



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Vilniaus dailės akademijos (Kauno fakulteto)  
**STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS „TAIKOMOJI KERAMIKA“**  
*(valstybinis kodas - 621W10008)*  
**VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

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**EVALUATION REPORT**  
**OF "APPLIED CERAMICS" (state code - 621W10008)**  
**STUDY PROGRAMME**  
at Vilnius Art Academy (Kaunas Faculty)

**Review' team:**

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2. **Doc. Dr. Eugenia Loginova,** *academic,*
3. **Doc. Dr. Karen Harsbo,** *academic,*
4. **Prof. Dr. Richard Launder,** *academic,*
5. **Ms Asta Vaičiulytė,** *representative of social partners'*
6. **Ms Rūta Stankutė,** *students' representative.*

**Evaluation coordinator -**

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Išvados parengtos anglų kalba  
Report language – English

## DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Taikomoji keramika</i>
Valstybinis kodas	621W10008
Studijų sritis	Menai
Studijų kryptis	Dailė
Studijų programos rūšis	Universitetinės studijos
Studijų pakopa	Antroji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinės (2 metai)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	120 ECTS
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Dailės magistras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	2007-05-16

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## INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	<i>Applied Ceramics</i>
State code	621W10008
Study area	Arts
Study field	Art studies
Type of the study programme	University
Study cycle	Second cycle
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time (2 years)
Volume of the study programme in credits	120 ECTS
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master of Arts
Date of registration of the study programme	2007-05-16

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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***

Kaunas Faculty of VAA (VAA KF) is an integral structural part of Vilnius Academy of Arts. VAA is a state school of higher education of arts organising university first-cycle, masters, special vocational, integrated, third-cycle, doctoral studies, performing research and developing high-level professional artistic activities. It 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 VAA community, including VAA Kaunas Faculty, VAA Vilnius Faculty, VAA Telšiai Faculty and VAA Klaipėda Faculty, sees itself as an educational institution of visual arts, recognised by its programme and value provisions, socially oriented staff of highly skilled artists and pedagogues, seeking to implement cutting-edge art technologies and capable of preparing professional artists, designers, architects who can compete in the art market, as well as experts in humanities and social science (art critics, cultural management professionals). The most talented graduates of the Academy comprise a significant part of the Lithuanian cultural elite producing art works that are recognised and appreciated in Europe and around the world.

The VAA KF offers university study programmes of arts at two levels (bachelor and master): 9 bachelor (Design, Graphic Design, Sculpture, Applied Ceramics, Applied Textile, Glass, Painting, Applied Graphics and Interior Design (from 2015)), 8 master (Design, Graphic Design, Sculpture, Applied Ceramics, Applied Textile, Glass, Painting, Applied Graphics), and 1 integrated study programme (Architecture, after bachelor and master study programmes were combined in 2016). In cooperation with the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, the joint master study programme Art Therapy was prepared and launched (overseen by the departments of Humanities of VAA and LUHS).

The MA Applied Ceramics study programme is located in the Department of Ceramics and Porcelain alongside the BA Applied Ceramic study programme. The department has been implementing the study programme in the field of ceramics since 1991, however the roots of ceramics education in Kaunas goes back to Kaunas School of Arts, where studies of ceramics were introduced in 1931. The BA Applied Ceramics study programme was first assessed in 2008, then again in 2010 and again in 2013. It was given accreditation for 3 years on each occasion of evaluation. The MA Applied Ceramics study programme is delivered by teachers from the Department of Ceramics and Porcelain, the Department of Humanities and students can take electives from other departments in the Faculty.

The previous evaluation of the programme of study was 2013, when it was accredited for three years. The evaluation of the programme in 2017 has been conducted by an international team assembled by the SKVC (see 1.4 below). In this work the team has followed the legal requirements and methodological guidelines, established for higher education institutions in Lithuania. The international expert group undertook its evaluation based on the information provided in the Self-Evaluation Report (hereinafter – SER), the submitted additional information by the VAA KF, and the observations made during the site visit to the KF. Following the visit, the views and findings of the review team members were discussed, which are reflected in this report.

#### ***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 *5/April/2017*.

- 1. Dr. Sarah Bennett (team leader)**, *Kingston University Head of The School of Art and Architecture, United Kingdom.*
- 2. Doc. Dr. Eugenia Loginova**, *Art Academy of Latvia, lecturer, Latvia*
- 3. Doc. Dr. Karen Harsbo**, *Royal Danish Academy of Fine Art, lecturer, Denmark.*
- 4. Prof. Dr. Richard Launder**, *University of Bergen, Institute of Art & Design, lecturer, Norway.*
- 5. Ms Asta Vaičiulytė**, *Contemporary Art Centre, curator and editor, Lithuania.*
- 6. Ms Rūta Stankutė**, *student of Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences, Lithuania.*

## **II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS**

### ***2.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes***

During the meetings between the review team and the teaching staff the title of the MA was discussed i.e. regarding whether it would benefit from increased visibility of the contemporary aspect within the title, but it was agreed that it remains appropriate and aligned to the learning outcomes and recruits successfully with the current title. Through reading the SER and the visit meetings, the review team have been confirmed in the view that the MA programme aims and learning outcomes meet the needs of the students, graduates and social partners to a high level of satisfaction and are reviewed and updated regularly (SER p8) by the study programme committee in relation to the Art Study Field Descriptor and to ensure their responsive to the changing cultural and creative sector, and market opportunities in Lithuania and beyond (see 2.3 below re international perspective). The positive evidence of career paths of graduates (SER p30) reflects the close alignment of the students' education to the sector needs. The Programme objectives and learning outcomes are well defined, clear (SER pp8-10) and are publicly available on the website (SER p7) and also are included in publications/leaflets and at events such as in the annual exhibition "Mokymasis. Studijos. Karjera".

The staff are to be highly commended that individual development and independent learning are supported to a high level and clearly supports students to deepen their artistic or design direction during their MA, enabling them to establish their own personal language of artistic expression. It is

recognised that the MA programme presents two fields: artistic ceramics and ceramics design: (SER p8) the programme staff stated that these are regarded as equal in terms of the allocation of study resources, a position which the review team totally supports. The review team note the particular opportunity which this creates for a contemporary hybrid practice, which was clearly in evidence in the ceramic works and theses which were presented. While the review team was impressed by the quality and standard of these final MA thesis texts, the review team wish to recommend a further expansion of these, to be more broadly inclusive of embedded artistic research: enabling the ‘making is thinking’ haptic – the doing aspect to be focused upon in equal measure to the academic study to give a distinctiveness to the MA study programme learning outcomes and its level (see also 2.2 below). While the review team confirm that the programme objectives and intended learning outcomes correspond to the second cycle of studies and compares very favourably to other programmes of study known to the team members, the focus on embedded artistic research would enhance the students possibility of undertaking third cycle study (LO A1), supported by the presence and guidance of a PhD student in the teaching team.

The review team welcome that the Faculty is already implementing (arriving summer 2017) new technology equipment that will further support the MA programme learning outcomes, and that the use of these are already integrated into the educational structure (SER p9) in addition to studio usage. When in place, the creative possibilities which this new equipment will enable will form an important aspect of creating a contemporary, level field between conventional and new technology languages of making and expression. In the review team’s opinion this is reflected in learning outcomes (e.g. A2 and C2) and programme objectives that correspond to the mission of KF to develop ceramic works that align with trends across the European Union. Social Partners found this of interest and useful in terms of possible employment opportunities. Programme objectives are linked to professional requirements for ceramic artists and designers and the review team witnessed through student/alumni meetings and the artworks seen that the learning outcomes support the development of agile, quick thinking and responsive practitioners who can research independently and apply their knowledge in a breadth of cultural contexts through the development of their research and subject-specific skills (SER p9). The review team recommends a regular updating/extension of new technology equipment, support for staff development to learn about these and the subsequent insertion of this knowledge into the teaching programme to support the Programme Aims (see also 2.4 below).

## 2.2. Curriculum Design

The second-cycle (Master's) Applied Ceramics study programme complies with the legislation of Lithuanian Republic. The curriculum design is described in the SER (pp10-14) and illustrates that the programme satisfies the legal requirements. The total volume of the programme is 120 credits (ECTS) – the legal requirement is no less than 90 ECTS. It has a duration of 4 semesters (a period of 2 years). The subjects of the programme are classified into 3 main groups (Table 3 SER p11): compulsory subjects of the study field cover 60 ECTS – the legal requirement is no less than 60 ECTS; optional theoretical subjects and subjects of the study field cover 30 ECTS – the legal requirement is no more than 30 ECTS and preparation of the thesis takes 30 ECTS, all are corresponding to the requirements.

Subjects of study are taught in a consistent manner, subjects or topics are not repeated. The programme is arranged according to the study goals, with a possibility of adjusting it to each student's individual requirements (LOs A2, B2). The theoretical and practical subjects are interconnected and supplement each other. Optional subjects are integrated into the individual curriculum, which helps to support the variety of final project approaches and topics (LOs C4, C5).

The content of subjects (modules) corresponds to the type and cycle of studies and is clearly described in the syllabus. Referring to the criticism of the previous evaluation, during the last two years the programme was thoroughly altered, as read in the SER report (p13). The goals of the Master's study programme of Applied Ceramics have been slightly altered in the field of theoretical contemporary art criticism. The programme has been upgraded in the sphere of application of research methodologies in art (LO B1). By reviewing the submitted syllabus the review team can see that the allotted time for scientific investigations has increased considerably, the following subjects can prove that: *The research paper 1, 2, 3* (MM0292, MM0293, MM0294) and *The Methodology of Scientific Research* (HM0002) (LO B2, B3). Before only one (the 3<sup>rd</sup>) semester was allotted to scientific work, but following the recommendations of the previous evaluation the students can now write the theoretical research paper for a period of three semesters thus allowing students to have a deeper insight and make a detailed research (45 pages is a desirable amount). The development of a written thesis is well guided by staff (LOs A1, A3, B2) and is connected with the practical part of the graduation work. The review team recommend the further development and understanding of 'practice as research' within the MA (see 2.1 above). This can be developed through continued evaluation of research approaches and supported by staff research activities and



their doctoral study i.e. a greater synthesis is aimed for between written thesis and final masters practice.

The content of subjects and study methods are appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Different methods are used to achieve the study programme aims: lectures, workshops, individual work, practices, seminars, team work and group discussions at mid-term assessments. The choice of optional subjects is also wider, now it is wide enough to satisfy the students' individual interests connected with the subject of their graduation work (LOs B2 and B3). Students can choose 2-3 optional subjects from the offered. The following subjects are added to the syllabus: *Development of Contemporary Art* (HM0003), *Anthropology of the Visuals* (HM0005), *Seminars of Scientific Rhetoric* (HM0099), *Psychoanalysis and Art* (HM0097), *Visual Art and Context* (MM0502, MM0283, MM0315) comprising all options of visual art courses (drawing, painting, sculptures, media, etc.). *Creative Interdisciplinary Laboratories* (MM0501) includes selecting teachers from VAA KF study programmes and guest lecturers in accordance with the study field of Master studies. The review team confirm that students in general are satisfied with the subjects' content. At the student meeting they communicated very actively, most of them did it in English. Students appreciated responsiveness of the Department to be flexible in working together on positive outcomes.

The scope of the programme at 120 ECTS is sufficient to ensure the learning outcomes of the Master of Applied Ceramics. Lectures and workshops take about 8 hours per day and respectively 40 hours per week. The proportion of individual work has increased in the Master's programme, about 54% of the total number of hours, which corresponds to the provisions of the Study Regulations of Vilnius Academy of Arts. Thus the Master's programme students are free to organise their own studying time and volume independently and responsibly (LO E1, E2). International exchange experience is one of the most significant parts in the study process. In this respect much has been done. Students' and professors' mobility within the Erasmus, Kuno or Cirrus programmes has increased, also other possibilities and offers are being used. The review team noted that a positive and praiseworthy initiative is the International Kaunas Porcelain Symposium organised by the Department of Ceramics and Porcelain. Thus, the Department facilitates international cooperation with other Art Universities by inviting them to participate and share their professional and creative know-how. That helps to advance international contacts, students' and professors' mobility, as well helps establish their place in a global context of art. The review team saw that there are concrete examples of the cooperation with the social partners (LO D1). More cases of cooperation are advisable as this kind of cooperation without any doubt will enrich

students' professional experience and help to adjust to reality. Social partners confirmed the high level of graduates' professional ability.

The review team agree that the content of the programme corresponds to the latest academic, artistic or technological achievements. Subjects as *Development of Contemporary Art* (HM0003) and *Creative Interdisciplinary Laboratories* (MM0501) acquaint students with the latest tendencies in contemporary art. Better understanding of art theory and criticism undoubtedly has had a positive effect on students' works and should remain high on the agenda to ensure currency of the curriculum. Due to the subject *Interdisciplinary Laboratories* students are able to gain an insight into the latest techniques and technologies of other branches and use that knowledge in their creative work (LOs A1, A2). Having seen the completed MA graduation works the review team commends that the programme operates at a conceptual and philosophical level - with visualisation going beyond traditional applied art –emphatically it is a contemporary ceramics art (LOs B1, B2). All the changes made, indicate that during the last two years a lot of work has been done to improve the study structure and supplement the syllabus with new subjects thus enhancing the quality of training to a higher level. The programme goals and envisaged results were renewed in accordance with the newest trends in the ceramics sphere, needs of students and employers.

### ***2.3 Teaching Staff***

The review team note that the MA Applied Ceramics study programme is taught by the following staff: 5 professors, 10 associate professors (among them, 3 PhDs), 7 lecturers (5 PhDs among them). 36.4% of teachers have a doctoral degree, 22.7% of teachers have the academic title of professor, 45.5% have the academic title of associate professor and 31.8% are lecturers. 100 % of MA teachers giving lectures of compulsory study field subjects are scientists and/or established artists (clarified in an email 23.3.17). When the review team consider these statistics in relation to the study programme delivery and subjects the review team can see that the staff profiles meet the legal requirements.

The qualifications of the teaching staff (Annex no. 4) are adequate to ensure learning outcomes, and the quality of student work and its presentation evidences the high standards of teaching and assures the review team that the learning outcomes are achievable by the students. The students and alumni were able to give a very clear and positive assessment of the support received from staff throughout their Masters in developing as independent practitioners (SER p13), (LOs C4, E1, E2) and it is clear that alumni who did not do their BA at Kaunas had benefited from dedicated teaching in technical

processes (LOs A2, C1) as well as in developing artistic/conceptual and design principals (LOs B3 and C3).

Given the small cohort sizes the number of staff (SER p17 and Annex no.3) is certainly adequate to deliver the learning outcomes in the review team's opinion. The review team note that the open competition method used to hire academic staff members for a period of 5 years along with the hiring of individual lecturers on fixed-term employment contracts for a period of one year (with a possibility to extend the contract) ensures potential for turnover of staff. The review team welcome the Faculty strategy to have a constant group of experienced staff complimented by new a generation of younger staff in order to make the subjects and programme more innovative (SER p14). This ensures an adequate provision of the programme, and the review team encourages that this strategy is maintained.

The review team commend all the Department staff for the strength of their interactions and professional activities in the city and beyond, such as the porcelain and ceramic symposia (SER p16), which contributes to the dynamic cultural and arts sector that the postgraduates will enter as professionals themselves (LO C5). The review team also note that staff's international activities provide valuable insights into the global context for students in the department and involvement with international networks such as KUNO and ELIA (SER p17) facilitates participation by Masters students in international exhibitions (LO C3). The additional opportunities provided by the invited international artist (USA) is welcomed and the review team recommend that this is extended further into an annual workshop event or series.

The review team congratulate VAA and the Faculty on the implementation of the Systematic Professional Development of staff (SER p17), which is evidence that VAA KF ensures conditions for professional upgrading of staff necessary to implement the programme. In particular the review team were impressed by the support for staff to make both internal and external funding bids that extends the scope of research beyond the Faculty and into other institutional contexts such as giving papers at conferences, organising symposia and curating or exhibiting nationally and internationally (SER p18 and Annex no.4), enhancing the content of the Artistic Research workshops 1-4 (Annex no.2). This provides the challenging context for students' engagement with artistic research (SER p13) through deep enquiry, analysis and critical thinking, all integrated as part of their practice methods (LO E2) and written papers. As recommended above (2.1 and 2.2), the review team would like to see artistic research as a totally integrated approach of *thinking through making* and encourage further investigation of this approach by the teaching staff through the plethora of published writing on the topic. The review team envisage a burgeoning culture of PhD artistic

research in ceramics might emerge over the next few years. Additionally 6 staff from the Department of ceramics were able to participate in exchange opportunities between 2014-2017, while 16 staff from the Department of Humanities undertook visits to other institutions as varied from China to Iceland during the same period (SER p19).

#### ***2.4. Facilities and learning resources***

Following the recommendations of the previous external evaluation (2013) the review team are pleased to see the improvements in the department facilities and to hear about the future plans regarding the renovation of the former hospital and commend the Faculty administration for the ambition of the project. As mentioned in the meeting with the VAA KF administrative staff, the Ceramics programme is regarded as quite unique and intend to invest not only Faculty funds but also to attract external funding. The renovation project will in time relocate the department, but some parts have already been taken into use, which were presented during the visit; the library and guest dormitories. The current premises for studies are now adequate both in size and quality, with separate rooms for technical functions (SER p23) and improved health and safety installations. The review team was told about a confirmed plan to check health and safety responsibilities at the administrative staff meeting.

The teaching and learning equipment are adequate both in size and quality for the students to acquire knowledge of the ceramic processes (SER p 24). There is a focus on electric kilns, but for students wishing to learn about wood firing there is an arrangement with VAA Vilnius Department of Ceramics. On the topic of health and safety students and staff are given instructions at the start of each year and certification for use of laboratories and machinery during the year. Hazardous materials are now clearly labelled and there are information tables displayed on the walls where appropriate. In the student meeting it was mentioned that the improvements have helped them in the context of making creative work. Students are supplied with all ceramic materials for free by the programme, provided by the social partners. The programme has purchased a ceramic 3D printer (arriving June 2017) and in preparation for this offered 3D modelling courses. The Faculty have a computer classroom in with 14 computers and relevant upgraded software. Other facilities are accessible for students - printing labs, wood, metal (SER p24).

The review team applauds the symbiotic relationships with a variety of social partners and of their “sponsorship in kind” with regards to tools, materials and equipment. However, the team would recommend that, as and when finances are available, the Faculty can invest further in equipment and updating appropriate technical training for the programme (see 2.1 above). The review team

recommends that the Faculty should establish a protocol for addressing copyright or IPR in case a situation might arise through an optional placement/internship when student work might go into production with the social partners.

Teachers and students have access to VAA library in Vilnius and its divisions and to its several subscribed international and national databases (SER p 25). The local library at VAA KF has been moved and refurbished with 32 working spaces and wireless internet and provides course books and specialised literature and publications. The review team were impressed by the new location for the library but viewing the selection during the visit, recommend that the Faculty remain vigilant regarding relevant library stock for the MA Applied Ceramics programmes to ensure the literature remains current, and improves as budget become available (the review team note that this is an action for improvement in the SER p25). The library in the methodical room is well stocked and popular amongst student and staff, however quite a few are gifts from staff and others rather than purchased by the faculty. Methodical papers and previous students MA theoretical papers and information of foreign study programs are likewise kept here.

### ***2.5. Study process and students' performance assessment***

Entrance requirements of VAA are well set, consistent and transparent, for the second-cycle that is described in SER (p25). A Master's degree programme is based on the knowledge acquired during the first-cycle studies as well as academic, social and personal abilities. Therefore, only students with a Bachelor's degree in art and those who have submitted their creative works to the admission commission can study in this programme. *The Rules for Admission of Students to VAA* govern the procedure of admission to a Master' degree studies at VAA approved by VAA Senate (23-03-2011, No. S-2) Since 2011 the second-cycle studies functions on *Description of the Procedure at the Faculty of Higher Studies of Vilnius Academy of Arts*, approved at VAA Senate meeting on 02-11-2011 No. S-7. From 2012 to 2016, 9 students were admitted to the Applied Ceramics Master's programme of VAA KF (SER, p26), one of them having done bridging studies, and 8 students graduated between 2013-2016 from VAA KF. During that time there is no evidence in the SER that any students dropped out of their studies. Mostly they are Bachelor's degree students of VAA VF or VAA KF thus, with four years experience in ceramics. Three applicants were from other Art Departments. Students with a different BA base demonstrate a different vision, emphasise other priorities and take an advantage of the other experience. The ceramic artworks shown to us testify to a good sound experience in this sphere.

Organisation of the study process (existing regulations and procedures) ensures proper implementation of the programme and achievement of the intended learning outcomes of the Master

of Applied Ceramics. The admitted students are introduced to the study process and the principles of evaluation. The methodology of the entire curriculum is problem-based (LOs A1, B1): starting from the all-round analysis of the chosen topic in the first study year to the artistic generalisations in the second year, through conceiving of new ideas and seeing wider context in the conceptual problems and their application in specific projects (SER p27).

Students of Applied Ceramics are encouraged to take part in artistic activities; they can attend various exhibitions and get involved in various creative and educational projects. Students also take an active part in the exhibitions organised by VAA's divisions and in the Lithuanian Artists' Union's projects as well as international ones. By summing up the information of the previous three years shown in SER (pp29-30), it can be stated that students participate in 2-3 international symposiums and 5-6 exhibitions every year, which has a favourable impact on their professional development (LOs C3, C4). During the conversations with students and professors the review team were convinced of the active creative life in the Ceramics Department. The review team were also given evidence of students' participation in symposia, exhibitions and competitions, projects and creative workshops (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Turkey, Poland).

Students are informed about the possibilities of mobility within Erasmus+, Kuno un Cirrus programme. VAA has signed the ERASMUS+ student and graduate internship contracts - 162 contracts in Europe, and in 2016 mobility was extended to other continents as well (SER p31). It should be mentioned that in the MA programme in the last few years not a single student made use of the long-term mobility. It can be explained by social factors: senior students may have families and may explain why short-term mobility is preferred, like international symposia and workshops (SER p30). A positive and praiseworthy initiative is the International Kaunas Porcelain Symposium organised twice by the Department of Ceramics and Porcelain. Thus, the Department facilitates international cooperation with other Art Universities by inviting them to participate and share their professional and creative know-how. That helps to advance international contacts, students' and professors' mobility (SER Appendix no.6, p3). The review team noted that Kaunas Ceramics Department has good relations with the neighbouring countries – Latvia and Estonia. Several international projects are implemented without any official support through private contacts, for instance, every year 3-4 Department students take part in the Latvian Art Academy's International Baltic states wood-firing symposium.

VAA KF ensures proper academic and social support for students, as it is described in the SER (pp30-31). Students can make use of many possibilities provided by the KF in various spheres. The review team noted that peer-to-peer learning across the BA and MA is productive. Staff usually use

email (inc group emails) to communicate with students and the Applied Ceramics Department has its own Facebook page, where all topical events of the Department and other important information for students are displayed. The review team understand that there is a virtual learning environment in Vilnius but it is not up and running in Kaunas yet. Awarding of scholarships and benefits is regulated by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, according to *The Regulations on the Granting of Scholarships of Vilnius Academy of Arts*. Approved at VAA Senate meeting on 18-01-2012, No. S-1; Approved at the Rector's Office meeting on 03-02-2015, No. R-4. However, the SER states that at present the scholarships cannot be awarded to all students with a good academic performance due to the lack of funds (SER p32). Students are motivated to do better through the personalised counselling with teachers, equal study opportunities, friendly atmosphere in the Department focused on understanding and encouraging them.

The system of assessing student achievements is clear, public and appropriate to assess the learning outcomes and relies on the principles of impartiality, objectivity, validity, constructiveness and clarity. The study programme of Applied Ceramics is implemented in accordance with the description of Art studies. Order No. V-927 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania of 27 August 2015 "Regarding approval of the description of art study field" (SER p32). At the outset of a semester the teaching staff inform the students about the criteria of assessment of their learning outcomes providing information about the syllabus, goals of the subject, anticipated learning outcomes, assessment system, impact of mid-term assessments on the final grade, requirements and assessment criteria. All issues are discussed with the students and also individually if it is necessary. According to the Order No. ISAK-2194 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania on 24 July 2008, regarding the approval of the system of study results evaluation a 10-point criterion grading scale is used (SER Table 12, p32).

Professional activities of the majority of programme graduates meet the expectations of programme operators and employers; and feedback from the MA graduates is very essential to the Department. Therefore, the Department stays in touch with its graduates, by inviting them to their events, assessment exhibitions or asking to review the works of the students as well as by following their professional careers. According to the graduate survey distributed on 14-11-2016, 100 % of all graduates either have art-related jobs mostly in ceramics, or are involved in artistic activities or teaching (SER p30). In a conversation with the alumni (BA and MA) the review team learned that some of those present are teachers of ceramics, a few of them are engaged in restoration or production (porcelain factory Jiesia), others work in museums with ceramic collections, some are freelancers or have started their own business. During the conversation with the experts the employers highly evaluate professionalism of the graduates. In the conversations with alumni and

social partners the review team discovered that all graduates are in demand and are working in the ceramic-related careers, which proves that the programme Applied Ceramic MA corresponds to the state economic, social and cultural and future development needs and meets all the needs.

Feedback is provided throughout the study time, during the classes or individually, and a fair learning environment is ensured. In the course of the semester, during the mid-term and final assessment shows open discussions are held, students present their work and express their opinion, professors and invited experts have their say. The feedback is an integral part of studies, as it is based on the *Description of the Academic Feedback System of VAA* (approved by the Senate of VAA in 2015). Each semester anonymous questionnaires have questions about students' needs, content of the study programme, quality of subjects, social and academic support. In the conversation with students the review team found out that students do not like this official way of communication. They prefer friendly discussions and meetings in the Department with the participation of all students and professors. The review team had a chance to feel that friendly open-hearted atmosphere in the Applied Ceramics Department, highly valued by the students. The review team recommend that, whilst using anonymous questionnaires, VAA should maintain more effective ways of official feedback.

Students are provided with opportunities to make complaints and lodge appeals in accordance with clear, public and transparent procedures. VAA is an independent institution that carries out 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 (SER p4). There is an Ethics Committee in VAA, which ensures fair learning environment and the implementation of the regulations of the Code of Ethics. It also considers the ethics-related reports it receives, imposes sanctions, etc. (SER, p.28-29). Honest attitude to studies is ensured in accordance with the regulations of the *VAA Code of Academic Ethics of Vilnius Academy of Arts. Approved by the Resolution No. S-2015-4/13 in VAA Senate meeting on 11-11-2015 No. S-2015-4*. Throughout the analysed period, the Department of Ceramics and Porcelain has not received any complaints from the students.

## **2.6. Programme management**

The review team sees that the new QA processes are effective and efficient and are well embedded in the Department and valued by staff and students. With regard to the Quality Assessment Assurance Policy, the review team notes that a new position – Senior Specialist of Study Quality Department - has been created to focus on quality matters, and liaises with VAA. Descriptors are provided in every faculty, via the Study Programme Committees (meeting twice per year). As this is



a very new system, there has been a considerable change, which takes into account the various voices: students, staff, stakeholders, etc so helping to improve the programme. Previous recommendations of the evaluation 2013 have been taken into account and re-thought in regard to quality and contexts; an alternative to the numerical system is now in place: there is an academic survey for the students which is more individualised - each professor does a questionnaire at the end of each course resulting from face-to-face discussion. There is also a meeting to review the previous semester (SER p39). The review team approves of these changes and confirms that responsibilities for decisions and monitoring of the implementation of the programme are clearly allocated.

The review team heard that there may be plans to increase BA student numbers to approx. 20 students in total, and in relation to this, recommend that the Faculty remain attentive to maintain the quality of delivery of both BA and MA programmes in terms of resourcing - in line with this potential increase, and that resources do not become over stretched. With regards to Health & Safety the review team note that a plan is confirmed to check different responsibility levels: staff who use equipment being initially responsible - then responsibility passes up through a faculty structure to a new post hired to organise health and safety, and sign-off.

In consideration of professional development and the Institutional support available for this raised in the previous evaluation 2013, the review team were informed that via the Systematic Professional Development (see 2.3 above), each individual finds their own route – professors present their motivation and Institutional support is available via application; this is similar in relation to Erasmus Staff Exchange Funding and Public Support Funding. The review team is very positive that the Faculty are actively involved in these various routes of research strategy: staff research-led field work/field trips, and attendance at seminars/conferences have become a route for greater contemporary relevance and competence of staff. This is reflected in the educational experience that the students receive. It is also noted that these activities greatly enhance and nurture staff development and upskilling in terms of leadership, increased responsibility and teaching zones. The data analysis of staff professional activities in the spreadsheet is very apposite to the higher education institution context, and along with data about staffing profiles (SER pp15-16) and student feedback it is confirmed that data and other information regarding programme implementation are collected and analysed frequently.

The review team applauds the formal relationships with Social Stakeholders (many of whom are Alumni) and encourages more partnerships, both formal and informal, which may be an enhanced possibility if Kaunas becomes a future City of Culture 2022. It is noted that Kaunas City Council is increasing investment, with many more creative projects due. The Social Partners found it very

beneficial that more business skills have been introduced (see 2.2 above), together with other examples of collaboration (see 2.5 above) such as an international touring exhibition (Italy, etc.) in which an area was dedicated to young ceramic artists (many from Kaunas), the Artists Union who guide the students to learn to self promotion as well as the National Scholarship application procedures. The review team also noted the supportive role which the Kaunas Ceramic Museum has played: curating and exhibiting staff and student works, affording access to the Porcelain Archive, etc. and given that Kaunas has a reputation as the ceramic city of Lithuania the review team were perplexed that this museum has been closed – and encourage the Institution to do what it can to have it re-opened. From the meetings it was clear that the social partners contribute to evaluation of the programme and are proactive towards its improvement.

In the department, it is noted that there is naturally a new wave of a younger generation who are now getting involved in teaching (see 2.3 above). It is noted that the department has a PhD candidate, which it views as an extremely positive factor, both as an indicator of quality, attractiveness of the MA and as a further expansion of expertise, attitude and as an example available to the MA student body. It is also of critical importance to create more opportunities for the students and staff to have greater contact with more visiting artists (see 2.3 above). It was noted that a Start-up Art Incubator will be available in future, to encourage and enable the students upon graduation with their transition into the professional sphere – this is an ambitious initiative, which the review team fully supports.

Information about the study programme is public, relevant and easily accessible on the website which the review team referred to during and before the visit (SER p7) and in admissions publications that are shared in schools visits and are publicly available.

## *2.7. Examples of excellence*

1. The staff are to be highly commended that individual development and independent learning are supported to a high level and clearly supports students to deepen their artistic or design direction during their MA, enabling them to establish their own personal language of artistic expression.
2. Having viewed the completed MA graduation works the review team commends that the programme operates at a conceptual and philosophical level - with visualisation going beyond traditional applied art –emphatically it is a contemporary ceramics art .
3. The review team commend all the Department staff for the strength of their interactions and professional activities in the city and beyond, which contributes to the dynamic cultural and arts sector that the graduates will enter as professionals themselves.
4. The review team commends the KF Administration for the ambitions of the future plans regarding the renovation of the former hospital and in particular the new residence centre at the Kaunas Faculty which can encourage visiting international artists and students.
5. A positive and praiseworthy initiative is the International Kaunas Porcelain Symposium organised by the Department of Ceramics and Porcelain thus the Department facilitates international cooperation and advances international contacts, students' and professors' mobility, which supports students to understand their place in a global context of art.

### **III. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The review team recommends a further expansion of the written thesis, to be more broadly inclusive of embedded artistic research: enabling the ‘making is thinking’ haptic – the doing aspect to be focused upon in equal measure to the academic study to give a distinctiveness to the MA study programme learning outcomes.
2. The review team recommends that the success of the workshop by an international artist is extended into a similar type of annual event or workshop series, subject to opportunities for funding being sought.
3. The review team recommends that the Faculty should establish a protocol for addressing copyright or IPR for instances when student work goes into production with the social partners.
4. The review team recommends a regular up-dating/extension of new technology equipment, and support for Professional Development to learn about these and the subsequent insertion of this knowledge into the teaching programme.
5. The review team recommend that the Faculty remain vigilant regarding relevant library stock for the MA Applied Ceramic study programme to ensure the literature remains current, and improves as budgets become available.
6. The review team recommends that the administration of VAA, whilst using anonymous questionnaires, should maintain more effective ways of official feedback.
7. The review team recommend that the Faculty remain attentive to maintain the quality of delivery of the MA study programme in terms of resourcing - in line with a potential increase in BA student numbers to approximately 20 students in total, and that resources do not become over stretched.

#### **IV. SUMMARY**

The review team are confirmed in the view that the MA programme aims and learning outcomes meet the needs of the students, graduates and social partners to a high level of satisfaction and are reviewed and updated regularly to ensure their responsive to the changing cultural and creative sector, and market opportunities in Lithuania and beyond. The positive evidence of career paths of graduates reflects the close alignment of the students' education to the sector needs. The Programme objectives and learning outcomes are well defined, clear and are publicly available on the website, in publications/leaflets and at events and exhibitions. The review team note the particular opportunity which the programme creates for a contemporary hybrid practice, which was clearly in evidence in the ceramic works and theses which were presented. While the review team was very impressed by the quality and standard of the final MA thesis texts, the review team wish to recommend a further expansion of these, to be more broadly inclusive of embedded artistic research to give a further distinctiveness to the MA study. The programme objectives correspond to the mission of KF to develop ceramic works that align with trends across the European Union and are linked to professional requirements for ceramic artists and designers. The review team witnessed, through the excellent artworks and hearing from the students and alumni, that the learning outcomes support the development of agile, quick thinking and responsive practitioners who can research independently and apply their knowledge in a breadth of cultural contexts.

The second-cycle (Master's) Applied Ceramics study programme complies with the legislation of Lithuanian Republic. The programme is arranged according to the study goals, with a possibility of adjusting it to each student's individual requirements. The theoretical and practical subjects supplement each other. The choice of optional subjects has widened and are integrated into the individual curriculum, supporting the variety of approaches and topics in the final project. The goals of the Master's study programme have been slightly altered in the field of theoretical contemporary art criticism. The programme has been upgraded in the sphere of application of research methodologies in art and now the Research work is given three semesters instead of one, thus allowing students to have a deeper insight and make a more detailed research. Having viewed the completed MA graduation works the review team commends that the programme operates at a conceptual and philosophical level - with visualisation going beyond traditional applied art – emphatically it is a contemporary ceramics art. All the changes made, indicate that during the last two years a lot of work has been done to improve the study structure and supplement the syllabus with new subjects thus enhancing the quality of training to a higher level.

The review team confirm that the number of staff and their professional standing meet the legal requirements for the study programme. The qualifications of the staff and the quality of student work evidence the high standards of teaching and ensures that the learning outcomes are achievable. The students and alumni gave a very positive assessment of the support received in developing independent artistic research, and throughout their studies. The review team welcome the KF's strategy to maintain a constant group of experienced staff complimented by new, younger staff to make the MA more innovative and ensure an adequate provision of the programme through staff turnover. The review team commend the staff for the strength of their international and professional activities, which contribute to the dynamic cultural and arts sector and provides valuable insights into the global context for students, and involvement with networks such as KUNO and ELIA and international exhibitions. It is recommended to extend the opportunities provided by the invited international artist workshop. The review team congratulate VAA and KF on the Systematic Professional Development of staff, which ensures upgrading of staff necessary to implement the programme. The review team were impressed by the support for funding bid applications that extend the scope of research into other institutional and international contexts, so enhancing the content of the Artistic Research workshops and providing a challenging context for students through deep enquiry, analysis and critical thinking.

The review team were pleased to see the improvements in the department facilities and to hear about the future plans regarding the renovation of the former hospital and commend the KF Administration for the ambition of the project. The premises for studies are now adequate both in size and quality with improved health/safety installations. The review team support a confirmed plan to check health and safety responsibilities. The review team welcome the purchase of a ceramic 3D printer and related 3D modelling courses. The extent of students possibilities for practice is adequate and the review team applaud the close collaborations with a variety of social partners and sees the value of their "sponsorship in kind" with regards to tools, materials and equipment. However, the reviewers would hope that, as when finances are available, the Faculty can invest further in equipment. The review team recommends the Faculty establish a protocol for copyright or IPR issues, when students' work goes into commercial production. The review team was impressed by the new location for the library but viewing the selection during the visit, it is recommended that the Faculty remain vigilant regarding relevant library stock for the MA Applied Ceramics programmes to ensure the literature remains current, and improves as budget become available.

Entrance requirements of VAA are well set, consistent and transparent. Recent years saw a positive experience of students being admitted with a different BA base. Overall, the study process is organised well. Existing regulations ensure proper implementation of the programme. Assessment system is clear and students are able to get appropriate feedback. The Ethics Committee in VAA ensures a fair learning environment. The statistical data of students' achievements in artistic activities are well documented and provide convincing and transparent overview in this study programme. Short-term mobility is preferred by MA students, like international symposiums and workshops, due to work and family issues. The review team welcome the residence centre at the KF as it could help to attract more guest international artists and students, thus integrating the global context at VAA VF. Awarding of scholarships and benefits is regulated, however, in the Self Evaluation Report it states that financing is not adequate to satisfy students' needs, thus it remains an aspect to be addressed. A praiseworthy initiative is the International Porcelain Symposium that advances international cooperation and contacts, plus students' and professors' mobility, thereby supporting students' understanding of their place in a global art context. The review team were reassured that graduates are in demand in ceramic-related careers, proving that the programme corresponds to the state economic, social and cultural and future development needs.

The review team confirms that the new QA processes are effective and efficient and are well embedded in the Department and valued by staff and students. With regard to the Quality Assessment Assurance Policy, the review team notes that a new position – Senior Specialist of Study Quality Department - has been created to focus on quality assurance, and liaises with VAA. As this is a very new system, there has been a considerable change, which takes into account the various voices: students, staff, stakeholders, etc so helping to improve the programme. The Study Programme Committee meet twice per year. Previous recommendations of the evaluation have been addressed in regard to quality and contexts. It is confirmed that data and other information regarding programme implementation are collected and analysed frequently. The review team recommends that the administration of VAA, whilst using anonymous questionnaires, should maintain more effective ways of official feedback to students. The review team recommend that the Faculty remain attentive to maintain the quality of delivery of both MA and BA programmes in terms of resourcing - in line with a potential increase in BA student numbers. The Faculty are actively seeking to support staff through the Systematic Professional Development. The review team commends the formal relationships and collaboration with Social Stakeholders and encourages more partnerships, both formal and informal. It is confirmed that data and other information regarding programme implementation are collected and analysed frequently.

## V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Applied Ceramics* (state code – 621W10008) at Vilnius Art Academy is given a **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	4
2.	Curriculum design	3
3.	Teaching staff	3
4.	Facilities and learning resources	3
5.	Study process and students' performance assessment	4
6.	Programme management	4
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>21</b>

\*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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Grupės nariai: Team members:	Eugenia Loginova
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	Richard Launder
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