



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

**LIETUVOS MUZIKOS IR TEATRO AKADEMIJOS
STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS VAIDYBA (612W40002)
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

**EVALUATION REPORT
OF ACTING (612W40002)
STUDY PROGRAMME
at LITHUANIAN ACADEMY OF MUSIC AND THEATRE**

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DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

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| Studijų programos pavadinimas | <i>Vaidyba</i> |
| Valstybinis kodas | <i>612W40002</i> |
| Studijų sritis | Menai |
| Studijų kryptis (pagrindinė) | Teatras ir kinas |
| Studijų programos rūšis | Universitetinės |
| Studijų pakopa | Pirma |
| Studijų forma (trukmė metais) | Nuolatinės (4) |
| Studijų programos apimtis kreditais | 240 kreditų |
| Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija | Teatro ir kino bakalauras |
| Studijų programos įregistravimo data | 2001-08-02 Įsakymo Nr. 1187 |

INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

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|---|---------------------------------------|
| Title of the study programme | Acting |
| State code | <i>612W40002</i> |
| Study area | Arts |
| Study field (major) | Theatre and Film |
| Kind of the study programme | University |
| Study cycle | First |
| Study mode (length in years) | Full-time (4) |
| Volume of the study programme in credits | 240 ECTS |
| Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded | Bachelor's degree in Theatre and Film |
| Date of registration of the study programme | 2001-08-02 Order No 1187 |

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I. INTRODUCTION

Following analysis of the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and its appendices (which included module descriptions, CVs of teaching staff, previous evaluation report from 2011 etc.) provided for the Evaluation Team (ET) in advance, the ET visited the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre (LAMT) on Wednesday 7 and Thursday 8 May 2014. The evaluation process followed the external evaluation procedures, set by the Ministry of Education and Science (by order No 1-01-162 of 20 December 2010) and the methodology for the evaluation of Lithuanian higher education institutions, set by the director of The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (by order 24 July 2009 No ISAK-1652, amendments 05.11.2009; 17.12.2009; 30.09.2010).

The visit to the Academy in respect of the BA Acting involved meetings with:

- i) Staff responsible for the preparation of the SER
- ii) Students
- iii) Teaching Staff
- iv) Senior Administration Staff
- v) Alumni
- vi) Social Partners

Site visits to physical resources available to the students were conducted during the course of the two days and a selection of Theses and Final Project works of the students were viewed.

The Evaluation Team would like to thank the Rector of the Academy and his senior team, the Dean of Faculty of Theatre and Film and all the staff, students, alumni and social partners for their positive engagement with the evaluation process during our visit to the Academy and for preparing the Self-Evaluation Reports and other materials that we received in advance. We are very grateful for the welcome which we received, the hospitality shown to us during the visit and the willingness of staff, students, graduates and external stakeholders to make themselves available according to the needs of our exacting schedule.

Note: The Evaluation Team's visit to the Academy included evaluation of the **BA Acting** as well as the **BA Theatre Directing**. The SER produced for each individual programme was based upon a common template document produced by the Faculty of Theatre and Film and, therefore, contained a significant amount of commonality in its analysis of both Faculty-wide and Academy-wide processes and learning resources. Except for students (two distinct meetings), all the ET's meetings (e.g. with social partners or teaching staff) were for both programmes at the same time. Consequently, the reports for **BA Acting** and for **BA Theatre Directing** are similar in many ways.

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

1.1 The aims and learning outcomes of the BA Acting are set out in the SER ('aims' in paragraph 13, 'learning outcomes' in paragraph 14); the aims and learning outcomes of each individual study course (module) are contained within the individual descriptors, which were sent to the ET in advance of the Evaluation Visit (Annex No. 3 – Descriptions of Courses). The ET viewed the programme aims as being well defined and clear; the learning outcomes as well, though less so (for example about acting for films). When asked about the learning outcomes, all students had seemingly high knowledge of the learning outcomes; most teachers as well, though not all of them; in fact, some teachers showed limited knowledge and understanding of the learning outcomes themselves. They are also publicly available on the Open Information, Consultation and Orientation System (AIKOS), which is administered by the Ministry of Education and Science. Key information about the programme is also publicly available on the LMTA website. Students also commented on the fact that the aims and learning outcomes of each module were explained in detail by teaching staff in the first class of each semester; this is good practice that the ET wishes to commend.

1.2 The ET met with teaching staff, students, alumni and social partners during the Evaluation Visit; each group confirmed that the aims and learning outcomes of the programme met academic and professional requirements, public needs and the needs of the national labour market. There was unanimous view on this – however students and alumni noted the fact that the programme does not sufficiently prepare students for international careers. Students and alumni stressed that they appreciate all the possibilities to engage in short-term international activities, however they saw a missed opportunity in terms of internationalisation of the programme. Although this is not part of the current aims and learning outcomes of the programme, the Academy may want to consider the needs of the international labour market (and not just the national labour market).

1.3. The programme aims and learning outcomes are consistent with the type and level of studies and the level of qualifications offered, i.e. First Study Cycle in this case (as set out within the national Descriptor of Study Cycles). In particular, the SER made reference to the ELIA Tuning Document (paragraph 17), which illustrates how the programme team aims to position and benchmark their programme at the right level.

1.4 The name of the programme, its learning outcomes, content and the qualifications offered are compatible with each other. The ET noted the fact that the ongoing reorganisation of some of the study fields (e.g. Dance) means that the BA Acting focuses more on its core (i.e. acting). The ET welcomes the reorganisation and the clarity it will lead to, in line with the first recommendation from the 2011 Evaluation Visit.

1.5 It is the stated aim of the Academy to prepare students for engaging in critical thinking and for working as independent professionals. This would include encouragement for students to pursue their interests in exploring subjects that bear upon their chosen field but may be considered outside the scope of traditional theatre education. In this regard the Academy may consider seeking cooperation with other arts' academies and art related university programmes

within Lithuania. During its visit students informed the ET about their interest in cooperation of this kind, and they noted especially the synergy created when working together with the students from the Academy of Fine Arts.

Main strengths and weaknesses as seen by the ET:

Strengths:

- The aims and learning outcomes are comprehensive and well defined; they are well aligned to the institution's more general aims
- The learning outcomes are mostly well-defined; students seem to be well aware of their contents
- Students are well trained and well prepared for participation in the Lithuanian national theatre life.

Weaknesses:

- Some of the learning outcomes (e.g. with regard to acting for film) are only partially developed
- Some teachers had limited awareness of the formal learning outcomes of the course
- Possibilities for cooperation with other national art academies and/or university programmes are only partially exploited in the formulation of the programme aims and learning outcomes

2. Curriculum design

2.1 The curriculum design meets legal requirements. Although it initially seemed that the curriculum broke the 7-subject rule, with its highly fragmented curriculum, the programme team explained how this granularity had to be interpreted more holistically, e.g. recognising that units such as "ethnographic singing", "ensemble singing" and "singing with a microphone" were actually part of the same subject. The ET understands the logic of the curriculum design, but these small units are not the same subject: they have different codes, different course descriptors, forms of assessment, etc. **The ET recommends** to merge small curriculum Units in order to fully meet legal requirements without ambiguity.

2.2 Study subjects modules are spread evenly and their themes are not too repetitive, however the „straight-jacket“ design of the curriculum leaves limited space for interdisciplinary work (including collaborations with students from other programmes) and rules almost out all possibilities for students to pursue long-term exchange studies abroad (e.g. one semester). The ET can understand the reasons for this, however the ET wishes to highlight that curriculum design should facilitate rather than hinder student mobility.

2.3 The content of the subjects/modules is consistent with the type and level of the studies; the move towards a more modular approach was mentioned by the programme team, however there seems to be little encouragement for students of different years to work together, as the students themselves explained. The ET wishes to suggest that the programme team considers how/when/why it could be beneficial for students of different years to collaborate more.

2.4 The content and methods of the subjects/modules are appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. The delivery of the programme is largely based on a “master-disciple” model which is culturally/historically coherent. There is however little space for students to select optional courses and to design their study to their own particular needs; the programme team is aware of this issue, as identified page 14 in the SER; students also commented on it. At the meeting with senior management, it was mentioned that the Academy plans to review its study programmes to offer all students more optionality in module choices; indeed **the ET recommends** that systems of options are implemented to provide choice, flexibility and personalisation of studies.

2.5 Practical training is an important part of the programme. The ET understands that for the lack of material resources the Academy must for the most part rely on cooperation with social partners in this regard. At meetings with the ET teachers and staff expressed their hopes that practical training could be more structured once the Learning Theatre would be fully functional.

2.6 The scope of the programme is sufficient to ensure learning outcomes. The programme is well designed; it is very demanding for students, as students themselves recognised. The best students complete the programmes and graduate with excellent results, as noted by the ET when they reviewed some of the students’ works.

2.7 The content of the programme tend to reflect the latest achievements in science (research), art and technologies. Students and alumni however argued that students may need more entrepreneurial skills, online portfolios and more insight into how to market their own talent. Paragraph 25 of the SER also mentions the fact that „surveys conducted in 2013 demonstrated that graduates lack entrepreneurial skills“ so **the ET recommends** enhancement of the curriculum by introducing elements of entrepreneurship training (in the form of modules or projects).

Main strengths and weaknesses as seen by the ET:

Strengths:

- The curriculum is comprehensive and logically structured
- The curriculum has a clear emphasis on necessary skills and acting techniques
- The curriculum benefits from close relations with the professional theatre sector
- Training in analysis and reflective thinking is embedded in different units of the curriculum
- The programme is open for improvements and new developments with regard to curriculum
- The curriculum is developed systematically

Weaknesses:

- The curriculum appears rather fragmented
- The transition to a modulatory structure is still in its infancy
- The curriculum is lacking in entrepreneurial components
- Little space is left within the curriculum for international student exchange.
- The curriculum allows for too little selection of optional subjects and interdisciplinary work

- The curriculum does not support cooperation between students of different years within the programme
- The Academy must for the most part rely on social partners for providing professional practical training (Learning Theatre)
- Students do not seem to receive any support to develop their own international portfolio

3. Staff

3.1 The study programme is provided by staff meeting legal requirements regarding professional experience and education of programme staff. Teachers have appropriate knowledge and expertise to ensure effective teaching and prepare students for professional practice in a range of acting specialties. The ET was however surprised to see that so few (if any) experienced stage technicians are employed within the study programme.

3.2 The qualifications of the teaching staff are adequate to ensure learning outcomes – not only their academic qualifications, but also their professional achievements. The programme is taught by accomplished artists and experienced practitioners, which is a key strength of the programme.

3.3 The teacher/student ratio is difficult to define as methods of working with students vary from one programme to another. In the SER this ratio is estimated as 6,6 for the study field Theatre and Film. Thus, it is clear that students are offered relatively high proportion of contact-hours, indicating that students are well supported, both pedagogically and professionally. The group of current students that the ET met with during the Evaluation Visit commented very positively on the helpfulness of their teaching staff.

3.4 The teachers are either core staff (permanently employed) or sessional teachers (temporarily employed). The proportion of teaching that is provided by each group is not known. Still it is clear that sessional teachers have very important roles, bringing with them valuable experiences and knowledge from the professional practice that study programmes as this one cannot be without. The drawback however is that around 50% of staff are employed part-time, and as sessional teachers come and go it may be difficult for them to take part in the ongoing discussions about quality enhancement and programme development more broadly.

3.5 According to the SER workload of teachers is divided into three categories: contact work, non-contact work, and artistic practice/research/organizational activity. The workload defined as independent artistic practice and/or research is for professors from 43-47%, for associate professors it is 40-43%, and for lecturers 37-40%. This proportion is 33-37% for assistants,

3.6 Professional development of the teaching staff is organized in different forms: with teachers exchange (training abroad), participation in masterclasses/seminars offered by visiting teachers, participation in seminars within Lithuania, and with providing training sessions, courses, and conferences organized by the Academy itself. According to the SER teachers have possibilities of taking regularly sabbatical leave. Still, as evidenced at meeting with teachers there seems to be limited interest in exploiting opportunities that the sabbaticals provide. The ET believes that the Academy has created conditions for the professional development of the teaching staff necessary for the provision of the programme; this is particularly important for staff (such as

practicing artists) who may have fewer opportunities for professional development in terms of pedagogy.

3.7 With reference to the SER the panel notices that the Academy has made considerable efforts in the last few years to develop international cooperation, regarding both the input of international visiting artists, and LAMT staff who take part in projects abroad. This is especially evident within the dance-programme, but to a lesser degree within the acting-programme. The Panel notices that in the last years between 4 and 6 guest teachers are employed each year for periods that are not defined. Also, it notices that most of these are in the field of dance or movement. Other experts are not highlighted in the SER.

The academic staff met by the ET were able to provide several interesting examples of their own international activities and how they benefit students, even though there is no formal mechanisms in place to monitor how artistic and activities supported by the Academy are of benefit for acting students, and in general within the institution.

3.8 According to the SER approximately 90% of teachers are actively engaged in cultural and artistic activities. The ET was not been presented with any systematic documentation of these activities and therefore it has limited possibilities in supporting this information any further.

The academic staff met by the ET were able to provide examples of their own applied research activities and how they benefit students, however that proved more anecdotal than systematic, as the Academy does not seem to have formal mechanisms to monitor how artistic activities and research supported by the Academy are of benefit to the programme.

The ET wishes to commend the fact that an increasing number of staff are publishing research articles and monographs and methodological materials.

Main strengths and weaknesses as seen by the ET:

Strengths:

- Teachers are active practioners and many are recognized nationally as accomplished artists
- The number of core staff is small, and with extensive experience in teaching and in organizational activities
- The student / teacher ratio is low (i.e. few students per full-time staff position)
- Academic staff has a relatively high proportion of their workload defined as independent artistic practice and/or research
- Ties with professional practice are strengthened by employing sessional teachers from different fields of professional practice
- International mobility of teachers is encouraged
- Professional development of staff is supported, directly and indirectly

Weaknesses:

- No mechanism seems is in place to monitor how artistic activities and research supported by the Academy are of benefit for the programme.

- Documentation of the staff's artistic practice and/or research activities is not systematically disseminated
- There is a limited offering of foreign guest teachers for acting students
- Some staff have limited exposure to academic and professional exchange in other countries
- There is a lack of expertise in stage techniques within the core staff
- The proportion of teaching provided by core staff related to the to proportion provided by sessional teachers seems not to be clearly defined and monitored

4. Facilities and learning resources

4.1 The premises for studies are just adequate, both in their size and quality. The ET was able to visit the premises to see how some parts are now being systematically improved and renovated (e.g. the Learning Theatre). Still, as other parts are in poor conditions and the spaces in general being rigidly structured allow only for very limited flexibility there is still much scope for improvement, especially regarding the spaces for students.

The programme directors are fully aware of this issue; the SER refers to the fact that „infrastructure of the Academy ensures only be basic level for implementation of the study programme“ (page 25). Students are aware of that shortcoming, also commenting negatively on aspects beyond the teaching spaces themselves, such as the fact that no catering services, canteen or cafeteria, are available in the main building. This is relevant as acting students need to work and rehearse for hours on end, and would benefit from such facilities.

The ET also had the impression that the fact that some of the facilities are protected by law and regulations as national heritage seem to be a hindrance. The senior administration team mentioned the project of a new campus; although this development is in its very early stages, the ET wishes to commend this strategic planning which should in the future highly improve the student experience.

4.2 The teaching and learning equipment too (e.g. computer equipment, consumables) are just adequate for basic needs. The auditoriums that the ET members were invited to visit are provided with elementary stage technology, none however were found to be equipped with the up-to-date equipment that could satisfy the needs demanded by contemporary theatre. Also of concern is the fact that no expert staff seems to be available on permanent basis to implement and operate such technologies, maintain the equipment and teach courses specifically designed to train students in this regard.

4.3 According to the SER (paragraph 81) just over half of the all LMTA buildings had wireless internet coverage in 2013 (though it is not clear if this average is applicable to the premises of the BA Acting Programme). Teaching facilities at university level should have a full internet; **the ET recommends** that IT (information technology) should be used more efficiently and more consistently, by both students and staff. The ET did not see evidence of an *Intranet* being used at LMTA.

4.4 The Academy provides adequate arrangements for students' practice. The links with many social partners (such as local theatres) mean that students can complete projects in professional environments that are often of a better quality than the facilities and premises where they study.

However, in the long run it must be of concern for the Academy that it itself can offer only very limited opportunities for in-house professional training and has to a large measure rely on outside partners for providing venues for larger productions and shows.

4.5 Teaching materials (textbooks, books, periodical publications, databases) are just adequate and accessible. Systematic efforts have been made in the last few years to update library facilities and its stocks, and according to the SER the Academy presently allocates specifically about half of available funds for updating the library of the Faculty of Theatre and Films. Students are provided with a number of computerized workplaces in the reading room and they have access to 18 subscribed on-line databases.

In terms of accessibility, several students commented on the limited opening hours of the library, which is an area that the Academy might want to consider. Although it was good to see that the library offers access to a wide selection of literature on Lithuanian theatre, access to other resources, especially in English, was more limited. **The ET recommends** that the BA Acting makes more use of the increasing number of online/digital/free resources such as e-books.

Main strengths and weaknesses as seen by the ET:

Strengths:

- Systematic efforts are made to refurbish the present teaching facilities
- Learning Theatre is being reconstructed and updated with new stage technologies
- Library provides students and staff access to important academic databases as well as opportunities to use important e-catalogues, both national and international
- The library offers access to wide selection of literature on Lithuanian theatre

Weaknesses:

- The premises are widespread and the organization of learning spaces only allows for limited flexibility
- Many spaces are still poorly maintained and need refurbishing
- No catering services, canteen or cafeteria, are available in the main building
- Central services, such as library services, are located away from the main basis of acting students
- The Academy needs to rely heavily on social partners for providing venues for larger performances and theatre projects
- The library offers a very limited selection of books and printed periodicals in English
- Full internet coverage is still to be implemented

5. Study process and student assessment

5.1 The study programme has specialized requirements for admission that include a 3 step entrance examination and an interview on issues related to the programme. According to the SER the results of the entrance examinations make up for 70% of the calculation of the total competitive score. The remaining part is comprised of final grades from secondary school in Lithuanian language and literature and from final grade in foreign languages.

Since 2009 when national reform in higher education was implemented, admission to all study programmes in the fields of art in Lithuania is jointly administered. This has substantially changed the order and nature of admission to state-financed study places. According to the SER this reform has diminished constantly the role of the Academy in selecting the most talented students “as the use of “baskets” (the principle “money follows the student”) means unification of requirements to all study areas.”

In meetings with staff some of the most experienced teachers expressed their regrets about having to abandon former ways of selecting students, and they asked that “power to admitting students were brought back to the Academy.” Their main concern is that the current admission systems do not accommodate for the special conditions within the performing arts, that the standardization of admission is taking control over more specialized approach, and therefore the levels of competencies of incoming students are not always as high as they could be. The Panel is not in a situation to take position in this matter but it considers it important that the teachers’ concerns are being listened to by those that decide on the rules.

5.2 Information on admission requirements and procedures is readily available, and the Academy is to be commended for organizing “open days” during which future students are provided with detailed information regarding all study programmes and other aspects of their future study. In addition, the Academy provides special counselling for those who are aiming for entrance examinations.

5.3 Admission is organized annually. On the average about 6 candidates compete for each student place. According to the SER majority of candidates mark the acting programme as their first choice. Competitive score of successful candidates for the programme is considered very high and steady. In general, admission of new students seems to be fair and clear and serves the acting profession in best possible way.

5.4 The organisation of the study process ensures an adequate provision of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes. Despite the high demands of the programme (for the students who do not always have access to some of the necessary facilities), most students graduate within the planned time. Should a student, for some some reason, need to change course of study, they are given special attention and support, as the programme team explained. Some students drop out during their first or second year of study, but this is a rare occurrence.

5.5 The professional activities of the majority of graduates meets the programme providers' expectations. Social partners and alumni praised the high quality of the teaching and training delivered by the programme. Most alumni have successful careers, which also shows that all expectations are fulfilled and often surpassed, however meetings with students and alumni raised the issue of the number of graduating Acting students for a relatively small national domestic

market (especially as those students are not always equipped to compete internationally, as outlined in sub-section 1.2).

5.6 According to information provided in the SER (table 12) graduates have good prospects of being employed in their profession. A substantial group of graduates have felt motivated to work together after graduation and have established independent theatre groups that now have made strong impressions in Lithuanian theatre life. Still, large groups of graduates have decided to continue higher education in the second cycle of studies (table 12).

It should, however, be noted that the Academy has not as yet made efforts to collect systematically statistical data regarding the demand for theatre and dance professionals on the labour market. Neither is it possible to deduct from the information provided in the SER what are the long term prospects for graduating students to make living from their profession.

The Panel wants to express its concern regarding future employment prospects of acting students and encourages the Academy to widen its scope in offering education and training that can offer graduates employment opportunities in fields that have not been in main focus until now, such as in the growing industry of film and television.

5.7. According to the information provided students are systematically encouraged to participate in variety of professional activities that are outside of their defined study programme. This includes for example participation in various conferences, discussions, meetings, festivals and seminars. Also, students are provided with conditions to slowly get involved into the theatrical process and thus gradually gaining professional experience outside of the Academy. Most of these engagements come about through personal contacts and connections. Formal agreements framing such collaborations seem not to exist.

5.8 Special efforts have been made in the last few years to strengthen the international dimension of the FTF. At the end of 2010 the Academy established a full-time position within the International Relations Office for serving the needs of the Faculty and providing more systematic accounting of international mobility at FTF than was provided before. As accounted for in the SER this has led to a more consistent approach to the implementation of the international strategy of the Faculty that applies to relations with other science and art institutions abroad, dissemination of information about the FTF in other countries, and participation in international projects, events and festivals.

As student mobility is central to FTF's international strategy it must be of concern for the Faculty that long-term student mobility and exchange is still very low within the Acting Programme. As regards outgoing students this low mobility is explained in the SER by the fact that majority of students are employed by local theatres, and are therefore reluctant to make changes that may put an end to their employment and at the same time closes for them an important source of income. Also to be noted is that the number of incoming students from abroad is still very small. This can be explained, at least partly, by the fact that most teaching in the programme is in Lithuanian and foreign students may have difficulties in fully participating in the studies.

As regards outgoing students the ET considers it of utmost importance that special measures will be taken to encourage students to take considerable part of their studies and practice training in academies and/or companies abroad. The world of theatre and film is rapidly opening up and future opportunities for becoming actors are increasingly found outside of national borders. What

these measures could be is not for the Panel to say, but obviously they will carry some limitations of students employment while they are still enrolled in their studies.

As regards attracting foreign students to the programme the Academy may consider to systematically offer certain modules of study that are taught in English. This could also be of benefit for the Lithuanian students as they learn at the same time to work in an environment where communication is in a foreign language. The Panel noticed during meetings with students that many of them have difficulties in expressing themselves in English, even in a very basic way.

Most progress in international student mobility is seen in increasing participation in short-term engagements, such as in creative workshops, projects and festivals. Indeed, the list presented in the SER (table 14) is impressive. Students confirm that study experiences in international contexts have been of much value for their professional development.

5.9 The Academy ensures an adequate level of academic and social support. Academic support is well provided by the Academy (as noted in sub-section 3.3) however other areas of student support should be further considered; in particular, students commented on the need to provide a nurse or a psychologist on site, or even, at a most basic level, better First Aid kits. **The ET recommends** that the Academy pays closer attention to issues of student welfare and student well-being. Likewise, students are not aware of the work of the “Career Centre” – and they would clearly benefit from more support with their careers.

5.10 Student assessment in the Acting programme is directly related to the forms of assessment used within the Academy. Grades are given on the scale of 1 to 10, the higher number indicating excellence and exceptional knowledge and abilities (SER table 16). Teachers and students confirm that in assessment the scale is applied from the lowest to the highest, which makes the Panel wonder why average grades in final projects are almost without exceptions in the numbers of 9 or 10. The panel recommends that this will be given a special thought.

The assessment system of students’ performance is clear, adequate and publicly available; students themselves recognised that the assessment process is fair overall. However, according to students themselves, it seems that two important aspects of assessment are not in place: (a) assessment criteria are not always communicated in advance to students, and (b) students rarely receive written feedback on their work. Of course for some subjects/modules, assessment criteria are well communicated to students (and discussed and clarified) but this is not the case for some subjects/modules; **the ET recommends** that assessment criteria should always be communicated to students. Likewise, the ET is aware of the benefits of spoken feedback but **the ET recommends** that students receive some written feedback on their assignments. In summary, the area of assessment is one where the ET believes that the programme team should spend more time in terms of quality enhancement.

5.11 As stated in sub-section 2.2 the design of the curriculum provides little space for students to select optional courses outside of the core of the programme, and thus design their study to their own particular needs. The Panel encourages the Academy to open up for more flexibility in this respect and to recognize at the same time the fact that acting students so highly specially trained need exposure to fields of studies that may lie remotely from their narrow interests

Main strengths and weaknesses as seen by the ET:

Strengths:

- Admission is competitive and entrance examinations are specially designed to the needs of the programme
- Admission of new students is fair and serves the profession in best possible way
- The large majority of students finish their studies within the time planned
- Students have good prospects in being employed within the profession nationally
- Students are systematically encouraged to participate in external professional activities, both in Lithuania and abroad
- Students are increasingly engaged in short-term international activities
- Support services are available to students in all important areas

Weaknesses:

- Long-term prospects for graduate employment are unknown
- No statistical data regarding the demand for theatre and dance professionals on the labour market is collected or analysed
- Little focus on preparing students for working professionally in films and tv
- Previous strategies to increase long-term international student mobility have only been partially successful
- Students are not sufficiently prepared for launching international careers
- Students are not aware of the services provided by the Career Center
- Final projects are graded within the narrowest range in the top-part of the scale
- Assessment criteria are not always communicated in advance to students
- Students rarely receive written feedback on their work.
- Students have little exposure to academic studies outside the narrow field of their intended profession

6. Programme management

6.1 As described in the SER the overall management and quality assurance of the Acting Programme is entrusted to a special study committee, Committee on Study Programmes of Acting and Directing, established at the end of 2012. Ten people sit in the committee, thereof are six professors and lecturers, one representative of social partners, and three students. The study process is organized by the Dean and a special course supervisor is responsible for the implementation of the programme and accounting of studies. According to the SER the committee analyzes the most important indicators of the programme and resolves issues pertaining to the content of the programme.

The Panel commends the Academy for setting up such a formal structure to manage the studies and ensure the programme's quality and development. Indeed, the institution is here implementing one of the most important recommendations of the Review Panel from 2011. Still, the present Panel believes that the function of the new committee has not been fully realized.

For the first, some committee members are not active within the committee and seem not to be aware of their responsibilities with regard to the development of the programme. For the second, the committee may not as yet have found its way in operating the programmes, as indeed is recognized in the SER.

It is a real challenge for the Academy to get the study committee to fully operate and to shoulder the responsibilities that it is given. The Academy may consider to restructure the committee in such a way that it will be lighter to operate. For example, a smaller committee with perhaps only two or three staff, one student and/or one graduate, and one outside representative will connect more directly with the programme and provide more immediate feedback into the studies.

6.2 Different measures of quality enhancement and quality control have already been implemented or are in the process of being implemented within the Academy. These include preparations of a Quality Handbook, plans for integration of processes pertaining to monitoring and improvement of quality measures and benchmarking, development of an IT system for quality management, and systematic collection of data pertaining to student assessment, employee surveys, and systematic accounting of studies (SER, paragraphs 145-152).

However, the Panel has to report that during its visit to the Academy it did not see that measures already taken or that are in the process of being implemented have had much effect on how the Acting programme is managed. Indeed, the Panel considers that there is a certain lack of willingness to recognize the importance of formalization of quality enhancement and control. In the eyes of the Panel this is a major drawback for an otherwise excellently run institution.

Especially, this element comes through in a lack of understanding that student surveys have to be systematic, regular, continuously on-going, entirely private, preferably on-line, and have to be followed up in a transparent and systematic manner. For this the Academy needs to set up a functional *intranet*, where communication is securely confined and reliable. The setting up of such a network is of primary importance.

6.3 The evaluation and improvement processes involve stakeholders, especially social partners. One of the strengths of the programme is the fact that it maintains close relations with Lithuanian theatres and other art institutions within the field of performance arts. These stakeholders are represented within the Academy in different functions, both formally and informally – for example representatives of these institutions are invited to sit on assessment panels for final projects and as members of study committees; they are also present in more informal ways, through collaborations, projects and performances.

The ET commends these close relations between the Academy and its social partners, but also wishes to raise a concern regarding the importance for the Academy to maintain its academic freedom and control over the development of studies: if university studies become too dependent on the support of external partners and collaboration with outside industries and/or market (including the cultural sector and the creative industries), there is an immediate danger that other factors than those that serve the personal and intellectual development of the students may take control. In this matter, the Academy, as indeed all other academic institutions of highest level of education, has to find a right balance and make sure it safeguards necessary courage to implement its decisions without regard to what outside partners may find best suitable in each case.

Main strengths and weaknesses as seen by the ET:

Strengths:

- A Committee (responsible for programme management and development) with participation of staff, students and social partners has been set up
- Important functions of a comprehensive quality framework have been implemented or are in the process of being implemented
- Communication between students and teachers is open, easy and informal
- Teachers are easily available and highly committed to the well-being and development of their students
- Students and staff are committed to developing the programme in the best possible way
- The Academy keeps close relations with Lithuanian theatres and other art institutions within the field of performance arts

Weaknesses:

- The Programme Committee is not fully functional yet
- The role of the course supervisor within the management structure is only vaguely defined
- The formalization of systematic quality enhancement and control has as yet not been implemented
- Student feedback is not collected continuously and systematically with guarantee of full anonymity
- No formal mechanisms are in place to monitor and process feedback from students, teachers, or other employees
- Communication within the programme is mostly informal and procedures for more formal exchange seem not to exist
- The Academy is much dependent on external partners for the development and implementation of the programme

III. RECOMMENDATIONS:

Programme Aims and Learning Outcomes

- Study programme has little focus on preparing students for employment in film and television. In this regard aims and learning outcomes need to be further developed and more deeply implemented.
- The Academy is advised to explore possibilities for further cooperation with other national art academies and university study programmes, both at the academic and operational levels.
- In-house practice training through the functions of the Learning Theatre needs to be further strengthened. This includes special emphasis on managing –up-to-date stage techniques, such as scenography, lighting, sound, and video.

Curriculum Design

- The Academy is encouraged to complete its planned transition towards a modulatory structure of the curriculum. The present fragmentary structure needs to be revised with the purpose of creating fewer but larger modules. The evaluation Team recommends to merge small curriculum Units in order to fully meet legal requirements without ambiguity.
- The Academy is advised to include well-defined entrepreneurial components in the curriculum of the study programme.
- The curriculum should provide flexibility for students to participate in more long-term international student exchange.
- Students have little exposure to academic studies outside their field of core study. It is advised that more space is given to optional subjects and interdisciplinary work.
- Measures should be taken within the design of the curriculum that supports transfer of knowledge and experiences between students of different years within the programme. Also, cooperation with students of the directing programme could be further strengthened.

Staff

- The Academy is advised to develop a strategy regarding what proportions of teaching and organizing are provided by core staff on one hand and by sessional teachers on the other. This strategy should include benchmarking with regard to proportion of visiting teachers from abroad.
- Staff mobility within the acting programme needs to be further encouraged with emphasis on increased exposure to academic and professional exchange in other countries. These should include both academic staff and support staff. Also, teachers need to be better informed about the options of applying for sabbatical leave.
- The Academy needs to secure its international standing by systematically employing foreign experts for different functions within the acting programme. Besides guest teachers and lecturers these may include examiners (final projects), study advisors, and reviewers.

Facilities and learning resources

- The Academy is encouraged to use to the full the limited flexibility it has in present premises in reorganizing spaces in such ways that supports exchange and communication in better ways than now is being done. Especially, it is important to connect the library services better with the mainstream of student and staff traffic. Also, catering services, such a canteen or cafeteria, needs to be located centrally.
- The Academy needs to continue its efforts in refurbishing the present teaching facilities. However, it is pertinent that at the same time a plan is developed for future housing that allows for more flexibility and more varied ways of organizing the studies than the present premises allow.
- The Academy needs to provide full wireless internet coverage for all teaching facilities.
- The Library needs to develop a concise long-term strategy regarding its priorities in building up its library stocks and technologies. Special consideration needs to be given to its role in preparing students for participating in the international cultural sector.

Study process and student assessment

- Collaborations with theatres and other social partners need to be more clearly formalized, for example through the introduction of creative-partnerships agreements.
- Long-term prospects for employment of acting graduates are uncertain. The Academy is advised to systematically collect data regarding the demand for theatre and dance professional on the labour market.
- Students need to be better prepared for launching international careers. This includes encouraging still further international exchange, improving of language skills, and support to students for developing their own international portfolios.
- Students need to be better informed about the functions of the Career Center, as well as about functions of other support services provided by the Academy.
- Final projects are rated using the narrowest range in the top-part of the grading-scale. The Academy is advised to instruct teachers and examiners to extend substantially their use of this scale.
- The Academy is advised to widen its approach to student assessment by encouraging teachers and examiners to supplement the numerical grading by evaluation in the form of concisely written statements. This may particularly apply to evaluation of larger scale projects and performances. The Evaluation Team recommends that students receive some written feedback on their assignments.

Programme Management

- Measures need to be taken to fully implement the managing function of the Study Programme Committee. Also, it should be considered to re-structure the Committee so it will be lighter to operate. The role of the Dean and the Course Supervisor needs to be better defined.

- The Academy needs to implement a formal comprehensive quality system, including a Quality Handbook/Manual describing all important procedures in managing and organizing the study programme.
- Student feedback needs to be collected continuously and systematically with guarantee of full anonymity. This includes on-line surveys questioning the quality of each course, the quality of the programme in larger context, and the quality of equipment and facilities used.
- The Academy should consider setting up complain-lines through external student advisors and different forms of psychological support.
- The Academy needs to introduce mechanisms to monitor and process feedback from students, teachers and other employees.
- Documentation of the staff's artistic practice and/or research supported by the Academy needs to be systematically collected and disseminated. The option to create an open database for this purpose should be considered. Mechanisms should be put in place to monitor how these activities and research become of benefit for the study programme.
- The Academy needs to set up a functional *intranet*, where communication is securely confined and reliable. The setting up of such a network is of primary importance.

IV. SUMMARY

Positive qualities

1. The programme is taught by accomplished artists and experienced practitioners.
2. The very high number of staff means that the Academy can implement a successful educational model of master/disciple, which enables a high quality, individualised approach to teaching and learning.
3. Students are very dedicated and highly motivated; the best students complete the programme and graduate with excellent results.
4. Alumni have successful careers, which is a credit to their studies at the Academy.
5. International activities are encouraged, for both staff and students, and they are clearly beneficial.
6. Many changes and improvements have occurred since the last evaluation in 2011.

Areas for improvement

1. Although facilities are being improved and renovated, there is still scope for improvement, especially spaces for students.
2. IT (information technology) could be used more efficiently and more consistently, by both students and staff.
3. The programme does not optimally prepare students for entrepreneurial international careers.
4. Student welfare and student well-being could be further supported.
5. The programme should further implement some of the formal aspects of higher education, such as:
 - a. Collecting student feedback systematically and anonymously;
 - b. Ensuring that students always know assessment criteria;
 - c. Having more formal procedures for internal quality assurance;
 - d. Providing students with written feedback for more assignments;
 - e. Involving social partners and alumni more optimally in curriculum development.

V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme Acting (state code – **612W40002**) at Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre is given **positive** evaluation.

Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas.

| No. | Evaluation Area | Evaluation Area in Points* |
|-----|---|----------------------------|
| 1. | Programme aims and learning outcomes | 4 |
| 2. | Curriculum design | 3 |
| 3. | Staff | 4 |
| 4. | Material resources | 2 |
| 5. | Study process and assessment (student admission, study process student support, achievement assessment) | 3 |
| 6. | Programme management (programme administration, internal quality assurance) | 2 |
| | Total: | 18 |

*1 (unsatisfactory) - there are essential shortcomings that must be eliminated;

2 (satisfactory) - meets the established minimum requirements, needs improvement;

3 (good) - the field develops systematically, has distinctive features;

4 (very good) - the field is exceptionally good.

Grupės vadovas:
Team leader:

Dr. Loïc Lominé

Grupės nariai:
Team members:

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Prof. Hjálmar Helgi Ragnarsson

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Milda Paklonskaite (Student representative)