



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

VILNIAUS DAILĖS AKADEMIJOS
PROGRAMOS *Fotografija ir medijos menas*
(valstybinis kodas - 612W60001)

VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

EVALUATION REPORT
OF *Photography and Media Art*
STUDY PROGRAMME (*state code - 612W60001*)
At Vilnius Academy of Arts

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Išvados parengtos anglų kalba
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DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Fotografija ir medijos menas</i>
Valstybinis kodas	612W60001
Studijų sritis	Menai
Studijų kryptis	Fotografija ir medijos
Studijų programos rūšis	Universitetinės
Studijų pakopa	Pirma
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinės studijos (4)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	240
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Fotografijos ir medijos meno bakalauras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	1997-05-19

INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	<i>Photography and Media Art</i>
State code	612W60001
Study area	Creative Arts and Design
Study field	Photography and Media Studies
Kind of the study programme	Undergraduate University Studies
Study cycle	First
Study mode (length in years)	Full time (4 years)
Volume of the study programme in credits	240
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Bachelor of Photography and Media Art fr
Date of registration of the study programme	19-05-1997

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Vilnius Academy of Arts is a well-established and respected institution. Its status as the only Academy of Arts in Lithuania creates particular responsibilities between the Lithuanian authorities and the Academy, and between the Academy and the Lithuanian public. Its origins go back to 1793 when it was established as an Architecture department at the Chief School of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in Vilnius. Lithuania's turbulent history had a significant impact on the development of the institution. In 1990 it regained its name of Vilnius Academy of Arts. The Academy is based in Vilnius but has faculties in Kaunas, Klaipėda and Telsiai.

The programme being evaluated was founded in 1996 as part of the Faculty of Visual and Applied Arts, at that time one of five faculties in the Academy. It is now located in the Faculty of Graduate and Postgraduate Studies. The programme was designed to meet the country's need for specialists in this subject area. The programme was last evaluated in 2010. An institutional review of Vilnius Academy of Arts took place in 2013.

The review of the programme was organized by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC), Lithuania, in its role as the Authorized Agency prescribed by Lithuanian law. The review was conducted in accordance with the prescribed methodology according to the procedures for the external review of higher education in Lithuania. The Academy submitted a comprehensive Self-Evaluation Report (SER) with annexes.

The expert team visited Vilnius Academy of Arts on April 29 2014, participating in several meetings organized by the School. The expert team consisted of team leader Mr. Klaus Jung and team members Mr. Keith Bartlett, Mr. Mika Ritalahti, Mr. Andrew Miksys and students representative Mr. Domas Burkauskas.

The expert team met senior staff of the Academy, the authors of the Self-Evaluation Report, administrators, academic staff, students, alumni and social partners. The Self-Evaluation Report provided a suitable basis for the evaluation. The evaluation was further informed by the meetings. The expert team provided an oral feedback at the end of the evaluation visit. The team is grateful to colleagues at the Academy, students, graduates and social partners, for their cooperation.

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

The programme aims and learning outcomes are, in general, well-defined and clear. The overall aim of the programme is articulated in paragraph 1.1 of the BA Self-Evaluation Report (SER). This describes a clear purpose for the BA programme, and conveys the ambition to produce graduates who are independent artists with relevant technical, professional and intellectual skills and knowledge. However, it is a very long statement and it would perhaps benefit from being represented as numbered bullet points.

The programme aims and learning outcomes are publicly available, in Lithuanian and, in summary form, in English, via the Academy's website. The information seen by the expert team

includes specific admissions requirements, the programme aim and learning outcomes, and programme structure with links to module outlines.

In general, there are clear relationships between the programme aims and learning outcomes and those of study modules. The expert team asked students about the clarity of the programme learning outcomes. Students confirmed that programme and study module information is sent to them by the programme administrator and also made available on-line, and that the learning outcomes are clear.

The SER describes the relevance of the programme, the demand for it, and the distinctiveness of the programme in the context of the Academy's overall provision. Regarding the needs of the labour market, it describes how programmes in other institutions are designed for applied practice in photography and media while the aim of the Academy's BA is to educate interdisciplinary artists who are also able to work in a range of creative contexts in Lithuania and internationally.

The expert team asked a group of senior Academy staff about the contribution which the BA and MA programmes make to the Academy's overall strategy. The senior staff affirmed the relevance and importance of the programmes in the context of contemporary developments and changes in the media environment, and stated that the need for the programmes was unquestionable. They also referred to the ways in which the Photography and Media programmes are influencing other departments of the Academy. The authors of the SER confirmed to the expert team that demand for the programmes was created by contemporary cultural and artistic developments and that they are helping to fulfil the mission of the Academy in respect of issues in contemporary art and life.

In terms of graduate career opportunities, the expert team read in the SER that the options available include working as independent artists, seeking commissions, participating in art projects and exhibitions, and employment in the creative industries. Graduates may also progress to further study at MA level. The expert team considered information on the careers pursued by graduates since 2009 and found that this reflected the range of options indicated. The expert team also explored this with BA and MA alumni who confirmed that they saw themselves as artists and that the programmes had prepared them for a range of fields including professional photography, advertising, teaching and technical roles.

Since the last evaluation of the BA and MA programmes, the Academy has introduced an Advisory Board with membership from the cultural and creative sectors, to advise on curriculum currency and students' preparation for employment and self-employment, and the expert team endorses this development. The Academy has also introduced a number of study modules which support students' preparation for employment and self-employment. The expert team suggests that the Academy continues this process, drawing on the advice of social partners and the Advisory Board, especially where employment and self-employment in the creative industries are concerned.

The expert team found that the language used in the SER and the programme documentation is weighted towards independent artistic practice rather than the creative industries. This is an appropriate reflection of the mission of the Academy and the ways in which the BA programme is distinguished from those of other types of higher education institution. However, in exploring

this in discussions with teaching staff, students, alumni and social partners, the expert team formed the view that this use of language potentially gives the application of knowledge, skills and creativity in artistic practice a higher status than their application in commercial or industrial fields; and that it also makes independent artistic practice and commercial practices appear as mutually exclusive or separate rather than existing in a dynamic or complementary relationship. The expert team suggests that the Academy reflects on the language used in programme documentation in order to ensure that it is more inclusive of the full range of artistic and commercial opportunities which are developing in contemporary art, design and media.

The programme descriptions meet the expectations of the Lithuanian government's *General Requirements for the First Degree and Integrated Study Programmes, 9th April 2010, section 1 General Provisions* (para 7). The programme learning outcomes are organised in five groups which meet national Lithuanian requirements and also reflect the expectations of this level of study (Level 6) in other parts of the Europe:

Knowledge and its application

Ability to conduct research

Special abilities

Social abilities

Personal abilities

Learning outcomes in Group 2 (“Ability to conduct research”) relate specifically to the use of current methods of research to support creative experimentation and the “*solving of artistic problems*”. Those in Group 3 (“Special abilities”) concern artistic and creative skills and are distinguished from those in Group 4 (“Social abilities”), which are more concerned with the generic or “transferable” skills which would be expected of graduates in all disciplines (for example, expert teamwork and written and oral communication). The distinctions between the learning outcomes in Group 4 and those in Group 5 (“Personal abilities”) could perhaps be made more clear and the expert team suggests that the Academy considers this.

The name of the programme is appropriate and the programme learning outcomes and content are compatible with each other. The module learning outcomes reflect and contribute to those at programme level. The programme content offers the student the opportunity to develop an individual creative practice in the context of contemporary and traditional techniques, processes, and theoretical and historical underpinning.

The expert team asked the authors of the SER about how they review the programme aims, learning outcomes and curriculum content, and how they develop revisions when necessary. The authors outlined a number of mechanisms through which they gather feedback from students and social partners, including curators, professors from similar schools, and professionals from creative industries organisations such as the Audio-Visual Arts Industry Incubator. They also referred to staff engagement in the cultural and creative sectors through their own external practices as a conduit through which staff maintain currency.

Summary

- The programme aims and learning outcomes are, in general, well-defined and clear.

- The programme aims and learning outcomes are publicly available.
- The demand for the programme was created by contemporary cultural and artistic developments.
- The programme helps to fulfil the mission of the Academy in respect of issues in contemporary art and life.
- Alumni confirmed that they saw themselves as artists and that the programmes had prepared them for a range of fields including professional photography, advertising, teaching and technical roles.
- The expert team suggests that alongside the aim of developing independent artists, the application of skills in commercial and industrial fields is also articulated in all programme documentation in order to ensure that this reflects the full range of artistic and commercial opportunities which are developing in contemporary art, design and media.
- The expert team suggests that the Academy continues to draw on the advice of social partners and the Advisory Board, especially where employment and self-employment in the creative industries are concerned.
- The distinctions between the learning outcomes in Group 4 and those in Group 5 (“Personal abilities”) could perhaps be made more clear and the expert team suggests that the Academy considers this.

2. Curriculum design

The programme conforms to the legal requirements as articulated by the *General Requirements for the First Degree and Integrated Study Programmes, 9th April 2010, section 1 General Provisions*.

The SER provides a clear description of the overall volume of study on the programme, and the volume and proportions of individual modules. The overall volume of study on the programme, and the volume and proportions of individual study modules, classroom work and self-study, together with the forms of assessment, comply with the relevant Lithuanian legal requirements (eg *General Requirements for the First Degree and Integrated Study Programmes, 9th April 2010, section 2, Requirements of First Degree University Study Programmes*).

The SER states that a key principle of the programme is “*learning art by making it (...)*” (paragraph 2.1.3). In the view of the expert team, this is entirely appropriate for a BA programme in these creative disciplines. The curriculum is designed according to a sequence of eight themes, each theme being the focus of a semester or term of study. These over-arching themes support students’ achievement of the programme and module aims and learning outcomes.

The overall study plan for the programme (showing the modules which are delivered in each term or semester) is clearly described in Table 1 of the SER, while Table 3 demonstrates how the compulsory specialist subjects support the theme of each term or semester. For example, the term 1 theme, *Genesis of the Image*, is supported by modules in *Visual Expression* and *Media Theory*. The themes for terms 2, 3 and 4 – respectively, *Moving Image*; *Space and Time in the*

Image; and *Image and Sound Systems* – are supported by the modules *Media Art and Technology 1, 2 and 3*, and *Graphic Expression 1, 2 and 3*.

It is important to emphasise that while there are similarities in module titles (eg *Graphic Expression 1, 2 and 3*), the module themes and content are not repetitive. Rather, they build upon each other in depth and complexity, opening new areas of theory, practice, knowledge and skill, and new avenues for students to explore as they progress through the programme.

In examining the curriculum, the expert team found that information was incomplete in some study modules or inconsistent between study modules. However, this did not prevent the expert team from reaching conclusions in its evaluation. The Academy should review the study module outlines to ensure that all sections are complete and consistent.

The module outlines are presented in a clear, standardised format. They clearly articulate the relationships between module and programme learning outcomes, together with the following information:

Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods

Main Module Aim

Annotation (summary of module content)

Syllabus

Assessment Criteria

Reference material

Teaching and study hours

The curriculum structure and design is clear, well-organised and summarised in the SER (Table 1). Following the last evaluation, changes made to the programme included the incorporation of a newly-designed module *Visual Expression* (photography, animation, videography and drawing) and review of the content of the *Graphic Expression* module. Together with *Media Expression and Technology 1* (term 2), these study modules are designed to provide a solid grounding for students in the first year of study. In Year 2 they are built upon by core specialist modules *Graphic Expression 2 and 3* and *Media Expression and Technology 2 and 3*.

As students progress through Years 1 and 2, there are opportunities for them to design their studies according to their individual needs. This is in keeping with similar programmes in other specialist academies and universities and provides strong opportunities for students to develop as independent learners and creative practitioners. In Year 3, there is a focus on individual creative practice (*Creative Project 1 and 2* in terms 5 and 6), which prepares students for the *Final Work Project* modules in the final year of study (terms 7 and 8). The main aim of the *Final Work* (term 8) is for students to demonstrate that they have acquired the knowledge and ability to operate in independent artist practice and to realize creative projects, applying skills in contemporary media technology.

The content of the modules is consistent with the type and level of studies. There is an appropriate balance of theory and practice modules, with theory accounting for at least one third of studies in each term. Throughout the programme, the practice modules are supported and informed by theory subjects. In the first term, the 11-credit *Media Theory* module supports the 10-credit *Visual Expression* module, thereby providing a solid foundation for students'

developing work. In the final term, theory and practice are integrated. The expert team asked teaching staff about the place of theory on the programme and whether there was a need to increase the focus on contemporary media theory. Teaching staff responded that practice and theory staff collaborate closely, that theory is located in the main study subjects as well as the optional modules, and that contemporary media theory is introduced through modules such as *Media Theory* in term 1.

In term 4, there is an 8-credit *Multimedia* module which supports *Media Expression and Technology 3* and *Graphic Expression 3*, both of which are also 8-credit modules. The expert team formed the view that this module's location in term 4 (ie the end of Year 2 of studies) might be somewhat late in the programme. It might be beneficial for the Academy to consider whether this module could be introduced earlier in the programme, along with the development of students' skills and knowledge in interactivity.

The majority of the theory modules are 3-credit modules and, in addition to those that are compulsory, from term 2 onwards there is a range of options for students to choose from, offering a rich underpinning for practical studies. The expert team asked teaching staff about the impact of 3-credit modules on the assessment workload for students and staff and teaching staff responded that the impact was manageable.

The expert team asked students for their views about the major strengths of the programme. Key strengths stated by students included the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills in a range of creative disciplines in photography and media, and the development of self-confidence through peer discussion and critique of their ideas and creative work.

The content and methods of the modules are appropriate for the achievement of the programme learning outcomes. In terms of the continuing development of the programme and the need to maintain its currency in the context of rapidly-developing contemporary media practices, there are two areas where the Academy might be advised to give further consideration to the future scope of the programme.

Firstly, it might be beneficial for the Academy to consider whether there is scope for extending the content around the areas of transmedia, narrative and interactivity, in both practical and theoretical studies. These could potentially be developed from the starting point which is provided by the module *Multimedia* (term 4); for example, in the *Creative Project 1* and *2* and the *Final Work* modules.

The second area where there might be scope for further discussion and development is in the preparation of students for employment and self-employment. It might be possible – and beneficial – for professional practice and employability to be brought out more clearly in the documentation.

The expert team asked a group of social partners about the contribution of the BA and MA programmes to Lithuania's cultural and creative sectors. Partners were broadly supportive of the way that the Academy produces “new professionals”, stating that the Photography and Media department is one of the most progressive and outstanding in the Academy, with some very good teachers. They also suggested variations in the readiness of some BA and MA graduates for artistic practice and employment, and that MA students were wider in their thinking than BA students, with greater ability to work independently.

The expert team asked BA students about the effectiveness of the curriculum in helping them to identify future career options and preparing them for their next step. Across all year groups, some students were clear that the programme was helping them to identify options, while others were uncertain about whether they were being appropriately equipped for future opportunities. The expert team also asked alumni about this, and they were generally positive. The view reached by the expert team was that this is an area of curriculum development and design which the Academy is advised continue to address.

The expert team considered study modules which are designed to help prepare students for future opportunities. While noting that the learning outcomes of, for example, *Media Expression and Technology 2* and *3* include “*Ability to generate, implement and deliver creative ideas using professional vocabulary*” and “*Ability to publicly present their art works the structure and objectives of the value using for the audience understandable vocabulary*”, the teaching schedules for these modules do not appear to specifically support these (albeit being strong in technical/aesthetic content).

The expert team also noted that the 5-credit modules *Workshops 1, 2* and *3* (in terms 3, 5 and 7 respectively), appear to be an effective adjunct to the development of students’ professional skills. They are primarily focused on independent study, their purpose effectively summarised by the Annotation of *Workshop 3*, which states that students “*further deepen their practical skills independently or by selecting workshops, by participating in exhibitions and festivals.*”

The expert team also noted that employability and professional skills are supported by the following:

- A compulsory 6-credit module in term 8, *Artist's Career Management*
- Optional modules in terms 5, 6, 7 – *Public Relations*; and *Introduction into Entrepreneurship*.

The expert team formed the view that it would be beneficial for the Academy to make clear whether students can undertake live commercial work for external clients and to submit this for assessment, as an alternative to – or in addition to – “*participating in exhibitions and festivals.*” In this regard, the relationships which are being developed between the programme and the Audio-Visual Arts Industry Incubator and the Design Innovation Centre will be significant.

Summary

- The programme conforms to the legal requirements.
- The key principle of the programme - “*learning art by making it*” - is entirely appropriate for a BA programme in the creative disciplines.
- The module themes and their content build upon each other in depth and complexity, opening new areas of theory, practice, knowledge and skill, and new avenues for students to explore as they progress through the programme.
- The curriculum structure and design is clear, well-organised and summarised in the SER.
- Following the last evaluation, changes were made to the programme including the incorporation of a newly-designed module *Visual Expression* and review of the content of the

Graphic Expression module. These help to provide a solid grounding for students in the first year of study and they are built upon in Year 2.

- The content of the modules is consistent with the type and level of studies.
- The content and methods of the modules are appropriate for the achievement of the programme learning outcomes.
- Practice and theory staff collaborate closely, and theory is located in the main study subjects as well as within optional modules.
- Key strengths stated by students included the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills in a range of creative disciplines in photography and media, and the development of self-confidence through peer discussion and critique of their ideas and creative work.
- Partners were broadly supportive of the Academy producing “new professionals”, stating that the Photography and Media department is one of the most progressive and outstanding in the Academy.
 - The Academy should review the study module outlines to ensure that all sections are complete and consistent.
 - It might be beneficial for the Academy to consider whether the module *Multimedia* could be introduced earlier in the programme, extending the content around the areas of transmedia, narrative and interactivity, in both practical and theoretical studies.
 - The expert team formed the view that it would be beneficial for the Academy to make clear whether students can undertake live commercial work for external clients and to submit this for assessment, as an alternative to – or in addition to – “*participating in exhibitions and festivals.*”

3. Staff

The teaching staff team consists of 9,75 full-time equivalent members, more than half of the whom are recognized artists, with one also holding a Doctoral degree. With 64 students currently following the study programme, this creates a ratio of 6,56 students per teacher. This is considered to be an appropriate student-staff ratio for this level and type of programme. The expert team considers that the number of the teaching staff is sufficient to enable students to meet the intended learning outcomes.

Thirty other teachers contribute subjects from the humanities, sociology and language, including eight with Doctoral degrees, six professors, ten associate professors and sixteen lecturers. Occasionally visiting teachers from overseas contribute to the teaching. At the time of the site visit one lecturer was attending the study programme on a Fulbright Fellowship. The expert team considers the teaching staff to be a committed and high quality group.

The composition of the staff team is a satisfactory combination of senior artists and younger, well-recognised artists at the beginning of their careers. This reflects changes in Lithuanian society and culture and is in line with the accelerating development of digital technology. The ongoing changes in the role of the artist and her/his contribution to society will continue to impact upon curriculum design and the composition of the staff team. The expert team suggests

that those responsible for the programme must keep this in mind and include more staff with experience in the creative industries in the future.

The teachers are highly appreciated in their field and can also point to long careers in higher education. The SER (pages 22-23) gives evidence that staff participate actively in opportunities to further their professional knowledge as researchers, artists and teachers. The expert team suggests, however, that the department should consider a more strategic approach to professional updating and the enhancement of the pedagogical expertise of teachers.

Most of the teachers have worked for the department for a number of years. In the past five years four teachers have left the programme (SER p. 21) and three new teachers have been appointed. The department employs visiting teachers from overseas when funds permit (SER p. 19) and would like to increase this. The expert team welcomes the department's and the Academy's recognition of the importance of internationalisation and encourages them in their efforts to secure additional funding to support the inclusion of international staff .

The teaching staff pay attention to their own currency and professional development as artists and as researchers. The Academy provides a sabbatical programme which allows staff to take a paid leave every five years (SER p. 21). The expert team supports the department's stated intention to develop a timetable for staff sabbaticals.

Staff develop their professional expertise by participating actively in seminars, recent examples including "*Assessment of general admission examinations*" organized by the Association of Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions (LAMA BPO), professional development opportunities organized internally by the Academy.

The teachers in the department are active in their fields as artists and as researchers. In the last four years, seven teachers of the study programme have participated in more than ten exhibitions overseas including the Venice Biennale, the Triennial of Baltic International Art and the Bologna Book Fair (SER p. 22). Three teachers are also active as curators (SER p. 23). Five teachers are active in film and performance art. In recent years they have released films which have received national and international distribution and awards. All such activities have strong relevance for the content, aims and learning outcomes of the study programme.

Summary

- More than half of the teachers are recognized artists and one of them holds a Doctoral degree.
- The teachers are highly appreciated in their field and can also point to long careers in higher education.
- The composition of the staff team is a satisfactory combination of senior artists and younger, well-recognised artists at the beginning of their careers.
- The expert team considers the teaching staff to be a committed and high quality group.
- The student-staff ratio is considered to be appropriate for this level and type of programme.
- The teachers in the department are active in their fields as artists and as researchers. All activities have strong relevance for the content, aims and learning outcomes of the study programme.

- The expert team welcomes the department's and the Academy's recognition of the importance of internationalisation and encourages them in their efforts to secure additional funding to support the inclusion of international staff.
- The ongoing changes in the role of the artist and her/his role in society will continue to impact upon curriculum design and the composition of the staff team. The expert team suggests that those responsible for the programme must keep this in mind and include more staff with experience in the creative industries in the future.
- The expert team suggests that the department should consider a more strategic approach to professional updating and the enhancement of the pedagogical expertise of teachers.

4. Facilities and learning resources

As noted in the last evaluation in 2010, the objective for moving the Department of Photography and Media Art into the Pravda Printing House building was to provide more space for studies. This goal has been clearly met. Importantly, students and faculty report that the building and new facilities continue to provide a positive environment for studies and work. The expert team confirms this positive assessment.

Since the last review in 2010, the workrooms, photography studio, large hallways, darkrooms, and classrooms continue to be comfortable, clean, and professional environments, meeting the needs for practical work and theoretical studies. The audiovisual equipment and televisions remain in working condition. In the last report it was recommended that all the classrooms have AV equipment for lectures, presentation, and screenings. In the equipment room there are now two portable projectors available for this purpose marking a positive improvement. Visible attention is given to the condition of these new facilities and they are constantly being updated as needed.

Operating the Photography and Media Department requires highly specialized, expensive and constantly changing technology. Additionally, with studies ranging from black and white darkroom photography to video, they must have equipment that covers the full range of technology from analogue to digital. The department is very conscious of these challenges and makes strong efforts to maintain the currency of its equipment and ensure that it is in working order. Students report that staff are receptive to their requests for new equipment. The expert team found that staff are resourceful in seeking funding from a variety of sources including the Academy budget, EU grants, and government grants. The large photography studio is in excellent condition. The expert team noted that this is a good facility for a relatively small number of students. In the last two years the Academy has instituted a policy that allows students to have access to facilities in all departments. Students are supportive of this policy. In addition, the Academy is one of three founding partners of the Audio-Visual Arts Industry Incubator ("NordBaltic Incubator"). This provides access to state-of-the-art "film equipment, video and sound postproduction stations, sound recording studios, conference and screening halls." (www.amiincubator.com/) The expert team did not have an opportunity to tour the Incubator but believes that it presents significant opportunities to students and staff of the department. These facilities are available to students during their studies and up to four years after graduation.

The 2010 report was critical of the Library and reading room resources. In response the department made acquisitions of photography books, magazines and other publications pertaining to media arts and the internet. The Faculty also reported that Library staff regularly ask them to suggest new titles and make purchases based on their requests. Faculty also enthusiastically share titles from their own collections with students. Students are also encouraged to use the reading room at the Contemporary Art Center (a partner of the Academy) for additional materials. Even with these efforts to supplement materials, these resources remain in need of a further systematic approach to increase the diversity and number of titles.

Summary

- Students and staff report that the new building from 2009 and new facilities continue to provide a positive environment for studies and work.
- The condition of these new facilities is monitored and they are regularly updated as needed.
- Since the last review in 2010, the workrooms, photography studio, large hallways, darkrooms, and classrooms have continued to provide comfortable, clean and professional environments, meeting the needs for practical work and theoretical studies.
- The expert team found that staff are resourceful in seeking additional funding for equipment from a variety of sources including the Academy budget, EU grants, and government grants.
- In the last two years the Academy has instituted a policy that allows students to have access to facilities in all departments. The expert team considers this to have been an important and positive decision. Students are supportive of this policy.
- The Academy's partnership in the Audio-Visual Arts Industry Incubator presents significant opportunities to students and staff of the department.
- Library resources remain in need of a further systematic approach to increase the diversity and number of titles.

5. Study process and student assessment

The assessment process is well developed and appropriate for higher education in the arts. Learning outcomes and how they relate to assessments are explained to students at the beginning of the programme and well communicated throughout the study modules. As students' individual work increasingly becomes the focus of their studies over the four years of the programme, it is a consequence that this is also the focal point for assessing achievements in subjects of the practical study field, specifically at the final exam. While theoretical and general subjects are assessed by the member of staff responsible for the module in the form of an examination, the programme has developed a system for the assessment of artistic work, which is based on discussions in student groups and continuous feedback from staff (mid-term and end of term). This is common practice internationally in higher education in the arts. The system has been developed to such a degree that the programme's students are constantly aware of their progress and gain a high level of self confidence from practicing in the presentation of their studies and their artistic work to a critical audience. This is an effective form of preparation for future professional practice.

The requirements for admission are well-founded. They meet the regulations of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, which were introduced in 2009 and updated in 2014. The main influence on admission is the score in the entrance examination, which is coordinated jointly between programmes at the Academy and two other universities. This counts for 60% of the total score and consists of two artistic tasks. The remaining 40% of the score is assigned according to the rules of the General Admission Association of Lithuanian Higher Education Schools.

The expert team observed that the high number of students completing their studies successfully indicates that the admissions process has, in the past, been effective in bringing the best qualified students to the programme. However, it remains to be seen if the new process (revised in 2014) will also be effective for studies in the arts. The expert team observes that, in the revised process, the possibility of interviewing applicants individually at programme level is no longer feasible. Internationally, the individual portfolio interview has, for many years, been established as good practice in admissions to higher education programmes in the arts. It helps to ensure that the applicant has the highest possible level of motivation, a precondition for successful completion of their studies. The expert team recommends that the Academy influences national policy to reintroduce individual portfolio interviews for applicants to studies in the arts.

The expert team commends the study programme for its contribution to the Academy's discussions about the nature of artistic research. Artistic research and the role of artists as researchers are currently being discussed intensely in higher education internationally. The expert team notes that programme staff actively participate in these discussions and contribute to them at international conferences and other fora; for example, the Summer School for Artistic Research at the Nida Art Colony in 2012, in the frame of the SHARE network – Step-change for Higher Arts Research and Education - coordinated by the European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA) and financially supported through the EU commission's Life Long Learning Programme.

Artistic research is a strong element of the Master's study programme and students are introduced to it at BA level. First Level students are encouraged to participate in exhibitions and presentations of their study results in professional contexts, especially as part of the Creative Project I and II in terms 5 and 6. The expert team supports this curriculum philosophy, which is intended to give students an experience of professional practice at an early stage.

Table 9 on page 35 of the SER refers to opportunities for students to participate in mobility programmes. The expert team was pleased to note that the study programme has been active in seeking such opportunities for international cooperation, which provide students with access to different views through international networks. These opportunities have also enabled staff to share their experiences as teachers with colleagues in other countries; for example, the seminar "On Teaching Methods" organised by KUNO, Association of Institutions of Higher Education of Nordic and Baltic States, in 2012.

Academically and socially, students of the department are sufficiently supported by the means that have been put in place by the Academy.

The assessment system is designed so that students receive regular and ongoing feedback about their performance and their artistic achievements throughout their studies. Assessment criteria

are adequate and are published for each course on the Academy website, in both Lithuanian and English. The expert team learned during the meetings with staff and students that group feedback sessions can be challenging but are also appreciated by students, as they provide opportunities for them to strengthen confidence in their artistic work. The expert team found that the system of oral feedback is well developed. From an early stage of the programme, students and staff meet in critical debate on equal ground as artists. This is followed up by individual feedback from staff and culminates in the public defence at the final exam, which involves social partners from the professional world. This system strongly supports the overarching aim of the study programme, to “graduate independent artists” (page 7 of the SER). The expert team suggests, however, that the system of oral feedback is enriched through enhanced formal recording to increase further the critical distance between staff and students at the stage of assessment.

Summary

- The assessment process is well developed and appropriate for higher education in the arts.
- Learning outcomes and how they relate to assessments are explained to students at the beginning of the programme and well communicated throughout the study modules.
- The assessment system is designed so that students receive regular and ongoing feedback about their performance and their artistic achievements throughout their studies.
- The expert team supports the programme team in encouraging students to participate in exhibitions and presentations, which gives students an experience of professional practice at an early stage.
- The expert team was pleased to note that the study programme has been active in seeking opportunities for international cooperation, which provide students with access to different views through international networks and enable staff to share their experiences as teachers with colleagues in other countries.
- The expert team commends the study programme for its contribution to the Academy’s discussions about the nature of artistic research.
 - The expert team suggests that the system of oral feedback is enriched through enhanced formal recording to increase further the critical distance between staff and students at the stage of assessment.
 - Internationally, the individual portfolio interview has, for many years, been established as good practice in admissions to higher education programmes in the arts. It helps to ensure that the applicant has the highest possible level of motivation, a precondition for successful completion of their studies. The expert team recommends that the Academy influences national policy to reintroduce individual portfolio interviews for applicants to studies in the arts.

6. Programme management

The programme is managed by the *Study Programmes Committee*, chaired by the head of department (SER p. 40). The Committee consists of nine members; four teachers, two students,

one alumni and two stakeholders. The Committee holds a meeting twice a year. The Committee's decisions and proposals are reviewed by the Faculty Council and approved by the Senate. The same Committee serves for both of the study programmes in the department.

The highest decision making of the department is done in the plenary meetings of its pedagogical and research staff. Stakeholders and other outside participants may be invited to participate on the meetings. The meeting has to be arranged if at least one third of the department's staff requests this.

The implementation of the decisions is the responsibility of the head of department. The head of department is elected in the department's plenary meeting for a five-year term.

The overall management of the study programme is in line with the Academy's activity plans. The expert team formed the view that staff, students and stakeholders had a clear understanding about the department and the programme and their responsibilities within it. The students and stakeholders understand the department's mechanisms through which they can voice their opinions, and who to contact when they have a particular need.

The study programme collects information regularly (SER p. 42) through anonymous questionnaires. Feedback from teachers, stakeholders and employers is gathered orally. The Study Programmes Committee prepares suggestions for improvements.

The expert team suggests that it could be beneficial for systematic written methods to be developed for the gathering of feedback from teachers, stakeholders and employers, to support the valuable oral methods which are in place. Written information is easier to share and return to later if needed.

The study programme was last evaluated in 2010, at which time it was accredited for three years. The programme has implemented both compulsory recommendations from the last evaluation. Most of the suggestions from the 2010 evaluation have been considered. The expert team considers the establishment of an Advisory Board to be a significant improvement and clear evidence that the department is using the outcomes of external evaluation to enhance the quality of the programme.

The expert team encourages the programme team to work closely with others in the Academy to improve the system of quality enhancement further, including measurable indicators.

Summary

- The overall management of the study programme is in line with the Academy's activity plans.
- The expert team formed the view that staff, students and stakeholders had a clear understanding about the department and the programme and their responsibilities within it.
- The study programme collects information regularly.
- The study programme was last evaluated in 2010, at which time it was accredited for three years. The programme has implemented both compulsory recommendations and most suggestions.

- The expert team considers the establishment of an Advisory Board to be a significant improvement and as clear evidence that the department is using the outcomes of external evaluation to enhance the quality of the programme.
- The expert team recommends that the Academy influences national policy to reintroduce individual portfolio interviews for applicants to studies in the Arts.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The expert team encourages the programme team to contribute to the international discussions about the role of the artist in the 21st century, which also embraces entrepreneurial behaviour and other applications in the cultural sector and the creative industries, to inform future and ongoing curriculum design and the composition of the staff expert team.
2. The expert team encourages the programme team and the Academy to continue on the path towards refining the quality assurance systems at institutional and at programme level
3. At a national level the expert team recommends that the department should explore the possibility of reintroducing individual portfolio interviews for its applicants to enable entry to the study programme by the most talented and motivated applicants.

IV. SUMMARY

The expert team is confident, that staff and management of the programme Photography and Media at the Vilnius Academy of Arts have put the necessary measures in place to deliver a study programme, which: attracts excellent students; prepares graduates to contribute significantly to the art and culture and the creative industries in Lithuania; and contributes to the development of the Academy on its journey to becoming a valuable and highly respected partner in international Higher Art Education.

After thorough consideration the expert team assessed the programme as “good” in all six of the evaluation areas. During the next six years, staff and management of the programme are expected to continue to adjust the programme to changing demands in the arts, related industries and in Higher Art Education. The enhancement of the quality of the programme will be an ongoing requirement for the programme team as well as for the Academy.

1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

- The programme aims and learning outcomes are, in general, well-defined and clear.
- The programme aims and learning outcomes are publicly available.
- The demand for the programme was created by contemporary cultural and artistic developments.
- The programme helps to fulfil the mission of the Academy in respect of issues in contemporary art and life.
- Alumni confirmed that they saw themselves as artists and that the programmes had prepared them for a range of fields including professional photography, advertising, teaching and technical roles.
- The expert team suggests that alongside the aim of developing independent artists, the application of skills in commercial and industrial fields is also reflected in all programme documentation in order to ensure that this reflects the full range of artistic and commercial opportunities which are developing in contemporary art, design and media.
- The expert team suggests that the Academy continues to draw on the advice of social partners and the Advisory Board, especially where employment and self-employment in the creative industries are concerned.
- The distinctions between the learning outcomes in Group 4 and those in Group 5 (“Personal abilities”) could perhaps be made more clear and the expert team suggests that the Academy considers this.

2. Curriculum design

- The programme conforms to the legal requirements.
- The key principle of the programme - “*learning art by making it*” - is entirely appropriate for a BA programme in the creative disciplines.

- The module themes and their content build upon each other in depth and complexity, opening new areas of theory, practice, knowledge and skill, and new avenues for students to explore as they progress through the programme.
- The curriculum structure and design is clear, well-organised and summarised in the SER.
- Following the last evaluation, changes were made to the programme including the incorporation of a newly-designed module *Visual Expression* and review of the content of the *Graphic Expression* module. These help to provide a solid grounding for students in the first year of study and they are built upon in Year 2.
- The content of the modules is consistent with the type and level of studies.
- The content and methods of the modules are appropriate for the achievement of the programme learning outcomes.
- Practice and theory staff collaborate closely, and theory is located in the main study subjects as well as within optional modules.
- Key strengths stated by students included the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills in a range of creative disciplines in photography and media, and the development of self-confidence through peer discussion and critique of their ideas and creative work.
- Partners were broadly supportive of the Academy producing “new professionals”, stating that the Photography and Media department was one of the most progressive and outstanding in the Academy.
- The Academy should review the study module outlines to ensure that all sections are complete and consistent.
- It might be beneficial for the Academy to consider whether the module *Multimedia* could be introduced earlier in the programme, extending the content around the areas of transmedia, narrative and interactivity, in both practical and theoretical studies.
- The expert team formed the view that it could be beneficial for the Academy to make clear whether students can undertake live commercial work for external clients and to submit this for assessment, as an alternative to – or in addition to – “*participating in exhibitions and festivals.*”

3. Staff

- More than half of the teachers are recognized artists and one of them holds a Doctoral degree.
- The teachers are highly appreciated in their field and can also point to long careers in higher education.
- The composition of the staff team is a satisfactory combination of senior artists and younger, well-recognised artists at the beginning of their careers.
- The expert team considers the teaching staff to be a committed and high quality group.
- The student-staff ratio is considered to be appropriate for this level and type of programme.

- The teachers in the department are active in their fields as artists and as researchers. All activities are of strong relevance for the content, aims and learning outcomes of the study programme.
- The expert team welcomes the department's and the Academy's recognition of the importance of internationalisation and encourages them in their efforts to secure additional funding to support the inclusion of international staff.
- The ongoing changes in the role of the artist and her/his role in society will continue to impact upon curriculum design and the composition of the staff team. The expert team suggests that those responsible for the programme must keep this in mind and include more staff with experience in the creative industries in the future.
- The expert team suggests that the department should consider a more strategic approach to professional updating and the enhancement of the pedagogical expertise of teachers.

4. Facilities and learning resources

- Students and staff report that the new building from 2009 and new facilities continue to provide a positive environment for studies and work.
- The condition of these new facilities is monitored and they are regularly updated as needed.
- Since the last review in 2010, the workrooms, photography studio, large hallways, darkrooms, and classrooms have continued to provide comfortable, clean and professional environments, meeting the needs for practical work and theoretical studies.
- The expert team found that staff are resourceful in seeking additional funding for equipment from a variety of sources including the Academy budget, EU grants, and government grants.
- In the last two years the Academy has instituted a policy that allows students to have access to facilities in all departments. The expert team considers this to have been an important and positive decision.
- With this initiative in place, students within the department appreciate opportunities to access equipment housed in other departments.
- The Academy's partnership in the Audio-Visual Arts Industry Incubator presents significant opportunities to students and staff of the department.
- Library resources remain in need of a further systematic approach to increase the diversity and number of titles.

5. Study process and student assessment

- The assessment process is well developed and appropriate for higher education in the arts.
- Learning outcomes and how they relate to assessments are explained to students at the beginning of the programme and well communicated throughout the study modules.
- The assessment system is designed so that students receive regular and ongoing feedback about their performance and their artistic achievements throughout their studies.

- The expert team supports the programme team in encouraging students to participate in exhibitions and presentations, which gives students an experience of professional practice at an early stage.
- The expert team was pleased to note that the study programme has been active in seeking opportunities for international cooperation, which provide students with access to different views through international networks and enable staff to share their experiences as teachers with colleagues in other countries.
- The expert team commends the study programme for its contribution to the Academy's discussions about the nature of artistic research.
- The expert team suggests that the system of oral feedback is enriched through enhanced formal recording to increase further the critical distance between staff and students at the stage of assessment.
- The expert team commends the Study Programme Photography and Media Art for introducing the notion of artistic research into the Vilnius Academy of Arts.
- The expert team suggests that the system of oral feedback is enriched through enhanced formal recording to increase further the critical distance between staff and students at the stage of assessment.
- Internationally, the individual portfolio interview has, for many years, been established as good practice in admissions to higher education programmes in the arts. It helps to ensure that the applicant has the highest possible level of motivation, a precondition for successful completion of their studies. The expert team recommends that the Academy influences national policy to reintroduce individual portfolio interviews for applicants to studies in the arts.

6. Programme management

- The overall management of the study programme is in line with the Academy's activity plans.
- The expert team formed the view that staff, students and stakeholders had a clear understanding about the department and the programme and their responsibilities within it.
- The study programme collects information regularly.
- The expert team noted positively that changes to the curriculum design of the first year of the programme resulted from the feedback and review process.
- The study programme was last evaluated in 2010 and it was accredited for three years. The programme has implemented both compulsory recommendations and considered most suggestions.
- The expert team considers the establishment of an Advisory Board to be a significant improvement and as clear evidence that the department is using the outcomes of external evaluation to enhance the quality of the programme.

- The expert team encourages the programme team to work closely with others in the Academy to improve the system of quality enhancement further, including measurable indicators.

V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Photography and Media Arts* (state code – 612W60001) at Vilnius Academy of Arts 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	3
2.	Curriculum design	3
3.	Staff	3
4.	Material resources	3
5.	Study process and assessment (student admission, study process student support, achievement assessment)	3
6.	Programme management (programme administration, internal quality assurance)	3
	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.

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