STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

VILNIAUS DAILĖS AKADEMIJOS
STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS
FOTOGRAFIJA IR MEDIJOS MENAS
(valstybinis kodas - 621W60001)
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

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EVALUATION REPORT
OF PHOTOGRAPHY AND MEDIA ART
(state code - 621W60001)
STUDY PROGRAMME
at VILNIUS ACADEMY OF ARTS

Grupės vadovas: Team leader:	Klaus Jung
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Išvados parengtos anglų kalba
Report language - English

Vilnius
2014

DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	Fotografija ir medijos menas
Valstybinis kodas	621W60001
Studijų sritis	Menai
Studijų kryptis	Fotografija ir medijos
Studijų programos rūšis	Universitetinės
Studijų pakopa	Antroji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinės studijos (4)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	120
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Fotografijos ir medijos meno magistras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	**1997-05-19**

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INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	***Photography and Media Art***
State code	621W60001
Study area	Creative Arts and Design
Study field	Photography and Media Studies
Kind of the study programme	Postgraduate University Studies
Study cycle	Second
Study mode (length in years)	Full time (2 years)
Volume of the study programme in credits	120
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master of Photography and Media Art
Date of registration of the study programme	**19-05-1997**

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The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education

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I. INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

The Master's programme aims and learning outcomes are, in general, well defined and clear. There are also clear relationships between the programme aims and learning outcomes and those of study modules. Students confirmed that the programme aims and learning outcomes are made clear to them, they are briefed at the start of each study module when staff explain what is expected and required, and that the information is also made available on-line.

The programme aims and learning outcomes are made publicly available, in Lithuanian, via the Academy's website and intranet, and includes admissions requirements, the programme aims and

learning outcomes, and programme structure with links to module outlines. Information is also available in English and, while it is lacking in detail, this is an area on which the Department is working.

The English section of the Academy's website makes clear that the Master's curriculum provides students with the opportunity to negotiate and develop individually-tailored programmes of study. Students are supported by regular consultations with academic staff and "artistic advisors" and, in order to graduate, they must submit, and successfully defend in public, a final thesis and artwork. The website also summarises the main subjects studied.

The main aim of the Master's programme is clearly stated in paragraph 1.1 of the SER as being to produce independent artist–researchers who are able to realise creative projects using advanced media. The SER also makes clear the commitment of the programme and the Academy overall to expanding the range of artistic and technological experimentation, creating new opportunities for studies in media art, and influencing cultural development within Lithuania and internationally. In the view of the team, these features give the programme a strong and distinctive purpose, especially considering that it is the only Master's programme in Photography and Media Art in Lithuania.

The SER articulates the validity of the aims of the Master's programme, referring to the shortage of artists in Lithuania who are capable of reflecting on and developing conceptual approaches to media. This is seen as the key reason for Master's-level training in artistic and contextual research. The SER also asserts that, along with developing Master's students' research capabilities, the programme has a social or civic mission to generally raise the level of understanding and appreciation of media in society. In reflecting on the documentation and the evidence provided by staff, students and social partners, the expert team reached the conclusion that the programme is meeting current academic requirements and also the need for Master's-level graduates who are able to promote the development of contemporary art and media within and outside Lithuania.

The authors of the SER confirmed to the expert team that demand for the programmes was created by contemporary cultural and artistic developments and that they are helping to fulfil the mission of the Academy in respect of issues in contemporary art and life.

The expert team considered information on the careers pursued by Master's graduates since 2009 and found that they are finding career paths in a range of artistic and commercial arenas, encompassing employment and self-employment in independent artistic practice, the creative industries and education. The expert team also explored this with BA and MA alumni who confirmed that they saw themselves as artists and that the programmes had prepared them for a range of fields including professional photography, advertising, teaching and technical roles. Since the last evaluation of the BA and MA programmes, the Academy has introduced an Advisory Board with membership from the cultural and creative sectors, to advise on curriculum currency and students' preparation for employment and self-employment, and the expert team endorses this development.

As with the BA programme, the expert team found that the language used in the Master's SER and the programme documentation is weighted towards independent artistic practice rather than the creative industries. This is an appropriate reflection of the mission of the Academy and aims

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

It has become common for artists to work independently and in applied fields at the same time. The expert team suggests that the department should develop this consciousness further, among students as well as staff, and strengthen discussions about the role of artists as part of the open debate in the programme.

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

Knowledge and its application
Ability to conduct research
Special abilities
Social abilities
Personal abilities

The Master's learning outcomes build effectively on those of the BA programme, emphasising, for example, the Master's graduate's critical judgement and creative agency (outcome A1), ability to apply theoretical knowledge in new unknown environments (A4), and the ability to identify research problems and apply the results of research in practice (B1-B2). The distinctions between the BA and Master's-level learning outcomes could perhaps be more sharply defined, and the expert team draws the Academy's attention to this.

Learning outcomes in Group 4 ("Social abilities") are concerned with the generic or "transferable" skills (for example communication) which would be expected of Master's graduates in all disciplines. The distinctions between the learning outcomes in Group 4 and those in Group 5 ("Personal abilities") could perhaps be made more clear and the expert team suggests that the Academy considers this. Learning outcome E2 in group 5 ("Personal abilities") concerns the student's experience in research and, while entirely valid in itself, it is not clear why it appears in this group and not in group 2 ("Ability to conduct research") and the expert team suggests that the Academy also considers this.

Outcome A2 concerns *"the ability to underpin one's artistic position with most recent knowledge in visual art and culture in general, to apply it in research and in creative projects"*. In the view of the expert team, this is an entirely valid Master's-level learning outcome. However, the expert team reached a similar conclusion to its view about the BA programme, that

there might be scope for more work and input around transmedia, narrative and interactivity, both in practice and in theoretical underpinning.

The name of the programme (Master's in Photography and Media Art) is appropriate. The SER notes that the Academy is reconsidering the name, with the possibility of changing it to Master's in Media Art. The expert team explored this with teaching staff who responded that the proposed change of name was intended to reflect the wider artistic possibilities which are evolving for contemporary media practices.

The Master's programme learning outcomes and content are compatible with each other. The module learning outcomes reflect and contribute to those at programme level. The programme content offers Master's students the opportunity to develop as individual creative practitioners and researchers and to progress to careers as artists and in the creative industries.

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

Summary

- The Master's programme aims and learning outcomes are, in general, well defined and clear and are published via the Academy's website.

- The Master's learning outcomes build effectively on those of the BA programme.

- Students confirmed that learning outcomes are made clear to them.

- Students are supported by regular consultations with academic staff and "artistic advisors" and, in order to graduate, they must submit, and successfully defend in public, a final thesis and artwork.

- The programme is meeting current academic requirements and also the need for Master's-level graduates who are able to promote the development of contemporary art and media within and outside Lithuania.

- The programme content offers Master's students the opportunity to develop as individual creative practitioners and researchers and to progress to careers as artists and in the creative industries.

- MA alumni confirmed that they saw themselves as artists and that the programmes had prepared them for a range of fields. The Academy has introduced an Advisory Board with relevant membership and the expert team endorses this development.

- In order to review the programme the staff team has developed a number of mechanisms through which they gather feedback from students and social partners.

- The staff team also draw on their own experience in professional practice in the cultural and creative sectors.

o The distinctions between the BA and Master's-level learning outcomes could be more sharply defined, and the expert team draws the Academy's attention to this.

o The expert team suggests that alongside the aim of developing independent artists, the application of skills in commercial and industrial fields is also reflected in all programme documentation in order to ensure that this reflects the full range of artistic and commercial opportunities which are developing in contemporary art, design and media.

2. Curriculum design

The SER provides a clear description of the overall volume of study on the programme, and the volume and proportions of individual modules. In terms of the components of the curriculum and the balance of credits across the programme, the Master's in Photography and Media Art complies with the relevant Lithuanian legal requirements regulating scholarly and study processes, including the aim of second cycle study programmes to train students for independent research. It also complies with the internal requirements of the Academy.

The Study Plan comprises compulsory subject modules in the field of study; optional theoretical modules; the development and production of a final body of work; and the defence of the Final Work. Classroom-contact accounts for 40-70% of students' time while independent learning accounts for 30-60%.

Compulsory modules account for 60 credits; optional modules account for 30 credits; and the Final Work accounts for 30 credits. The number of credits earned from each module depends on its content and the nature of the knowledge and skills which it enables; theoretical modules linked to the student's specialism are worth at least 6 credits, while practical modules in the specialism are worth at least 9 credits and the Final Work amounts to 30 credits. Optional modules are selected according to students' individual needs and the number of credits required for the achievement of the learning outcomes of the programme. The combination of compulsory and optional modules forms each student's individual study plan.

The compulsory modules (Research Methods; Project Development 1, 2 and 3; and Research for MA Final Project), together with the modules MA Dissertation or Practice-Led Research 1, 2 and 3, the Final Work and MA Thesis and Artistic Research, are spread evenly throughout the two years of the programme. Optional modules are taken in each semester.

In examining the curriculum, the expert team found that information was incomplete in three study modules. However, this did not prevent the expert team from reaching conclusions in its evaluation. A list of information will be provided to the Academy, which should review study module outlines to ensure that all sections are complete and consistent.

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

- Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods
- Main Module Aim
- Annotation (summary of module content)
- Syllabus

- Assessment Criteria
- Reference Material
- Teaching and Study Hours

In the view of the expert team, the curriculum structure and design is clear and well-organised, enabling students to develop their creative projects under the expert guidance of staff while also benefitting from the deepening of their wider knowledge and skills through the selection of optional modules which support their main studies. The SER provides a detailed outline of how the curriculum programme enables the development of students' individual study plans, from the start of the Master's programme and through to the conclusion of the four terms of study.

The vehicle for delivery of the curriculum, and students' achievement of the Master's learning outcomes, is the sequence of compulsory and optional modules. The module outlines, in particular those for *Project Development 1, 2* and *3*, and *MA Dissertation or Practice-Led Research 1, 2* and *3*, make clear the student's progression through different stages or levels of artistic and academic development. These enable students to develop the depth and complexity of their practical and theoretical work, culminating in the *Final Work* (the graduation project), which comprises a practical art project (60%) and a theoretical paper (40%). Together, these two components encapsulate the results of the student's artistic research.

The content of the overall programme, and the modules which contribute to it, are generally consistent with the expectations of Master's-level study in art, design and media in other parts of Europe. It is arguable that the volume of self-study (30-60%) is potentially lower than might be found on equivalent programmes elsewhere. However, it is also noted that this is an indicative figure and also that the programme is required to conform to Lithuanian national requirements.

The content of the modules, and the approaches to teaching, learning and assessment, are appropriate for the achievement of the programme learning outcomes and they meet the expectations of Master's-level study.

The SER identifies artistic research as the core feature of the Master's programme. The Academy's position on the nature of artistic research, and the role of the artist in society, is seen as evolutionary and the SER provides examples of contributions to this debate, including a post-doctoral fellowship at the Academy between March 2013 and February 2015 which is being funded by the national research council. The SER also describes how the academic staff of the Master's programme, who are practising artists and theorists in photography, video art and interdisciplinary art, help to create the conditions for students' practical and theoretical research, and enable students to create comprehensive and rational study plans.

The key method of the Master's programme is individual support and guidance for each student in the development and implementation of their individual study plan. This is augmented by other teaching and learning methods, including lectures, overviews, consulting and seminars, creative workshops, case studies, visits, and project reviews. In the view of the expert team, this range of methods is entirely appropriate for the achievement of the learning outcomes.

The SER outlines the requirements for the Final Work together with the process of assessment by a panel of professionals. The panel takes account of the artwork's artistic and social-cultural context together with the student's knowledge of theory and philosophy and the extent to which

the work reflects the student's original intentions. The SER also refers to the Academy's development of MA final assessment regulations. The expert team explored this with staff and was informed that the Photography and Media department is actively contributing to this institutional development by the Faculty of Graduate and Postgraduate Studies.

The expert team asked students for their views about the major strength of the programme and students responded that this was the opportunity for deep investigation of their selected fields for a 2-year study period. When asked by the expert team about aspects of the programme which could potentially be improved, students referred to the availability of individual workspaces, their wish for 24-hour opening of certain facilities, and the timing of choices about theory tutors.

In the view of the expert team, the scope of the programme is broadly sufficient to ensure the achievement of learning outcomes. The Academy's attention is drawn below to two areas for further consideration.

Firstly, the SER notes that there is an insufficient range of optional theoretical study modules concerned with contemporary media art and theory, and that this is a weakness in the Master's programme curriculum design. This was considered by the expert team, which found that it reflected views which it had formed about Master's learning outcome A2 (see p7 above) and also the BA programme. In the view of the expert team, it might be beneficial for the Academy to consider whether there is scope for extending the content around the areas of transmedia, narrative and interactivity, in both practical and theoretical studies.

Secondly, a weakness identified by the SER concerns the number of external visits made by the programme to contemporary art events and venues. The expert team suggests that visits are not limited to contemporary art events but that they should also be made to significant contemporary *media* venues and events, in order to reflect the academic and creative ambitions of the Master's programme and the fast-developing global media culture.

The expert team asked MA students about their experience of the programme and whether it was living up to their expectations. Students responded positively, stating that they were treated as artists and had opportunities to work across a range of practices. One student stated that he had developed freelance work in photography, film and theatre.

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

The expert team also asked alumni about the effectiveness with which the programmes prepare students for employment and self-employment. Alumni were generally positive. The view reached by the expert team was that this is an area of curriculum development and design where the programme is making progress and that the Academy should continue with this work.

The expert team also found that, throughout the documentation, there are many references to "artists" and "artist-researchers" but few if any references to media designers, producers, or creatives. As noted above (p6), the expert team suggests that the Academy reflects on the language used in programme documentation in order to ensure that it is more inclusive of the full range of artistic and commercial opportunities which are developing in contemporary art, design and media. In the case of the Master's programme, this is also important in view of the Academy's consideration of a possible new name for the programme to reflect the wider artistic possibilities which are evolving for contemporary media practices.

Summary

- The components of the curriculum and the balance of credits across the programme comply with the relevant Lithuanian legal requirements.

- The module outlines are presented in a clear, standardised format.

- The curriculum structure and design is clear and well-organised.

- The SER identifies artistic research as the core feature of the Master's programme.

- The scope of the programme is broadly sufficient to ensure the achievement of learning outcomes.

- Students described the major strength of the programme as being the opportunity for deep investigation of their selected fields for a 2-year study period.

- Social partners are broadly supportive of the way that the Academy produces "new professionals", stating that the Photography and Media department was one of the most progressive and outstanding in the Academy, with some very good teachers.

- They also stated that MA students were wider in their thinking than BA students, with greater ability to work independently.

- Alumni are generally positive about the effectiveness with which the programmes prepares for employment and self-employment.

o The expert team supports the Academy in its consideration of a possible new name for the programme to reflect the wider artistic possibilities which are evolving for contemporary media practices.

o In examining the curriculum, the expert team found that information was incomplete in three study modules. This should be addressed.

o The expert team confirms the view expressed in the SER that there is an insufficient range of optional theoretical study modules concerned with contemporary media art and theory.

o In the view of the expert team, it might be beneficial for the Academy to consider whether there is scope for extending the content around the areas of transmedia, narrative and interactivity, in both practical and theoretical studies.

o The expert team suggests that study-visits are not limited to contemporary art events but that they should also be made to significant contemporary *media* venues and events.

o The view reached by the expert team was that preparation for employment and self-employment is an area of curriculum development and design where the programme is making progress and that the Academy should continue with this work.

3. Staff

The teaching staff consists of 3,75 full-time teachers, all of whom are recognized artists, with one also holding a Doctoral degree. With 18 students currently following the Master's programme, this creates a ratio of 4,8 students per teacher. This is considered to be an appropriate student-staff ratio for this level and type of programme. The expert team considers that the number of the teaching staff is sufficient to enable students to meet the intended learning outcomes.

Sixteen other teachers contribute subjects from the humanities, sociology and language, including two with Doctoral degrees, seven professors, six associate professors and three lecturers. Occasionally visiting teachers from overseas participate in the teaching. The expert team considers the teaching staff to be a committed and high quality group.

The composition of the staff team is a satisfactory combination of senior artists and younger, well-recognised artists at the beginning of their careers. The professional skills of staff range across contemporary art and media. This reflects changes in Lithuanian society and culture and is in line with the accelerating development of digital technology. The ongoing changes in the role of the artist and her/his contribution to society will continue to impact upon curriculum design and the composition of the staff team. The expert team suggests that those responsible for the programme must keep this in mind and include more staff with experience in the creative industries in the future.

The teachers are highly appreciated in their fields and can also point to long careers in higher education. The SER (page 21) gives evidence that staff participate actively in opportunities to further their professional knowledge as researchers, artists and teachers. The expert team suggests, however, that the department should consider a more strategic approach to professional updating and the enhancement of the pedagogical expertise of teachers.

Most of the teachers have worked for the department for a number of years. In the past five years two teachers have left the programme (SER p. 20) and two new teachers have been appointed. The department employs visiting teachers from overseas when funds permit (SER p. 18) and would like to increase this. The expert team welcomes the department's and the Academy's recognition of the importance of internationalisation and encourages them in their efforts to secure additional funding to support the inclusion of international staff.

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

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

The teachers in the department are active in their fields as artists and as researchers. In the last four years, seven teachers of the study programme have participated in more than ten exhibitions overseas including the Venice Biennale, the Triennial of the Baltic International Art and the Bologna Book Fair. (SER p. 21). One teacher is also active as a curator. (SER p. 21). Two teachers are active in film and performance art. In recent years they have released films which have received national and international distribution and awards. All such activities have strong relevance for the content, aims and learning outcomes of the Master's programme.

Summary

- All of the teachers are recognized artists and one of them holds a Doctoral degree.

- The teachers are highly appreciated in their field and can also point to long careers in higher education.

- The composition of the staff team is a satisfactory combination of senior artists and younger, well-recognised artists at the beginning of their careers.

- The expert team considers the teaching staff to be a committed and high quality group.

- The student-staff ratio is considered to be appropriate for this level and type of programme.

- The teachers in the department are active in their fields as artists and as researchers. All activities have strong relevance for the content, aims and learning outcomes of the Master's programme.

- The expert team welcomes the department's and the Academy's recognition of the importance of internationalisation and encourages them in their efforts to secure additional funding to support the inclusion of international staff.

4. Facilities and learning resources

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

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

Operating the Photography and Media Department requires highly specialized, expensive and constantly changing technology. Additionally, with studies ranging from black and white darkroom photography to video they must have equipment that covers the full range of technology from analogue to digital. The department is very conscious of these challenges and

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

The expert team recommends that permanent studio spaces for MA students are considered. This would provide students with more solid grounding for their projects instead of shuttling materials between Academy and home. Students would gain by having more exposure for their work through studio visits and potentially establishing stronger ties with Academy partners, employers, curators, and those that might help their future careers.

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

Summary

- Students and staff report that the new building from 2009 and new facilities continue to provide a positive environment for studies and work.

- The condition of these new facilities is monitored and they are regularly updated as needed.

- Since the last review in 2010, the workrooms, photography studio, large hallways, darkrooms, and classrooms have continued to provide comfortable, clean and professional environments, meeting the needs for practical work and theoretical studies.

- The expert team found that staff are resourceful in seeking additional funding for equipment from a variety of sources including the Academy budget, EU grants, and government grants.

- In the last two years the Academy has instituted a policy that allows students to have access to facilities in all departments. The expert team considers this to have been an important and positive decision. Students are supportive of this policy.

- The Academy's partnership in the Audio-Visual Arts Industry Incubator presents significant opportunities to students and staff of the department.
- The expert team recommends that permanent studio spaces for MA students are considered.
- Library resources remain in need of a further systematic approach to increase the diversity and number of titles.

5. Study process and student assessment

The condition for admission to the programme is the successful completion of first cycle studies at university level in Photography and Media or in neighbouring study fields (Fine Arts). Candidates apply by portfolio and with an abstract of the project they intend to carry out during their studies. The admissions process includes an interview. This process is highly appropriate for Fine Art related programmes at Master's level. The requirements are well founded and cohere with common international practice.

Students select a teacher as supervisor for their individual project and their final artistic work as well as a consultant for their research work. Equal emphasis is expected to be put on practice and theory. Learning outcomes are aligned with four stages (mapping in term 1, research in term 2, participation in term 3 and final work in term 4). A strong element of the assessment process is debate with the assessment committee, with fellow students and in public. Students and alumni explained in meetings with the expert team, that they appreciate this as a welcome opportunity to strengthen their confidence in their own artistic work. The assessment criteria are adequate and the programme is designed in a way that supports students in their learning and progression towards their final work. At the meeting with students the expert team learned that students appreciate this process.

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

Table 6 on page 31 of the SER refers to opportunities for students to participate in mobility programmes. The expert team was pleased to note that the Master's programme has been active in seeking such opportunities for international cooperation, which provide students with access to different views through international networks. These opportunities have also enabled staff to share their experiences as teachers with colleagues in other countries; for example, the seminar "On Teaching Methods" organised by KUNO, Association of Institutions of Higher Education of Nordic and Baltic States, in 2012.

Academically and socially, students of the department are sufficiently supported by the means that have been put in place by the Academy. The authors of the SER state on page 31 that the theoretical element of the final work can be a real challenge to students, who are mostly

practicing artists. International experience confirms that the practices of art and the awareness of the historical and theoretical context of artwork, are not contradictory. The programme team has strengthened this relationship through introducing opportunities in creative and academic writing on the programme. The expert team endorses this and recommends the development of further opportunities which help students to gain confidence and skills in writing.

The assessment system is designed so that students receive regular and ongoing feedback about their performance and their artistic achievements throughout their studies. Assessment criteria are adequate and are published for each course on the Academy website, in both Lithuanian and English. The expert team learned during the meetings with staff and students that group feedback sessions can be challenging but are appreciated by students, as they provide opportunities for them to strengthen confidence in their artistic work. The expert team found that the system of oral feedback is well developed. From an early stage of the programme, students and staff meet in critical debate on equal ground as artists. . This is followed up by individual feedback from staff and culminates in the public defence at the final exam, which involves social partners from the professional world. This system strongly supports the overarching aim of the Master's programme, to graduate "highly qualified independent artist –researchers capable of artistic research in the field of contemporary art and realizing a creative project using the most advanced media." (page 7 of the SER). The expert team suggests, however, that the system of oral feedback is enriched through enhanced formal recording to increase further the critical distance between staff and students at the stage of assessment.

Summary

- The admissions process, centred around a presentation of the project students wish to carry out during the 2 years of their studies, is highly appropriate for programmes of this type and level.

- The requirements are well founded and cohere with common international practice.

- The programme is designed in a way that supports students in their learning and progression towards their final work.

- The expert team commends the Master's programme for its contribution to the Academy's discussions about the nature of artistic research.

- Artistic research is a strong element of the Programme at Master's level. The capacity for artistic research in the field of contemporary art and media is one of the aims of the programme.

- The assessment system is designed so that students receive regular and ongoing feedback about their performance and their artistic achievements throughout their studies. Students and alumni appreciate the strong level of debate in the assessment process as a welcomed opportunity to strengthen confidence in their artistic work.

- The assessment criteria are adequate and are published for each course on the Academy website, in both Lithuanian and English.

o The authors of the SER state that the theoretical element of the final work can be a real challenge to students. The expert team endorses the approach to this taken by the programme

team and suggests the development of further opportunities which help students to gain confidence and skills in writing.

6. Programme management

The programme is managed by the *Study Programmes Committee*, chaired by the head of department (SER p. 40). The Committee consists of nine members; four teachers, two students, one alumni and two stakeholders. The Committee holds a meeting twice a year. The Committee's decisions and proposals are reviewed by the Faculty Council and approved by the Senate. The same Committee serves for both of the study programmes in the department.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary

- The overall management of the Master's programme is in line with the Academy's activity plans.

- The expert team formed the view that staff, students and stakeholders had a clear understanding about the department and the programme and their responsibilities within it.

- The study programme collects information regularly.

- The Master's programme was last evaluated in 2010, at which time it was accredited for three years. The programme has implemented both compulsory recommendations and most suggestions.

- The expert team considers the establishment of an Advisory Board to be a significant improvement and as clear evidence that the department is using the outcomes of external evaluation to enhance the quality of the programme.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The expert team encourages the programme team to contribute to the international discussions about the role of the artist in the 21st century, which also embraces entrepreneurial behaviour and other applications in the cultural sector and the creative industries, to inform future and ongoing curriculum design and the composition of the staff expert team.

2. Writing a theoretical paper as part of the final work has been identified as a real challenge to students, who are mostly practicing artists. International experience confirms that the practices of art and the awareness of the historical and theoretical context of artworks, are not contradictory. The programme team has strengthened this relationship through introducing opportunities in creative and academic writing on the programme. The expert team endorses this and recommends thedevelopment of further opportunities which help student to gain confidence and skills in writing.The expert team encourages the programme team and the Academy to continue on the path towards refining the quality assurance systems at institutional and at programme level.

3. The expert team encourages the department and the Academy to continue on the path towards refining the quality assurance systems at institutional and at programme level.

IV. SUMMARY

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

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

1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

- The Master's programme aims and learning outcomes are, in general, well defined and clear and are published via the Academy's website.

- The Master's learning outcomes build effectively on those of the BA programme.

- Students confirmed that learning outcomes are made clear to them .

- Students are supported by regular consultations with academic staff and "artistic advisors" and, in order to graduate, they must submit, and successfully defend in public, a final thesis and artwork.

- The programme is meeting current academic requirements and also the need for Master's-level graduates who are able to promote the development of contemporary art and media within and outside Lithuania.

- The programme content offers Master's students the opportunity to develop as individual creative practitioners and researchers and to progress to careers as artists and in the creative industries.

- MA alumni confirmed that they saw themselves as artists and that the programmes had prepared them for a range of fields.The Academy has introduced an Advisory Board with relevant membership and the expert team endorses this development.

- In order to review the programme the staff team has developed a number of mechanisms through which they gather feedback from students and social partners.

- The staff team also draw on their own experience in professional practice in the cultural and creative sectors.

o The distinctions between the BA and Master's-level learning outcomes could be more sharply defined, and the expert team draws the Academy's attention to this.

o The expert team suggests that the Academy reflects on the language used in programme documentation in order to ensure that it is more inclusive of the full range of artistic and commercial opportunities, which are developing in contemporary art, design and media.

2. Curriculum design

- The components of the curriculum and the balance of credits across the programme comply with the relevant Lithuanian legal requirements.

- The module outlines are presented in a clear, standardised format..

- The curriculum structure and design is clear and well-organised.

- The SER identifies artistic research as the core feature of the Master's programme.

- The scope of the programme is broadly sufficient to ensure the achievement of learning outcomes.

- Students described the major strength of the programme as being the opportunity for deep investigation of their selected fields for a 2-year study period.

- Social partners are broadly supportive of the way that the Academy produces "new professionals", stating that the Photography and Media department was one of the most progressive and outstanding in the Academy, with some very good teachers.

- They also stated that MA students were wider in their thinking than BA students, with greater ability to work independently.

- Alumni are generally positive about the effectiveness with which the programmes prepares for employment and self-employment.

o The expert team supports the Academy in its consideration of a possible new name for the programme to reflect the wider artistic possibilities which are evolving for contemporary media practices.

o In examining the curriculum, the expert team found that information was incomplete in three study modules. This should be addressed.

o The expert team confirms the view expressed in the SER that there is an insufficient range of optional theoretical study modules concerned with contemporary media art and theory.

o In the view of the expert team, it might be beneficial for the Academy to consider whether there is scope for extending the content around the areas of transmedia, narrative and interactivity, in both practical and theoretical studies.

o The expert team suggests that study-visits are not limited to contemporary art events but that they should also be made to significant contemporary *media* venues and events,.

o The view reached by the expert team was that preparation for employment and self-employment is an area of curriculum development and design where the programme is making progress and that the Academy should continue with this work.

3. Staff

- All of the teachers are recognized artists and one of them holds a Doctoral degree.

- The teachers are highly appreciated in their field and can also point to long careers in higher education.

- The composition of the staff team is a satisfactory combination of senior artists and younger, well-recognised artists at the beginning of their careers.

- The expert team considers the teaching staff to be a committed and high quality group.

- The student-staff ratio is considered to be appropriate for this level and type of programme.

- The teachers in the department are active in their fields as artists and as researchers. All activities are of strong relevance for the content, aims and learning outcomes of the Master's programme.

- The expert team welcomes the department's and the Academy's recognition of the importance of internationalisation and encourages them in their efforts to secure additional funding to support the inclusion of international staff.

4. Facilities and learning resources

- Students and staff report that the new building from 2009 and new facilities continue to provide a positive environment for studies and work.

- The condition of these new facilities is monitored and they are regularly updated as needed.

- Since the last review in 2010, the workrooms, photography studio, large hallways, darkrooms, and classrooms have continued to provide comfortable, clean and professional environments, meeting the needs for practical work and theoretical studies.

- The expert team found that staff are resourceful in seeking additional funding for equipment from a variety of sources including the Academy budget, EU grants, and government grants.

- In the last two years the Academy has instituted a policy that allows students to have access to facilities in all departments. The expert team considers this to have been an important and positive decision.

- With this initiative in place, students within the department appreciate opportunities to access equipment housed in other departments.

- The Academy's partnership in the Audio-Visual Arts Industry Incubator presents significant opportunities to students and staff of the department.

o The expert team recommends that permanent studio spaces for MA students are considered.

o Library resources remain in need of a further systematic approach to increase the diversity and number of titles.

5. Study process and student assessment

- The admissions process, centred around a presentation of the project students wish to carry out during the 2 years of their studies, is highly appropriate for programmes of this type and level.

- The requirements are well founded and cohere with common international practice.

- The programme is designed in a way that students are supported in their learning and progression towards their final work.

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- The assessment criteria are adequate and are published for each course on the Academy website, in both Lithuanian and English.

o The authors of the SER state that the theoretical element of the final work can be a real challenge to students. The expert team endorses the approach to this taken by the programme team and suggests the development of further opportunities which help students to gain confidence and skills in writing.

6. Programme management

- The overall management of the Master's programme is in line with the Academy's activity plans.

- The expert team formed the view that staff, students and stakeholders had a clear understanding about the department and the programme and their responsibilities within it.

- The study programme collects information regularly.

- The Master's programme was last evaluated in 2010, at which time it was accredited for three years. The programme has implemented both compulsory recommendations and most suggestions.

- The expert team considers the establishment of an Advisory Board to be a significant improvement and as clear evidence that the department is using the outcomes of external evaluation to enhance the quality of the programme.

V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Photography and Media Arts* (state code – 621W60001) at Vilnius Academy of Arts is given **positive** evaluation.

Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas.

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

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

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

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

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

Grupės vadovas:
Team leader: Klaus Jung

Grupės nariai:
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