

Arts Study Programme Group assessment decision University of Tartu

29/09/2017

The Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA) decided to approve the report of the Assessment Committee and to carry out the next quality assessment of the first and second levels of higher education of the Arts Study Programme Group of University of Tartu in seven years.

Pursuant to clause 41.1 of the document “Quality Assessment of the Study programme Group at the First and Second Levels of Higher Education” established on the basis of the authorization contained in § 10 (4) of the University Act and clauses 3.7.3 and 3.7.1 of the Statutes of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education, the Higher Education Assessment Council of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (hereinafter the Council) states the following:

1. The University of Tartu coordinated the quality assessment period of the study programme group with EKKA on 15.11.2016.
2. The Director of EKKA approved with the order of 27.09.2017 the quality assessment committee (hereinafter committee) for the first and second levels of higher education of the Arts Study Programme Group of the University of Tartu, Tallinn University, Pallas University of Applied Sciences and the Health Care Study Programme Group of Tallinn University, in the following composition:

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

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

Creative Applications of Cultural Heritage (professional higher education)

Creative Applications of Cultural Heritage (Master's study)

4. The University of Tartu submitted a self-analysis report to the EKKA office on 15.09.2017, which was sent to the committee by the assessment coordinator on 20.09.2017.
5. The evaluation visit to the Viljandi Culture Academy of the University of Tartu took place on 15.11.2017.
6. The Committee sent the draft assessment report to the EKKA office on 10.01.2018, which EKKA forwarded to the institution of higher education for comment on 10.01.2018 and to which the University of Tartu submitted a reply on 19.01.2018.
7. The Committee submitted the final assessment report to the EKKA office on 22.01.2018. The assessment report is an integral part of the decision. The report is available on the EKKA website.
8. The Secretary of the Assessment Council forwarded the final assessment report and self-analysis report to the members of the Assessment Council on 22.01.2018.
9. The Council discussed the received documents at the meeting of 02.02.2018 with the participation of eight members and decided to highlight the following strengths, recommendations, and areas for improvement concerning the first and second levels of higher education of the Arts Study Programme Group of the University of Tartu.

General recommendations of the Committee regarding the Arts Study Programme Group at the University of Tartu, Tallinn University and Pallas University of Applied Sciences

- 1) It is recommended to conduct a review of arts, crafts, and design curricula at the national level in order to better understand the connections between the four main art education providers in Estonia. This would allow each institution of higher education to share its best practices and better understand how the choice of curricula on offer contributes to a holistic and balanced approach to the fields of study in the higher education sector.
- 2) Due to the low competition for academic positions, lecturers' salaries should be critically reviewed and, if necessary, increased in order to recruit qualified and experienced international talents to higher education institutions.
- 3) Given that entrepreneurship education is a relatively recent addition to the curricula, the Assessment Committee recommends that educational institutions compare their results so far in order to share experiences and consolidate existing practices. As cultural entrepreneurship is an important prerequisite for creating new public platforms for arts and cultural activities, other educational institutions, such as EBS, could be involved.
- 4) It should be analyzed how the research and creative work trends of institutions of higher education coincide with the development of creative research in internationally recognized art colleges.

Study programme group strengths

- 1) An effective and inclusive management culture enables teachers to influence the decision-making process and understand broader institutional challenges.

- 2) The good cooperation of the Academy with the university creates opportunities for mutual exchange of knowledge, creating a bridge between traditional academic subjects and handicraft culture and creative practices.
- 3) The Academy has a clear understanding of modern pedagogy, which combines practice-based learning, critical thinking, creativity, and research.
- 4) The content of the study programme, learning outcomes, teaching methods, and assessment processes are very well described, and there is a balance between theoretical and practical learning in the learning modules. Assessment procedures are transparent and based on clear assessment criteria
- 5) The quality of student work is very high. In particular, the Master's theses cover an impressive range of research topics related to textiles, metals, and construction. These projects are a sign that students' practical work and research is much more extensive than just an analysis of traditions and history.
- 6) The dynamism of the student body is evidenced by the increase in the number of admissions and the low drop-out rate compared to the average of the University of Tartu, which also reflect the success of the Academy's mission in highlighting the value and relevance of heritage technologies in today's cultural context.
- 7) Students are able to collaborate across disciplines and are given great flexibility in organizing their studies.
- 8) The curricula offer unique approaches to the research and practice of Estonian creative applications of cultural heritage, which is based on the academic professionalism of teachers, creative research methodology, and high-level craft skills.
- 9) The growing confidence and sophistication in the field of practice-based research are shown by the publication of the peer-reviewed scientific journal *Studia Vernacula*, in which selected Master's students can also publish their work.
- 10) Interdisciplinary cooperation in extracurricular projects is viewed in a very positive and encouraging way.
- 11) The budget of the Native Crafts Department has recently increased due to the increase in the number of students. The budget is supplemented by project funds.
- 12) The learning environment is at a very good level. The renovated Vilma study building has enough space for many special workshops and general study rooms. The continuous improvement of the infrastructure of the Viljandi Culture Academy corresponds to the needs and development of curricula.
- 13) The Native Crafts Department also manages the Viljandi Centre for Creative Industries, which provides support and tools for start-up craft entrepreneurs.
- 14) Teachers and students can use workshops freely outside of the studies. Students are only allowed to use machines and teaching aids after they have received appropriate training and have the necessary work experience. In addition, they are supervised by lecturers and technical assistants.
- 15) There is a continuous development of the e-learning environment, which meets the requirements of the modern learning environment for both full-time and distance learning.
- 16) Sustainable and flexible teaching and learning models have been developed based on feedback from students, alumni, employers, and partners.
- 17) The highly qualified and dedicated staff is a key element in the continuous development of the Academy and the Native Crafts Department. Students value both the professionalism and teaching skills of the teachers.
- 18) The academic community has equally high demands on its own work and that of its students.
- 19) The internship-based approach to entrepreneurship, which is applied both by lecturers and in the Center for Creative Industries, significantly supports both internal and external

developments in the Academy. This is a good example of a commitment to strategic cooperation that also leads to tangible results and should be set as an example for other similar areas.

- 20) The students of the study programme group form a united community, which also acts as a support network. The students' diverse professional and academic backgrounds allow them to share their knowledge and skills with each other.
- 21) The Open University offers flexible learning opportunities for students who need to combine learning with work and/or family life.
- 22) The employment rate of alumni is high. The alumni of the Academy have won several awards and started successful companies. Employers are satisfied with the competence of the graduates.

Areas for improvement and recommendations related to the Study Programme Group

- 1) The main challenge for curricula is to increase their international profile and the two-way mobility of students and teachers. At present, students' mobility abroad is limited, as they are often held back by family and work responsibilities due to their higher than average age. Therefore, consideration should be given to offering them shorter-term mobility opportunities.
 - 2) Given the very specific focus of curricula and current developments in research/creativity, opportunities should be sought to participate in existing international networks, for example, through membership of the ELIA (*European League of Institutes in Art*).
 - 3) Introducing the creative/research work of the Native Crafts Department at the international level would also help to recruit foreign students to the curricula. Clear support of the university for the Academy's internationalization plans is needed.
 - 4) There is no systematic approach to evaluating the performance of teachers.
 - 5) Cooperation with various local and international partners should be stepped up in order to make the most of existing workshops and technology.
 - 6) At the university level, creative research carried out in the Native Crafts Department must be recognized and valued.
 - 7) The average age of students is quite high, and it is difficult to recruit younger students for curricula. It is worth considering investing in craft courses in secondary schools in order to attract the interest of the younger generation in the field as well.
- 10.** Clause 41 of the document "Quality Assessment of the Study Programme Group at the First and Second Levels of Higher Education" stipulates that the Assessment Council shall approve the assessment report within three months after its receipt. The Council will consider the strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations identified by the Assessment Committee and decide to carry out the next quality assessment of the study programme group in three, five, or seven years.
- 11.** The Council considered the strengths, areas for improvement and recommendations set out in point 9 and found that the study programme, the studies provided, and the development activities related to the studies meet the requirements and:

DECIDED

To approve the assessment report and to carry out the next assessment of the quality of the first and second levels of higher education of the Arts Study Programme Group of University of Tartu in seven years.

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

12. The Council proposes to the University of Tartu to submit to EKKA no later than 02.02.2019 an action plan on taking into account the areas for improvement and recommendations presented in the report.
13. A person who considers that the decision has violated his or her rights or restricted his or her freedoms may file a challenge with the Assessment Council of EKKA within thirty (30) days after the appellant became aware of or should have become aware of the contested act.

The Assessment Council shall send the challenge to the challenge committee of the Assessment Council of EKKA, which shall submit a written, impartial opinion to the Assessment Council on the reasoning of the challenge within five (5) days of receipt of the challenge. The Assessment Council shall resolve the challenge within ten (10) days of receipt, taking into account the reasoned position of the appeal committee. If the challenge needs to be further investigated, the Assessment Council may extend the term for reviewing the challenge by up to thirty (30) days.

Contestation of a decision in court is possible within thirty (30) days as of its service by submitting an appeal to the Tallinn Courthouse of the Tallinn Administrative Court pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Administrative Court Procedure Act.

Tõnu Meidla
Head of the Council

Hillar Bauman
Secretary of the Council