



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Vilniaus dailės akademijos
STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS „MONUMENTALIOJI DAILĖ“
(valstybinis kodas - 612W10003)
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

EVALUATION REPORT
OF "MONUMENTAL ART" (state code - 612W10003)
STUDY PROGRAMME
at Vilnius Art Academy

Review' team:

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Išvados parengtos anglų kalba
Report language – English

DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Monumentalioji dailė</i>
Valstybinis kodas	612W10003
Studijų sritis	Menai
Studijų kryptis	Dailė
Studijų programos rūšis	Universitetinės
Studijų pakopa	Pirmoji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinė, 4 metai
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	240 ECTS
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Dailės bakalauras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	1997 gegužės 19 d., Įsak. Nr. 565

INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	<i>Monumental Art</i>
State code	612W10003
Study area	Arts
Study field	Fine Arts
Type of the study programme	University first-cycle
Study cycle	first
Study mode (length in years)	full-time (4 years)
Volume of the study programme in credits	240 ECTS
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Bachelor of Fine Arts
Date of registration of the study programme	1997 May 19. Order No.565

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The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the evaluation process

The evaluation of on-going study programmes is based on the **Methodology for evaluation of Higher Education study programmes**, approved by Order No 1-01-162 of 20 December 2010 of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC).

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

The evaluation process consists of the main following stages: 1) *self-evaluation and self-evaluation report prepared by Higher Education Institution (hereafter – HEI)*; 2) *visit of the review team at the higher education institution*; 3) *production of the evaluation report by the review team and its publication*; 4) *follow-up activities*.

On the basis of external evaluation report of the study programme SKVC takes a decision to accredit study programme either for 6 years or for 3 years. If the programme evaluation is negative such a programme is not accredited.

The programme is **accredited for 6 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as “very good” (4 points) or “good” (3 points).

The programme is **accredited for 3 years** if none of the areas was evaluated as “unsatisfactory” (1 point) and at least one evaluation area was evaluated as “satisfactory” (2 points).

The programme is **not accredited** if at least one of evaluation areas was evaluated as “unsatisfactory” (1 point).

1.2. General

The Application documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by the SKVC.

1.3. Background of the HEI/Faculty/Study field/ Additional information

Vilnius Academy of Arts (hereinafter – Academy) is a state institution of higher education of arts organising university first-cycle, master’s, special vocational, integrated, third-cycle, doctoral studies, performing research and developing high-level professional artistic activities. The Academy was established by the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania and is an autonomous institution carrying out independent academic, administrative, economic and financial management activities based on the principle of self-government, academic freedom, and defined in the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, the Law on Higher Education and the Statute of the Academy.

The Academy consists of the following structural departments: the Council of VAA, the Rector's Office, the Senate of the Academy (Senate), Faculty of Postgraduate Studies (FPS), Vilnius, Kaunas, Telšiai, Klaipėda Faculties, science and arts departments, administrative units, internship and recreational bases, cultural and sports centres, Open School of Arts, Design and Architecture (OSADA) of VAA, Design Innovation Centre, etc.

Vilnius Faculty is an integral structural part of Vilnius Academy of Arts, thus it uses the Academy's facilities and methodological resources on equal terms with other structural departments. The Vilnius Faculty implements university study programmes in arts: bachelor's and master's.

Since 2008, all study programmes of VAA regularly undergo external evaluation. Over this period, the majority of study programmes of VAA have been evaluated more than once. In 2008, according to the results of the external evaluation of the study programme, the Bachelor study programme of the Monumental Art was accredited for 3 years. In 2011, according to the results of the external evaluation of the study programme, Bachelor study programme of the Monumental Art was accredited for 6 years, until the 30 June 2017.

1.4. The Review Team

The review team was completed according *Description of experts' recruitment*, approved by order No. V-41 of Acting Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. The Review Visit to HEI was conducted by the team on *16/March/2017*.

- 1. Dr. Atis Kampars (team leader)**, *University of Business Art and Technology RISEBA, lecturer, Latvia.*
- 2. Michael Fox**, *Limerick Institute of Technology, Head of Design Department, Ireland.*
- 3. Prof. dr. Duncan Higgins**, *Nottingham Trent University School of Art and Design and Bergen Academy of Art and Design, Professor, United Kingdom, Norway.*
- 4. Mr Saulius Valius**, *Founder and CEO, Ekspobalta LTD, Lithuania.*
- 5. Ms Anna Lena Bankel**, *student of University of Applied Arts Vienna, Austria.*

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

2.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

The Self Evaluation Report (hereinafter – SER) is clear, articulate and a well-structured description of the Monumental Art bachelor's Programme (hereinafter – Programme). The method of the

description of learning outcomes follows the guidelines given by the Descriptor of the Study Field of Art thus directly clarifying the Programme's main fields of knowledge and skills.

The mission of the Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts is to become one of the most influential centres for art studies in the Baltic region. The uniqueness of this Monumental Art programme clearly places within that framework. The Programme's objectives effectively outline a profile of contemporary artist capable of working in the areas of mural painting, stained glass, mosaic, painting, and interdisciplinary art projects both independently and alongside architects, restorers, curators and other professionals of the related fields. (SER pages 8, 9) The objectives to prepare the students for continuation of studies at the MA level and the ability to conduct research are positive aspects of the Programme, which are also clearly reflected by the on-going discussion at the Department about the role of theory in art study content.

The explanation of intended learning outcomes (hereinafter – LO) are very direct and clear and give a precise description of the proposed graduate profile. Accessibility of the LO is good both in direct teacher/student communication and in electronic form. The overall structure of learning outcomes reflects the requirements of the Lithuanian legislation and specifically the principles imposed by the Descriptor of the Study Field of Art. The parallel demonstration of intended outcomes and related study courses should be appreciated as a useful method of academic communication. The list of LO's may seem extended but no distinct repetitions were found – there is a thorough information on broad variety of students' competences which indicates at possibilities to fulfil the objectives of the Programme.

Programme objectives are clearly stated and relevant to their local, national and international contexts. The outcomes of the study indicate how the education can contribute to the cultural development and the economic well being of the individual and of society. The outcomes of the Monumental Art BA programme will enable graduates to work in the community, in regional, national and international contexts, in an interdisciplinary capacity beside architecture and heritage organisations. The intention to serve the broad needs of art market and artist's social duties is obvious and in this sense the SER outlines a very distinct programme of study. The review team recognizes these developments as an implementation of the recommendation 3.8. of the previous accreditation (*"3.8. The aims and outcomes require enhancement to improve the learning of generic personal and transferable skills by students to replace some of the emphasis on speciality craft skills."* Evaluation Report of Monumental Art study programme at Vilnius Academy of Arts. March, 2011. Hereinafter – ER 2011. Page 11.).

The Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts mission described in the SER indicates the need to understand and negotiate the broad vocational, economic, social and environmental contexts of their study and the range of professional opportunities available to them. These include: anticipating and responding to change; knowledge and application of business processes; communication (visual, written, oral, personal and digital); distribution and dissemination of work; skills in entrepreneurship; and client/audience negotiation skills.

The SER statement acknowledges a responsibility towards sustainable development and to equipping students to work in a way that contributes to society, the economy and the environment (SER table 2, learning outcome E2, page 13). The list of intended LO's also includes the statement on the further professional activities – the continuation of BA studies at the second (MA); also the concept of lifelong learning ('personal skills') is fully appropriate academic objective and the SER provides clear statements of how this is achieved.

The description of LO follows the principal division in 5 groups ('knowledge and application', 'research skills', 'special skills', 'social skills', 'personal skills') provided by the Descriptor of the Study Field of Art. This seems to be an exhaustive method how to define the Programme's academic requirements and professional goals and covers all required positions of LO's. This system is applied by VAA to effectively articulate graduate's planned competences also in broader sense including foreign language and computer literacy studies ('social skills'). The intention to extend the personal and social skills of a graduate beyond the frame of a specialism provides the prospect to further intellectual developments of an individual the Monumental Arts BA programme is obviously claiming for.

The Review team's meeting with the social partners group confirmed that the Programme students are well prepared for professional interactions. Members of the group, who had experience working with the students in external contexts, expressed that they were impressed with the student's level of professionalism and their ability to work to a schedule. An architect representative stated that he was impressed with the level of student proposals and that he would be pleased to work with them, in a professional context.

Correspondence of the Programme's objectives and content to the first cycle university level of art studies are clearly expressed by the SER, and extensively outlined in Annexes 1 and 2, demonstrating the volume of competences consisting of practical skills, theoretical and practice-based theory. The Academy provides students with information on the requirements, criteria and procedure of the final thesis' preparation and evaluation. The process, as described in the SER, is gradual, inclusive

(student's informal learning successes is also considered) and open to public access. The composition of the academic committee responsible for evaluation of the BA theses clearly demonstrates the presence of democratic principles and includes professionals representing different fields and social partners' representative as well (SER page 39). The Department actively promotes the discussion on the actual needs and directions of theoretical developments within the Programme and this is a particular factor that allows the Review team to conclude that the Programme shows sustainable qualities of academic and professional communication.

The title of the Programme is appropriate to the content of studies as well as to the description of LO. The entire concept of 'monumental' is not completely articulated, yet is understandable in the context of professionally oriented course of a specialism. This view was expressed during the Review team's meeting with the social partners group, when it was pointed out that some members of the group felt that the title was too narrow to define the breadth of subjects, covered by the programme. Further discussions on the Programme's prospect could be focused on the contemporary aspects of application of monumental techniques and concepts of art especially in the context of developments in architecture and design.

2.2. Curriculum design

The BA programme is designed around a four year (full-time) 240 ECTS framework, which is in line with the national standards of Lithuania and broader European standards. The SER indicates (pages 37, 38) good benchmark standards of the curriculum to achieve the consistent capacity to be creative, ability to apply intellectual enquiry and aesthetic judgment, demonstrate critical reflections on quality issues, skills in team working or independent activities, appreciation in own learning development, and shape the ability to communicate the context of one's creative initiatives in a broad range of professional or social formats.

The curriculum is structured in accordance with the requirements of Lithuanian national and European legislation and its fundamental principle is to establish the balance between the general university subjects and those specific to a field of art studies. The overall structure of the curriculum proves that the volume of the parts of the Programme exceed the standard requirements: 24 ECTS allocated for the general subjects of university studies: 15 ECTS required; 216 ECTS for the study field subjects: 165 ECTS required. The field study part is distributed as follows: traineeship 15 ECTS: 15 required; final thesis 24 : 15 required; optional subjects 39 : 12 required. The structure of curriculum effectively responds to the necessity of interaction of the various elements (practical and theoretical) of the programme. However the evident dominance of the Study field courses in the

curriculum (8:1; not including 24 ECTS of the final thesis) might question the role and substantiation of the general university study subjects in the course of Programme (SER pages 16, 17, table 4).

Although the size and the structure of the Monumental Art BA programme allow courses of different type and kind to be included within its thematic frame, no obvious repetition was found. The course of the curriculum gradually accumulates the student's knowledge and skills and shows stable consistency in this development. However, the holistic links between the 'general university' subjects and the specialism courses could be formulated more explicitly. The critical review of the content of theoretical subjects may reflect the findings in both directions allowing designating more applicable elements of theory to the practical study courses and, secondly, to reformulate the practical approaches and methods of a specialism in closer connection with the theoretical concepts of the university study block and with integrated professional experience from the field of art.

The curriculum shows intense approach to planning and the maximum of examinations to be passed per semester is 7. The SER informs that "each subject included in the programme is completed by passing a differential evaluation" (page 16) – the curriculum imposes very concentrated form of studies providing few opportunities to individually interpret the study content. In general, this aspect may be relevant to the character of BA degree programme where the acquisition of fundamental skills and knowledge is the main objective. On the other hand, the necessity to initiate the creative research attitudes at the early stages of the art studies (already at the BA cycle) may contradict to this tight frame of curriculum.

The number of subjects in the curriculum is substantial and provides gradual increase of practical skills and theoretical knowledge necessary for the BA level of studies. The Programme also offers acquisition of basic skills of visualization (e.g., academic figure drawing, classical painting) parallel to studies of the specialism. The connections between the blocks of subjects (university subjects vs. study field subjects) seem rather formal at the moment and the nature of subjects displays a certain fragmentation of the overall structure. In the coming period of academic development, the Department has to ascertain how these subjects combine to create a more coherent composition of study content.

The SER present the subject descriptions mentioned in the curriculum (Annex 2). In general, these descriptions have a common layout yet there is an indication that different groups of subjects (theory or specialism) can have specific prototypes as well. The form of the document is quite complicated and could provide more direct annotation of its content to be better accessible for students. The explanation on evaluation criteria seems the least articulated element of the subject description –

some of the definitions are approximate and cannot give a proper insight to the methods of assessment of student's performance. The formulations on criteria basically reflect the proportions of different components of a given grade rather than explain the methods and reason behind that grade. This form of evaluation criteria articulates a developmental view which is disjointed and may not accurately reflect the homogenous manner in which a student acquires and assimilates knowledge and skills.

During the site visit, the Review team noticed that some texts produced by students as a part of study assignments do not fulfil the standards of academic writing. The teaching staffs has confirmed that it is already aware of this and is planning to develop guidelines. This is welcomed and encouraged by the Review team especially in context of the overall developments of artistic research studies at the Academy (please refer to Recommendation 2). During the site visit the Review team learned that students are satisfied with the overall attitudes of teaching and this aspect indicates that the information is forwarded and collected by the means of direct teacher/student communication. The Review team welcomes the collegiate atmosphere in the Department that could evolve into a complex and consistent professional and academic policy in the coming period.

The thematic scope represents a complete set of courses necessary for the Monumental Art BA programme and is broad enough to cover the extended list of LO's. The scope of the programme is ambitious but the potential problem is how to combine various subjects into a coherent unit that will decide the intended outcomes to be achieved. The representatives of the Department assured the Review team that the Programme leaders and students have active communication and have already initiated the discussion on the reformation on the study content.

The SER indicates in learning about the contextual setting of their disciplines. There are enough of courses and themes that correspond to the actual creative thought or technologic achievements. Students also engage with appropriate related theories within global, historical/contemporary and cultural/environmental settings, which inform that context and add purpose to their activity. Still there is an open question to what extent the Programme can adapt the variety of 'new technologies' in addition to the standard techniques of monumental painting or of stained glass? As a consequence of these processes, students could develop and challenge their own critical disposition in relation to their discipline and even the conventions of the discipline. If the Programme can maintain a flexible, open and responsive dialogue with the aims and outcomes the course can meet the necessary demands of students needs on graduation.

2.3. Teaching staff

According to the SER, the teaching staffs involved in the Monumental Art BA programme meet the legal and academic requirements that are claiming for professional competence, teaching experience, individual creative experience, sociability, and foreign language skills. As the SER informs, “100 % of teachers giving lectures of mandatory study field subjects are scientists and/or established artists” (page 20). The Academy assesses the competences and professional activities of the staff members during the certification procedures every 5 year. The distribution of academic duties (in average, implementation of studies: 60%, methodological work or creative activities: 30%, public services: 10%) seem relevant to the Programme’s character and orientates teachers’ activities towards diverse academic objectives. The qualifications of the staff allow realizing these functions.

The composition of teaching staff accounts their abilities to guide the creative activities of students: 100% of teachers providing the mandatory study field subjects are established artists or scientists (SER page 20).

The Academy organizes open competitions to select the most appropriate candidates for the Programme – practitioners, researchers or scientists; the qualifications of candidates are analysed at the Department and the proposal is then forwarded to the Certification Commission of the Academy. This procedure, taken together with teacher’s annual report, imposes definite dynamism into the academic area of teaching and mobilizes specialists to actively participate in various artistic, research or social events. The Department also enriches the content of curriculum by involving visiting artists into the Programme’s process to deliver seminars and workshops (SER page 20). The SER informs about 17 international visits of teachers and artists in the period from 2012 till 2016 (table 8, page 24). This form of teaching and learning is highly appreciated by the Review team because it brings the latest information to the students’ society and develops their professional and cultural horizon.

The teaching staffs of the Department consist of 12 teachers permanently implementing the Monumental Art BA programme: 1 professor, 5 associate professors, and 6 lecturers. The academic staff of the other departments of the Academy providing lectures on university or elective courses is not included in this number. The approximate teacher/student ratio is 1:3 which shows potentially a very high degree of individual support and subsequently attainability of learning outcomes as well. However the serious concerns can be raised about the efficiency of the Programme taking into account the unpredictable admission results which may not refer to the real needs, capabilities and status of the Programme.

The Programme has experienced a significant staff turnover during the last 4 years and at the present moment the study process is implemented by both mature and young generations of teachers. The positive aspect is that despite of unexpected changes the Programme was able to maintain the highest academic positions – professors and associate professors. The professor/lecturer ratio has decreased because of the increase of number of lecturers' position: 6:3 in 2014; 6:6 in 2016 (Table 5, page 21). The Review team appreciates the energy and strategic outlook of the Departments' representatives and was assured that the current composition of teaching staff can direct the Programme towards its professional and social goals.

Professional developments are regulated by annual certification of the teaching staff – teachers shall report their research and creative activity results at the end of each year. The Annex 4 informs about the broad range of creative and research activities – 70 local and international events during the period of accreditation. These reports are published by the Academy and discussed during the meetings at the Department and the Study Programme Committee.

The Programme's teaching staffs constantly improve their methodological qualifications in the following directions: involvement in qualification development activities, participation in socio-cultural events, organization of exhibitions, direct involvement in the academic processes such as participation in commissions of various events, coordination of creative workshops and renewal of the course content (SER 21-22). The SER Annex 4 accounts 55 methodological and qualification improvement activities realized by the Programme's teaching staff in the period from 2012 till 2016. The SER informs (page 22) that the Senate of the Academy has approved the "*Implementation Plane for the VAA Lifelong Learning Strategy for 2016-2020.*" Teachers are encouraged to improve their pedagogical, research or practical qualifications and participate in international exchange programmes. This institutional plan convincingly demonstrates consistent and permanent approach to the mechanisms of quality improvement.

Teachers of the Department have been involved in the mobility visits abroad 19 times during the last 6 years. This statistic shows a good result especially considering the total number of teaching staff (12 members) and the fact that 10 persons of them have been involved in the mobility programme.

2.4. Facilities and learning resources

In general, the study premises are adequate in size and of a good quality. The main building of the Department (Maironio street 4) provides a suitable learning environment where students can fulfil their intentions experimenting with different techniques or means of expression. The spaces are

appropriate for acquisition of the specific monumental art techniques but there can be some doubts about the size of spaces for composition projects and fine art subjects (drawing, painting) in which the direct studies of artistic expression on a grand scale could be hardly possible. This aspect, left without attention, can also influence the content of the fine art studies and limit students' abilities to visually think in terms of monumental scale.

The SER informs about the 18 study spaces at the Department's disposal with 657.36 m² of floor area (Table 9, page 26). These consist of studios, technical workshops or laboratories and few lecture rooms. There are also 4 rooms for office purposes and technical needs. The use of spaces seem relevant to the needs of field studies, e.g., there are 10 'fresco-mosaic' and/or 'stained glass' specialism studios; 5 of these studios are reserved for special groups of students (1st year, 2nd year, 3rd year, 4th year). There are several workshop studios for common use as well. The average sizes of studios seem relevant for art studies with limited number of students (average 8 students per year). The largest two spaces in the Department's main building are allocated for fine art classes (painting studio: 71m²; drawing studio: 63,39m²), however in terms of student's working place area (allocated space ~ 7m² for each student) it seems to meet the minimum necessary for creative activities in the field of monumental art (see comment above). There is a separate glass workshop (Stained glass training centre, Jasinskio str. 16; 250m² altogether) which is technologically well equipped, with very experienced technical support staff, and can effectively respond to the various professional needs of students and professional artists. Since 2016 the Department has rooms for interdisciplinary projects with specific light and sound installations. The condition of the studios is appropriate for art students and the Academy invests a certain amount of money every year for renovation works.

The SER informs that laboratory workshops of the Monumental Art and Scenography Department (83,57 m²) for fresco-mosaic educational were installed in 2010 in concordance with hygiene standards and sanitary requirements. These are positive improvements to the art study environment which were followed by more recent (2013) technological additions. However there are technical rooms located at the Jasinskio str.16, which demand attention to the health and safety issues. There is little evidence of appropriate safety equipment available for student use; safety signage is evident but could be expanded on. These premises are decently equipped and are also used as a technical resource for creative actions by professional artists. There are newly installed computer rooms and the Monumental Art programme students share these premises with students of other programmes. The study environment and the professional equipment is fully suitable for the needs of the Programme and is a good precondition for the development of the Programme in the coming period.

The Academy has developed constant and mutually useful contacts with the artistic infrastructure of Vilnius and Lithuania – representatives of local municipalities, gallerists, curators, and institutions of art education. This allows students and graduates to participate in art events on local or national level, or to establish teacher's career. The Academy has its own premises for organizing students' practices – the good example is the Nida Art Colony where art projects of national or international scale are organized every year. In 2016 there were special event at the Nida Art Colony for 35 Monumental art and Scenography programme students involving guest 3 lecturers from abroad and Erasmus exchange students as well. The Academy has two more premises outside Vilnius (Mizarai Base, Panemunė Castle) and this extended infrastructure can serve the fundamental needs of study practice. The Programme involves study practice also in the facilities of its social partners as well as in public spaces both on national and international level (SER page 28).

The methodological resource of the Academy is unquestionably good – there are excellent academic library spaces in the main building with developed electronic library system as well. The number of available databases is constantly extended and, according to the SER, the content suits the interests of Monumental Art programme. The library resource is permanently complemented with the new learning materials and the Vilnius Faculty has 68 installed working stations altogether if accounting all five reading rooms of the library. This academic and professional resource is completely adequate for the needs of Monumental Art BA programme and can also initiate deeper interest of students' society to continue learning on an individual level.

2.5. Study process and students' performance assessment

Successfully embedded assessment strategies support students' understanding of their learning processes and are designed to foster a deep personal approach to the course of studies as such. Strategy of the Academy also promotes autonomous learning and self-evaluation as vital elements within the overall learning process (paragraph 6.4.4, page 39; page 44). Self and peer-evaluation constitute an important part of formative assessment and of the formal summative assessment process as well. Feedback and “feed forward” is core to students' learning and offers students clear guidance with regard to future development. During the interview sessions the representatives of Department demonstrated obvious awareness on these learning developments of the BA programme considering them as a part of study continuation at the second and third cycle of studies.

The statistics on admission, graduation and drop-out numbers shown in the SER (Tables 11 and 12; page 32) indicate that the students accepted in the Programme are motivated and disciplined – only 6 drop-out cases were recorded during the past five year period, 4 of them in 2012 and 2013. The drop-

outs mainly happen in the 1st year of studies and are explained as the result of the general admission system where students have to indicate his/her first, second or third 'priorities' (page 33). It seems that students decide to start their studies in the Programme they were offered after the centralized examination and then apply to the Academy for a switch to the desired field of studies. The only one case of study interruption because of the 'academic failure' happened in 2016. The admission results show fluctuations in numbers, in one case (from 2012 to 2013) the number of admitted students was more than doubled: 2012 – 5 students; 2013 – 11 students (Table 12; page 32). The average numbers of admitted students (~8 per year) as well as the average number of graduated (~5 per year) seem relevant for the specific field of Monumental Art but the numerical fluctuation seems a constant feature of the current admission process and may negatively influence the management of the Programme.

In Lithuania admission to the first cycle of studies in higher education is generally granted through a central national office that allocates students on the basis of national test scores and a centralised artistic exam. However, during the site visit the staff still communicated that the current entrance procedures pose a challenging situation of insecurity, since the department is not able to decide on the number of students that are admitted each year. While the centralized admission is a consistent and transparent procedure, the Review team feels that this process is not ideal for assessing artistic abilities and intentions of an individual, as it is not able to include consideration of the previous artistic development. The current admission system does not allow the Academy to evaluate the prospective students directly and select the students whose talents and plans correspond to the mission and objectives of the Academy and its programmes. The Review team explicitly welcomes the initiative to install more holistic methods of assessment of prospective students, such as portfolio evaluation and/or conducting personal interviews.

Based on the information of the SER and the evidence collected during the site visit, the organisation of the study process at the Academy is adequate to ensure the implementation of the Programme. The curriculum is written on the principle of increasing complexity and the degree of individual working thus providing gradual accumulation of student's knowledge and skills. This model of planning reflects the attested methods of art studies and the Monumental Art programme positively demonstrates the links between learning outcomes and study subjects but more attention should be turned to the modular structure (or links between the courses) of the curriculum. While the curriculum gives the impression that the programme focuses relatively little on theory, the site visits and the interview sessions revealed that the teaching and discussion of art theory is integrated into the subjects focussing on the semester's main artistic project. The Review team feels that this aspect, which both students and staff stressed as important to them during the interview sessions, should be continued and developed further.

The students' achievements of 'non-formal activities' or 'informal learning' are not evaluated with grades (SER page 39) and, subsequently, not awarded with credits. There is evidence that the Academy have recognized the importance of such independent activities and the regulation *Description of the Procedure for Evaluation and Recognition of Learning Outcomes and Competences Developed Through Non-formal and Informal Learning* was approved by the Senate in 2014 (SER page 39). The Review team is convinced that the latter demonstrates encouraging developments towards the objectives included in the recommendation 3.6. of the previous accreditation report. (*"3.6. An enhancement of independent or negotiated learning as an integrated part of the programme is required. Students have to be capable of learning independence of action and the taking of responsibility for their own actions not as an extra mural activity but as necessary and established learning outcome. The academy may need to establish guidelines based on best international educational practice for the use of all its programmes in this matter."* ER 2011, page 11)

The Programme ends with a final art project that is accompanied by a text of variable length. Students have confirmed a proper implementation of the Programme that also allows for certain flexibility: up to three subjects per semester can be carried forward into the next semester.

The Academy has well established approach to maintain the Quality Assurance (QA) control over the course content – subjects included in the Programme are certified in accordance with the procedure prescribed by the Academy for a period of one or two years. This seem to be an academically relevant form how to intensify the improvement of the course content & methods and allow to test the feedback from the actual performance as well.

The SER provides a list with numerous artistic activities of the Monumental Art programme students. They are taking part in art events/projects/exhibitions and are organising exhibitions nationally and internationally. Altogether 15 domestic and international exhibitions are mentioned in the SER (page 33). The Review team feels that the Academy and the Department could profit from valuing activities that were initiated by students independently by allocating them a place in the curriculum that could be also awarded with some credits. The SER provides little evidence of students' scientific or applied science activities, such as conferences of being part of research groups. Since the SER states that graduates should be able to work in the field of conservation and restoration, the Review team advises that students are encouraged to explore the possibilities of taking part in scientific research projects and conferences that provide contacts to restorers, conservation specialists etc. Generally, the Review team welcomes the Department's effort to improve students' skills in academic writing and would recommend to expand these efforts (please refer to Recommendation 2).

The Academy has established an impressive network of cooperating Universities across the globe: since 2012 students of the Programme has visited foreign institutions to study monumental arts: 6 students for one semester on Erasmus base, 9 short-term visits on Nordplus base (page 34). The SER also informs (page 34) that not all candidates for a semester abroad can be offered a position; this is a result of the state's policy of distributing the number of places in mobility programmes according to the number of students of the course. The Review team would like to encourage the Department to lobby for an increased number of mobility positions for the students of the Programme with the relevant institutions.

The Monumental Art BA programme seems to be a unique player in the field of higher art education therefore the character of its professional connections should be contextualized both in the content of field studies and prospect of contemporary art. Graduates of this Programme are going to work in a highly specialised but also competitive field and international contacts are essential to their future careers. From the information provided by the SER it is possible to conclude that a fair number of students are coming to the course through mobility programmes – during the last two study year period the number of incoming foreign students significantly exceeds the number of outgoing students: 7 : 2. (SER page 34). In context with the tendency of the Programme to increase its international prospect, this is a good indicator for the recognised quality of teaching and the positive reputation of the course abroad. The presence of incoming students also activates the use of foreign language thus allowing more direct access to international learning resources and communication with the professionals of the field. More students in mobility programmes would also help to promote the high standard of the programme internationally (please refer to Recommendation 4 and 6).

According to the information provided by the SER, the Academy provides students with several possibilities for obtaining essential course information and academic support through its website, the institution's virtual academic platform, consultation hours with teachers after class, and various other digital ways (email, Facebook etc.). During the site visit, students expressed that their needs were met. The social support provided by the Academy seems to be adequate; also a limited number of state-funded scholarships is available. The Academy recently launched a programme promoting mental health, which the Review team recognises as a particularly committed and pro-active step towards supporting students in various crises. The Review team was assured that the teaching staff is able to openly and friendly communicate students' interests and assist in solving their everyday problems. The interview sessions during the site visit confirmed that both staff and students are aware of this programme and find it a positive development.

From the SER it appears that the realization of LO can be achieved through assessment methods to support students' understanding of their learning processes (page 19). The descriptions of content & methods of the Programme's courses transparently state their relations to the learning outcomes and indicate how grades are calculated. Evaluation of the students' achievements is made during interim and final reviews of course projects as well as during the defence of their final theses. The classes are marked through cumulative assessment, which enables students to obtain regular feedback and allows them to improve their performance during the course of the semester. The Review team noted a reflected criticality amongst students as well as staff towards grading art projects by scores, which seems an appropriate attitude towards this complex issue.

The SER provides data of employability rates of the Programme graduates during the last five year period (Table 15; page 39). It also states that informal communication with graduates (there are only 3-7 graduates per year) concluded that 80% of graduates work in the field of monumental art (page 39). The SER states that some graduates also work in other art-related fields such as design or teaching. The meeting with graduates during the site visit left the Review team with the strong impression that those who ventured into adjacent fields feel confident and fulfilled. Employers expressed their satisfaction that graduates of the Programme are enthusiastic and reliable project partners and co-workers.

The SER argues that the course in Monumental Arts is providing a highly specialised qualification in relatively rare profession. During the site visit, the Review team was able to convince itself that this is correct – the Programme is likely to offer one of very few university qualifications in the field of Monumental Art and produces very well qualified graduates. Thus, the Programme offers an important contribution to the cultural heritage of Europe. In order to keep this heritage alive, it needs to be updated with meaning that is relevant in today's society; the Academy achieves this by exploring how the traditional techniques of monumental art can connect with contemporary art practises and styles. In order to share this field of expertise, the Review team would advise the Academy to continue to seek international recognition amongst top art institutions (please refer to Recommendation 6).

The Review team appreciates the democratic and empathic attitudes created by the teachers and Department's leaders. The current combination of experienced and young staff members seem to be a good prerequisite to create a long-term learning environment with positive and mutually promotive practices. Although there were no complaints and it was generally confirmed that the Department management and teachers are very supportive of varying professional and social situations of students, the Review team detected a certain risk that, due to the intimate and friendly atmosphere at the Department, arrangements for various specific needs might be made on an individual rather than

a structural basis. The Department management should be aware of this situation and ensure that all students' opinion was listened and students are given equal opportunities.

Although there is a strong tradition of providing students with comprehensive oral feedback through tutorials, feedback is delivered in both written and verbal forms, increasingly using online, audio and video methods. The SER also describes several informal opportunities (many of them public forums), where feedback can be provided (page 38). The now established Study Programme Committee offers a more formal way to be involved in academic self-government. Regular evaluation questionnaires provide an opportunity to give anonymous and immediate feedback. The Review team noted an atmosphere of critical friendliness that may not always be conducive to the most critical evaluation of individual practices though clearly does create a very support environment. During several interview sessions students explicitly confirmed that their wishes were heard and requests dealt with in an efficient way.

2.6. Programme management

The Academy has well established decision-making system: the Department, the Study Programme Committee, the Methodological Commission of the Faculty, the Council of the Faculty, the Group for Studies of Academy. This sequence of academic institutions show the legal procedure the decisions are initiated, formulated and affirmed. The system meets the democratic standards of HEI and can effectively respond to the needs of Programme and students.

Although the Programme is principally managed by the Head of Department, students' representatives (chairpersons of a group) are involved in the decision-making processes – they can also communicate with Students' Council and the Administration. (SER page 41). This also proves the implementation of the recommendation 3.5. of the previous accreditation. (“3.5. *Students must be familiarised with the working processes and management of the faculty and the University, and be encouraged to participate in its regulatory bodies.*” ER 2011, page 11)

The Review team has learned that students are satisfied with the current state of Programmes management and know their rights to speak up their problems to higher academic and administrative bodies. The ambience of the teachers/students society seems open, democratic and constructive and as such it meets the preconditions necessary for professional communication.

The Department regularly collects the statistic data on attainment, dropout, student mobility and employability of graduates (page 39). There are regular (after every semester) surveys on study programmes' content and the quality of process addressing the opinion of both students and social

partners (page 38). According to the SER (pages 40-41), the information is discussed in collegiate form at the Study Programme Committee and the Department's meeting; the Committee meetings are held at least twice a semester (page 42). This is, in general, a proper way to get the feedback from the Programme's performance and forward the reliable information to the higher academic and administrative bodies.

The internal and external evaluation is embedded in the academic processes of the Academy and of the Department allowing timely and consistently respond to the complex of problems recognized by the means of self-evaluation procedures. The recommendations from the previous external expertise (programme accreditation of 2011) were used to indicate and gradually fix the problems, and improve the study programme's performance, content, methodological approaches and resources involving all the levels of academic society. The direct result of the internal self-analysis was the Rector's order to establish the study programme committees (page 6). During the interview the Programme students confirmed the positive changes in the content and the performance of the Programme. The students specifically pointed at the flexibility of the teaching/learning approaches and affirmed the involvement of students' representatives in the institutional system of the Academy. The SER shows very clear and pragmatic approach to the self-evaluation process and the Review team finds it as easy accessible and highly informative. (SER headings "*Strengths and Aspects Subject to Improvement.*" Pages 11, 19, 20, 25, 29, 40, 41, 45, 46).

Stakeholders were involved in the elaboration of the SER and degree of their participation was pragmatic and useful for the SER group. The communication with the representatives of social partners was realized in the form of discussions; information was transferred by electronic mail. During the interview session, the social partners demonstrated thorough understanding on the academic processes and appreciate the increase of 'broader mind-set' of students and especially pointed at the high degree of students' ability to be disciplined and prompt. Social partners are also involved in the regular self-evaluation process made by the Study Programme Committee – stakeholders comment the level of preparedness of the students for the labour market, quality improvement, and socio-cultural projects. This area of Departments duties is effectively implemented and stakeholders support the Department's intention to activate public access to the Programme. The Review team recognizes that this proves the implementation of recommendation 3.1. of the previous accreditation. ("*3.1. It is essential to establish a regular formal and business like consultation process with external stakeholders. Including the introduction of regular briefings by the faculty of new developments and the recorded collection of external stakeholder responses to guide future developments and changes.*" ER 2011. Page 10)

The Academy has established and tested the systems and principles of internal Quality Assurance (QA). The presence of these systems reflect on the annual teacher's performance certification, student surveys on the quality of courses, regular revision (in two year period) of subject content and the involvement of social partners into the work-out of the self-evaluation report which was composed in accordance with the strict time-plan and shows precise division of responsibilities. There are also quality benchmarking principles at the Academy which explores the relationships between the study task and the quality of student's performance – this methodology allows designating the true weaknesses in the teaching system, indicate incompleteness of material resources and propose subsequent improvements. The SER indicates that the quality assurance results are accessible for academic society and public as well (page 43). There is a logical and clear procedure how the information on quality issues become completed by the Department and presented to the Council of Faculty, the Dean's office and the students' society. The results of internal and external evaluation are published on the Faculty's website. The thorough institutional approach to feedback evaluated by the Review team was seen as a truly effective instrument to embed the positive principles of self-criticism into the academic environment and promote continuous activities of quality assurance and management.

2.7. Examples of excellence

The Programme provides an exceptionally good environment for Monumental Art studies, the content of which comprises of a wide range of practical experience, supported by strong, contemporary, theoretical elements. This programme structure provides the necessary skillsets to prepare students for their future professional careers.

The way the Programme structure recognises the broader contexts of the field, by including practice-based research and acknowledging the wide range of professional possibilities, to which the graduate's expertise can be applied, distinguishes this programme as a unique source of learning, teaching and artistic creation.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Programme should continue to develop the integration of theory into the content of the curriculum.
2. The Programme should continue to develop the appropriate methodologies that address how to deal with academic standards of all integrated written components.
3. The Programme should actively continue encouraging cross-departmental projects.
4. The Programme should undertake the necessary engagement with the contemporary processes and discourses beyond the local socio-cultural environment.
5. The Review team actively welcomes the potential change in enrolment procedure policy which has clearly had a previous impact on the stability of the programme.
6. The Programme's international recognition should be institutionally supported and actively encouraged.

IV. SUMMARY

The review team would like to extend its appreciation and warm thanks to everyone involved in the various meeting sessions at Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts. Throughout the entire process all the participants were extremely co-operative and professional and their positive attitude to the process contributed, to what the review team agreed, was very successful and informative site visit.

The Monumental Art Bachelor's study programme of Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts effectively outlines a profile of contemporary artist capable of working in the areas of mural painting, stained glass, mosaic, painting, and interdisciplinary art projects both independently and alongside architects, restorers, curators and other professionals of the related fields in the community, in regional, national and international contexts, and in an interdisciplinary capacity collaborating with architecture and heritage organisations. The prospect of the Programme clearly establishes the preconditions for further studies at the MA cycle. The mission set by Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts is to become one of the most influential centres for art studies in the Baltic region. The objectives of the Programme also include a range of social and personal abilities such as: responding to change, skills in entrepreneurship, communication and negotiation skills, so the intended outcomes of the study process indicate how the education can contribute to the cultural development and the economic well-being of the individual and of society. The unique character of the Monumental Art programme clearly places within that framework. The course of the Programme's curriculum gradually accumulates the student's knowledge & skills and shows stable consistency in this development. The curriculum imposes very concentrated form of studies and the Academy is developing the legal forms how the independent creative and research activities of students could be integrated in the content and volume of the Programme. There are enough of courses and themes that correspond to the actual creative thought and technologic achievements. The scope of the programme is ambitious and students are engaged with related theories within global, historical/contemporary and cultural/environmental settings thus adding purpose to their activity. The direct task of the coming period is how to combine various subjects into a more coherent unit and the representatives of the Department assured the Review team that the Programme leaders and students have already initiated the discussion on the reformation on the study content.

The teaching staffs involved in the Monumental Art BA programme meet the legal and academic requirements that are claiming for professional competence, teaching experience, individual creative experience, sociability, and foreign language skills. The Academy re-evaluates the competences and professional activities of the staff members every 5 year during by organizing open competition to select the most appropriate candidates for the Programme – practitioners, researchers or scientists.

This democratic procedure, taken together with teacher's annual report, imposes definite dynamism into the academic area of teaching and mobilizes specialists to actively participate in various artistic, research or social events. The teaching staffs permanently involved in the provision of the Programme consists of 12 teachers: 1 professor, 5 associate professors, and 6 lecturers. There are also academic staffs of the other departments of the Academy providing lectures on university or elective courses. The approximate teacher/student ratio is 1:3 which shows high potential of individual attitude. At the present moment the study process is implemented by both mature and young generations of teachers – the Review team appreciates their energy and strategic outlook and was assured that the current composition of teaching staff directs the Programme towards its professional and social goals. The statistic data show good level of staffs' mobility and the Department also enriches the Programme's content by inviting visiting artists to perform seminars and workshops. This attitude is highly appreciated by the Review team because it brings the latest information to the students' society and develops their professional and cultural horizon.

The study premises are adequate in size and of a good quality – positive improvements to the art study environment and technological equipment were made after the last accreditation in 2011. There are 16 study spaces at the Department's disposal: art studios, technical workshops or laboratories and lecture rooms (657m² altogether) and the use of spaces is relevant to the needs of 'field studies'. There is a separate glass workshop (Jasinskio str.16; 250m² altogether) which is technologically well equipped, with very experienced technical support staff, and can effectively respond to the various professional needs of students and professional artists. There are newly installed computer rooms at the Academy and the Monumental Art programme students share these premises with students of other programmes. There is an excellent academic library in the main building equipped with developed electronic library information system and resources permanently complemented with the new learning materials which suits the interests of Monumental Art programme. In general, the study environment and the professional equipment is a good precondition for the development of the Programme in the coming period. The Academy has developed consistent and mutually useful contacts with the artistic infrastructure of Vilnius and Lithuania. Students and graduates can use these links to participate in art events on local or national level, or to establish teacher's career. The Academy has its own premises for organizing students' practices – the Nida Art Colony where art projects of national or international scale are organized every year and two premises outside Vilnius (Mizarai Base, Panemunė Castle).

The Academy has successfully embedded assessment strategies that support students' understanding of their learning processes and foster a deep personal approach to the course of studies as such. Students of the Monumental Art Department can use an impressive international network of

cooperating Universities and a fair number of mobility students are coming to the Programme as well. This is a good indicator for the recognised quality of teaching and shows the positive reputation of the Programme abroad. The Programme is likely to offer one of very few university qualifications in the field of Monumental Art and produces very well qualified graduates. The Review team would advise the Academy to continue to seek international recognition amongst top art institutions. In Lithuania, higher education admission to the first cycle of studies is generally granted by a central national office that allocates students on the basis of national test scores and a centralised artistic exam. The Review team feels that this process is less than ideal for assessing artistic abilities and intentions of an individual and welcomes the initiative to reconsider this procedure and put forward through consultation with other HEI.

The Programme is managed by the Head of Department. Students are satisfied with the current state of Programmes management and know their rights to speak up their problems to higher academic and administrative bodies – the students' representatives are involved in the decision-making processes and communicate with Students' Council and the Administration. The Academy has established and successfully tested the systems and principles of internal Quality Assurance reflecting the annual teacher's performance, student surveys on the quality of courses, regular revision (in two year period) of subject content, and the involvement of social partners. The existing quality benchmarking principles explore the relationships between the study task and the quality of student's performance allowing to designate the true strengths and weaknesses in the teaching system. The results of internal and external evaluation are published on the Faculty's website and the Academy provides both academic and public accessibility to the quality assurance results. The procedure how the information on quality issues is collected and completed is a logical and clear. The Review team regards this system as truly effective instrument to embed the principles of self-criticism into the academic environment and promote continuous activities of quality assurance.

V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Monumental Art* (state code – 612W10003) at Vilnius Art Academy is given **positive** evaluation.

Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an area in points*
1.	Programme aims and learning outcomes	3
2.	Curriculum design	3
3.	Teaching staff	4
4.	Facilities and learning resources	3
5.	Study process and students' performance assessment	4
6.	Programme management	4
	Total:	21

*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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