of their studies, students have the possibility to receive academic advice from various bodies and departments. Interviews have shown that students are happy with the system and that it provides sufficient support throughout their studies.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:
1. The international opportunities available for students: seeing foreign, international exhibitions and even participating in them.
2. Strong student support. Students are happy with the opportunities provided, especially in terms of academic and exhibition support. Availability and awareness of different types of support.

(2) Weaknesses:
1. Low academic mobility*.*

3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

Studying, student performance and graduate employment shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:

3.4.1. Evaluation of the teaching and learning process that enables to take into account the needs of the students and enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes

The variety of learning and assessment methods aligned with the specific objectives of each subject is one of the strengths of both first cycle programmes. They are distinguished separately in the SER: lectures, seminars, individual consultation, internships as well as independent work. In addition to passive methodologies, the programmes seek to promote student-centred learning (SCL). As a result, in the process students are an active part, both proposing topics and producing their own works aligned with their personal concerns. In particular, the focus is on feedback from teachers, not only in numerical form (on a scale of 1 to 10) but also specifically qualitative feedback, when explaining to students both their strengths and weaknesses in each subject. This type of process is highly valued by students, who declare it as a motivational component in their study progress.

In the case of the MA programme, the personalisation of content and evaluation methods in each individual project of the students is much more pronounced. Those who must propose the central theme of their thesis and work on it, are, therefore, asked to be more active and the feedback provided by the teacher is more specific support.

The satisfaction surveys also show a growing satisfaction over the years by students for learning methodologies, teaching environment and feedback proposed by the teacher, with satisfaction rates of more than 80%. However, the participation of students in such surveys should be promoted in order to have a complete picture of the situation and to detect points of improvement. As well as conducting more specific surveys with a wider margin of response to make them work better. Despite having introduced new questions in recent years that help this work, research in QA and usability recommend giving at least a scale of 5 options when answering.

The students are satisfied with the teaching and learning methods as well as the performance assessment methods. They are well encouraged to be actively engaged in the study process inside the school as well as in out-of-school activities (practices). A track record of both first and second cycle students pursuing further studies is provided.

3.4.2. Evaluation of conditions ensuring access to study for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs

There are no additional guidelines specific to the Department as the general procedures of the entire HEI are being used. Socially vulnerable groups have access to the programmes, however, there was no evidence of positive anti-discrimination activities or any proactivity to attract such groups to enrol.

Support for students with special needs is available. For instance, in the case of special needs, a flexible remote or hybrid form of studies is organised, which allows the learning process to be carried out at a distance (SER, p. 79).

3.4.3. Evaluation of the systematic nature of the monitoring of student study progress and feedback to students to promote self-assessment and subsequent planning of study progress

There is a continuous process of feedback throughout the semesters, involving students, teaching staff, and social partners. Students find teachers and staff available and accessible throughout the year for any study progress evaluation questions.

Some alumni are well integrated in further processes of the study programme management (being part of SPCs or being social partners). They think that their feedback has an influence on the programme development.

Based on the description of the VAA Academic Feedback System, the study progress of the students in the PMA BA, Animation BA and PMA MA is monitored periodically – once a semester – and discussed by the SPCs. Students' achievements are then analysed at Department and SPCs meetings, during individual consultations, and at joint meetings of lecturers and students at the end of the semester. The monitoring of student study progress also includes individual and informal methods – all this together allows considering the feedback systematic and productive. The data is collected in a number of different ways and when processed, it is used for optimising individual study progress. The students' opinions and viewpoints, according to the site visit, are considered and taken as direct and indirect arguments and basis for improvements in curricula. Besides their own Department, also the Study Department is giving advice to students; the same applies to the Ethics Committee and some other structural units.

According to the findings during the visit, the formal questionnaires are unsatisfactory for both teaching staff as well as the student body; and there is an issue of low student participation. There are suggestions to adjust the structure of the questionnaires.

3.4.4. Evaluation of employability of graduates and graduate career tracking in the study field

The record of employability of the graduates of the programme is informed by centrally conducted surveys by VAA and data from the Government Strategic Analysis Centre (STRATA) as well as the Department survey results. Social partners value graduates of the programmes for their creative skills.

VAA Department of Photography and Media Art graduates find employment in national art and media institutions and take an active part in the current art scene. Often, they become important actors in the art scene/cultural life and initiators of new developments. Often, they

express themselves successfully in the international context. Graduates of the Department work as freelance or media artists, media art professionals, members and managers of creative teams and creative industries, capable of establishing enterprises and creating jobs. They lecture at different universities, work in TV or film studios, advertising companies etc. The questionnaire of graduates from 2017-2021 (SER, p. 86) indicates that 43% of the graduates work in commerce and 41% are self-employed. The opinions of the employers on the professional training of the graduates and the competencies acquired following the studies are collected in a semi-systematic manner, part of this valuable information still relies on personal connections and informal networks.

The mission and strategy of the HEI should include clearer statements that refer to the training of their students for the profession, especially as regards the aims of both the BA programmes. In the case of VAA, as an art academy the training for profession is not a central task, therefore, it is not easy to trace this component as it remains rather abstract and embedded in the dominant artistic objectives. For improvement it would be necessary to map in detail – along the aims and outcomes of all the practically oriented courses at the least – the professions and professional activities the graduates have been involved in until today. Possibly it would be beneficial to predict the changes in the labour market in advance.

3.4.5. Evaluation of the implementation of policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination

The principles and means to ensure academic integrity are in place. Principles of tolerance, non-discrimination and equal opportunities are ensured through HEI's Procedure for the Implementation of the Equal Opportunities Policy from 2018. However, the Equal Opportunities Policy was not recognised in detail and the person appointed at VAA for preventing harassment was not known to any of the teachers or students.

The teaching staff were aware of the Ethics Commission but the training for equal opportunities or against harassment was largely not known among teachers even if they are promoted among the management (teachers remember possibilities for online training but none among the interviewed attended). However, a case of student-teacher harassment was dealt with well, by the ethical commission. Students can depend on the "backup" (psychologist) as well as are

aware of the appeal protocol which they refer to as one of the first options to express issues of harassment or discrimination.

It is recommended for the Equal Opportunities Policy to be reinforced by a well-coordinated and promoted programme of staff training and proactive promotion of such values and protocols.

3.4.6. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the application of procedures for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study process within the field studies

The procedures of appeals and complaints of the 3 programmes are established according to the general regulations of VAA, both in general evaluations and specifically for the cases of final works of BA or MA degree (Study Regulations (Section 5.8), the VAA Description of the Procedure for the Preparation, Formalisation, Defence and Assessment of Bachelor's Theses and the VAA Description of the Second Study Cycle Thesis). This appeal committee has a student representative to ensure the integrity of the final decision and guarantee the rights of the appellant. In the SER, it is indicated that no student of the programmes of this study field has used these procedures in the evaluation period.

However, there is no mention of the procedure to be followed for students' complaints that are related to other aspects of the study process besides evaluation. Such feedback is resolved by informal methods but it is recommended to formalise and anonymise a method for filing and processing such complaints and pro-actively advertise it among students.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:
1. The student body and teaching staff are explicitly satisfied with the qualitative assessment of their study process as it offers useful information for monitoring student study progress and feedback to students (including self-assessment and subsequent planning of study progress).
2. The graduates of the programme demonstrate a good employment rate, especially in comparison to other art fields. Well and systematically controlled career tracking (employment rate and structure).

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The mission and strategy of the HEI potentially miss clearer statements that refer to the training of their students for the profession, especially as regards the aims of both the BA programmes.

2. Equal Opportunities Policy is not reinforced enough clearly across the faculty – teachers, students and staff lack clear protocols and procedures to obtain fair treatment in cases of harassment or discrimination.

3. Both the student body and the teaching staff find the formal questionnaires and the level of participation in them not satisfactory enough.

3.5. TEACHING STAFF

Study field teaching staff shall be evaluated in accordance with the following indicators:

3.5.1. Evaluation of the adequacy of the number, qualification and competence (scientific, didactic, professional) of teaching staff within a field study programme(s) at the HEI in order to achieve the learning outcomes

PMA teaching staff consists of teachers, all of whom are recognised artists, with a few teachers holding a doctoral degree. 19 teachers with nearly 100 students currently following all three programmes create a ratio of ca. 5 students per teacher. This is an appropriate student-staff ratio. The expert panel considers that the number of the teaching staff is sufficient to enable students to meet the intended learning outcomes. 16 other teachers contribute subjects from the humanities, sociology and language, including two with doctoral degrees, seven professors, six associate professors and three lecturers. More rarely, guest teachers from overseas take part in the teaching. During the pandemic, this number first decreased and then started to increase using Zoom, and Teams among others programs of distance learning. Teaching staff in the Photography and Media Art Department are highly motivated and successfully merge their research work with teaching.

According to SER (p. 91), the number of teachers completing doctoral degrees was 3 in 2018, 2 in 2019 and 4 in 2020. Teaching staff with pedagogical titles is respectively 6, 7 and 13. According to SER (p. 57), "Doctoral students admitted to competitive PhD positions: Arnas

Anskaitis (2016–2020), Marija Šaboršinaitė (2017–still studying), Laimutė Kreivytė (2017–2021), Valentinas Klimašauskas (2019–still studying), Monika Dirsytė (2020–still studying)." On-site meetings approved that teachers are active also in Erasmus exchanges and field studies among other out-of-routine undertakings. PMA has the largest number of PhD teachers in the whole VAA. The total number of teachers is adequate, however, according to some opinions of the alumni and social partners, a part of the visiting teachers could rotate more. The will to complete a higher level of degree (PhD) is implemented into the teachers' motivation, which is high and relatively careless of income among other material conditions.

3.5.2. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring teaching staff's academic mobility (not applicable to studies carried out by HEIs operating under the conditions of exile)

The teachers have a lot of opportunities to travel but a system of promoting this better could be in place. Despite this field being one of the priorities for improvement, the mobility figures remain fairly low in total and there is not a significant teacher mobility culture in place at the HEI, even if this has been improving in recent years. Only a few teachers from the community travel regularly and benefit from E+ and KUNO. Younger staff is keener on academic mobility.

3.5.3. Evaluation of the conditions to improve the competencies of the teaching staff

The most important of these conditions are there – these are the "mental condition" of the teaching staff and high motivation. It is indicated through two current doctoral students – teachers at this moment. The teachers not only actively use mobility opportunities such as Erasmus+ and KUNO but also are active participants in research conferences as well as art events and workshops (SER p. 52 ff.; 92 ff.). Also, there is a healthy "competition" between the teaching staff personnel to get higher qualifications. This indicates the existing atmosphere of academic values. However, the financial underpinning for these incentives could be more prominent as well as academic interexchange between teachers through the *teachers teaching teachers* model to enhance knowledge-sharing could be fostered.

Moreover, there is an encouragement for teachers to specialise in pedagogy which was doubled in 2020, as well as to contribute to the innovation of even general subjects.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

Strengths:

1. Prestige of academic degrees among teachers.
2. High motivation of teaching staff.
3. High qualification of teaching staff.
4. Increasing involvement of teaching staff to specialise in pedagogy that was doubled in 2020.
5. Encouragement of teaching staff to contribute to the innovation of even general subjects.

Weaknesses:

1. The system of financial stimuli does not always follow the enthusiasm of the teaching staff.
2. Decreasing international mobility of teachers that was partly a side effect of the Covid pandemic. This mobility should have been reinforced quicker.

3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

Study field learning facilities and resources should be evaluated according to the following criteria:

3.6.1. Evaluation of the suitability and adequacy of the physical, informational and financial resources of the field studies to ensure an effective learning process

There are different physical facilities and laboratories with technical equipment for the student to develop their artistic projects. Good animation and photography laboratories and opportunities with new technologies such as VR and AR. In addition, they have the opportunity to use the other field laboratories, which give wide options to students' projects.

The physical conditions of the Department are very good especially after moving to the newer building *Titanikas*. Site visit confirmed that the Department has plenty of rooms for lecturing, seminars, studio photo shooting and exhibiting work; labs for analogue photography; and computer classes for digital photography among others courses. Equipment is generally

adequate as well. There are several photo studios, equipped with professional lighting systems (flashes) and necessary professional hardware. There are enough computers; the used software is legal and up-to-date.

The library of VAA is good and supportive towards the Media Art programmes; and besides books and specialised magazines, access to various network databases is guaranteed and well monitored. The particular databases that are in use are sufficient. Financial resources are adequate. Besides purchasing equipment, funds also cover student support with materials and VAA in general awards students with grants and scholarships. Individual possibilities for supporting students are also there.

In addition, laboratories and equipment can be booked in the faculty. The Department is working on an electronic and centralised booking system to ensure equal opportunities among students and updated monitoring of the equipment, however, it is not yet in place.

3.6.2. Evaluation of the planning and upgrading of resources needed to carry out the field studies

The planning of materials and resources is managed and updated at the VAA level. The VAA's Economy Department is the body responsible for the development and maintenance of infrastructure. This body receives requests from all departments and study programmes annually. These are prioritised and planned taking into account general economic resources. Through meetings with the different groups, it has become clear that the Department takes into account the needs of teachers and students when making requests.

Through SER the expert panel affirms that the Department has short- and medium-term operational planning of resources and workspaces to improve, taking into account the needs of the different subjects and the exhibition space of the students. To further improve, there could be a solution for some resources that need to be prioritised for Media Art programmes, especially in the final evaluation project period.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. Wide range of spaces for students to develop artistic work (galleries, laboratories, exhibition spaces, animation rooms).
2. Clear and strong planning and upgrading system that ensure the renovation and adaptation of facilities and resources for the learning process.
3. Constantly updated literacy resources at the VAA's library.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. Presential booking system. Need for an online procedure to run equipment and facilities reservations.

3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

Study quality management and publicity shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:

3.7.1. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system of the studies

VAA internal study quality assurance system was built up in accordance with general international and nationwide quality requirements/agreements. The latter are "The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education," ESG, 2015, the Republic of Lithuania Law on Higher Education and Research, the VAA Statute (2013) and the VAA Study Regulations (2017).

Internal quality assurance is an integral part of the management of each study programme. It applies to all components of the study programme specified in its description. The internal quality assurance system for the VAA media art studies programmes is based on cooperation, ongoing monitoring, and publication, and is functioning overall consistently and efficiently. On-site meetings with stakeholders, students, teaching staff and administration confirmed that all the above-mentioned methods and tools are indeed effectively in use. It was additionally

identified that the Head of the Department is at the same time the Head of the SER group, which leaves the quality processes in the hands of one person.

SPC analyses and improves the content of study programmes. It reviews it annually and submits proposals for the renewal of study programmes to both the PMA Department and other academic units of VAA. Based on SPC decisions, also art history and theory programmes have been repeatedly updated. For optimising theory subjects, one of a total of 6 members of the SPC has been invited from the field of art history. Since 2022, PMA has introduced a new course specific to their programme *Practicum of Media and Art Philosophy* which was so far just a general history of philosophy. For making the SPC even more competent and effective, it would be a productive idea to include one or several foreign members to the committee who could bring a variety of benchmarks for otherwise still just self-assessment procedures.

The internal QA system of VAA concerning the three reviewed programmes is well in place, with the remaining challenge of intensifying student feedback. The SE process as reflected in the reviewed SER as well as in the interviews shows that the Department would benefit from separate and well-contrasted treatment of the individual programmes where all the key entries in the SER should be presented separately for each programme (PMA BA; PMA MA; Animation BA).

3.7.2. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the involvement of stakeholders (students and other stakeholders) in internal quality assurance

By and large, the student body as a whole as well as the alumni and the employers could be more deeply involved in the respective parts of setting up the SER. However, the student representatives' inclusion in the SER is good and was evidenced both in the interviews as well as in the SER itself, while some social partners are obviously involved in an active way, too (by contrast, others were mostly merely informed about the finished SER). Teachers appear to be aware of the SE process but do not actively participate in it (other than in the surveys and in the semester meetings of the Department), while the programme heads do.

The development of the study programmes through SPCs is balanced in terms of the diverse involvement of teaching staff, social partners and students. All these stakeholders were

satisfied with their level of involvement and how their feedback was systematically taken into account.

3.7.3. Evaluation of the collection, use and publication of information on studies, their evaluation and improvement processes and outcomes

Academic information relating to media art field programmes is correctly reflected in the specific section of each one's documentation and publicly accessible information, which shows a brief description of the objectives as well as the competencies, subjects and the syllabus of each. The documentation concerning the conclusions of the external evaluation of the programmes is found in a different section of the VAA website, therefore, it is recommended to include these documents in a section on quality assurance on the specific pages of each programme.

The collection of study information is broad and comprehensive, thorough and inclusive, the evaluation is covered by the SE group with correctly distributed competencies per stakeholder. The monitoring loops and action circles are dense (per semester, or even denser) but so far predominantly informal, however, they function well. A further formalisation step would contribute to a more robust and fine-grained data gathering and monitoring, thus completely closing the loop.

3.7.4. Evaluation of the opinion of the field students (collected in the ways and by the means chosen by the SKVC or the HEI) about the quality of the studies at the HEI

VAA systematically collects the opinion of students on the quality of studies through biannual surveys, which were updated in 2019 to include a greater number of items to evaluate. The results of this formal method show a growing general satisfaction of students in the media art programmes (the results are not disaggregated between the various programmes): the quality of learning received is generally more than 80% positive; this data is, however, not decisive, due to the improved percentage of responses (it varies between 30% and 60%). The programme management is aware of this problem and is committed to a review of the survey methodology to increase the number of participants in the future as well as conducting more specific surveys with a wider margin of response to make them work better. Despite having

introduced new questions in recent years that help this work, research in QA and usability recommend giving at least a scale of 5 answer options.

Students are polled consistently even if their feedback is still not satisfactory in quantity. They appear very satisfied with the study provision in all three programmes, they approve of the studying conditions, and are aware of and included in the quality assurance process. The students consider the studies at VAA to be of high quality in all three reviewed programmes, which is based on an exceptionally deep awareness of the quality concept among the students that manifested in the interviews.

Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:

(1) Strengths:

1. A very well-functioning informal and qualitative data gathering and feedback loop, especially between programme managers and students.
2. Deep dedication to quality culture by the Department and programme management that is recognised among the students who are aware of the importance of the QA system and a closed loop.

(2) Weaknesses:

1. The anonymous and quantitative data gathering (in the surveys) is still not representative and inclusive enough for all three programmes.
2. Head of the Department is at the same time the Head of the SER group, which brings too much responsibility/burden and a power-concentration risk onto one person.
3. All three programmes are being evaluated together, and within one SER, with no clear differentiation among individual programmes as regards the quality indicators; some data gathering is not fine-grained enough in order to allow more detailed monitoring and fine-tuning of quality improvement actions.

IV. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

Exceptionally satisfied students, with a good awareness of and participation in the quality feedback loop (even if this is predominately informal and qualitative), and a deep and wide integration into the artistic field of practice in the realm of media art, both in Vilnius, in Lithuania and even internationally.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	- Set up a proper framework for developing courses in which students can develop self-directed (also non-formal) learning and self-management of the career that would comply with the real needs in an artistic freelancer career. - In order to trace the practical competencies component throughout the curricula, and the way it is implemented and linked to the needs of the labour market, consider necessary mapping in detail the professions and professional activities the graduates have been involved in so far, as well as to prognose the changes the in the labour market in advance, which should be done in close collaboration with the social partners and alumni. - Review the difference in the number of electives for both BA programmes in order to confirm, whether the fewer number of electives in Animation BA corresponds to an objective, and if not, to match the number. It is also recommended in both cases to increase the number of optional subjects of study field since the amount of specialisation within the field of media art is large.
Links between science (art) and studies	- Involve more social scientists and make clearer differences between core studies, applied studies and creative research. - Interdisciplinary research activities with other departments of VAA and even with other HEIs could be considered.
Student admission and support	- It is recommended to analyse low participation in academic mobility to identify the key points on which to act to promote greater participation, taking into account the benefits for both students and the programme. - Consider strategies of acquiring more and stable funding for places (or total funds) for academic mobility, also outside Erasmus+ and KUNO.

Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	• Adjust and improve the formal surveys of feedback regarding the study programmes (at the institutional level), and/or introduce department-level compensation for gathering such data. • Consider implementing more systematic surveys of employers and social partners on the kind of professional training for (and competencies needed by) graduates as the component of training for a profession could be more properly mapped and included in future programme revisions. • Equal Opportunities Policy should be reinforced by a well-coordinated and promoted programme of staff training and promotion of such values and protocols.
Teaching staff	• Involve more international teachers to give visiting lectures and workshops; arrange more online lectures among other meetings and events to broaden the scope of teaching staff activities. • Try to financially match the staff's ambitions in their competency development. • Try to promote and agitate the *teachers teaching teachers* system to better use academic resources.
Learning facilities and resources	• Consider introducing an online formal and centralised procedure for equipment and facilities reservations. • Provide a solution for some resources that need to be prioritised for Media Art programmes, especially in the final evaluation project period.
Study quality management and public information	• Further formalise and make representative the anonymous and quantitative data gathering (in the surveys), by promoting it as such, and the culture of QA, especially among students. • Consider choosing a different person for the head of the department from the head of the SER group to relieve

	responsibility and burdens as well as power-concentration risks on a single person.
	• Consider introducing a separate and more sensitive evaluation process per programme, and integrate this contract along the SER.
	• For making the SPC even more competent and effective, it would be productive to include one or several foreign members to the committee who could bring a variety of benchmarks for otherwise still just self-assessment procedures.
	• The documentation concerning the conclusions of the external evaluation of the programmes is found in a different section of the VAA website, therefore it is recommended to include these documents in a section on quality assurance on the specific pages of each programme.

VI. SUMMARY

The expert panel has found that the three reviewed programmes at VAA have been working intensively on both the curriculum stated as well as the actually achieved **learning outcomes.** The curricula of all the programmes are prepared soundly and overall are well maintained, with good compatibility and stringency of aims, learning outcomes and teaching/learning as well as assessment methods. Furthermore, the academic theses, as presented in the review, were found to be of above-average quality and the practical parts of the theses get good visibility in the institution's many capacities for public exposure of final student work. However, the employers did express a clear need for students to develop self-directed (also non-formal) learning and self-management of the career that would comply with the real needs in an artistic freelancer career. Furthermore, even if training for a profession is not a central aim of the VAA programmes at large, it is, therefore, not easy to trace this component throughout the curricula and the way it is implemented. It thus remains rather abstract and embedded in the dominant artistic objectives, and this aspect should be more properly mapped and included in future programme revisions. The electives in Animation BA and the optional subjects in both BA programmes would call for a revision in a view of the practical plurality of the media field.

VAA's **links between science (art) and studies** are exceptional as regards the three reviewed programmes, with a clear presence of research in most stages of the curricula that also get diligently implemented. There is a high motivation for research among students and teaching staff and the staff's strong mental support for both teachers and students to produce research work, which is commendable. The entire school and especially its Photography and Media Art Department provide researchers with databases, literature, and conference incentives, while a blend of both artistic and scientific research is becoming gradually a norm in the VAA's Media Department.

Student admission and support appear to perform good (at BA level) to excellent (for the MA programme) with particular strengths in the international options (the students get to see foreign and international exhibitions, and even participate in them) and strong student support**.** Students are happy with and well aware of the opportunities provided, especially in terms of academic and exhibition support, which comes in various types. It would be necessary, however, to analyse the academic mobility processes more carefully in order to identify the key

points on which to act to promote greater participation, taking into account the benefits for both students and the programme of this type of academic mobility.

The student body and teaching staff are explicitly satisfied with the qualitative assessment of their study process, offering useful information to the **monitoring of student study progress** and feedback to students. The graduates of the programme demonstrate a good **employment** rate, especially in comparison to other art fields, including a systematically controlled career tracking as regards employment rate and structure. On the other hand, the Equal Opportunities Policy is not reinforced enough clearly across the faculty: teachers, students and staff should be given clear protocols and procedures to obtain fair treatment in cases of harassment or discrimination. Both the student body and the teaching staff find the formal questionnaires and the level of participation in them not satisfactory enough, which calls for systematic improvement. The mission and strategy of the HEI should include clearer statements that refer to the training of their students for the profession, especially as regards the aims of both the BA programmes.

The teaching staff is excellent in terms of their expert and academic profiles, highly qualified, very satisfied and highly motivated, with a certain air of prestige in academic degrees among teachers. There is increasing involvement of teaching staff to specialise in pedagogy (doubled in 2020) and the institution's encouragement of teaching staff to contribute to the novation of even general subjects is commendable. However, the system of financial stimuli does not always follow the enthusiasm of staff and students. Furthermore, a decreasing international mobility of teachers that was partly a side effect of the Covid pandemic should have been reinforced quicker.

The institution offers the reviewed programmes a **wide range of spaces** for students to develop artistic work (galleries, laboratories, exhibition spaces, animation rooms). There is **a clear and strong planning and upgrading system** in place that ensures the renovation and adaptation of facilities and resources for the learning process, including the well-maintained resources at the VAA's library. The equipment and space booking system currently in place is not satisfactory and calls for an online procedure to run equipment and facilities reservations.

Study quality management and public information are in place, with a very well-functioning informal and qualitative data gathering and feedback loop, especially between programme

managers and students. A deep dedication to quality culture by the Department and programme management can also be recognised among the students who are aware of the importance of the QA system and a closed loop. However, the anonymous and quantitative data gathering (in the surveys) is still not representative and inclusive enough for all three programmes. The Department lead is at the same time head of the SER group, which brings too much responsibility and a certain power-concentration risk onto one person. Currently, all three programmes are being evaluated together, and within one SER, with no clear differentiation among individual programmes as regards the quality indicators; some data gathering is not fine-grained enough to allow more detailed monitoring and fine-tuning of quality improvement actions.

As one of the most important aspects of higher education, if not its key focal point – the panel at VAA has found exceptionally satisfied students, with a good awareness of and participation in the quality feedback, and a deep as well as manifold integration into the artistic field of practice in the realm of media art, both in Vilnius, in Lithuania and even internationally.

The panel wishes to thank the programme teams and the entire staff of VAA for making the visit a pleasant yet very informative experience, for preparing all the documentation duly and for their efforts in preparing the self-evaluation report. Above all, the interviews were very frank and open towards the expert panel, making this report as objective and representative as possible.

Expert panel chairperson signature:
    dr. Peter Purg