

**Assessment Report on Meeting the  
Requirements of the Secondary Condition**  
Study programme group of  
Arts

**Estonian Academy of Arts**

2019

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## Introduction

### Background and aim of the assessment

Quality assessment of a study programme group involves the assessment of the conformity of study programmes and the studies and development activities that take place on their basis to legislation, national and international standards and developmental directions with the purpose of providing recommendations to improve their quality.

The goal of quality assessment of a study programme group is supporting the internal evaluation and self-development of the institution of higher education. Quality assessment of study programme groups is not followed by sanctions: expert assessments should be considered as a recommendation.

Quality assessment of a study programme group takes place at least once every 7 years based on the regulation approved by EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education *Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups at the Level of Doctoral Studies*.

In 2017, international expert panel assessed the quality of the study programme group of Arts at the Estonian Academy of Arts (EAA). As a result, EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education decided at its meeting on September 29, 2017, that the next assessment is to take place in seven years if the university meet certain requirements set by the Council.

**The aim of the current assessment committee's work** was to evaluate whether the requirements (secondary condition) set by the Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education have been met by the Estonian Academy of Arts.

### Assessment committee

The following members formed the assessment committee:

Professor John Butler	CEO EQ-Arts, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Maren Schmohl	Vice Rector, Merz Akademie, Stuttgart, Germany

### Assessment process

The assessment process was coordinated by Hillar Bauman (EKKA).

EAA sent on September 30, 2019 the following documents:

- 1) The progress report of the Estonian Academy of Arts on eliminating the secondary condition set in the assessment of the study programme group of Arts

## Assessment Report on Fulfilment of the Secondary Condition

- 2) Action plan of the Faculty of Design
- 3) Action plan of the Faculty of Fine Arts
- 4) Action plan of the Faculty of Art and Culture
- 5) Action plan of the Interior Architecture programmes

The report is written based on the written materials presented by the EAA.

In the following sections, the assessment committee summarizes its findings regarding the fulfilment of the secondary condition, and also provides feedback on the progress the university has made in connection with experts' recommendations made in their report in 2017.

The current report is a public document and will be available on [EKKA website](#) after EKKA quality assessment Council has made its decision.

## 1. General progress report since last assessment of study programme group

### 2.2 General assessment of the actions taken by the EAA with regard to improvement areas presented in the EKKA Council 29.09.2017 decision.

Below the panel evaluates the actions taken by the Estonian Academy of Arts (EAA) over the past two years following the EKKA Council decision. The assessment is based on the documents submitted by the Academy (see the list in Section 2.1). This report describes and evaluates progress achieved in all areas of improvement and recommendations outlined in the EKKA council decision from September 2017.

Overall, the panel finds EAA has made considerable effort to make improvements in almost all areas. The panel commends the Academy for preparing a clear and concise Report on improvements.

### Institutional Accreditation

#### Comments

The EKKA Council review assessment decision on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2017 incorporated both Institutional and Programme assessments and although the Council found the Academy conformed to the four EKKA Institutional requirements, it did set out 11 recommendations which if addressed would support the institution and programmes achieve the appropriate quality levels. It was clear from the material and Action Plans of the four faculties that a number of these recommendations have been addressed (e.g. 3, 6, 7 and 11), but there are significantly important areas that the panel can find little evidence of their achievement (e.g. 1, 4, 5 and 8). In responding to the EKKA report the Academy has presented 4 Faculty Action Plans addressing issues and recommendations identified by the panel specific to them, but with no comment or actions by the Academy itself, other than in addressing the requirements of the secondary condition. The Faculty responses in general state the actions taken to address recommendations made but offer little evidence (metrics, analysis of staff and student surveys etc.) of their achievement (e.g. *"In 2018, a new English MA curriculum Contemporary Art was opened. The number of applicants in 2019 almost doubled compared to 2018"*<sup>1</sup>). The panel thinks the Academy should have presented a documents such as Annual Reports/Action Plans as part of this follow-up process, it would have provided better evidence of their evaluation process, the actions taken and the evidence of achievement. This is a key part of developing a quality culture.

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<sup>1</sup> Fine Arts Action Plan p.4 point 12

### Further considerations

- The Academy revisits the review report of 2017 to see at an institutional level what quality and enhancement processes it needs to establish to further develop its quality culture. This would include the evidence it requires at both institutional and programme level to achieve this and how best to present it.

## **Action plan of the Faculty of Interior Architecture**

### Comments

The Faculty has provided a detailed description in an action plan document for the actions taken during the past two years to address the recommendations made in the EKKA Council's report of September 2017. The panel finds that the Faculty has made a considerable effort for all 11 recommendations proposed by the panel for the assessment. A short description of the panel's response to the action plan for these recommendations is presented below.

1. The interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary qualities of the curricula could be enhanced by closer cooperation with other departments and stakeholders outside the academic sector. It is worth considering how to cooperate more with other departments in the new building (e.g. the Department of Architecture). It is a positive step to see the study programme Interior Architecture is building on the collaborative actions it had already established with Architecture and Urban Design and taking the opportunity offered by the move into the new building to extend and develop new cooperation's (e.g. North Estonia Medical Centre, the Faculties of Fine Arts and Arts & Culture. These collaborative actions, both within the Academy and with the professional world, will strengthen the opportunities for students to find employment after graduation.
2. As the content of the curricula is not directly related with traditional interior architecture, it is worth considering if the name of the curriculum and department could be changed into the curriculum/department of Spatial Design. The appointment of a new Head of Curriculum to the Faculty has had a positive impact on the development and direction of the curriculum.. It is rational to retain the title and curriculum if the BA and MA curricula of Interior Architecture is based on the principles of the Charter of Interior Architect Training (2013) of the European Council of Interior Architects. In keeping with this it is also consistent that the curriculum development will be revised in line with the professional standards and respective changes in cooperation with the professional association (Estonian Association of Interior Architects, ESL). The Review Team endorses the new MA *Making Space* with its increased interdisciplinary and experimental practice.

3. In order to make the instruction even more learner-centred, the role of the material lab in the instruction should be increased and more events such as academic workshops conducted.  
The Faculty's move to the increased usage of the 'labs' and the introduction of the new material lab in the instruction of the students and their alignment to the research topics of the Academy will make the programmes more student-centred.
4. Considerable changes should be made in the MA curriculum as the number of students is at times unacceptably small and the number of drop-outs higher than the average in the BA curriculum and in the academy in general.  
It is commendable to see that ten students are starting the MA this year, which is sufficient to support the student learning process including peer learning. The programme must closely monitor the achievement and drop-out rates to ensure the quality of the programme. The skills and knowledge developed by the BA study programme curriculum and the rigorous interview and recruitment process should help should support this.
5. The volume of the internship credit points could be increased.  
It is positive to hear the new Head of Curriculum is reviewing the credit-value of the *internship* units. The panel was suggesting the increase to reflect the learning value and workload of this activity, especially as the student "*completes an operational building design documentation for the client, draws up the budget for materials, (partly) constructs the object and arranges the transportation to the destination site*".<sup>2</sup>
6. More attention should be paid to the development of students' entrepreneurial skills.  
An increase in the teaching of the development of entrepreneurial skills is welcomed by the panel and this action combined with the BA module *Life after University/Creative workers* (3 ECTS) and the MA module *Creative Industries* (3 ECTS) should help the students find employment after their graduation. It is worth noting that these key elements should be addressed and supported by close collaboration between the staff of both the Centre for General Theory and the studio.
7. It is worth analysing the impact of students' participation and workload in elective courses and voluntary projects on their speciality studies.  
After the review visit the panel was very positive about the curriculum "*comprised of a wide spectrum of challenging content*",<sup>3</sup> what the students expressed was a concern of competing workloads and the accessibility of electives beyond the department. Now the department has introduced better time-management to programming the curriculum, with the introduction of week long speciality electives, master-classes etc. twice per semester with no

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<sup>2</sup> Interior Design Action Plan p.2 point 5

<sup>3</sup> EAA Assessment Report 2017 p.54

regular classes is welcomed. This will increase student choice and relieve some pressure on their workload.

8. The academic staff do not perceive that they get sufficient support to their research from the academy. It is recommended that appropriate conditions are established for the lecturers to set up research groups and the development of the research culture is supported in the entire university. The Academy should be highly commended for the major steps it has taken in the support available for academic staff to engage in research activities. These including establishing:
  - administrative support by the faculty project managers and the research and development team;
  - internal grants for the academic staff – research grant, development grant and creative research grant, for the establishment of research groups, the development of research area, the increase of the group’s competitiveness in the application of supplementary external funding;
  - a scholarship for the lecturer of creative subjects in the Cultural Endowment for conducting both creative and research projects;
  - funding for conference travel, writing and publishing (translation, editing, illustration copyrights etc.) scientific articles;
  - support for the organisation of research events, travelling expenses in cooperation projects, writing large-scale project applications, commissioning further studies or other outsourced services.
  
9. The salary of the academic staff is lower compared to other Estonian higher education institutions which has an impact on the recruitment and selection of new lecturers.

The panel notes and applauds the recent increase in staffing salaries of on average 11.7%, including the average increase of 16% for the positions of a lecturer and associate professor. What is of real concern to the panel is that we have been informed that the *activity support allocated to higher education institutions has remained the same in the past 5 years and according to the state budget strategy agreement signed in spring 2019, it will remain on the same level until 2023. Therefore the funds allocated to higher education remain the same for 8 years (period 2015-2023)*<sup>4</sup>. The panel believe that the Academy is a leading European higher arts education institution, but if this financial scenario was to remain this can only lead to a deterioration of the student learning experience and the reputation of the Academy. The panel urges the Estonian Education Ministry to reconsider this decision and the Academy to carryout a risk assessment to find the most appropriate reorganisation it can take to minimise the impact of such a financial decision.
  
10. A considerable problem is the physical access of students with special needs to the premises.

The panel is pleased to hear the recent move into the new campus has alleviated the access problems for all students.

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<sup>4</sup> Interior Design Action Plan p.2 point 9



11. The anonymity of the student feedback must be ensured.

The panel is reassured of the anonymity of the students in using the OIS system. There is always an issue if programme student numbers are small and that it is sometimes not difficult to deduce who may be making an observation/criticism, but all stakeholders must overcome this and must buy into the enhancement value of these processes to develop a real 'quality culture'.

### Commendations

- The panels' recommendation were addressed in a substantive manner.
- The introduction of week long speciality electives, master-classes etc. twice per semester with no regular classes;
- The increased usage of the 'labs' and the introduction of the new material lab in the instruction of the students and their alignment to the research topics of the Academy;
- The support available for academic staff to engage in research activities;
- The recent move into the new campus has alleviated the access problems for all students

### Further considerations

- The Estonian Education Ministry to reconsider the decision that funds allocated to higher education remain the same for 8 years (2015-2023) and the Academy to carryout a risk assessment to find the most appropriate reorganisation it can take to minimise the impact of such a financial decision.

## **Action plan of the Faculty of Design**

### Comments

The Faculty has provided a detailed description in an action plan document for the actions taken during the past two years to address the recommendations made in the EKKA Council's report of September 2017. The panel finds that the Faculty has made a considerable effort in addressing the majority of the 20 recommendations proposed by the panel for the assessment. A short description of the panel's response to the action plan for these recommendations is presented below.

1. Led by the Academy management, the structure of the Faculty should be made more straightforward and transparent. For this purpose, it is recommended that the Academy conduct a SWOT analysis, taking into account the external perspective of the Faculty's broad network of partners and connections. A more thorough market analysis regarding both current and planned study programmes should be conducted.  
During the academic year 2017/2018, numerous discussions and meetings were held at the Faculty of Design to analyse the panel's report, the results of the

institutional accreditation, and the assessment of the study programmes, which included a SWOT analysis. A development Manager of Academic Affairs was established in July 2018, to be renamed Head of Quality Assurance in June 2019. The Head of Quality Assurance was actively involved in the working group of curriculum development and the amendments to the faculty structure. This process resulted in a comprehensive agenda for changes within the Faculty of Design which address most of the issues noted in the report, certainly the most pressing and important ones, which are mentioned in more detail below. A systematic analysis of and engagement with the labour market (which has been piloted and tested during the development of the Digital Product Design curriculum) will be used as the model in the future for other curricula. This includes interviews with employers and specialists in the field, both in Estonia and abroad.

2. The Academy's management should initiate and support changes in the Faculty more vigorously. Involvement of the management is crucial, as sometimes the Faculty has not succeeded in taking into account the recommendations already made during the 2006 external evaluation.  
It appears that the Faculty has accepted the challenge to reform following the latest panel review and was able to initiate the necessary discussions and actions for change by itself. The management of EAA assisted the process by giving clear support for further reforms and setting of deadlines.
3. The narrowly segmented study programmes pose an economic challenge for the Academy and run counter to the need for designers with a broader education. Consideration could be given to opening a smaller number of study programmes at the Faculty that are more broad-based.  
At the heart of the reforms lays the merging and streamlining of the core B.A. programmes of the Faculty of Design, which was approved in January 2019. The eight day-time curricula were merged into four combined curricula. The number of specialisations within the curricula were increased (from 8 to 10 (planned) specialisations with the option of including even more specialisations in the future. The curricula have thus become indeed broader based and may be adapted more easily to changing needs of the labour market.
4. An explicit plan should be put in place regarding how to use common resources as the number of applicants is decreasing, while at the same time retaining the strengths of small study groups.  
Sharing of resources was one of the issues which was naturally addressed and aided by the move to the new building and the redesign of the workshops and labs. The issue was further addressed in revising the plan for general and elective subjects with a particular view to enhance cooperation among students and staff of different specialisations and curricula. The elective subjects and free electives are meant to provide opportunities for students to get acquainted with the issues and technologies of other areas. In the course of the projects conducted in the fifth semester, multidisciplinary teams. The reforms thus include several possibilities for mutual support, the sharing of resources and joint projects; there is no reason to believe that this has a negative impact on

the size of study groups which, considering that the overall student numbers in the Faculty are still small.

5. Since the teaching staff members have not been engaged very much in academic research, the majority of the teaching is not based upon research. Broader and more streamlined programmes would allow the department to develop clearer guidelines for practice-based artistic research. This issues was tackled through several actions.
  - Preparation of students for practise-based research. Academic reading and writing classes gradually build and enhance students' research skills. The BA final exam will include a written section which prepares students for future MA and PhD studies. New teachers of theory have been recruited by the Faculty of Design. In addition, two research and development project managers have been employed to enhance the overall research capabilities of the Faculty.
  - The creation of the new subject "Design theory 1-4" as general subjects. The courses are offered across all curricula. In the classes students learn to place their work in a wider context, to conceptualise and substantiate their design work in a more research based way.
  - Reading and writing seminars and a new course on conducting research have been introduced.
  - Since 2019, a representative of the Faculty of Design has been appointed to the management of the joint doctoral curriculum Art and Design (run in cooperation with Fine Arts). A design research working group has been established with its members (researchers, PhD and MA students) in order to organise joint seminars and writing sessions to develop research competences. The aim is to increase the number of research publications by the staff and students of the Faculty of Design. In 2019, the number of academic staff working with theory and research increased in the Faculty of Design.
  - Personnel resources were added (and shifted) to conduct an audit of the research and development competence of different departments. The aim is to apply for project funding and initiate cooperation projects with companies and organisations. It is hoped that more centralised approach will contribute to enhance the research and development potential and increase the number and volume of research and development projects.
  
6. The majority of BA students would benefit from a broader and more interdisciplinary approach, which would introduce them to the general concepts and processes of design, while at the same time enabling them to specialise in different materials and areas.

The merging of related curricula has certainly addressed this concern (see 3). Also the volume of the basic design studies has increased and the general subjects were updated in order to expand the specialisation of the curricula. All the students of the Faculty attend several general courses offered by the Faculty to develop general interdisciplinary competences and basic design skills. The elective subjects and free electives allow the students to get acquainted with the

issues and technologies of other areas in order to acquired skills and knowledge which will enhance future trans-disciplinary cooperation projects and their ability to develop a more general, less specialised design practice.

7. The study programmes launched in recent years (joint, MA and part-time programmes) should be considered as parts of a new diverse identity of the Faculty of Design, on equal terms with the 'older' study programmes. Although there is less explicit information on this issue it seems clear that those curricula were not left out of reform but were considered and positively affected by them as well.
8. Competition for student places and the number of students admitted to almost all of the BA programmes have been below the Academy's averages for several years.  
This fact is reasonably explained by the complex demographic situation of Estonia and changing student profile. General artistic skills and knowledge of applicants have also been in gradual decline – a challenge that is shared all over Europa, possibly globally. The faculty addresses this by structural changes and an enhanced offer to students.  
Admission to the combined curriculum supports the continuation of smaller specialities, that could no be maintained as discreet programmes/curricula. The enrolment of students in the (newly) combined curriculum is now jointly conducted. (Before, each speciality conducted its entrance exams separately). Students make the decision of a specialisation after the first or second semester (depending on the curriculum). This system is designed to ensure the admission of the best candidates to the curriculum despite their initial speciality preference. The basic studies of the curriculum make gives students a more informed basis to choose their speciality. More systematic studies of basic art and design skills support students with different skill levels.
9. Only 54% of graduates work in their chosen fields of study, and many of them earn at lower salary levels than Estonian averages. In cooperation with employers, professional organisations and students, ways should be found to improve the students' professional employment rates.  
The Faculty seems very aware of this issue and has devised several actions to counter this finding. General courses have been updated, the internship module has been doubled and more support will be given to students to find suitable placements. Efforts have been made to enhance the quality of industry cooperation. From now on an in-depth analysis of the labour market will precede the opening of new curricula and specialisations. The communication with employers and alumni has been enhanced: each curriculum committee of the Faculty of Design now includes representatives of the alumni and the employers of the respective sector who are consulted on curriculum updates and changes. A more comprehensive and systematic study on the employment of the alumni is planned for the academic year 2019/2020. The Faculty finds that the quality of industry cooperation has steadily improved in recent years, in terms of maturity and openness towards user-centred design, innovation, generation of fresh ideas and unexpected solutions. The Faculty has noted that the

employment in the field of speciality is considerably higher among those alumni who have been in the labour market for more than 2 years and proposes to include this finding into further alumni studies.

The Faculty and Academy recognises that it must work persistently in order to increase the rate of the alumni's employment in their field of specialisation. The curriculum development described above is just a part of the solution and reform's results may be measured fully only in 5-10 years. In the development of new curricula, it will pay greater attention to the feedback provided by alumni and employers. The universal basic skills studies and the delayed choice of specialisation should provide the future graduates with a more consistent basic education allowing them to adapt better to possible changes.

The Faculty has overhauled its offers for introducing entrepreneurship skills with a different offer for different study groups as not all specialities benefit from the same kind of entrepreneurship courses. The Faculty also contributes to the academy wide theory subjects with a new elective module called '*Creative Workers/Life after university*'.

10. The BA programmes should be reviewed carefully and self-critically in order to make them more learner-centred.  
The issue is not explicitly mentioned in the progress report but is addressed by some actions such as the postponed choice of a specialisation, a greater fluidity between curricula, an enhanced preparation for employment (internship module, entrepreneurship classes), reading and writing seminars to support research skill may well be considered to enhance student-centred quality of the studies.
11. In the BA programmes, more attention should be paid to digital and newer media design in general, and additional resources for that purpose should be acquired as needed.  
The Faculty has introduced the speciality of '*Digital Product Design*' for the BA curriculum Product Design. The programme specialities develop digital technologies and new equipment of their field and implement them in the instruction (3D ceramic printers, folio printers of accessories design, soft electronics of textile and fashion, multimedia solutions for graphic design etc.) The Academy has launched labs researching and implementing digital technology: Virtual Reality Lab, Future Textiles Lab, Prototyping Lab, Artificial Intelligence Lab, Digital Printing Lab. Students and the faculty have been provided design software licences with the support of HITSA. For the new BA curricula, a new subject '*Digital tools*' was developed and launched, there are also free electives in development focusing on the improvement of digital and new media skills. The changes as described mostly concerns structural changes, the updating and redesign of some courses and an heightened focus on research skills. To enhance the development of students' digital skills as well as their competence to lead design processes is one of the measures that is planned for the future.

12. Design thinking, design theories and practice-based artistic research should be systematically embedded in all the study programmes.

The Faculty recognises that today's world poses new challenges to design education in that Designers can contribute (and are called upon to do so) to finding solutions to problems facing a changing society and environment, as to help us to understand the changes. The Faculty encounters these demands by an growing attention to research skills that are systematically build in the curricula and the offering of new curricula for exploring non-material topics in order to educate specialists to work with systems, services, social issues, education, accessibility etc. Newly introduced subjects like "Design theory 1-4" focus on relevant issues facing the practice of design as well as offer an opportunity for students to contextualize their work and enhance their research oriented approach to work.

13. More emphasis should be given to studies relating to entrepreneurship.

Several amendments have been made to emphasize entrepreneurship:

- The new subject "Design Theory 1-4" includes learning about entrepreneurship;
- As part of the Academy wide theory subjects the Faculty has prepared an elective module "*Creative Workers/Life after university*". It offers different groups of students a view on entrepreneurship that best suits their career needs;
- It is planned to provide counselling and training for students, alumni and academic staff on entrepreneurship and business cooperation.

14. A more systematic strategy should be developed on how best to exploit the potentials of e-learning.

No specific mention was made of this issue.

15. Continuity of timetables should be ensured while also retaining flexibility in learning. Sometimes students find it difficult to manage unexpected changes in their class schedules.

No specific mention. But the structural changes in terms of combined curricula, streamlined module sizes etc. surely will support a simplified and more transparent organization of studies.

16. As regards the assessment of learning outcomes, systematic external and internal benchmarking should be performed.

No specific mention was made of this issue.

17. Members of the teaching staff should be offered design based IT and pedagogical courses instead of the current overly general courses.

No specific mention was made of this issue. The Faculty recognises that the updating of the EAA staff structure (as well as staff development presumably) is still in process.

18. Dropout rates for the MA programme in Design and Applied Art and the part-time BA programme in Creation of Environments are higher than the Faculty's average. The reasons for this should be identified.

No specific mention was made of this issue.

19. The rates for graduating in a timely manner should be improved in all cycles of study.

No specific mention of this issue was made. But structural changes in term of streamlined module sizes etc. surely will support a simplified and more transparent organization of studies as well as additional classes to prepare for thesis writing may also support student progression.

20. The study programmes should be better marketed in order to increase the numbers of potential students.

No specific mention is made. Yet structural changes such as a common entrance exam, the postponed choice for a specialization, combined curricula, the updated curricula provide a good basis for an increase of applicants.

### Commendations

- The Faculty engaged with the report in a credible and self-critical manner.
- The panels' recommendation were addressed in a substantive manner.
- The combination of curricula and the introduction of a common structure for module sizes and proportions seems like a major achievement and shows that the faculty is now able change in ways that were not possible before.
- The structural changes and new elements (new subjects etc.) provide a good basis to support further changes and address all the recommendations of the panel.

### Further considerations

- The Faculty plans to distribute students evenly among curricula (3x20), yet it is not clear how this can be achieved should less than the desired amount of students register for one curricula.
- Some recommendation of the panel were not addressed. So far the main focus appears to have been on the core (day time) B.A. programmes. The panel realises that not everything can be done at once and that the changes have been substantial. The panel encourages the Faculty to keep the agenda and momentum of change going and to find time to address the issues concerning the programmes located more on the periphery of the faculty's offerings and those that have not been addressed so far.

## **Action plan of the Faculty of Fine Arts**

### Comments

The Faculty has provided a detailed description in an action plan document for the actions taken during the past two years to address the recommendations made in the EKKK Council's report of September 2017. The panel finds that the Faculty has made a considerable effort for all 12 recommendations proposed by the panel for the assessment. A short description of the panel's response to the action plan for these recommendations is presented below.

1. The relationship, synergy and integration of the Department of Scenography with other departments and the Drama School of the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre calls for further specification. In order to enhance the mutual cooperation between the students of drama and scenography, the curricula should be more synchronised.

The Action Plan outlines a number of ways this synergy is being developed, including the changes made in the BA curriculum of Scenography in spring 2019, a joint module within the curricula of the Faculty and a project-based cooperation between the Academy and the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre (EMTA) has been established. The Review team welcomes the appointment of an internationally renowned professor to the Department of Scenography and fully endorses the planned collaboration with leading Estonian theatres.

2. It is highly recommended that international benchmarking analyses of curricula are conducted in the faculty.

The Academy has carried out benchmarking analysis with leading international arts academies, including Emily Carr University of Design and Art, Funen Academy of Art, KUVA, Trondheim Academy of Fine Art NTNU and Zürich University of the Arts ZHdK, and this has informed the previously mentioned changes in curriculum. The Review Team think it would have been useful to have seen some outcomes of this analysis.

3. With regard to the changes planned for 2017/18, also the content and volume of the modules should be revised in order to ensure their compliance with the trans-disciplinary approach of the planned joint curriculum of sculpture, painting and graphic design. It may require the establishment of more extensive studio modules, in the final stage of the BA studies, in particular.

That the Faculty has revised the BA curriculum in 2018 to have more extensive speciality modules including the speciality studio course and the course of the contemporary theory of a speciality medium, and has introduced a joint seminar bringing together all the students of the faculty, will enhance the trans-disciplinary approach to the students study programmes. Similarly with the MA Contemporary Art programme the faculty has introduced changes to the curriculum including introducing a new English language MA Contemporary Art programme. The focus of the new programme with its rich variety of theoretical and practical courses and seminars and sharing joint modules with the students



of MA Curatorship of the Faculty of Art and Culture, will help prepare the student to enter the professional field.

4. In students' estimation, their self-directed learning is not sufficiently supported at the beginning of their studies.  
The Review Team welcomes the formulation of the Self-Initiated Focus Group, but would have liked to have known its membership and terms of reference, so as to help understand how it operates and its possible impact on self-directed learning. Prior to the review visit the supervising professor was responsible for supporting the student's individual development and they (the students) raised this question, what has changed since then?
5. There is no clear connection between the planned learning outcomes and assessment criteria. There has been no comparison of assessment standards between various departments. Summative assessment is often provided orally in the form of criticism with its volume and level of detail varying considerably by departments. There should be more transparency and consistency in the assessment to ensure the students' equal treatment. The faculty should lay down a coordinated assessment system that defines the assessment principles and describes the relation between assessment criteria and learning outcomes. The students say that they would also benefit from written feedback.  
That the Faculty has revised the relationship between learning outcomes and assessment criteria in the syllabi is a positive move if it is in line with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) 2015. The Review Team is slightly confused to read in the Faculty Action Plan's response "*It would be difficult to establish entirely uniform assessment standards for all curricula and course formats.*"<sup>5</sup> The Tuning/Paradox benchmark statements for Fine Art clearly state the Learning Outcomes for BA, MA and Doctoral levels of study. The assessment criteria should clearly align to these learning outcomes. The purpose of these programme statements was to ensure a comparability of standards and levels of achievement in all 3 cycles (BA, MA & Doctoral) across Europe. EKKKA and the Academy have both signed-up to the ESG, which clearly makes a statement on the use of learning outcomes. It is a strength that all professors and lecturers can attend assessments and that experts outside the Academy are invited to participate, the critical factor is that they are working to the same defined assessment criteria. The students will fully appreciate the good practice of receiving written assessment feedback, which again should be aligned to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria.
6. According to students, the feedback questionnaire in ÖIS is not relevant and it would be better to use informal feedback channels. The questionnaire in ÖIS should be revised.  
It is very positive to read in the Faculty Action Plan that the ÖIS feedback form has been revised in the Autumn 2017 to be more relevant to the students. Other very constructive actions have included the introduction in 2017 of focus group interviews with the graduates of BA and MA studies and a written

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<sup>5</sup> Fine Arts Action Plan p.2 point 5

satisfaction survey introduced in 2017/18 for all BA and MA graduates of EAA in order to receive feedback on the completed curriculum, the quality of instruction, the organisation of studies, supervision, the learning environment and counselling in general. It would have been useful for the enhancement value of this exercise, and the Review Team to know, if there has been any increase in response since these introductions and any trends and noteworthy outcomes have arisen from these developments?

7. According to the MA students of Animation, all study materials are not always available in English.  
This issue has been resolved with all the study materials of the Animation curricula having been translated into English.
8. The academic staff wish that workshops are managed and funded centrally. The means acquired for specific projects are not available for everyone.  
Through reading the Faculty Action Plan there is clear evidence that substantial steps have been made to centrally manage the workshops, with the timber and metal workshops, VR and prototyping labs now jointly managed. For the printing, technology, photo studio and graphics workshop this work is slightly more complex and has still to be completed. The Review Team commends the Academy that *"workshop funding and procedure for use have been centrally established and the financing and maintenance ensured."*<sup>6</sup>
9. The academic staff's participation in creative research work should be supported to ensure better integration of theory and practice in all aspects of the curricula. Further interdisciplinary cooperation within the Academy should be done to develop and support practice-based research.  
The Academy should be highly commended for the major steps it has taken in the support available for academic staff to engage in research activities. These including establishing:
  - administrative support by the faculty project managers and the research and development team;
  - internal grants for the academic staff – research grant, development grant and creative research grant, for the establishment of research groups, the development of research area, the increase of the group's competitiveness in the application of supplementary external funding;
  - a scholarship for the lecturer of creative subjects in the Cultural Endowment for conducting both creative and research projects;
  - funding for conference travel, writing and publishing (translation, editing, illustration copyrights etc.) scientific articles;
  - support for the organisation of research events, travelling expenses in cooperation projects, writing large-scale project applications, commissioning further studies or other outsourced services.

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<sup>6</sup> Fine Arts Action Plan p.3 point 8

10. There is no evaluation system for lecturers. It is advised to establish a forum for lecturers to share their best teaching practice.

The Review Team acknowledges the Faculty has to abide by national laws governing evaluation of lecturers, but wonders whether an internal enhancement driven procedure couldn't be introduced? The aim of this is for a bottom-up/top-down process to ensure staff are supported to achieve their goals as well as deliver high quality teaching. This process could also be peer to peer. It is worthy to note that the Academy has introduced in 2017/18 the excellent practice of *Good Instruction Seminars* whereby both permanent staff and visiting lecturers can share their experience and best practice and also analyse their teaching practise. This is supported by guest speakers from partner universities and beyond. The Academy has also introduced joint seminars for faculty lecturers outside the academy to discuss issues related with curriculum development and the ways to enhance the work of the faculty.

11. Too large a proportion of the lecturers are alumni of the faculty. The background of lecturers could be more versatile. The recruitment of qualified foreign lecturers is primarily hindered by the low salary.

The Review Team are aware that there are no easy solutions to this problem, but supports the Faculty for bringing in a visiting Professor in the curriculum of Animation and visiting Associate Professors in the curriculum of Art in 2018 and 2019 respectively. It also acknowledges that a large percentage of teaching is conducted by visiting lecturers with a high profiles and international backgrounds.

12. The faculty should pay special attention to the recruitment of new students, incl. offer more flexible options for studying in order to attract older students and encourage dropouts to continue their studies. It is also recommended to establish more foreign curricula to attract foreign students more.

The Review Team is reassured that the Faculty has strongly focused on recruiting new students and is utilising social media for marketing the programmes in close cooperation with the Department of Communication. It is also positive to read that the faculty has provided comprehensive support to the mobility of the academic staff and visits to partner universities. The Review Team commends the Faculty for the a new English MA Contemporary Art started in 2018 and the impact of almost doubling the number of applicants in 2019 compared to 2018.

### Commendations

- The Faculty's revision of the BA curriculum to include more extensive speciality modules including the speciality studio course and the course of the contemporary theory, introduced in 2018;
- The substantial steps made to centrally finance and manage the workshops;
- The major steps taken in the support available for academic staff to engage in research activities;
- The introduction of *Good Instruction Seminars* whereby both permanent staff and visiting lecturers can share their experience and best practice.

### Further considerations

- The Faculty offers a staff development course to ensure all staff have a clear understanding of learning outcomes and the necessary alignment of assessment criteria.

## **Action plan of the Faculty of Art and Culture**

### Comments

The Faculty has provided a detailed description in an action plan document for the actions taken during the past two years to address the recommendations made in the EKK Council's report of September 2017. The panel finds that the Faculty has made a considerable effort for the majority of the 7 recommendations proposed by the panel for the assessment. A short description of the panel's response to the action plan for these recommendations is presented below.

1. At present, the curricula are not very international due to lack of resources to recruit foreign lecturers and researchers. The international marketing of the curricula should be improved in order to attract more foreign lecturers and students.

The Faculty, through the action plan has demonstrated that it has made considerable effort to increase the international content and taught input into its study programmes. The Department of Cultural Heritage and Conservation offers wide ranging international workshops, summer schools, a successful ERASMUS+ Strategic Partnerships project and memorandums of cooperation with institutions and organisations such as Nordplus and the Port of Tallinn, which are clear indicators of the international ambitions of the Department. The Department of Art History and Visual Culture started in 2017/18 the new MA in Literature, Visual Culture and Film Studies in collaboration with Tallinn University and has recruited 80% international students with the teaching conducted in English. Within the Department there are one-week intensive courses taught in English for both BA and MA programmes and a collaboration with the Centre for Contemporary Arts to organise an open lecture series with international lecturers/artists/galleries conducting monthly seminars.

2. Applicants have little interest in the curricula reflected in the small number of students. The faculty should improve their activity in making their work and cultural relevance more visible in order to create more interest in the potential applicants.

The Department of Art History and Visual Culture (KVI) has made a number of actions to develop the curriculum through the addition of new specialisations in art history, visual culture and a specialisations curatorship and museology were started in 2018/2019. The Department has noted an increase in applicants in

2019-20, with 37 applicants for BA curricula (16 enrolled), 16 for MA curricula (14 enrolled). KVI carries out a programme of visits, including students, to Estonian secondary schools to introduce the departments. The Department of Cultural Heritage and Conservation has lower applicants, but is promoting its programmes through social media, the Pre-Academy and Open Day events.

3. The faculty expressed strong criticism of some EAA support structures that should be taken seriously and the respective reasons tackled.  
As a result of these issues the Faculty has organised inter-departmental meetings with the Heads of the support units to resolve them. We are informed that these problems have arisen largely due to structural changes within the Academy and the Faculty's action plan states these meetings have contributed to better mutual understanding and better cooperation.
4. The practical cultural heritage studies in the curriculum of Art History and Visual Culture should not overshadow the more theoretical research studies in contemporary art history.  
This recommendation has slightly altered with a different focus on curriculum, when the panel was more concerned with staff research in both departments being given the same level of support, that history and theory staff are able to develop their own research profile.

### Commendations

- The Faculty has made considerable effort to increase the international content and taught input into its study programmes.
- The Department of Art History and Visual Culture (KVI) has made a number of actions to develop the curriculum to make it more contemporary and culturally relevant.

### Further considerations

- Some recommendation of the panel were not addressed. The panel encourages the Faculty to keep the agenda and momentum of change going and to find time to address those that have not been addressed so far.

## 2. Report on meeting the requirements of the secondary condition, Estonian Academy of Arts

### 2.1 General background

At its meeting on September 29, 2017, EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education decided that the next assessment of the study programme group of Arts at the Estonian Academy of Arts (EAA) will take place in 7 years (maximum term) but set a secondary condition that the EAA should meet in 2 years.

Based on the Assessment Report of the international panel and the Decision of EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education, the EAA submitted the following documents to EKKA:

- 1) The progress report of the Estonian Academy of Arts on eliminating the secondary condition set in the assessment of the study programme group of Arts
- 2) Action plan of the Faculty of Design
- 3) Action plan of the Faculty of Fine Arts
- 4) Action plan of the Faculty of Art and Culture
- 5) Action plan of the Interior Architecture programmes

### 2.2 Meeting the requirements of secondary condition

The following is the requirement set by the Quality Assessment Council to be met by the EAA, and the committee's assessment on the developments EAA has made in this regard.

According to subsection 6 (1) of the Government of the Republic Regulation, 'Standard of Higher Education', a study programme must take into consideration the needs of the labour market and the target group. The study programmes with narrow specialisations at the Faculty of Design are not consistent with the current needs in the labour market for designers having a broader education. The rates of graduates becoming employed in their professions are low. The Academy's management should initiate and support changes at the faculties more vigorously.

**Assessment of the committee: the secondary condition is fully met**

### Comments

During the academic year 2017/2018, numerous discussions and meetings were held at the Faculty of Design to analyse the panel's report on the assessment of the study programmes, and a SWOT analysis carried out. This process resulted in a comprehensive agenda for changes within the Faculty of Design. In autumn of 2018, the management of EAA gave their clear support for further reforms and set a deadline: the new curricula (Fashion, Accessory and Textile Design; Applied Art and Design) combining the former separate curricula were to be approved by the EAA Council at the end of 2018. The project was a success and deadlines were met. On 15 December 2018, the new curricula were approved by the EAA Council and on 7 March 2019, also by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research (hereinafter HTM). Admission to the new curricula was conducted in summer 2019 and the regular classes began in September 2019. The post of development Manager of Academic Affairs was established in July 2018, to be renamed Head of Quality Assurance in June 2019. The Head of Quality Assurance was actively involved in the working group of curriculum development and the amendments to the faculty structure.

A systematic analysis of and engagement with the labour market (which has been piloted and tested during the development of the Digital Product Design curriculum) will be used as the model in the future for other curricula. This includes interviews with employers and specialists in the field, both in Estonia and abroad. The communication with employers and alumni has been enhanced: each curriculum committee of the Faculty of Design now includes representatives of the alumni and the employers of the respective sector who are consulted on curriculum updates and changes.

A more comprehensive and systematic study on the employment of the alumni is planned for the academic year 2019/2020. The Faculty finds that the quality of industry cooperation has steadily improved in recent years, in terms of maturity and openness towards user-centred design, innovation, generation of fresh ideas and unexpected solutions. The Faculty has noted that the employment in the field of speciality is considerably higher among those alumni who have been in the labour market for more than 2 years and proposes to include this finding into further alumni studies.

At the heart of the reform lay the merging and streamlining of the core B.A. programmes of the Faculty of Design. The volume of the basic design studies has increased and the general subjects were updated in order to expand the specialisation of the curricula. General courses have been updated, the internship module has been doubled and more support will be given to students to find suitable placements. Efforts have been made to enhance the quality of industry cooperation. The curricula have thus become indeed broader based and may be adapted more easily to changing needs of the labour market.

The Faculty has overhauled its offers for introducing entrepreneurship skills with a different offer for different study groups as not all specialities benefit from the same kind of entrepreneurship courses. The Faculty also contributes to the academy wide theory subjects with a new elective module called '*Creative Workers/Life after university*'. The Faculty is planning to provide counselling and training for students, alumni and academic staff on entrepreneurship and business cooperation.

The move to the new building and the redesign of the workshops and labs and the introduction of new elective subjects and free electives have provided opportunities for students to get acquainted with the issues and technologies of other areas, thus increasing their skill base to meet the demands of the professional world.

Preparation of students for practise-based research. Academic reading and writing classes gradually build and enhance students' research skills. The creation of the new subject '*Design theory 1-4*' as general subjects is offered across all curricula. In the classes students learn to place their work in a wider context, to conceptualise and substantiate their design work in a more research based way, which will enhance their skill base in a professional context. A design research working group has been established with its members (researchers, PhD and MA students) in order to organise joint seminars and writing sessions to develop research competences. The aim is to increase the number of research publications by the staff and students of the Faculty of Design.

The panel commends the rigour and commitment that the Faculty of Design has made to addressing these issues and believes it has fully meeting this requirement.

#### Commendations

- The panel commends the rigour and commitment that the Faculty of Design has made in meeting this requirement;
- The comprehensive agenda for changes within the Faculty of Design;
- The appointment of the Head of Quality Assurance;
- A systematic analysis of, and engagement with, the labour market;
- Developing the curricula to become broader based that may be adapted more easily to the changing needs of the labour market;
- The creation of the new subject '*Design theory 1-4*' offered across all the Faculty curricula;
- The redesign of the workshops and labs;
- The establishment of a design research working group.

#### Further considerations

- The panel encourages the Faculty to keep the agenda and momentum of change going and to continue to address the issues concerning the programmes that have not been addressed to-date and evaluate the impact of the actions that have been introduced.



