

VILNIUS ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS

FINE ARTS Programmes

FINAL REPORT

61202M117 BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS (PAINTING)

62402M114 MASTER OF FINE ARTS (PAINTING)

61202M112 BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS (SCULPTURE)

62402M110 MASTER OF FINE ARTS (SCULPTURE)

61202M107 BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS (GRAPHICS)

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61202M111 BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS (MONUMENTAL ARTS)

62402M106 MASTER OF FINE ARTS (MONUMENTAL ARTS)

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1. Introduction

The Panel of Experts (Panel) visited Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts on Monday 21st and Tuesday 22nd April, accompanied by Daiva Buivydiene from the LCQA. The group collectively met with the Administrative Staff of the Faculty; past graduates (13) and employers (4); and divided into two teams to meet the respective Undergraduate and Master's Programme combined SER team & teaching staff for Graphics (11 staff), Monumental Arts (10 staff – including 8 who wrote the SER + 1 student); separately with the SER team and teaching staff for BA/MA Painting (5 x SER & staff), and Sculpture (SER & 9 x staff); and current students (9 x Graphics, 17 x Monumental, 32 x Painting & 14 x Sculpture respectively).

The Academy was *'given clear guidelines by the Agency in good time'* and received *'an absolutely clear message about the process'* (Administrator's meeting).

The SERs were produced in 2007 and new guidelines were introduced more recently, but reports have not been changed. Top-down process delegated to Departments by the Rectors Council The documents were checked by the Vice Rector (*'only a formal process'* – Administrator's meeting).

The best Departments *'co-operated, bad ones did not - collective teamwork exists in the best Departments- in the bad Departments it was done (SER) by one willing person'* - no training was available, only discussion at irregular meetings of authors to discuss coping with the evaluation documents and as this was the first time staff had no previous experience (Administrator's meeting).

As with other programmes under review the programme is based on three sets or blocks of studies.

- 1) Block A Professional specialised
- 2) Block B General Art subjects
- 2) Block C Humanities/general/university

There maybe an over complexity and multiplicity of classes in the Curricula for an MA programme.

This model of programme design may also create conflict between Humanities and specialisations about the 'ownership' of programmes and who can determine change or development of the programme as an integrated whole.

2. Aims and goals of study programmes

2.1 61202M111 BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS (MONUMENTAL ARTS)

- There are three streams to the programme:
 - Stained Glass
 - Fresco-Mosaic
 - ScenographyEach stream has its own discreet set of aims and objectives;
- The common aim of all three specialisms of the bachelor's study programme is to educate a professional artist.

2.2 62402M106 MASTER OF FINE ARTS (MONUMENTAL ARTS)

- there is no rationale for the existence of the MA programme that defines it as being a discreet entity, it would seem that it is a 'deepening' learning experience but does not make explicit the possible transformative outcome, from a BA graduate to an MA graduate, from which an MA graduate may benefit. In essence it appears to be an extension for a further two years of the BA programme.

2.3 61202M112 BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS (SCULPTURE)

- the Department of Sculpture at Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts is described as the foremost institution in Lithuania to acquire competency as a sculptor/artist. The Department orients the teaching programme towards sculpture/spatial arts studies in the context of contemporary art processes. The aim is to prepare contemporary artists able to participate in these processes;
- the primary aims and goals of the BA Sculpture study programme are described in the SER as "developing the student's individual artistic abilities through training critical thought and artistic expression processes";
- the main goal is expressed as education of a generation of independent artists with capabilities for adequately assessing and participating in artistic processes occurring in contemporary art worlds;
- the SER describes further how the "primary task of the Sculpture Department is to assist the individual student to find his/her own, identity and system of values to reveal their creativity. In his/her studies, a student not only learns the language of sculptural plasticity but also how to adapt it to individual needs for creativity".

2.4 62402M110 MASTER OF FINE ARTS (SCULPTURE)

- the primary aim of the master degree program in sculpture is described as being focused on "training the contemporary artist to directly participate in the evolution of art and to address urgent social problems" (SER p. 9);
- at MA level, the SER appears to suggest that there may be two programmes of study within the MA study programme. One concept based, the other more traditional upholding "traditional creeds" (ibid). The traditional "trend" is barely represented in the SER and both teachers and students were absent from meetings during the experts visits. It is regrettable for the evaluation process that a comprehensive cross section of staff from all "trends" as well as both B and C blocks were not available;
- the concept based "contemporary sculpture" "trend" clearly relates to the described aims of the programme;
- the department acknowledges traditional practices in sculpture and discusses some problems arising from traditional ways of thinking, the SER states "The decorative/formal nature of the sculptural arts and the scale of values that modernist trends formed at the start of the 20th century became the basic features of sculptures in Lithuania during the interwar period which is recognized as the foundation of the "Lithuanian school of sculpture." This understanding has disseminated with vitality at the Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts. It is believed and claimed that the main need in society is specifically for this sort of

sculpture. Nonetheless, once severed from the evolvement of European thought and artistic creativity, a void appeared that can be discerned. Unfortunately it is being filled very slowly, often empirically or even independently by the self-educated” (SER p.4);

- as the SER points out “The goals of the Sculpture Department branches differ. At the one in Telšiai, the teaching process accents traditional sculpting crafts. The Kaunas branch develops an understanding of traditional monumental sculpting to a greater extent.

2.5 61202M117 BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS (PAINTING)

- the aim of painting bachelor studies is to educate a qualified painter, who would have required practical and artistic competences of his speciality, would be able to realize the tasks of painting and composition independently, to use various expression methods and techniques of painting. The programme aims to provide graduates with high artistic and humanitarian erudition, who would be well aware of topics on contemporary art, would have practical skills to use painting, graphics, mosaic and fresco techniques, digital layout design, as well as having experience in making painting exhibitions and being able to present his own works for the audience. – the Panel is concerned that to achieve this there must be greater collaboration between the different Departments and the A/B/C blocks and a more holistic consideration of the curriculum and greater flexibility for more interdisciplinary practices. Students complained that the latter point was not supported by some sectors of the teaching staff. Students identified this as one of most serious problems in the Department.

2.6 62402M114 MASTER OF FINE ARTS (PAINTING)

- the aim of master studies in painting is to educate a creative and intellectual artistic personality, who would be able to formulate and realize creative tasks independently, create individually, claiming for originality of artistic idea and technical acquisition, be able to elaborate various ways of expression in artworks;
- the MA programme student must be able to theorize and evaluate processes of contemporary painting, have professional knowledge and tools to take part in art world;
- the student has to be prepared for self-dependent activities in art market (art advertising, public relations, art competitions) and take part willingly in creative projects (plain-air, projects, group exhibitions, etc.);
- the Panel after reading the SER and discussions with the students feel that the rigid assessment criteria and attitude of many of the staff in not assessing work other than painting is damaging to the development of contemporary artists and limits the achievement of the programme’s aims;

2.7 61202M107 BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS (GRAPHICS)

‘The ultimate aim of the study programme is to educate an intellectual personality receptive of the values of science, culture and state-of-the art technologies and capable of creation and proliferation of these values, and of contributing to the creation of art that celebrates the national identity of their culture. To train professional artists who are capable of independent creative

activity, and furnish them with knowledge and technical skill sufficient to achieve successful integration on the market of hired jobs.¹

- generally there is a lack of coherence between the stated aims and the programme provided. Better consideration could be given to how the programme aims are reflected in the course elements, learning outcomes and assignments set;
- the Panel disagrees that the Bachelor Programme is sufficient to fully achieve the stated aim, or the 'Key Parameters of Study Quality'² provided to the Panel by the Lithuanian Quality Assurance Agency;
- the Panel suggests that at present the marriage of 'applied arts' and 'fine arts' pathways in a single graphic arts programme is ill-conceived, lacks sufficient educational or professional synergy and is inhibiting the development of what they perceive as two distinct directions;
- the 'applied' option is often referred to colloquially by students, staff and in the SER as 'graphic design' this verbal and written reference seems to suggest confusions and uncertainties, not only about the name of the title of the award but of the direction, ethos, content and outcome of the programme;
- the Panel recommends that a clearer definition of the niche study specialisations within the programme or programmes is required. These are potentially and inherently available within the existing programme. These study pathways should be clearly defined and made available to students as options within the programme and purposely could link practical and theoretical competences more explicitly to defined career opportunities. The aims of the programme are not feasible in the long term and as it exists lacks sufficient integrity of purpose.

2.8 62402M103 MASTER OF FINE ARTS (GRAPHICS)

- *'The aim of the master study programme is to train a professional artist in fine or applied graphic arts with a strong command of the theoretical, scholarly knowledge in the selected field as well as adequate practical skills of the trade, fully capable of independent solution and realization of creative ideas and self-expression. The graduates from the second level (MA) study programme are prepared to embark on an artistic career and able to take leadership and teaching/training jobs';*³
- the Panel recommends that there should be clearer definition and delineation between Bachelor and Masters study - emphasising the research element at MA level and the development of the capacity for conceptual and critical thinking. Using Applied Graphics as an example, the research element should not necessarily be limited to History of Art or Artistic Theory, but should be broadened to include marketing research, design research, manufacturing and production research, materials and processes research;
- generally there is a lack of coherence within the stated aims, which need consolidating. Better consideration should be given to how the

¹ SER page 6

² Page 2 External Assessment of Study Programmes, Methodological Guidelines for Experts, Studiju Kokybes Vertinimo Centras, Vilnius

³ SER P27

expectations⁴ of students are reflected in the programme aims, learning outcomes and assignments set;

- the Panel respectfully disagree that the Masters Programme is sufficient to fully meet the 'Key Parameters of Study Quality'⁵ provided to the experts by the Lithuanian Quality Assurance Agency;
- the Panel respectfully suggest that at present the marriage of 'applied arts' and 'fine arts' pathways at Masters level particularly is inappropriate, lacks sufficient educational or professional synergy and is inhibiting the development of what they perceive as two distinct directions;
- the 'applied' option was often referred to colloquially by students during the Panel's visit, and the Staff in the SER as 'graphic design' this verbal and written reference seems to suggest confusion and uncertainties, not only about the title of the award but also the direction, ethos, content and outcomes of the programme.

3. Analysis of programmes

3.1. 61202M111 BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS (MONUMENTAL ARTS)

3.1.1. Structure, contents and study methods

- it is not possible from the SER to see how many subjects there are per semester;
- the departments are too independent for small programmes (a confederation of '*kingdoms*' – Administrator's meeting), not sharing of problems or best practice;
- there appears to be no real leadership without Programme Directors;
- problem of lack of communication between theory tutors and studio staff – not relating and delivering appropriate content with a focus on historical rather contemporary (only introduced in year 4 common to all Vilnius programmes!!) lacking contemporary critical theory – not in line with aims of the programme (delivering contemporary professional artists);
- develops very good practical skills – but some inconsistency in what is offered (appropriateness) by service Departments (e.g. drawing for the main programmes);
- positive encouragement and support for developing the international dimension (exchanges, visits etc.);
- Fresco – opportunity for 'live' projects for practice (church)
- Threat of small numbers in declining industries (stained glass and fresco);
- Good links with architecture programme – joint projects/collaborations;
- Good intelligent and articulate students – constructive and positively critical; able to develop irrespective of any shortcomings in resources;
- Overload of workload (more than 7 subjects per semester)
- Assessment a mystery for students – lack of understanding of criteria;
- Lack of links with industry (in decline) and profession – no placements;
- Over emphasis on process over ideas;
- 7 international symposia on stained glass;
- Poor IT training;

⁴ ibid

⁵ ibid

- Little overview of the programme content (A,B,C blocks) – no possibility for programme organising.

3.1.2. Execution of studies and support for students

- Students can get methodical resources and other information about separate study years, optional subjects on the website of VAA www.vda.lt as well as in the department of monumental painting and scenography. For students of all three specialities individual study plans are compiled, thus support may take on other forms – students are helped by consultants, foremen, project makers according to different specialities.
- accessibility of workshops and technical support for both programme and other students;
- although students are taught good specific practical skills related to their discipline the experts endorse the students request for greater development of broader professional skills preparing their students for the work place;
- the Criteria for Assessment are:
 - Originality, expressivity of the creations presented.
 - Method and consistency of task execution.
 - Quality of execution of works; technical and technological cleanness.
 - independence, self-sufficiency.

there is no information provided in the SER on the weighting of these criteria and no transparency of application to specific elements of the programme. The confusion and multiplicity of aims, the lack of learning outcomes and an obvious lack of alignment of outcomes, content, assessment criteria and a transparent assessment process are of grave concern to the Panel;
- there is a lack of specialist instructors (finance) e.g. lighting, structural engineers; theatre production);
- the students request more IT skills;
- the students would like greater access to the digital/video department – problem of accessing already over-used resource;
- the assessment criteria (see SER p8) is comprehensive but hard to see how they are taught or assessed in practice;
- the students would like more material support for extra-curricular art activities (e.g. providing models for additional drawing).

3.1.3. Variation in the number of students

- No information could be found, or opened on the link, about student numbers in the SER or the Appendices.

3.1.4. Teaching staff

- from the SER it is not possible to evaluate if the number of Docents/Dr is sufficient as there is no information available;
- the student perception is of good quality staff;
- the students would like more contributions from visiting staff to give a wider viewpoint;
- the staff should use the evaluation process on a regular basis to evaluate the curriculum, learning and teaching strategies
- need for better communication between staff & students (student's meeting) of what is expected, how to achieve and outcomes of assessment.

3.1.5. Advantages and disadvantages of the programme

- in general students are proud to be members of the academy;
- students think that the relationship with architecture could be improved/extended – danger of one-sided facilitation;
- Positive collaboration with Music and Theatre Academy planning for live projects.

3.2 62402M106 MASTER OF FINE ARTS (MONUMENTAL ARTS)

3.2.1. Structure, contents and study methods

- course credits and percentage of *deepening* is appropriate;
- it is not possible from the SER to see how many subjects there are per semester;
- very good mature programme;
- very open intelligent and articulate students with constructive positively critical ideas and views;
- the experts request the programme defines a clear rationale for the existence of the MA programme;
- good practice of students writing study research programme proposals outlining aims, objectives and this also helps inform the subject of their essay/dissertation;
- further clarification of assessment criteria required.

3.2.2. Execution of studies and support for students

- the students would like more support and better communication generally between staff and students;
- a Student Council meets each month with heads of student groups and problems are discussed;
- 10% student representatives in Senate and there is a procedure how students can forward their questions. Since late 2006 the communication with Student Council is stable.

3.2.3. Variation in the number of students

- No information could be found, or opened on the link, about student numbers in the SER or the Appendices.

3.2.4. Teaching staff

- from the SER it is not possible to evaluate if the contribution by Professors is sufficient as there is no information available;
- The Panel is concerned about the Academy's pedagogical qualification requirements for teachers - *The program of Master studies is run by MPS department pedagogical staff. The specifics of forming the teaching staff is much like in Bachelor study program. What concerns the staff of Master studies, the department is not in an easy situation. There is a problem with pedagogical qualifications. Senior lecturers have very average pedagogical qualifications or degrees while the younger have none at all. Of course, this doesn't add to the solidity of the staff, however, after the regulations of teachers' assessment have been changed, the possibilities appeared for the department teachers to seek higher pedagogical qualifications.* (SER);

- there is no information available in the SER on policy, strategy or procedure for staff development.
- staff are concerned about their understanding of Government policy whereby the Academy's income is directly linked to student numbers forcing them to recruit lower 'quality' students.
- the Rector has a reserve budget for inviting artists to address the problem of staff rotation

3.2.5. Advantages and disadvantages of the programme

- a very good international bi-ennial symposium/exhibition;
- a specialist minority provision which needs to reflect on declining industries;
- lack of links with industries/professions in decline (staff & students);
- the main problem is the financial situation and possibilities of the department (SER).
- there are no satisfactory conditions for storing the works, they are temporarily stored in an enclosed area of the stairwell (SER).
- another problem of all three specialities is shortage of computers. We don't have even one computer for our department students' training and studying process (SER).

3.3 61202M112 BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS (SCULPTURE)

3.3.1. Structure, contents and study methods

- the SER describes how the needs and skills/abilities of students entering the department are widely differing, depending upon the previous learning situation of the student. Therefore, the department works to look after the differing needs and requirements. Presently, the entrance exams are rather technical by nature but there is a wish for the entrance exams to be based more upon the individual, thereby reflecting upon the nature of learning within the department but also the relevance of the processes in a study focussing on contemporary art practices;
- courses are offered consisting of basics of theoretical and practical assignments which they say are fundamental to the analysis of visuals (two-dimensional arts and spatial illusion) and artistic depiction;
- in order to underline the individual nature of the studies, students select a lecturer and the programme that he/she offers. At the same time "the lecturer is able to adapt/modify each programme individually for a student, not only the basic studies but also the others";
- the coordination of the three subject groups (A, B & C) seems to present certain problems. Staff and students at the department of Sculpture have little if any influence on in particular, the theory teaching in the humanities education - C Block. Both students and staff have asked for more history of sculpture in the art history lectures and there was criticism by students about the chronological nature of the theory lectures starting with Egyptian art when the students are working with contemporary issues from the first year in A block. The C Block studies are described as being a "universal mixture applicable to all", but clearly this is not the case according to the students. There is a strong wish for the theoretical studies to be in coherence with the study programme;

- two disparate and possibly opposing directions of two sculpture studios within the sculpture department are apparent. Mentioned in both the SER and in interviews with the staff, one studio focuses on traditional skills (so far “*not defined*”) based whilst the other is more in tune with contemporary art practices and is more concept based. Staff and students from the traditional skills based studio did not participate in writing the SER or in the meetings;
- the department uses a study module programme which describes objectives and learning outcomes of the module, teaching methods, level of module and how many credits the student gains from the module. There is a strong assessment process with large participation from both staff members and students. Students share an understanding of the process - sharing strengths and weaknesses. This allows them to understand not only their peers’ development but also gives an insight into their own development and creates a platform for understanding assessment conclusions;
- international contacts, contacts between institutions are developed with among others Amsterdam’s Gerrit Rietveld Academy, Copenhagen’s Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, and the academies of Stuttgart and Düsseldorf.

3.3.2. Execution of studies and support for students

- all admitted students have completed sufficient prerequisites to begin studies. However, these are far from being on same by level. Thus a lecturer adapts/modifies each programme individually for a student. Students have the right and opportunity to work with different lecturers which the Department actively encourages. As result the student becomes familiar with an entire line of programmes, perspectives and methods which are considered important for individual maturity;
- students have close contact with teachers and express that they have a clear understanding of their learning situation within the department. The assessments are made over a week and include participation by students;
- there is no or little control over the other teaching blocks. Theory teaching starts chronologically (Egyptian art) reaching contemporary art only in the 4th year. Both sculpture students and staff stated that they have asked for history of art in sculpture to be included in these blocks;
- there is support for students who have disabilities within the academy and the department. Those spoken to were positive about the way they were included. According to the SER about 50% of the students receive scholarships and 20% among them receive social financial support. Orphaned students and students with disabilities receive special financial support set by the state. Most of the students have possibility to stay at Academy’s dormitory, although there is a lack of available rooms;
- students are able to coordinate their studies with their jobs/taking care of children on mutual agreement with the department.

3.3.3. Variation in the number of students

- students are very engaged and there is strong competition for places at the Sculpture department. It appears to offer two of the most sought after courses in arts in Lithuania;

- the number of applicants and acceptances is healthy and has remained constant for the past three years.

3.3.4. Teaching staff

- the teaching staff at the sculpture department are very engaged teachers interacting well with the students. They are all well known Lithuanian artists;
- the studios and courses are well organised offering courses teaching technical skills from digital to casting welding and stone as well as challenging individual conceptual thought;
- the students maintained that they were very satisfied with the majority of the staff;
- it is clear that there is some conflict between certain teachers within the department. Despite this, there appears to be a general will to develop the department;
- some of the interviewed staff discussed how they had tried to make a staff development seminar without any real support from Academy.

3.3.5. Advantages and disadvantages of the programme

Advantages:

- the vibrant milieu with good communication between very engaged staff and students within the department;
- the aim of the programme to “develop the student’s individual artistic abilities through training critical thought and artistic expression” is an advantage and clearly relates to contemporary art worlds;
- the department of Sculpture is regarded as the best by its own students and also by some students of other departments/faculties;
- openness with regard to students on other programmes having access to workshops;
- the development of the individual sculptor/artist with their own “voice”;

Disadvantages:

- the lack of communication with Academy leadership and the conflict within the department;
- the A,B & C blocks of the programme makes for a disjointed study and denies a comprehensive holistic and responsible overview of the programme;
- the financing of the programme is inadequate and the salaries of teachers are unjustifiably low. Teachers work with great devotion and often at the expense of higher personal well being.

3.4 62402M110 MASTER OF FINE ARTS (SCULPTURE)

3.4.1. Structure, contents and study methods

- the breakdown of the courses into 3 components may be pragmatic but the experts perceive holistic problems with the content, structure and management of the curriculum. The theoretical studies should be coherent with study programme. Nevertheless at MA level the students (interviewed) were more satisfied with C block than in the previous BA studies. According to the SER “Humanitarian disciplines art appointed as part of this program to widen the student’s horizons,

develop his intellectual abilities, analytical way of thinking, and to help him be motivated in his own work” (ibid.);

- students apply to the MA Sculpture programme with a project for individual study. Students select a supervisor/tutor who discusses and helps to further develop the project. This process of admission by individual project to the programme is perceived as good practice by the experts;
- tutorials are carried out throughout the year and there is good communication between the students and teaching staff;
- there is a strong assessment process with large participation. Students share an understanding of the process - sharing strengths and weaknesses which allows them to understand where they are in the assessment process;
- students are actively encouraged to exchange to institutions outside of Lithuania or go on study trips if possible.

3.4.2. Execution of studies and support for students

- students and staff both describe good individual and group discussions with teachers who are always available.

3.4.3. Variation in the number of students

- no information could be found, or opened on the link, about student numbers in the SER or the Appendices;
- the Panel was informed there is strong competition for places.

3.4.4. Teaching staff

- the teaching staff (attending the meeting with experts) are forward thinking artists and teachers concerned with the discussions in the sculpture department in a wider context of Europe;
- sculpture staff are aware of the need to develop their own learning and teaching situation and carried out a staff development seminar albeit without support from the Academy;
- students are satisfied with the teachers.

3.4.5. Advantages and disadvantages of the programme

Advantages

- vibrant milieu with good communication between staff and students;
- attention is focussed on developing the creativity of each individual;
- the students are aware, active and very committed;
- the department is very active regarding the promotion of study trips and exchanges. The international dimension is very important. The department has collaborations with some of the foremost institutions in Europe including The Royal Danish Academy of Arts, Rietveld Academy, Amsterdam, Academies in Stuttgart and Düsseldorf.;
- employers maintained that the Sculpture training produces the best creative thinking artists;
- the department has a high profile within the institution from student body as well as from other students nationally. Other students regard it as being the best department;
- the department allows other students to access workshops and receive help such as from textiles an example of good practice;
- the sculpture department allows for a breakaway from perception of sculpture as a craft;

- the department is aware of what they are doing. They are producing contemporary artists: The aims are clear.

Disadvantages

- a main disadvantage is the lack of communication between the sculpture department and the leadership of the Academy;
- critical reflection is gained through sculpture block A, which is obviously an advantage for the sculpture department, but should rather be supported through other blocks;
- lack of available literature in the library.

3.5 61202M117 BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS (PAINTING)

3.5.1. Structure, contents and study methods

- the first stage bachelor studies last for four years, the programme consists three blocs of taught subjects: A- subjects of speciality , B – general subjects on art, C – subjects of humanitarian;
- the total amount of credits for the programme – 160;
- the studies in A bloc consist of closely related painting and composition tasks, which are based on painting (model, still-life, portrait, landscape) and separate thematic tasks given by the professor for each year/course. The learning process is based on the method of assigning more complex tasks;
- an important part of bachelor studies is the summer workshops, which the programme believes is an inseparable element of professional and creative education for a future painter. During a one month workshop the further development and sophistication of accomplished tasks is continued;
- in the SER as well in the discussions with students experts feel the programme is lacking flexible possibilities for students to work in alternative ways and experience a range of learning and teaching methodologies.

3.5.2. Execution of studies and support for students

- the teaching of painting is based on several principles: a) the tasks have to be developed by making them more and more complex; b) openness for ideas, tolerance for different point of views, the collaboration between student and professor; c) the synthesis of the basics of profession (“craft” in its positive meaning) and creativity in all stages of education; d) the fostering of student's intellectual potential;
- the independent work of students is encouraged as a necessary precondition for creativity of future artist. Both during the studies and summer workshops, students are asked to present various sketching material (painted, drawn, collage, photographic, etc), which is discussed together with the other students;
- the students of the painting programme usually start to take part in exhibitions, plain-airs, symposiums and actions both in Lithuania and abroad from the first years of their studies.
- the importance of students working independently is expressed in the SER, but the Panel still feels the possibilities for this is limited within the relatively narrow and fragmented curriculum;
- the Panel feel the programme team should pay more attention to the assessment criteria, especially explaining and discussing with the students at the beginning of each semester before examinations. After the meeting with students the Panel had the impression that there was

a lack of effort by staff in this area of the learning and teaching process.

3.5.3. Variation in the number of students

- the number of applicants and students starting the course has remained constant over the past five years, although the number of students *'accepted to the Bachelor programme in 2006/2007 was reduced due to insufficient material conditions for learning and teaching (big number of students in groups; small studios). Also, as the Heritage Conservation programme has been confirmed, there is no need to increase the number of students at the expense of restorers'*;
- consultations are held for the students aiming to join the programme, where information about the entry conditions and requirements, the nature and programme of studies and the portfolios are reviewed. Open days are held annually in spring. Prior to entry exams, reviews of individual works are arranged;
- the SER states that each year 4-7 students do not complete Bachelor studies in time due to various reasons (leave of absence, discontinued studies, under-achievement) – the Panel believes this is too high and thinks the programme team should carry out research to see how this can be reduced.

3.5.4. Teaching staff

- all the professors and lecturers have work experience of at least three years and their pedagogical work load matches the requirements of bachelor and master studies;
- there is no clear strategy in the programme on how to maintain the level of professional development of its teachers and no information about what staff development has been provided over the past three years to support these processes;
- there was no methodology presented showing how the institution ensures its academic staff are teaching at the appropriate level and using current teaching methodologies (how much it corresponds to the *Bologna* principles? How it is connected to staff appraisal?);
- also missing in the SER was how students are involved in the review of staff and how significant an influence they can have for the careers of teachers or on appointing new ones.

3.5.5. Advantages and disadvantages of the programme

Advantages:

- the continuation of learning process - the development from simple to complex tasks - the step-by-step relationship between tasks;
- the interrelationship between painting practice and theoretical knowledge, aiming to relate learning tasks with the topics of contemporary art;
- the stability of tradition and prestige of painting as an artistic field, which influences the motivation for studies.

Disadvantages:

- the low level of literacy among bachelor students is acknowledged (staff);

- during the entry exams a scarce knowledge of Lithuanian and foreign art trends and artists is revealed;
- the flexibility for interdisciplinary practice is not embedded nor recognised in assessment, there is very low activity in relation to other Departments in the VAA and other HEI institutions in Lithuania and abroad.

3.6 62402M114 MASTER OF FINE ARTS (PAINTING)

3.6.1. Structure, contents and study methods

- the Panel think the programme study methods are appropriate for master's level - the students are accepted after presenting an independently prepared plan of master studies (an outline of practical and theoretical work) and having selected a theme of written thesis. All the material is evaluated by the entrance commission, formed by Department;
- the master's studies are based on the negotiated individual tasks of each student. The master student, together with the advisor of practical and theoretical work, form an individual plan of studies, where he/she presents the stages of committing practical and theoretical work, tasks through the semesters, which formulates the direction of individual work;
- although students are encouraged to understand and be able to use various forms of artistic expression, as in the bachelor studies, the Panel found the flexibility for interdisciplinary practice is not embedded in the programme nor recognised in assessment, which is very restricting in professional practice and development;
- the Panel found that unlike many programmes under review the programme is not based on three blocks of studies but seems to have two main subject areas - practice and theory.
- The structural balance, credits etc between Theory and Practice is not provided, however difficulties about the relationship between them occur frequently in the SER.

3.6.2. Execution of studies and support for students

- tutorial support is timetabled for each of the master's students. At the beginning of their studies, students are requested to produce a study plan. During the process of studies, students prepare themselves for diploma work and their final direction is formed. The practical work is executed according to thoroughly planned stages of work. During the last stage of work intensive discussions between the student and the guiding teacher of the work take place and changes to resolve problems and omissions are made;
- the programme team should give more time and effort to the development and dissemination of clear assessment criteria appropriate to master's level;
- a concern for the Panel was the following statement in the SER *'Therefore, the 1st year of Master's degree are designed to overcome certain "schoolish" inertia of Bachelor studies, which psychologically exists due to many factors. One of them is the dependence on a teacher and his/her corrections during the course of teaching'* – this challenges the aims of a bachelor degree at the Academy and shows little respect for the teachers of the programme;

- the Department should be congratulated on its support for students with disabilities.

3.6.3. Variation in the number of students

- the Panel considered information provided and the observations in the SER p.22 present a very disturbing situation of reasonably healthy numbers entering the programme over a five year period, 52 but only 31 completing over the same period. In response to the factors above the MA SER P 24 states: *'As the experience shows, it is advisable to gradually reduce the number of students accepted to Master's programme in the future and to achieve that all students successfully and timely complete the studies.'* This would not appear to be a very constructive approach; it seems unfortunate that numbers are reduced rather than addressing underlying but probably more fundamental reasons. An analysis for the reasons in this disparity, or any remedies to address it, are not presented.

3.6.4. Teaching staff

- the SER provides no information on how the Department supports the professional development of its teachers and what staff development has been provided over the past three years to support these processes;
- the SER provides no information on how the Department or Academy ensure its academic staff are teaching at the appropriate level and using current teaching methodologies. How much that corresponds to *Bologna* principles and how it is connected to any staff evaluation processes?

3.6.5. Advantages and disadvantages of the programme

Advantages:

Disadvantages:

- *'The low level of literacy among Master students is acknowledged. During the entry exams a scarce knowledge of Lithuanian and foreign art trends and artists is revealed'*. – (SER);
- there is very little collaboration with other Departments in the VAA and other HEI institutions in the Lithuania and abroad.
- *'Master study program needs circulation of new ideas, exchange and sharing of the experience, therefore we are looking for possibilities to have contacts with professors of foreign higher Art Schools or just artists of corresponding fields'*. – (SER);
- *'The most serious drawback is that very low salaries for lecturers do not encourage the staff to seek pedagogical qualifications, but remains the object of everyday talks and discussions'*. – (SER).

3.7 61202M107 BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS (GRAPHICS)

3.7.1. Structure, contents and study methods

- the breakdown of the courses into categories of general education, general and specialized studies may be pragmatic but the Panel perceives problems with the content, structure and management of the curriculum that results;

- it is very difficult to ascertain the 'ownership' of the programme and the abilities of any category to influence the content and curriculum of any other category, thus the programme is not providing sufficiently a holistic learning experience for students;
- the Study Plan for Block C does not contain enough opportunity to study the theory of contemporary art and/or design and is heavily biased towards historical studies. In the view of the Panel the study of contemporary art and/or design theory and related issues is essential at all stages (years) of this type of programme - without it, it will not be able to fully meet *'the expectations of students who live in a very dynamic world where professional qualities are valued more and more'*⁶ and the *'acquired knowledge, skills and abilities are in conformity with the requirements for professional activities'*⁷ will not be provided;
- during the Panel's visit only specialized Graphic Arts staff together with a very small number of General Arts Subjects staff were available for discussions. This is regrettable and highly detrimental to the review process as a comprehensive cross section of staff is necessary to gain a holistic understanding of aims, content and delivery of the programme;
- credit weightings must meet the requirements of the law with regard to credit allocations and the number of subjects, at present there are more subjects than allowed and the Study Plan includes 1 and 1.5 credit units, not only breaking regulations but indicating to the Panel a fragmented over complicated study plan;
- it is the opinion of the Panel that the range and type of subjects and courses available in all A,B,C Blocks do not produce a coherent holistic student experience of the type that is required to fully meet the *Key Parameters of Study Quality*⁸;
- in the view of the Panel the present course design does not produce a curriculum to fully provide the required knowledge, skills and abilities that are in conformity with professional activities in either the 'fine' or 'applied' graphics;
- in the 'applied' option – design problem solving methodologies, teamwork design experience, professional practice learning, interdisciplinary methodologies, marketing, business skills and versatility in *'state-of-the art technologies'*⁹ are not sufficiently evident;
- in the 'fine graphic arts' option - conceptual development, analytical abilities, independent learning, professional practice learning and interdisciplinary methodologies are not sufficiently evident *'to train professional artists who are capable of independent creative activity, and furnish them with knowledge and technical skill sufficient to achieve successful integration'*¹⁰;
- the Panel considers it excessive to extend the teaching of 'Composition' beyond the first 3 Semesters and the presence of it in Semesters 4,5,6,7 does not meet with best practice in Higher Arts Education institutions. It is important that the emphasis be shifted to

⁶ ibid

⁷ ibid

⁸ ibid

⁹ SER Page 6

¹⁰ ibid

the independent and autonomous study of studio practice, professional practice and personal development;

- the Panel considers the courses in Block C to be outmoded and lacking relevance to students of this programme. Of the 15 subjects available on the 'obligatory' list only two H003B007 Modern Art: Processes and Tendencies and S000B004 Socio-Cultural Theory would seem to be of immediate relevance, whilst five others would seem to be of possible relevance. The positioning of such courses as H003B007 S000B004 presently in Semester 7 should be strongly considered for inclusion in earlier semesters as well.

3.7.2. Execution of studies and support for students

- it is the Panel's opinion that the programme is not based on a coherent learning strategy that is fully student centred, but on technical processes and a craft ethos that is inappropriate to *'the expectations of students who live in a very dynamic world where professional qualities are valued more and more'*¹¹ as a result, the *'content of the programme (at present) is not in conformity with the aims and goals of the programme'*¹²;
- the Panel perceives that the Applied Graphics Arts programme is oriented towards the development of individual artists with a 'fine art' base; forthcoming changes to the consumer market mean that there is a need to relate Applied Graphic Arts education and training more to design education with the inclusion of the development of teamwork skills, project management and entrepreneurial/marketing/business skills. The positioning of Applied Arts within Faculty structures should be very carefully considered and based on an accurate research of future needs;
- according to students present at the meeting during the visit - *'here it is more traditional-you feel illegal if you have new ideas they (the teaching staff) don't understand'*;
- assessment criteria are not constructively aligned¹³, in the Panel's view, they lack coherence and as they reported are largely unknown to students before assessment. Students surmised that *'you never fail if you work hard – in the 1st year they look for quantity later they look for quality - the speciality teacher, he knows - there are basic rules i.e. composition - technical (un-written guides) – you get a mark but you don't know why'*;
- communication, representation and consultation with students both as groups and individually about the programme, or about individual progress appears haphazard and inconsistent to the Panel and to the students;
- students reported to the Panel that – *'questionnaires, some students have seen them - there is no gathering for meetings, just chatting - students are not asked to participate in staff meetings. There is a lack of communication with teachers in the 1st year. You listen to commands, but can't communicate - 2nd and 3rd year OK'*;
- the Panel also noted the ambivalence of students towards both new technologies and the relationship between 'fine' and 'applied' options.

¹¹ External Assessment of Study Programmes, Methodological Guidelines for Experts, Studiju Kokybes Vertinimo Centras, Vilnius

¹² ibid

¹³ SER P26

In the Panel's view this reflects both the confusion within the programme of this relationship and the lack of ICT facilities - *'I will become more skilled on the computer when I finish, must learn to work with computers - Fine Art is stronger in the academy, if I need applied arts I will learn it after – Applied Graphics ensures a more secure career'*.¹⁴;

- *'The most effective student support is offered by familiarizing them with the methodological material on specific tasks performed by previous students of the Department of Graphic Arts - It is as important as to choose from the variety of creative solutions. In the Methodological Office of the Department of Graphic Arts, the methodological material of the past twenty years has been accumulated.'*¹⁵ In the view of the Panel this practice is highly detrimental as it promotes an inbred culture, emphasises the achievements of the past as exemplary and inhibits incoming students from exploring opportunities for innovation, the exploration of new creative processes and the development of new ideas;
- in the view of the Panel the essential factors of independent study and risk taking presently absent from the programme must be introduced at all stages (years) only in this way can *'the expectations of students who live in a very dynamic world where professional qualities are valued more and more; the acquired knowledge, skills and abilities be in conformity with the requirements for professional activities; the content of the study programme be in conformity with the level of knowledge in the area field art'*¹⁶;
- students should be encouraged to be autonomous learners. More self-study needs to be introduced into the programme. This would have the positive effect of aiding students to become more responsible for their own learning and adopt a more positive approach to lifelong learning.

3.7.3. Variation in the number of students

- the number of applicants and entrants has remained fairly consistent over the past five years with a healthy competition for places - better than most Fine Arts programmes in Lithuania;
- the Panel is concerned with the relatively smaller number of students successfully completing the programme, but this staff team declare
- *'The real "attrition" of students is very insignificant, only one student was dismissed due to academic failure, and one other terminated his studies on his own will.'*¹⁷ and this is due to students taking 'academic leave'¹⁸ and *'Several students opted to discontinue their studies in Vilnius for going to continue their studies abroad.'*¹⁹ In the view of the Panel this may also possibly indicate underlying problems with the programme design, structure, contents and study methods and flexibility;

3.7.4. Teaching staff

¹⁴ ibid

¹⁵ SER Page 21

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ SER Page 20

¹⁸ SER Page 20

¹⁹ ibid

- there is an urgent need for the programme team to review the established methodological basis of the teaching as the Panel advises that it is outmoded (and historical) and as a methodology it is highly improbable that it is capable of producing programmes that can sufficiently meet the 'Key Parameters of Study Quality'²⁰, as defined by the agency. The focus on contemporary practice and on contemporary theory should be developed and enhanced;
- serious consideration should be given to reducing teaching contact time. This would allow teaching staff more time to involve themselves in professional development as teachers of higher education studies and to engage as researchers in the pedagogies of their discipline;
- there is an urgent need to develop a meaningful Staff Professional Development processes in the Department to support and encourage teachers in the enhancement of their role as 'learning facilitators' rather than the present established, outmoded (and historical) 'master teachers' role. In this way the true potential of the intrinsic talent that students possess, and bring with them to the study process, can be fully realised and made available to society on their graduation.

3.7.5. Advantages and disadvantages of the programme

Advantages

- the programme displays a good level of craftsmanship and a great focus on technical expertise;
- *'every student has the possibility to elect alternative subjects, which provide him with the basic knowledge about other specialties.'*²¹ - *'here it is more traditional-you feel illegal if you have new ideas they (the teaching staff) don't understand.'*²²;
- *'Students often collaborate directly with companies and publishing houses, take part in exhibitions, contests and exchange programmes with other institutions of higher education, testing themselves in situations, which require to solve real -life problems.'*²³

Disadvantages

- *'The programme of each specialization (of fine & applied graphics) pursues its own clearly defined objectives'*²⁴. The Panel perceives that this statement endorses their view that this programme has two sets of diverging aims and raises the fundamental question about the need for two programmes;
- the financing of the programme is inadequate and the salaries of teachers are unjustifiably low. Teachers work with great devotion and often at the expense of higher personal well being;
- *'Poor technical and material resources – adequate software is critical, as well as adequate technical support. Currently almost each computer is run on a different software version, the hardware is outdated and the monitors are designed for working with texts but not visual material'*²⁵;

²¹ SER P25

²² Student statement, Expert Group Meeting with Students 21/04/08

²³ ibid

²⁴ ibid

²⁵ SER P26

- subjects such as 'graphics' either in 'Fine Art' form or 'Visual Communication' form require adequate ICT equipment. The international standard for industry, higher education and artistic practice is to use Apple Macintosh computers with, full Adobe software packages, Photoshop, Illustrator etc. As well as Quark Express, In-Design, Flash, Dreamweaver, Premier Final Cut Pro. Digital still and Video Cameras are also required;
- if the outcome described in the SER – *'Many students, after graduating or yet at the academy, get jobs or become contracted by various graphic design firms, publishers, and editing facilities'*²⁶ - is to be sustained then investment (described above) in ICT is essential if both the employment of graduates and the requirement of the programme to meet the 'Key Parameters of Study Quality' are to be met.

3.8 62402M103 MASTER OF FINE ARTS (GRAPHICS)

3.8.1. Structure, contents and study methods

- the breakdown of the courses into categories of general education, general and specialized studies may be pragmatic, but the Panel perceives problems with the content, structure and management of the curriculum that results;
- the range and type of subjects and courses available, in view of the Panel, do not produce a coherent holistic student experience of the type that is required to fully meet the *Key Parameters of Study Quality*²⁷;
- it is very difficult to ascertain the 'ownership' of the programme and the abilities of any category to influence the content and curriculum of any other category;
- the Study Plan for Block C does not contain focused opportunities to study the Theory of Contemporary Art or Design and related issues and contains an excessive quantity of courses and subjects. The two historical studies courses are of questionable value. In the view of the Panel clearer and focused opportunities to study Contemporary Art Theory or Design Theory and related issues are essential in this type of programme;
- during the Panel's visit to the Graphic Arts department only specialised (Graphic Arts Staff), together with a very small number of 'General Arts Subjects' staff, were available for discussions, It is regrettable and highly detrimental to the review process that a comprehensive cross section of staff from all sectors of the programme was not available;
- although the credit weightings meet the minimum requirements of the law with regard to credit allocations and the number of subjects; at present the Panel respectfully suggest that the quantity of courses and subjects available is excessive. Five obligatory subjects of 2 credits each from a list of 11 and 12 obligatory subjects with a total of 70 credits does not equate with international best practice for MA studies in Art & Design. This indicates a fragmented over complicated study plan in the Panel's opinion where the content of the programme cannot meet the aims;

²⁶ ibid

²⁷ ibid

- in the view of the Panel the present programme design based on ‘fine’ and ‘applied’ studios does not produce a curriculum with enough focus on either to fully provide the required knowledge, skills and abilities that are in conformity with professional activities in either the ‘fine’ or ‘applied’ graphics;
- in the ‘applied’ option - problem solving design methodologies, team work design experience, professional practice learning, interdisciplinary methodologies, marketing and business skills and versatility in ‘*state-of-the art technologies*’²⁸ are not sufficiently evident;
- in the ‘fine graphic arts’ option - conceptual development, analytical abilities, independent learning, professional practice learning and interdisciplinary methodologies are not sufficiently evident to provide a student - *fully capable of independent solution and realization of creative ideas and self-expression*²⁹;
- in the view of the Panel the inclusion of - *The compulsory subjects of academic drawing and painting are the guarantee of the graduates’ professionalism and creative freedom*³⁰ is anachronistic and does not indicate a programme that can fully meet the ‘Key Parameters of Study Quality’³¹.

3.8.2. Execution of studies and support for students

- it is the Panel’s opinion that the programme is not based on a coherent learning strategy that is fully student centred but on technical processes and a craft ethos that is probably outdated and inappropriate to ‘*the expectations of students who live in a very dynamic world where professional qualities are valued more and more*’³² as a result, the ‘*content of the programme is not in conformity with the aims and goals of the programme*’;³³
- the Panel recommends that the Applied Graphics Arts element should address forthcoming changes to the consumer market. This means that there is a need to relate Applied Graphic Arts education and training more to design education with the inclusion of the development of teamwork skills, project management and entrepreneurial/marketing/business skills. The positioning of Applied Arts within Faculty structures should be very carefully considered and based on an accurate research of future needs;
- in the Panel’s view assessment criteria are not coherent or constructively aligned³⁴ - students report they are largely unknown before assessment;
- the confusion about assessment practices is highlighted in the SER p.26 -

‘it is always disputable what establishes the ultimate value of student’s work. Is student’s creative stance more important or the adherence of his work to the study programmes; how are the boundaries of creative field to be defined. In such situations the Academy should have a final word in its generalized attitude setting out the acceptable range of student creative

²⁸ SER Page 6

²⁹ *ibid*

³⁰ SER P31

³¹ *ibid*

³² *ibid*

³³ *ibid*

³⁴ SER P29

expression within which the evaluation criteria could be applied with more clarity and precision;

- the Panel considers it excessive and questionable that the teaching of 'Composition' is considered relevant, appropriate or necessary during a Master's programme. It is important that the emphasis be largely dedicated to independent and autonomous study of studio practice, professional practice and personal development;
 - *'The most effective student support is offered by familiarizing them with the methodological material on specific tasks performed by previous students of the Department of Graphic Arts - It is as important as to choose from the variety of creative solutions. In the Methodological Office of the Department of Graphic Arts, the methodological material of the past twenty years has been accumulated'*.³⁵ In the view of the Panel this practice is not appropriate as it promotes an inbred culture, emphasises the achievements of the past as exemplary and inhibits incoming students from exploring opportunities for the innovation of new creative processes and the development of new ideas which are considered essential at Master's level;
 - in the view of the Panel the essential factors of independent study and risk taking presently absent from the programme must be introduced and promoted; only in this way can – *'the expectations of students who live in a very dynamic world where professional qualities are valued more and more; the acquired knowledge, skills and abilities be in conformity with the requirements for professional activities; the content of the study programme be in conformity with the level of knowledge in the area field art'*;³⁶
 - students should be encouraged to be self-managed autonomous learners. More self-study needs to be introduced into the programme. This would have the positive effect of aiding students to become more responsible for their own learning and adopt a more positive approach to life long learning.
- 3.8.3. Variation in the number of students
- the number of applicants and the number of entrants have remained fairly consistent over the past 5 years with a noticeable increase in 2004, but the correlation between the two indicate there is little choice possible and therefore raises questions on the maintenance of quality and standards;
 - most of the students entering the MA programme in Graphic Arts are graduates of the BA Graphics Arts programme. Difficulties for those students who may have entered from other specializations and from other institutions are expressed in the SER p.31 but detail is not provided;
 - if most of the students entering the MA programme in Graphic Arts are graduates of the BA Graphics Arts programme, then the Panel recommendation that there should be clearer definition and delineation between Bachelor and Masters study - emphasising the research element at MA level and the development of the capacity for conceptual and critical thinking is even more critical;

³⁵ SER Page 21

³⁶ Ibid

- many students take '*academic leave*³⁷ or '*opted to discontinue their studies in Vilnius for going to continue their studies abroad*'³⁸ - in the view of the Panel this may possibly indicate underlying problems with the programme design, structure, contents and study methods and with a lack of the necessary flexibility required for students in employment, which is the norm at MA level internationally;

3.8.4. Teaching staff

- there is an urgent need to review the established methodological basis of the teaching as the Panel advises that it is not current and as a methodology it is highly improbable that it is capable of producing a Masters programme that can meet the 'Key Parameters of Study Quality'³⁹, as defined by the agency. The focus on contemporary practice and on contemporary theory should be developed and enhanced;
- serious consideration should be given to reducing teaching contact time. This would allow teaching staff more time to involve themselves in professional development as teachers of higher education studies and to engage as researchers in the pedagogies of their discipline;
- there is an urgent need to develop a meaningful Staff Professional Development processes in the Department to support and encourage teachers in the enhancement of their role as 'learning facilitators' rather than the present established, traditional 'master' teachers' role. In this way the true potential of the intrinsic talent that students possess, and bring with them to the study process, can be fully realised and made available to society on their graduation;
- the Panel fully endorses the aspirations of the teachers, particularly those involved with the Masters programme where international standards should apply - *The teachers of the Department of Graphic Arts have the possibilities to improve their qualifications in other European Art Academies. Naturally, this is not enough and the mobility of teachers is not satisfactory. We do hope to solve this problem by attracting young and energetic teachers, with a lot of initiative.*⁴⁰

3.8.5. Advantages and disadvantages of the programme

Advantages

- The programme displays a good level of craftsmanship and a strong focus on technical expertise;
- '*Students often collaborate directly with companies and publishing houses, take part in exhibitions, contests and exchange programmes with other institutions of higher education, testing themselves in situations, which require to solve real -life problems*'⁴¹;
- The Panel perceives as good practice – '*The entrants into the MA study programme must present a framework of their studies (depending on selected specialization) and a selection of his/her artwork. At the outset of the studies, each student with the help of an*

³⁷ SER Page 20

³⁸ *ibid*

⁴⁰ SER P 23

⁴¹ *ibid*

*individual study supervisor draft an individual study plan for two years*⁴²

Disadvantages

- *'The programme of each specialization pursues its own clearly defined objectives.'*⁴³ The Panel perceive that this statement endorses their view that this programme has two sets of diverging aims and raises a fundamental question for the need for two programmes.
- the financing of the programme is inadequate and the salaries of teachers are unjustifiably low. Teachers work with great devotion and often at the expense of higher personal well being;
- *'Poor technical and material resources – adequate software is critical, as well as adequate technical support. Currently almost each computer is run on a different software version, the hardware is outdated and the monitors are designed for working with texts but not visual material';*⁴⁴
- subjects such as 'Graphics' in 'Fine Art' or 'Visual Communication' require adequate ICT equipment. The international standard of industry, higher education and artistic practice is to use Apple Macintosh computers with: full Adobe software packages - *Photoshop, Illustrator* etc. as well as *Quark Express, In-Design, Flash, Dreamweaver, Premier - Final Cut Pro*. Digital still and video cameras are also required;
- if the outcome described in the SER – *'Many students, after graduating or yet at the academy, get jobs or become contracted by various graphic design firms, publishers, and editing facilities'*⁴⁵ - is to be sustained then investment (described above) in ICT is essential if both the employment of graduates and the requirement of the programme to meet the 'Key Parameters of Study Quality' are to be met;
- it is unclear to the Panel if this statement relates specifically to the MA or to the BA or to both programmes but, whatever the statement relates to it is highly unsatisfactory - *'The computer hardware and software is obsolete. A group of 7 – 11 students is supposed to share five computers. The groups have to be split into two. The software is updated irregularly and sporadically and does not reflect the demand of the students of the Department of Graphic Arts. The Department has no arrangements for routine computer support. New technologies are introduced also only within the extent of humble financial possibilities of the Department of Graphic Arts;*⁴⁶
- the Health and Safety aspects listed by staff are of particular concern to the panel – *'The air ventilation system is inefficient, though students use hazardous materials in their work. The upgrading of the ventilation system would require considerable investment, resources for which the Department of Graphic Arts does not presently have nor hopes to obtain in any near future. Partial repairs of the printing workshop were the result of the joint efforts of teachers and students of the Department of Graphic Arts.'*⁴⁷

⁴² SER P27

⁴³ *ibid*

⁴⁴ SER P26

⁴⁵ *ibid*

⁴⁶ SER P35

⁴⁷ *ibid*

4. Material conditions

- the projected move to a new building will offer some solutions to resource problems and create opportunity to rethink faculty organisation/structure;
- for Monumental Arts the SER/Appendices do not contain any explicit information about material Conditions under a separate heading;
- ideas are developed over any shortcome in resources (students).
- the Academy has a dormitory for students, a canteen, transport (bus +driver);
- the Academy sends groups abroad and has sites in the countryside as well as a gallery;
- for Sculpture the workshops, foundry, casting etc are well organised within the limited means of the department and Technicians are on hand to ensure safety, although most of the equipment is worn;
- There are few computer facilities considering the amount of students although the students said that the reading library is good, but that the other library is not;
- Students (and staff) need good up-to-date literature pertaining to the subject of study, it is maintained that there is a *“lack of special[ist] periodicals but that the contact between students and library personnel are good”*.

5. External relations

- for Monumental Art the SER/Appendices does not contain any information about External Relations;
- the primary aims and goals of the BA Sculpture study programme include the *“education of a generation of independent artists with capabilities for adequately assessing and participating in artistic processes occurring in contemporary art worlds”*. This implicitly demands that the programme must be open for external contacts. This is done through participation in Erasmus -Socrates student exchange programmes and by encouraging both teachers and students to be *“open and comprehend his/her own identity. Travel by lectors and students to higher schools of education at other countries by virtue of international exchange programmes serves that purpose”*. As they state in the SER: *“Only by comparing ourselves with others, we are able to see our strengths and weaknesses.”*

6. Feedback

- in future more research could be of value to design a process of obtaining feedback from all stakeholders that may provide more valuable and constructive information;
- the programmes should carry out a more intense evaluation of student perception questionnaires to fully realise the enhancement value of the process;
- for Monumental Art the feedback provided by the student survey seems very useful;
- informally the Rector goes to the Year 1 students and asks them if they have any problems?- attendance etc;
- Students Council is more and more active- collect reps from the programmes- they discuss and make formal application to the Rector, Deans, Senate;
- 10% of the seats on Senate are for the students;

- Student Newspaper;
- student self expression has grown over the past 2/3 years and is amore productive process recently;
- Professors are evaluated by student questionnaires;
- there is no formal system for feedback from graduates.

7. Internal assurance of study quality

- the Academy requires a clear Quality Assurance policy and strategy - lack of operational structure – staff produced their own parts of the SER but no joint discussion for development/enhancement;
- there are no written guidelines for QA – the Rectorate is frightened of being seen as bureaucratic by ‘artists’ and does not want to do it (Administrator’s meeting);
- Senate selectively monitors activities of Departments each year.
- Departments are too independent (financial and academic) – not sharing good practice or solutions to problems – lacking mutual respect;
- some Departments would have liked more and better support from the Academy for the review process - (SER meting)
- some QA procedures are in place (e.g. student questionnaires) but they tend to provide quantitative not qualitative data;
- the Academy needs faculty wide discussions and strategy for the further development of ‘*Bologna*’ student-led processes and procedures.

8. General assessment of the programmes within the study field

The Sculpture Department is beyond a doubt one of the most vital and creative art departments in Lithuania. It is clear that the staff are striving to maintain the dynamic nature of the programme but are constrained by the detached B and more particularly C block studies which the experts understand, are out of their control to influence. The programme is suffering from institutional communication and systematic difficulties. With some institutional support the experts believe that the sculpture department in Vilnius has the possibility of becoming an international flagship for arts education in Lithuania.

8.1. Recommendations to the higher education institution

Compulsory -

1. the Academy needs faculty wide discussions and strategy for the further development of ‘*Bologna*’ student-led processes and procedures;
2. the Academy requires a clear Quality Assurance policy and strategy;
3. staff should use the evaluation process on a regular basis to evaluate the curriculum, learning and teaching strategies;
4. the Academy management must produce clear guidelines for the production of, and sign-off completed SERs;
5. the Faculty and programme team must work closer with, and prepare students for the self evaluation process;
6. there is a need for better communication between staff & students (student’s meeting) of what is expected, how to achieve and outcomes of assessment;

7. the Monumental Art programme must define a clear rationale for the existence of the MA programme.

Highly recommended –

1. the Faculty considers a move from process-centred Departments whilst retaining distinctive specialisations;
2. the move to a new building will offer the Academy the opportunity to rethink and re-shape the institutions structure, curriculum and operational management policies and procedures;
3. in future more research could be of value to design a process of obtaining feedback from all stakeholders that may provide more valuable and constructive information;
4. the Faculty and programme look for additional ways to obtain qualitative data for programme self evaluation and development;
5. two-way communication between the leadership of VAFA and the department of Sculpture must be improved.
6. the experts recommend a clearer discussion around the notion of two distinct directions, within the department of Sculpture that appear not to relate to each other in any way;
7. to develop a meaningful Staff Professional Development processes in the Department to support and encourage teachers in the enhancement of their role as 'learning facilitators' and as colleagues;
8. the Panel recommends that the formal system for feedback is developed further in parallel to the existing informal feedback system;