

VILNIUS ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS

DESIGN PROGRAMMES

FINAL REPORT

KAUNAS ART FACULTY

61202M108 BACHELOR OF GRAPHIC DESIGN
62102M104 MASTER OF GRAPHIC DESIGN

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I. INTRODUCTION

Title of Programme: Bachelor of Graphic Design Master of Graphic Design

1. The panel of experts visited the Kaunas Faculty of Arts on Tuesday December 2nd accompanied by Daiva Buivydiene from the Lithuanian Centre of Quality Assurance in Higher Education .
2. The timetable for the visit is set out below and panel met with the Administrative staff of the Faculty, the SER group and the lecturing staff on both programmes , present students and former graduates and employers .
3. Timetable of Visit :
 - 9.00-9.30 Introductory Meeting with administrative staff of the faculty
 - 9.30-10.15 Meeting with staff responsible for preparation of self evaluation report .
 - 10.15-11.00 Meeting with teaching staff
 - 11.15-12.15 Meeting with students
 - 12.15-13.45 Observation of various support services (studios, teaching spaces, workshops ,library ,computer services)and familiarisation with students final works, examination material.
 - 15.00-16.00 Meeting with graduates and employers
 - 16.00-16.30 Discussions, observation of the visit (peer team only)
 - 16.30-17.00 Introduction of general remarks of the visit.
4. While a detailed SER was provided for both courses as currently delivered it was quite clear that both courses were going to be restructured by 2010. The panel supported the proposed restructuring as it would lead to much greater clarity in the overall direction of both courses However, this meant that the panel would not be able to offer full accreditation to either course as the new programme documentation was not made available to the panel. It was not possible for the panel to offer accreditation without the proper official documentation regardless of the quality of the existing courses.
5. It was quite clear that the preparation of the SER and the organisation of the visit involved all key constituents– management ,lecturing staff, students, graduates and employers . Staff and students were clearly aware of the nature and purpose of the visit by the panel and understood that it was part of a Quality Assurance / Enhancement process. This was demonstrated in the very smooth and efficient progress of the panel visit throughout the day.
6. The programmes in the Kaunas Art Faculty are based on 3 sets or blocks of studies
 - 1 Block A Professional Specialised subjects
 - 2 Block B General Arts subjects
 - 3 Block C Humanities/ General /UniversityThis model of programme design may create conflict between Humanities and Specialist subjects and create problems about ownership of the programme and who can determine change or development of the programme as a whole. This will become evident when the panel's recommendations about the introduction of new subjects such as Professional Practice, Business Studies and the expansion of provision on an existing subject like software applications for design are implemented.

2.1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMMES BACHELOR OF GRAPHIC DESIGN (61202M108)

The programme has 3 main areas and students study

1. Graphic Design
2. Product or 3 D Design
3. Design for Public spaces

with no early choice of specialisation.

The present course is aimed at producing graduates who have been educated in all three areas and specialisation only really takes place in the final year. The intended graduate profile is a multiskilled one so, for example, a graduate might be primarily interested in furniture or product design but would also be able to use their knowledge of graphic design to design and produce promotional literature and a website for their products or furniture range.

However, the panel was informed that the programme is being restructured so as to allow much earlier specialisation in either Graphic Design, Product Design or Furniture Design. The existing programme is focused on producing a graduate who is competent in all 3 areas which the panel felt was not a realistic option except for the most able and gifted of students. This would only be successful with the best students and would not work as a general approach. The panel did understand that the multiskilled approach had quite a few advantages for graduates working in the particular conditions of the contemporary Lithuanian economy. However, the lecturing staff agreed that this approach did lead to a certain lack of depth of knowledge in all 3 areas which could create problems for graduates as the Lithuanian design industry developed over the next number of years. The panel agreed with the proposed restructuring of the course so as to allow greater specialisation and focus at a much earlier time.

3.1. ANALYSIS OF PROGRAMMES BACHELOR OF GRAPHIC DESIGN

3.1. 1. Structure, Content and Study Methods

The SER describes how the programme of studies is divided into 3 blocks. Block A deals with Core specialist subjects, Block B deals with general art subjects while Block C focuses on the Humanities. A special feature of this programme is its wideranging nature with students studying Graphic Design, Furniture Design and Product Design with the ambitious target of producing a graduate who is proficient in all 3 specialisations. The first year provides a thorough grounding in the basics of art and design while Graphics and Product design are studied in Year 2. with a greater emphasis on Furniture Design in Year 3. In year 4 students undertake a major design project within a public context. While the emphasis is on producing a multiskilled graduate equally proficient across a number of areas, in reality, students did opt to specialise in one area in their final year. The aim of producing a graduate equally proficient in all 3 areas while laudable was only really going to succeed with the best of the student cohort and the student experience in year 4 confirmed this as true. The proposal for the restructured course acknowledges this reality and proposes a discrete specialisation in one of 3 areas:

1. Furniture and Product Design
2. Design for Print (Advertising and Graphic Design)
3. Design in a Public Arena

after the completion of the first year. The panel strongly recommended that Design for Screen (Design made on screen for viewing /using on screen) be incorporated into the Advertising / Graphic Design specialisation. For the purposes of the international credibility of the programme this change in the curriculum =must be given the highest priority. The early and discrete specialisation in one of the 3 areas from year 2 onwards means that the title

of the course should be changed from BA Graphic Design to BA Design. This will also bring the course into line with standard international practice and nomenclature.

3.1.2 Execution of studies and support for students

Assessment takes place in 2 stages, once in midsemester and at the end of the semester. There are 5 assessment criteria: 1. Expediency of decisions; 2. Originality of presented works; 3. Aesthetic and Technical merit; 4. Working Method and Organisation; 5. Independent work.

The panel felt that a much clearer explanation of the relationship of the midsemester assessment to the final assessment needed to be supplied. Such questions, for example, as what happens if a student does very badly in the midsemester assessment, what effect has this on the final assessment, are the provisions in place for the resubmission of midsemester work etc. The choice of final specialisation takes place very late in the course of studies which works against the student acquiring a sufficiently advanced level of knowledge in the area to function at a professional level.

The SER outlines a wide range of informal supports offered to students including information about new developments internationally, internships and important conferences and exhibitions. Students have been helped to participate in important Furniture Design exhibitions at LITEXPO exhibition centre and Salon Satellite in Milan and Moscow. In 2006, a bursary of 30,000 litas was made available as a prize fund for the very best students.

3.1.3. Variation in number of students

Demand for the programme is improving over 2002-2006 and the SER claims that the retention rate is quite good. The SER describes how the demand for individual places has improved in the period 2002 -2006 from 1.6 to 2.8 applicants per available place. The selection procedures for entry are quite rigorous and exhaustive and combine a range of measures – academic achievement, portfolio submission and practical examination which results in a student cohort with a high level of basic art and design skills.

3.1.4. Teaching Staff

Staff is highly committed to the development of their programme and have achieved excellent results in Furniture Design despite the lack of a Furniture Design workshop. The SER explains that new staff are recruited on the basis of their creative and professional practice and all staff have active practices in the design industry and are encouraged to participate in exhibitions and conferences both in Lithuania and internationally. Staff arrange workshop facilities for their students in commercial enterprises or in one case let students use their own private workshop facilities. Many of the lecturers on the course are past graduates of the Kaunas faculty who have developed considerable experience in the area of practical production. Their input is very positive as it strengthens the practical direction of the course. The number of staff teaching on Block B does not completely fulfil the requirement for of “Regulations for undergraduate, specialised, professional and integrated study programmes which states that no less than half of the volume in every study programme should be taught by regular lecturers with an appropriate qualification, degree or experience as a professional artist for teaching art subjects. Overall, the SER identifies 1 professor, 3 docents and 3 lecturers who may need to be supplemented by another specialist in Furniture and Product Design. The Graphic Design / Design for Print specialisation has a sufficient number of qualified specialists.

3.1. 5 Advantages and Disadvantages of Programme

Advantages

1. The programme has a very strong foundation in traditional art and design skills. The exercises in 2d and 3d composition from 1st and 2nd year were very impressive.

2. Staff have a very strong commitment to the programme and are trying to develop the programme in a strategic manner going forward.
3. Students are very articulate and have a critical understanding of the underlying philosophy and direction of the course especially its multidisciplinary focus.
4. Some very strong work in the area of Furniture Design which had been acknowledged internationally.

Disadvantages

1. There is no provision for Design for Screen i.e. design made on screen for use on screen. This knowledge is now a basic requirement of any Graphic Design course internationally.
2. There is a risk that graduates will not have a sufficient depth of knowledge due to the wide range of design areas covered in the programme .This is important given the rapidly changing industry environment and the fact that many of the graduates will expect to be employable outside of Lithuania
3. There are no provision for lectures on Professional Practice and business studies despite a clear demand from students, graduates and employers. This will require reorganisation of the syllabus and a renegotiation of the relation between the three main study blocks.
4. There is not enough provision of education in digital technology.In fact students seem to teaching themselves the relevant software applications which is not the best practice.
5. The title of the programme is incompatible with international practiceand nomenclature. The title BA Graphic Design usually means a programme that specialises in Design for Print and would never cover such areas as Product or Furniture Design.
6. The programme does not devote enough time to forming skills related to the basics of entrepreneurship which will make graduates more adaptable to changing market conditions.
7. A programme at this level should have a formal mechanism for developing links with industry either through a Industry Advisory panel or an extensive series of lectures/workshops by established industry professionals. This series of visiting lectures could begin by inviting past successful graduates of the programme in to talk to students about their work and careers.

4.1. MATERIAL CONDITIONS

The SER clearly identifies the main problems with facilities. These include the following:

1. There are no workshop facilities for furniture or product design. Lecturers allow students access to their own workshop facilities or help arrange placements with local industry.
2. There are very poor IT facilities. The panel recommend that the Faculty develop an IT /Software instruction policy for all courses.
3. There is insufficient funding for the actual execution of graduates final projects.

5.1. EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Participation in major Italian furniture exhibitions and competitions should continue. Students identified the Erasmus programme as being very important and they would like to see this programme expanded. Contacts are maintained with past graduates and the national design professional representative body.

6. 1. FEEDBACK

There is clear evidence of timely feedback to students from lecturing staff. identified in the SER .It is essential that there is a formal mechanism for collecting feedback from employers , graduates and other industry representative organisations about the programme and use their suggestions to ensure that the programme continues to be relevant is very rapidly changing industry and society.

7.1. INTERNAL ASSURANCE OF STUDY QUALITY

There is an awareness among staff of the importance of Quality Assurance. .In order to develop staff awareness of QA it is necessary to arrange formal information sessions which

will help familiarise staff with current developments in Quality Assurance / Enhancement. The mechanisms available for student feedback have to be re-examined and a more formalised approach to this important aspect of Quality Assurance / Enhancement should be developed.

8.1. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Compulsory Recommendations

1. Rewrite the programme document to reflect the new structure in relation to specialisation in the early years of the course.
2. Clearly identify specialisations and method of choosing a specialisation.
3. Introduce Design for Screen as an element of the Graphic Design specialisation.
4. Introduce modules on Professional Practice and Business studies
5. Create a formal structure for greater links with the design industry through an external advisory industry board and a series of lectures by visiting industry professionals.
6. Review the regulation about the tripartite block system of subjects so as to allow greater flexibility with regard to the introduction of new modules in response to rapid technological and societal change .

2. 2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME MASTER OF GRAPHIC DESIGN

The programme aims to create design specialists in a number of areas: graphic design, furniture design , product design and design for public spaces (environmental design). As with the BA Graphic Design there is a multiskilled approach embedded in this programme with students working across all 3 areas before choosing to specialise in their final year. .The panel did understand that the multiskilled approach had quite a few advantages for graduates working in the particular conditions of the contemporary Lithuanian economy .However , the lecturing staff agreed that this approach did lead to a certain lack of depth of knowledge in all 3 areas which could create problems for graduates as the Lithuanian design industry developed over the next number of years .

However, like the BA Graphic Design there is a plan to restructure the MA so that it has a much clearer focus .The restructured MA will offer a very clear choice of specialisation in one of 3 areas .The present structure does raise questions about the depth of the MA and the panel felt that the restructuring into clear specialisations was more relevant to market conditions and would produce a more employable graduate

3.2. ANALYSIS OF THE PROGRAMME MASTER OF GRAPHIC DESIGN

3.2.1. Structure , Content and Study Methods

The SER describes how the programme covers the relevant subjects in the choice of design specialisation which is supplemented by a selection of interdisciplinary art subjects and a Research Methods module. There are a number elective subjects in which students choose from according to their chosen specialisation .Students also have the opportunity to choose from a range of subjects from the general area of Critical Theory .The title of the programme MA in Graphic Design is quite misleading as it is clear from the SER that students select a specialisation in either Graphic Design, Furniture Design or Product Design . The programme should be described as a MA in Design allowing students to specialise in one of 3 distinct areas .The SER team acknowledge this possible confusion with the title of the programme are planning to restructure the programme to reflect the level of specialisation .It will then

become clear that the purpose of the MA is to facilitate a deepening of the students knowledge of Design.

3.2.2. Execution of studies and support for students

Assessment takes place in 2 stages, once in midsemester and at the end of the semester. There are 5 assessment criteria 1) Expediency of decisions 2) Originality of presented works 3) Aesthetic and Technical merit 4) Working Method and Organisation 5) Independent work.

The information provided for students about employment possibilities in the market place needs to be much more detailed and relevant. The SER outlines a wide range of informal supports offered to students including information about new developments internationally, internships and important conferences and exhibitions .Students have been helped to participate in important Furniture Design exhibitions at LITEXPO exhibition centre and Salon Satellite in Milan and Moscow . In 2006, a bursary of 30,000 litas was made available as a prize fund for the very best students

3.2. 3 Variation in number of students

The SER indicates that there is very high level of demand for this programme among graduates who demonstrate a very high level of both creative ability and an excellent understanding of the theoretical and scientific research process. The figures presented in the SER seem to indicate an initial high demand for the programme but the total presenting for the final examination are relatively small. In 2006 this amounted to 3 students . The SER gives no explanation for this decrease which may be caused by students opting to take up work before completing their studies.

3.2. 4. Teaching Staff

Staff is highly committed to the development of their programme and have achieved excellent results in Furniture Design despite the lack of a Furniture Design workshop. Staff arranges workshop facilities for their students in commercial enterprises or in one case let students use their own private workshop facilities. Many of the lecturers on the course are past graduates of the Kaunas faculty who have developed considerable experience in the area of practical production . Their input is very positive as it strengthens the practical direction of the course. Overall, the SER identifies 1 professor, 3 docents and 3 lecturers who may need to be supplemented by a another specialist in Furniture and Product Design. The Graphic Design / Design for Print specialisation has a sufficient number of qualified specialists.

3.2. 5 Advantages and Disadvantages of Programme

Advantages :

1. Final projects reflected a level of depth and sophistication appropriate to an MA programme.
2. Excellent presentation of final projects.
3. Final projects include a written report /dissertation which contextualises the final project and identifies the contribution made by the project to the current state of knowledge in the field .

Disadvantages :

1. There is not enough clarity in relation choice of specialisation.
2. There are insufficient links with industry. A programme at this level should have a formal mechanism for developing links with industry either through a Industry Advisory panel or an extensive series of lectures/workshops by established industry professionals. This series of visiting lectures could begin by inviting past successful graduates of the programme in to talk to students.

3. The structure and purpose of the final dissertation/ report needs to be reviewed. The research question needs to be clearly identified, a literature review has to be included and all reports should have an extensive bibliography.
4. A decision has to be made about whether the aim of the programme is to enable greater creative self development for the student or to produce a more professional and employable designer capable of entering the design industry at a relatively senior level.
5. The programme does not devote enough time to forming skills related to the basics of entrepreneurship which will make graduates more adaptable to changing market conditions.

4.2. MATERIAL CONDITIONS

The SER clearly identifies the main problems with facilities. These include:

1. No workshop facilities for furniture or product design. Lecturers allow students access to their own workshop facilities or help arrange placements with local industry.
2. Very poor IT facilities. The panel recommend that the Faculty Develop an IT /Software instruction policy for all courses.
3. There is insufficient funding for the actual execution of graduates final projects.

5.2. EXTERNAL RELATIONS

The SER provides a very detailed list of exhibitions, competitions and conferences in which students have participated . This level of participation in major Italian furniture exhibitions and competition should continue. Students identified the Erasmus programme as being very important and they would like to see this programme expanded.

Contacts are maintained with past graduates and the national design professional representative body .

6. 2. FEEDBACK

There is clear evidence of timely feedback to students from lecturing staff. It is essential that there is a formal mechanism for collecting feedback from employers , graduates and other industry representative organisations about the programme and use their suggestions to ensure that the programme continues to be relevant in a very rapidly changing industry and society.

7. 2. INTERNAL ASSURANCE OF STUDY QUALITY

The SER clearly identifies that there is an awareness among staff of the importance of Quality Assurance. In order to develop staff awareness of QA it is to arrange formal information sessions which will help familiarise staff with current developments in Quality Assurance / Enhancement. The mechanisms available for student feedback have to be re-examined and a more formalised approach to the important aspect of Quality Assurance / Enhancement should be developed.

8.2 GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Compulsory Recommendations

1. Rewrite course documents for the restructured MA.
2. Clearly identify specialisations and structure of the programme.
3. Restructure Research Methods module with more formal lectures on research methodology.

4. Final dissertation / report must have a much more scholarly format with an extensive literature review and supporting bibliography.
5. Introduce modules on Professional Practice and Business studies
6. Create a formal structure for greater links with the design industry through an external advisory industry board and a series of lectures by visiting industry professionals.

General Recommendations

1. Develop modules in Business, Management Studies, Professional Practice and Entrepreneurship.
2. Develop a Software Instruction Policy for the Academy.
3. Conduct a review of assessment practices and procedures as part of Staff Development.
4. Develop formal procedures for involving the Lithuanian Design Industry in course development – formation of External Advisory board for each programme.
5. Professional Development courses in learning and teaching and new developments in technology should be provided for all staff.
6. Develop a Quality Assurance system for the Academy.
7. The Academy should develop a common framework for distinguishing BA from MA. The Academy should consult the CUMULUS Tuning Report for Design.
8. All final assessment panels must include at least one senior external representative from the relevant section of the Design industry.