

# Vilnius Art Academy

(Kaunas Faculty)

## Architecture Study Programs

### FINAL REPORT

61205M102 Architecture

(Bachelor of Architecture)

62405M102 Architecture of Buildings

(Masters of Architecture)

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### Profile of programmes of Architecture study field

<b>Title of study programme</b>	Architecture	Architecture of Buildings
<b>State code</b>	61201S109	62101S119
<b>Kind of study<sup>1</sup></b>	U	M
<b>Mode of study<sup>2</sup> (duration in years)</b>	F (4)	F (2)
<b>Volume of study programme in credits</b>	160	80
<b>Degree and (or) professional qualification to be awarded</b>	Bachelor of <b>Architecture</b>	Master of <b>Architecture</b>
<b>Programme registration date, order No.</b>	1997-05-19, Nr. 565	1997-05-19, Nr. 565

#### 1. Introduction.

The visiting group of experts had the opportunity to spend time with students, alumni, teaching staff and employers related to the study program mentioned above. The experts were received with warm hospitality and friendly willingness by representatives and the leadership of the Faculty. The Experts took part in discussions, conducted interviews, visited all the premises and were shown examples of current and previous work (projects) of the students.

#### 2.Aims and goals of the study programmes :

Although it is not quite clearly expressed in the self-assessment report, the experts during their meetings with the staff and the visit of studios understood that the undergraduate program aims at training architects who, beyond the necessary professional expertise and technical knowledge, develop “an artistic independence”. This seems a valid concept as long as the implementation of

<sup>1</sup> **NU** – Non-university studies; **U** – Undergraduate studies; **M** – Masters’ studies;

**SP** – Specialized Professional studies; **I** – Integrated studies;

<sup>2</sup> **F** – Full-time; **PE** – Part-time (Evening); **PX** – Part-time (Extramural).

these aims in the actual assignments of the students' is reflected in an appropriate way, which did not seem to have been manifested by the student projects. Most projects seem to have been developed by searching forms that resulted into ambitious aesthetics buildings at the cost of functional and structural requirements. The experts feel that the role of art (the artistic factor) in the education of architects within the Art Faculty must be pedagogically redefined or reconsidered. Architecture is an "accountable " art responding with imagination to human needs , environmental and cultural factors, technology and cost efficiency where as fine arts are "free" of real life ties and constraints .

The aims and objectives of the Master's Programme of "Architecture of building" are not very clear. It is neither in-depth studies, dealing with complex architectural problems and building typologies (housing, medical, educational complexes etc) nor advanced level studies in subjects as construction, lighting, energy conservation or areas of specialization in urban design, interior design, or even design of open spaces.

### **3. Analysis of the programs:**

#### **3.1. 61205M103 Architecture (Bachelor of Architecture)**

##### **3.1.1. Structure, contents and study methods**

- During the visit, in the afternoon, the experts were handed a new and revised table of courses, in the Lithuanian language only, which according one of the experts who could read it, it appears to differ in some respects from the one included in the self-assessment report. However the comments in this report refer mainly to the original version, which was with the material the experts received formally.
- The curriculum does not seem to respond fully to the Law of Higher Education (Appendix 6) and to the requirements for choices of electives, (Please see Appendix 1 and 2)
- The visiting group of experts felt that the objective or aim of the structure of the courses in the curriculum and the breakdown of the courses into separate groups (compulsory subjects of special syllabus – general compulsory and optional art subjects – compulsory, optional and voluntary subjects of general syllabus) is not clear .For example lecture courses, design studio work and summer practices are mixed in the same section , the general art subjects section contains besides core art subjects technical lectures, and even foreign language courses.

- The table of courses has to be revised to meet the requirements of local law regarding credit points.
  - There are 11 subjects on first semestre, 13 subjects on second semestre
- Please see Appendix 1 and 2 on „Credit Breakdown“

### **3.1.2. Execution of studies and support for students:**

- The experts noted the following in the implementation of the program of studies and teaching methods: the studio teaching is done in inadequate facilities, lack of sufficient space for student places, small rooms, small and limited library resources and computer workstations. Regarding study methods, see comments on the curriculum in 3.1.1.
- According to students' interviews, there is a lack of space, working equipment and library facilities. The experts have also observed the same during their visit and think that these conditions do not promote the learning process.
- According to the students' interviews, the public assessment or presentations of the results of students' works start only in the 6<sup>th</sup> semester, and public or transparent feedback is missing for the benefit of the students. The experts think that this measure does not help the learning process and deprives the students from horizontal learning, which should be a continuous condition during the whole time of their education.
- The experts were shown students' work and building projects of good or better grades but not the work of average or lesser standards, as it was requested beforehand. This prevented a more realistic view and evaluation of the general quality of the learning results by the visiting experts.

### **3.1.3. Variation in the number of students**

The number of admitted students over the monitored period, according to the self-assessment report, showed a slight increase. To select the most prepared and motivated applicants, whose number exceeds three times those of the admitted students, the school implemented a two-phase admission procedure. The number of graduates in the previous five years follows the increase in the number of admitted students, except for the last year or two when a drastic decrease has been detected. The report considers this as an exceptional condition, and it explains that the reduction occurs because of the removal of students who were not able "to meet the high requirements". If

this is a fact, then it seems that it is necessary to re-examine the level of the entrance qualifications of in-coming students so that there will be minimal attrition later.

The general tendency of the number of students is of small increase (from 56 in 2002 to 66 in 2006). There is a total of 66 students in all years (full time students ). In the final year there are only 9 students. On one hand a small number of students offers better opportunities to monitor the students progress ,on the other hand such small numbers do not have a critical mass of students for intellectual interactions and horizontal learning, and of course the running cost of the Faculty is higher, to mention some handicaps..

#### **3.1.4. Teaching staff**

As the self assessment report emphasizes it, the main teaching load is distributed to the middle-career generation, the members of which are responsible for a great number of different courses. The average teaching load varies from 4-7 courses per person, but there are some teachers who are responsible for 11-19 courses each. The experts regard this shortage in faculty as a very serious problem. Furthermore, the qualifications of the teaching staff, even on the undergraduate level, is problematic. Most teachers coordinating the design courses are Lecturers, and only some of them Associate Professors. It seems that the teaching faculty are not sufficiently active in research areas , while there is a substantial number of them who are active in current professional practice. The self assessment report does not propose any measures to be taken. The experts believe that the above situation needs to be improved urgently. Teachers who teach 8 special areas courses are not at the rank of Professor or Assoc. Professor (Building design, Architectural colour,...etc).

#### **3.1.5. Advantages and disadvantages of the program:**

The visiting group of experts appreciated the possibilities of educating architects in the environment of a school of fine arts. The character of the curriculum is indicating the presence of various fields of Art which is expressed by the strong emphasis given to “composition” exercises within the curriculum. The visiting experts consider that it would be sufficient to maintain this up to 3 semesters in the curriculum. For the second half of the program, the emphasis would be more useful to be shifted to building design and that the liberated time and workload of the students

should be allotted to issues of design of building of various scale, complexity and types. Though most of the design assignments try to deal with real situations, many projects are too hypothetical or “artistic” at the detriment of functional and structural criteria. The experts believe that creativity should not be exercised in this sense, but in addressing realities.

The financing of the program is inadequate and the salaries of teachers are unjustifiably low. In spite of being overloaded, teachers work with great devotion and at the expense of higher personal well-being. As the students also emphasized, the greatest asset of the program is the warm and supportive atmosphere of the teaching staff.

### **3.2. Program 62405M106 Architecture of Buildings (Master of Arts in Architecture)**

#### **3.2.1. Structure, contents and study method**

The structure and contents of the curriculum reflect the lack of clarity of the aims and objectives of the Masters programme.

- The curriculum is not adjusted according to the law of higher education (Appendix 6) and does not seem to follow the requirements for choices and electives.
- Regarding the modules of study (H000M029-35), it is necessary to clarify the aim of the “research” modules and the “project(ing)” modules. The last are usually used in the first year to further develop the design abilities of the students with design projects before they begin work on their final “thesis” project during the second year. The “research” modules should be used to progressively complete the study and research of the area of “deepening” of the student, then formulating the thesis project design programme and finally start with the design of the “thesis” project.
- The options of choice for the students among the elective subjects are rather limited (6 proposed electives ► 12 credits out of 80).

#### **3.2. 2.Execution of studies and support for students:**

- The experts noted the following in the implementation of the program of studies and study methods: the studio teaching is done in inadequate facilities, lack of workplaces, small rooms, small and limited library resources and computer workstations. Regarding study methods, see comments on the curriculum in 3.1.1.

- The visiting group of experts finds the support for students regarding literature very poor. There was no further specific information provided.
- The exhibited thesis projects did not manifest the depth of learning acquired in the master program, and did not reflect the in- depth study or research of the subject .

### **3.2. 3.Variation in the number of students**

The general trend of the number of students very small increase (from 13 in 2002 to 15 in 2006). There are overall 15 students in total. In the final year there are 2 only students.

### **3.2. 4.Teaching staff**

The basic problem of the Master's program is the lack of qualified faculty. The responsibility of every project and research courses (plus four other courses) is assigned to one Lecturer without the necessary academic qualifications, this is in no way a judgment of the professional abilities of the teacher , who seems a respected professional, it is a comment with regard to the Law of higher education and normal academic practices for post graduate studies. Among the professional courses, also lecturers predominate. The situation is better in the case of the general university courses where mostly Associate Professors are teaching. The teachers of professional subjects are not sufficiently active in the research area, though there is a substantial number of them who are active in current professional practice. The self assessment report does not propose any measure to be taken, yet the group of experts believes that the above situation needs to be improved urgently. Teachers of 15 courses are not of the rank of Professors or Associate Professors (Research work, Projecting, Graduation work,...etc).

### **3.2.5. Advantages and disadvantages of the program:**

Neither the report nor the site visit made it clear to the group of experts in what way the Masters Programme deepens the knowledge of students. The general quality level of masters projects and theses does not exceed considerably that of the undergraduate ones. It did not become evident in what way the program and by what means advances the knowledge of graduate students in some special direction in "Architecture of Building".

The financing of the program is inadequate and the salaries of teachers are unjustifiably low. The experts were told that the teachers work with great devotion and at the expense of higher personal well-being.

#### **4. Material conditions**

- During the site visit, the group of experts observed that comments about material conditions expressed in the self-assessment report are justified. The physical conditions of the premises are extremely poor, the present building has been allowed to deteriorate to such an extent that it is inappropriate for an educational facility.
- The library of the Faculty is small and has very few architectural books and periodicals, and the methodological literature backing students is completely missing. The students reported, during the meeting, they have access to current magazines and books only by the generosity of their tutors who allow them to use their private office periodicals. The experts felt obliged to make special mention of the library conditions, since the lack of relevant professional information seriously deprives the education of the students and most definitely students of eth Masters level..
- The lack of lecture halls, modeling workshops and faculty offices, mentioned in the report, was verified by the experts during their visit.
- The scarcity of PC stations and current software was reported by students as well as by teachers.

#### **5. External relations**

While the self-assessment report gives account of many national and international exchanges, students during the interview expressed their wish to make the school more open by further reinforcing foreign relations, inviting more guest lecturers or taking educational tours/trips elsewhere.

#### **6. Feedback**

The visiting group of experts had the opportunity to converse with institutional and private sector employers. The experts were told that the graduates are in demand and find employment. The only critical comment was that the graduates find difficult for them to reconcile their creative ambitions with the constraints of the real world.

#### **7. Internal assurance of study quality**

The self-assessment report does not give enough information about internal methods or feed-back on quality assurance of the programmes. It reports instead of methods of evaluating course papers



and projects, tells about “collegiality principle”. The experts were not shown of any questionnaires by students and about results of the pedagogical qualifications of the staff.

During the interviews the students expressed some criticism. The most important comment was the lack of clear feedback on behalf of the staff during the review of course projects.

## **8. General assessment of the programs within the study field**

### **8.1. Recommendations to the higher education institution.**

**A .**The experts sympathize with the efforts of the faculty and did not doubt their good intentions, however as external observers it is their duty to address the problems they observed during their visit on the basis of which they are offering the following recommendations.

It is important to concentrate efforts and resources to build and strengthen the Bachelors Programme instead of trying to divert resources by maintaining a problematic and costly for so few students Masters Programme.

This recommendation is based on the following conditions observed during their visit:

*the run-down facilities , the shortage of appropriate spaces and funds , the lack of equipment and special facilities ( computer, photography and testing materials labs, model workshop, etc) ,the very limited library and the lack of teaching faculty of senior academic ranks are serious deficiencies in running Higher Education professional programmes ( undergraduate and graduate levels). Additionally the small number of students make it even more inefficient and costly to run two programmes, not to mention the necessary additional funds that must be raised to improve the present conditions.*

**B. Regarding the Bachelors Programme .** The curriculum must be revised and there must be a clear progression of the key architectural courses as well as a clear articulation and interaction between them and the optional and elective courses from the first year to the fourth.

For example parallel with first year conceptual exercises ,to run courses on history of art , and history of architecture, introduction to materials, physics ( moments of inertia, diagrams of forces and mechanics) ,etc at the second year with building design , continue teaching history of architecture , construction methods and structural systems of buildings etc and in the same way plan the progression through the third year up to the 4<sup>th</sup> year while in parallel run the elective courses of the other categories. As the degree is in Architecture the core courses ought to provide knowledge to the students in a rational sequence, as steps leading from the introductory level to

more advanced levels in the following years. The planning of the courses must also take into consideration how they integrate with each other, for example when the students take a more advanced course in structures they are given also building design exercises that demand more complex structural systems. To make more explicit the above comments particularly with regard to the very basic contents of the core of architectural education are briefly listed below the main subjects that normally are offered, each one as a progression from year one to the year four, as follows:

- From visual analysis (sketching) and composition exercises to building design and urban design scale projects. Three (3) semesters appear to be sufficient for the “composition” exercises, in the place of the remaining semesters additional building design courses must be introduced.
- Learning about historic precedents in architecture history and appreciating inventions in art
- Learning about building materials
- Learning about construction methods and details
- Learning the building physics and structural systems
- Learning about mechanical systems of buildings
- And parallel to the core are run the electives and optional choices that expand the education of the future architects.

In fact the basics or the core of the architectural curriculum is not a subject to invent, as it is widely known and accepted internationally what it should contain. Methods of teaching may vary from school to school and generally differences between them have to do with the faculty that teach, the information they expose their students, and the resources they offer them.

An other area that must be improved has to do with the method of reviewing student projects. The design and studio reviews must be public and open to all the students, as this is a very important learning process for the students seeing each others projects and hearing the comments of the faculty or guests at the design reviews or juries. Horizontal learning is a very important element of the architectural learning process.

Finally the teaching faculty must have less of a teaching load each, also the number of appointments must be according to the Law ( professor, associate professor etc ) and academic

qualifications ( that is ,not only professional achievements but some faculty must also be active in research and publishing ) . Improved facilities must be found, sufficient computer workstations and supportive laboratories must be provided , and the library must be expanded with architectural books and professional magazines

### **C. Regarding the Masters Programme.**

For the reasons mentioned previously it is not recommended to continue this programme in order to place all efforts and resources to save the Bachelors Programme. In the mean time until the present students finish their studies the following recommendations are made:

- To focus the “research” courses in the study and research through bibliographies and of good practices and examples of building typologies , that the student has chosen as a direction i.e. housing, or educational facilities, or medical facilities etc . In other words guiding the student to deepen their knowledge through these courses that will lead to the selection of the specific subject of the thesis , and the formation of the building programme for their thesis. The result of these studies will be included in the final report. For the support of the students some arrangement must be made between the Library of the AFA at Vilnius and the Library at Kaunas to lend books and architectural magazines of the first to the Kaunas students , and also computer access ought to be made available for the Masters students internet search .
- The “projects “course must be used for the first year to exercise further the students abilities in building design and during he second year of the Masters to work on the specific design of their thesis project.
- Finally as in the undergraduate programme the design and studio reviews must be in public as this is a very important learning process for the students seeing each others projects and hearing the comments at the design reviews or juries.

## Appendix 1

### Credits Breakdown

Extract from Ministerial Order:

University undergraduate study programme (its volume being 160 credits) **shall consist of three groups of subjects** the volume of which for every trend of studies shall be determined by the regulations of the trend of studies. Determining the volume of the groups of subjects the following requirements must be observed:

24.1. The volume of **subjects of general university education (A)**– no less than **24** credits. No less than one third of the volume of subjects of this group must consist of fundamental disciplines of philosophy and world outlook, covering philosophical basics of the field of research or arts under studies. No less than another third of this subject group must consist of subjects of other fields of studies: in the study programmes of humanities, social sciences and arts – physical, biomedical or technological sciences, in study programmes of other fields – humanities, social sciences or arts.

24.2. The volume of **subjects of the basics of the study programme (B)** (usually from the main field of studies or arts) - no less than **40** credits.

24.3. The volume of **subjects of special training of the study programme (C)** (from the main field of studies or arts) – no less than **64** credits. This group shall include final examination and final work (project).

No less than **5 per cent (9 kr.)** of the volume of the study programme must be left for a student's free-chosen subjects which may be from another field of research or arts. **(LP)**

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Credits Breakdown:

VAFA KF                      A – ? kr, B – ? kr, C – 71 kr      LP – 2 kr **(CHAOS)**

## Appendix 2

**Detailed Remarks on the Curricula**  
**of**  
**VILNIUS ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS**  
**Kaunas Art Faculty “Kaunas Art Institute” studies programs**  
**61205103 “Architecture” (undergraduate level) and**  
**62405M106 “Architecture of Buildings” (graduate level)**

### **A. Undergraduate study program 61205103 “Architecture”**

**A.1.** The group of experts examining the List of courses of undergraduate study program recognized that there are 34 subjects covering only one credit. They are: Architectural Graphics and Script 1 and 2, Architectural Color Study 1 and 2, Building Constructions 2 and 3, Specialty Composition 2, 3, 4 and 5, Building Engineering 2 and 3, Basics of Construction Technologies (Construction Mechanics) 1, Basics of Construction Technologies (Construction Mechanics) 2, Sculpture 1 and 2, Descriptive Geometry 1 and 2, Computer Basics -1 and 2, Foreign Languages (English and German; totally 6 courses<sup>3</sup>), Construction (thermal) Physics, Construction Physics (lighting technique), Basics of Furniture Design 1 and 2, Building Engineering Facilities, and Construction physics (acoustics).  
Some more subjects cover only 1.5 credit points.

**A.2.** The List of courses provided to the group of experts is arranged into 6 different sections:

1. A: Compulsory subjects of special syllabus;
2. B: General compulsory art subjects;
3. B: General optional art subjects;
4. C: Compulsory subjects of general syllabus;
5. C: Optional subjects of general syllabus;
6. C: Voluntary subjects of general syllabus.

The first section of subjects includes both subjects related to artistic training of architects (for instance, Building design, Architectural Color Study, Architectural Graphics and Script, Specialty Composition, etc), and special technical subjects (for instance, Basics of Construction Technologies, Building Engineering, etc.).

The second section of subjects also includes both subjects related to artistic training (for instance, Drawing, Painting, Sculpture, Basics of Composition, etc.), and special technical subjects (for instance, Construction Physics, Construction and Finishing

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<sup>3</sup> Both languages are compulsory, what isn't necessary.

Materials, Building Engineering Facilities, etc.), as well as humanities (Lithuanian Language Culture<sup>4</sup>, Foreign Languages, etc).

The third section of subjects includes two different fields – Photography and Ergonomics

The fourth section of subjects includes subjects related to history of architecture and art.<sup>5</sup>

The fifth section of subjects also includes subjects related to history of architecture and art.

The sixth section of subjects includes Introduction to Economics and one unnamed subject.

The group of experts indicated that such arrangement of subjects is not clear and logically structured.

Descriptions of a number of subjects included in the List of courses (for instance, Philosophy and Culture, History of European Culture, the subjects of the whole section C: Compulsory subjects of general syllabus, etc.) are not included in the descriptions of the subjects of Study Module Programme provided for the group of experts. Thus there was not possibility to evaluate the state of arts in teaching of these subjects.

Sections 3, 5 and 6 are named as optional or voluntary. Total number of credits of the subjects included in these sections doesn't exceed the total number of credits to be collected by a student. Therefore the above mentioned sections of subjects are not optional, and the whole program doesn't provide possibilities to choices.

During the visit of the Kaunas Art Institute the group of experts was provided with a new list of subjects in Lithuanian “Pagrindinių (Bakalauro) Studijų Planas 2007/2008. m. m.”. Subjects of the Study program in this document are arranged in three sections – “A. Special subjects”, “B. Other subjects” and “C. Subjects of Social and Human Sciences”. Total amount of credit points for separate subjects is sufficient. Number of subjects in this Program is reduced, but structure of arrangement of them into three sections is equally unclear and not logically structured (for instance, subjects relating to history of art and architecture are included both in sections B and C. The only elective possibility of the subjects is provided among the subjects “Ergonomics”, “Photography”, “Dendrology” and “Typology of buildings” included in the section B.

## **B. Graduate study program 62405M106 “Architecture of Buildings”**

B.1. The group of experts examining the List of courses of the study program recognized that the List of courses provided is arranged into 5 different sections:

1. A: Obligatory subjects of special education;
2. B: General obligatory (optional) art subjects;
3. B: General optional art subjects;
4. C: Obligatory subjects of general University education;
5. C: Optional subjects of general University education.

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<sup>4</sup> Content of the subject, as described in the Study Module Programme, covers only specific linguistic aspects, not directly related to the education of an artist or architect.

<sup>5</sup> Several similar subjects of this issue – “History of Architecture” and “History of Urbanism”, as well as “Cultural Heritage” – are included in the second section of the List of courses.

The first section includes courses of project work and research.

The second section includes courses related not only to art, but also related to other fields (Methodology of Scientific Research<sup>6</sup>, Ecology, Urban Projecting, Urbanism and Sociology).

The third section includes only two subjects not related directly to art (Landscaping and one undefined course).

The fourth section includes only three subjects related mainly to art or humanities and not to general university education (Topical Problems of Modern Philosophy, Trends, Theories and Esthetics of Modern Art and Interaction of Arts).

The fifth section includes four subjects also not directly relating to general university education (Traditionalism in Modern Culture, Art and Philosophy, Art Management and History of Music).

**B.2.** The group of experts indicated that the subjects offered in the list of courses does not follow a clear and rational structure.

The total number of credits of the subjects included in the section 2 is 20, whereas the total number of credits to be taken by a student is 18. Thus there is very limited possibility for the choice of courses by the students, as it is the intention of the title of this section.

Total number of credits of the subjects included in the sections 3 and 5 is equal to the total number of credits to be collected by a student, whereas these sections are supposed to offer several options for choices of courses by the students. Therefore the above mentioned sections of courses are not real optional, and don't provide possibilities to choices.

**B.3.** Descriptions of a number of subjects included in the List of courses were not included in the descriptions of the subjects of Study Module Programme provided for the benefit of the group of experts. Thus it was not possible to evaluate the teaching and the learning results of these subjects.

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<sup>6</sup> Subjects of this issue – “Research Work 1, 2 and 3” are included also in the first section.