



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Vilniaus dailės akademijos Kauno fakulteto
TAPYBOS PROGRAMOS (621W10010)
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

EVALUATION REPORT
OF *PAINTING* (621W10010)
STUDY PROGRAMME

at the Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts, Kaunas Faculty

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DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

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| Studijų programos pavadinimas | <i>Tapyba</i> |
| Valstybinis kodas | 621W10010 |
| Studijų sritis | menai |
| Studijų kryptis | dailė |
| Studijų programos rūšis | universitetinės |
| Studijų pakopa | antroji |
| Studijų forma (trukmė metais) | nuolatinė (2) |
| Studijų programos apimtis kreditais | 120 ECTS |
| Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija | dailės magistras |
| Studijų programos įregistravimo data | 1997-05-19 |

INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| Title of the study programme | <i>Painting</i> |
| State code | 621W10010 |
| Study area | Art |
| Study field | Fine Arts |
| Kind of the study programme | University studies |
| Study cycle | Second |
| Study mode (length in years) | Full-time (2) |
| Volume of the study programme in credits | 120 ECTS |
| Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded | Master of Fine Arts |
| Date of registration of the study programme | 1997-05-19 |

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I. INTRODUCTION

In carrying out the review of the MA Painting course the Expert Team (the Team chaired by Professor John Butler, Head of Birmingham School of Art, Birmingham City University, UK with: Rugilė Ališauskaitė, an undergraduate student of Vytautas Magnus University, working towards a BA in Baltic Region Culture and Art, Lithuania; Virginija Januškevičiūtė a curator at the Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, Lithuania; Prof. dr. Atis Kampars, the Latvian Academy of Culture, Riga, Latvia; and Prof. dr. Vojtěch Lahoda from the Institute of Art History of Charles University in Prague and also the Director of the Institute of Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic), were guided by the principles of objectivity, impartiality, respect for the participants of the evaluation process, confidentiality and cooperation.

The Team followed the criteria defined by the *Methodology for Evaluation of Higher Education Study Programmes* and other Lithuanian legal acts governing quality evaluation in higher education.

VAA Kaunas is a faculty of Vilnius Academy of Art and is the major education centre of fine arts in central Lithuania attracting students from all regions of the country. The Faculty has two cycles of study programme for Fine Arts Painting – Bachelor's and Master's.

VAA Kaunas' states *"Speaking about the mission of the higher education school, it has to be emphasised that VAA KF expediently aims at becoming one of the most significant centres of art studies in the central region of Lithuania"* Self Evaluation Report (SER p.8)

The Team visited Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts, Kaunas Faculty on Thursday 24th October 2013 after they had carried out a rigorous analysis of the MA Painting SER, the previous Accreditation Reports of 2008 and 2011 and the preparation of Preliminary Reports.

Following the subject review guidelines the study programme evaluation involved the examination of 6 areas: the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme; the curriculum design; teaching staff; facilities and learning resources; the study process and students' performance assessment and programme management.

The visit to Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts, Kaunas Faculty involved the Team meeting with the following groups:

1. the senior management & administrative staff
2. the SER preparatory team
3. the students
4. the teaching team
5. the alumni
6. the social partners

Site observations of the physical resources were conducted by the Team during the visit and the Team were also able to view art and final project work including the final thesis produced by the students.

After the completion of the report the Kaunas Faculty programme representatives presented an argument that although our Team's observations on the material resources were correct at the time of the visit, the academy has in the interim been able to present evidence to the Committee demonstrating they have been able to rectify the key issues regarding the space provision for the BA & MA Painting programmes. Although this request to review the Team's decision is very

unusual, to support the programmes and the Academy, we are willing to adjust our evaluation for Material Resources as it appears from the photographic evidence sent to us the appropriate work has been carried out, but we strongly recommend a qualified Health & Safety expert inspects the premises and provides certification to signify that it meets the legal requirements.

The Team would like to thank the Academy and programme team for the generosity and hospitality shown to them and the openness and frankness presented throughout the day. The level of involvement by the students and staff they encountered during the visit greatly enhanced the efficiency of the work that was carried out and made for an enriching experience for all involved.

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

In the SER (p.7) the programme team describes the MA as “*a balanced programme combining subjects of fine arts, art, humanities, and speciality studies, the purpose of which is to develop an analytically and conceptually thinking personality, able to evaluate and interpret art processes in a broad cultural context, independently formulate art-related tasks, find optimal research and solution methods, and critically evaluate and apply theoretical and practical knowledge in personal practical-creative activity*”. The Team, after meeting the students, alumni and teachers and seeing the work produced, thinks the programme is largely achieving these goals.

The criteria assigned for the MA programme, especially: analytical thinking; evaluation and interpretation; formulation, correspond to the necessary characteristics of the second cycle of studies. The Team believes the programme’s Learning Outcomes are well defined and aligned to the programme’s aims. There are two blocks of overall competences: General (or transferable) and Subject competences. Ability to study independently is a part of General competences (“*independent learning skills according to a self-prepared plan of life-long learning*”) SER (pp. 8&9) a positive aspect that mirrors the Bologna guidelines. The objectives (‘purpose’ as in the SER p.7) reflect the main aim of the programme “*.. to educate actively creating contemporary artists*” demonstrating understanding about the key research, interpretational, practical and social attributes.

The programme claims “*the study process emphasises a symbiosis of contemporary art theories, different expressions of painting, and multidisciplinary arts. Abilities of understanding the period and the artistic, social context are developed, and competences of painters-artists to create in a broad multicultural environment are formed*”, the ambition of which the Team fully supports, but the Team also thinks the programme has a considerable way to go to see this multidisciplinary environment realised.

The programme meets the general principles of Bologna declaration (1999): ECTS, social aspect; mobility; and importance of qualification and co-operation as well as the insights of Tuning Educational Structures (2006); and Dublin (2004) Descriptors of study cycles (2011); which discuss about the learning outcomes in each cycle.

The SER states that “*When creating and improving the second-cycle study programme, the programme’s aim was to develop clear level values, allowing first-cycle graduates to creatively continue studies in the Faculty of Postgraduate Studies of VAA. In general; these provisions are defined as follows: further development of creative artist’s individuality, an ability to freely choose a research subject, research and evaluation methods in a broad art context, and an ability to suggest and perform alternative problem-solving methods*” SER (p.8). The Team is happy to support this process and strategy.

Future steps in the direction of collecting feedback from the social stakeholders regarding the priorities of the programme should be better considered to reach relevant respondents who are outside of the prepared context who will only provide a predictable response: i.e. reach out for a carefully balanced and diversified selection of art professionals rather than online audience of a website of one or another organisation, which was done in case of an online questionnaire organised together with the Lithuanian Artist's Association. The design of such evaluation studies should be more rigorous for the sake of the programme's alumni becoming better embedded in the processes of foreseeable future. The Team recommends a more considered and rigorous process to gain appropriate data for the evaluation process.

The MA's title, its aims and broadly formulated objectives and the individualised content of studies (24 compulsory credits allocated for three research project courses, research theory and personal exhibition) enable the programme to be compatible in the majority of its aspects.

2. Curriculum design

The volume of study plan is 120 ECTS over 2 years that corresponds to the maximum length of the MA study cycle allowed by national standards. This is a pragmatic solution because preparation for the research in the arts demand extra time and efforts from the students.

Although the names of courses of the mandatory part of the MA plan (Study Course Subjects: 'Research work', 'Painting Project') are differentiated only by the number of semesters the courses span, individual research or artistic activities should be considered as specific disciplines.

The mandatory courses are arranged quite evenly: 19 credits in the 1st semester, 21 credit in the 2nd semester and 20 credits in the 3rd semester, so the workload is evenly spread.

Students would like more drawing and digital software training to enable them to engage more in inter-disciplinary practice and improve their professional presentation skills.

The quality of the majority of the MA theses are appropriate to Master's level, but there is inconsistency and the programme should look to presenting models of good practice and having clear guidelines for writing a Master's thesis. The Team did find there were some exceptional theses produced, well researched, structured and articulated, with good analysis and synthesis.

The Team found that considerable emphasis is put on the research studies starting from the first semester: near to a half of the study content is related with research (15 credits per semester on average), which the Team supports.

The structure and content of the programme is sufficient to ensure the students achieve the learning outcomes.

The Team supports the Programme's collaboration with the Department of Humanities and observed that this has strengthened the theoretical components of the programme.

The increase of opportunities to introduce students to interdisciplinary projects is also to be applauded and was fully supported by the social stakeholders.

The Team considers courses should be open to more independent and creative approaches by students. and would recommend a more balanced curriculum. Although the proportion of the

class work and independent work in the curriculum meets the provisions of the VAA Regulation and other associated documents (SAR p.14), which states class-contact work (lectures, seminars, practical classes, and individual consultations) make up 70-20 % of the volume of the Master's programme and, independent work and studies make up 30-80% of the total volume of the programme; the Team observed and the students commented that the programme content promotes students to produce the upper end of 70-20% bracket of works presented for the final review to be completed on the basis of assignments and the lower end of the 30-80% bracket on the basis of individual practice. The Team believe this is not the best preparation for students for the professional field.

More of the contemporary visual art theory should be taught by art teachers to unify practical studies with broad theoretical concepts of classical and contemporary art. Art courses should be open for flexible interrelationships with electronic media or spatial studies that can be provided by the departments of Architecture and Design.

3. Staff

In accordance with the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania (No. XI-242), the Order of the Minister for Education and Science Due to the Approval of the General Requirements for Master's Degree Study Programmes (No. V-231), and the Description of the Qualification Requirements for Scientists' and Artists' Positions and the Order of the Organisation of Assessment and Competitions to hold Positions as well as the Order of the Awards of Pedagogical Titles at VAA approved by the Senate (26 May 2010) the staffing legal requirements for the MA study programme are met.

Through the Team's meeting and as recorded in the SER (p.18) *“there are in total 23 teachers work in the Master's study programme of Painting: 7 Professors (including 1 with a Doctoral degree), 13 Associate Professors (including 10 with a Doctoral degree), and 3 lecturers. For 2012-13 there are currently 8 teachers in the Painting studio, including 2 Professors and 4 Associate Professors and 2 lecturers. 30% of the teachers have a Doctoral degree; 20.5% are Professors and 57% are Associate Professors; 13% are lecturers. In total, 78% of the teachers of compulsory study field subjects are researchers and/or recognised artists.”*

Although the qualifications of the teachers are appropriate to the level of studies and there is a generous number of teaching staff delivering the MA programme to attain the learning outcomes, the Team, the students and alumni all agreed there should be a greater input by national and international staff from a more diverse range of creative practices and expertise in a greater range of creative media – as these additional artists/teachers would complement the committee formed for each MA student, which consists of the supervisor of the creative project, the consultant of the creative project and the supervisor of the theoretical research work.

Some teachers delivering theoretical and practical classes are based in the Departments of Architecture, Textile, Graphics, and Humanities.

Students spoke very positively about the teachers saying they are very supportive and generous with their time, but again they were united in expressing their desire for a more diverse contribution to increase the contemporary element by national and international visiting teachers.

The Team recommends the introduction of a wider choice of concepts of painting would be advisable and may lead to the necessity to involve teachers from other departments of the Kaunas Faculty as well as more of visiting artists.

The Team notes that the programme is already working in this direction by introducing students to a wider scope of techniques, i.e. various techniques of graphic printing.

The Team was informed by the SER group and the SER (pp.18&19) that *“Over the last 5 years, the staff of the Painting Studio has not changed much. In 2009-2010, two experienced teachers of pedagogy and creative practice left the Painting Studio. The teaching experience ranges from the minimum of five years to a maximum of 32 years for pedagogical and 43 years for creative practice teachers”*. The Team recommend Faculty senior management should support contact with foreign teachers and artists and Lithuanian teachers organising workshops, lectures etc.

The problem of limited teacher input into the programme is exacerbated by lack of academic mobility of the teachers and teacher exchanges.

The Team noted the majority of teachers are around 45-64 years old and there are none younger than 34 years. The Team believe this is a weakness of the programme and the Faculty/programme management should take the necessary measures to rejuvenate the teaching staff to guarantee continuity of the programme.

Professional development of teachers is regulated and carried out by periodic teacher assessment. Annually teachers have to write reports presenting their artistic and scientific activity, which is then made public in a report by the Rector and discussed in the meetings of the Department. The Team were informed that qualifications are gained and improved through participation in seminars and courses organised by VAA as well as in engagement in activities of various associations and unions and through professional internships.

In the SER (p.23) it states *“The major weakness of the staff area is the lack of academic mobility of the teachers. The teachers of the Painting Studio do not go to teach at foreign schools due to several reasons: the Painting Studio does not get information from VAA about the possibilities of teaching at foreign art universities; the head of the Painting Studio has a great administrative workload and at the same time conducts intensive creative activity”*. The Team recommends VAA and the Faculty actively support their programme teaching staff to participate in international exchanges/visits to develop their awareness of other learning and teaching practices as well as help develop their creative practice and research.

The Team observed that the programme does annual monitoring of the teachers but we are not clear of the support to develop that. The study of January, 2012 *“Survey about the painter’s education (painting or interdisciplinary arts?)”* initiated by the Painting Studio of Kaunas Faculty together with the Lithuanian Artists’ Association can be evaluated as an important step to establish a long-term communication with the professional society SER (p. 8). Although the information collected from social partners and employers proved the unique position of the painting medium it is much too early to use this case as key findings for KF future strategy. The true content for interdisciplinary studies is not yet established within the Art Department so there is no solid ground for discourse on *‘painting or interdisciplinary arts?’*.

The core question of the study seems, instead, to be designed to superficially answer the recent schisms in Lithuanian art discourse. The Team recommends that providing better opportunities for teachers’ research and extending the numbers of external staff may prove positive influence on both the overall quality of the programme and its more nuanced connection to the context.

All the painting studio staff are active artists exhibiting nationally and internationally and have strong research/artistic practice profiles as illustrated in the list of exhibitions participated in and competitions won.

“Visits of teachers of foreign higher education schools and painters from abroad are rare in VAA KF Painting Studio. With limited resources in possession, it is extremely difficult to invite good teachers-painters from foreign schools to teach a small number of students; Since 2010, no visiting teachers from foreign countries delivered classes in the Department” SER (p.36). This is very limiting for the development of teacher/artists and reduces the learning experience of the students. The Team recommends the Faculty finds ways to support teaching staff to engage in international activities.

4. Facilities and learning resources

Through discussions with Senior Management Kaunas Faculty is undergoing major renovation to their premises and as stated in the SER (p.21) *“In order to renovate and adapt for the studies the building where main studies of the Painting study programme are conducted and all the other buildings of Kaunas Faculty according to contemporary requirements, three investment projects were presented in 2010: two of them to the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania and one to the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Lithuania. Unfortunately, the tenders were not approved. In 2013, another investment project was presented to the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania; however, no decision related to this project has yet been obtained”*. In the last accreditation review in 2011 the Team observed the conditions and were positive with the proposals to develop the campus. Although two years later there has been considerable development to the major new building, especially with the new library which is expected to be completed around Easter 2014, the remainder of the building is in a primitive state.

The Master’s students expressed their satisfaction with the studio spaces they occupied, but the Team is concerned about the need for greater consideration to health and safety issues especially if they are to remain and occupy these spaces for a considerable time to come. The Faculty has a duty of care for their students and the current premises are totally inadequate in terms of fire precautions, heating, ventilation, toilets and hot water supply. The Team strongly recommends the Faculty takes immediate action to ensure the premises meet the legal health and safety measures required.

The Team commends the Faculty on the new workshops and equipment recently installed.

Currently this is barely adequate both in terms of the studio provision and the library. *“The work conditions and technical equipment in a few classes do not fully meet the needs of the programmes; however, the problem is being gradually solved”*. SER (p.24)

“Unfortunately, the current environment of the library and work conditions there are very poor” SER (p.25)... *“One of the biggest drawbacks of this area is the library which does not meet contemporary requirements”* SER (p.29). The Team agree the current library space is very poor in terms of size and quality of space, the IT and book provision. The new library at Muitinès str. 2, which the Team hopes will open early next year will greatly enhance the provision and provide a national learning resource.

There is a good system of inter-library loans in place which goes some way to overcome the shortage in stock.

“There are also no possibilities to fully supply materials necessary for painting studies to students; however, resources are being sought as well as social partners who sometimes provide paint for free” SER (p.29). But the Team also commends the programme for providing some painting materials and offering a 20% discount for additional materials to students. When meeting the students the Team was informed that this service was not well known by them,

therefore the Team recommends the programme improves the dissemination of information to ensure all students are made aware of all the services (discounts, scholarships etc.) the programme and Faculty offers/provides.

5. Study process and student assessment

Recruitment on the programme (SER Tables 9 & 10 p.34) fluctuates between 2 and 8 over the past five years and each year the programme graduates on average 5 students (but often 2 or 3), which the Team thinks very low and is the minimum cohort a course can successfully run both from a financial position and academically from a learning and teaching perspective especially from peer learning. The Team recommends VAA and the Faculty looks to see how it can increase the demand and recruitment of students to make the programme a serious player in post-graduate Fine Art studies.

In 2009, the order of admission to the Master's study programme of Painting was changed. The Faculty of Postgraduate Studies was established and a general admission to the block of 5 study programmes (painting, sculpture, graphics, photography, and media art) was organised. The entrance exams have been organised in two stages. In the first stage, applicants present a portfolio of their creation and, in the second stage, a conception of their future master's project. The Team supports this process, but thinks the Faculty and programme management should work to recruit students from other Bachelor programmes rather than relying too much on their own undergraduate programme.

The entrance exam to this programme is organised according to the order of organisation and evaluation of entrance exams approved by the Minister of Education and Science.

Students are encouraged to engage in external projects, competitions and exhibitions and the Team observed that they do so, but the teaching team do not accredit their engagement nor their output, which is not the best way to encourage such activities. *“The fact that knowledge acquired by way of non-formal education and self-education is not evaluated by grades is one of the weaknesses of the study programme although such education is encouraged and the results are reflected in the course and degree projects. However, it is a general provision of Vilnius Academy of Arts and a single department cannot perform otherwise”* (SER)

The Team notes this issue has been raised by previous accreditation teams and recommends the programme team should find ways to resolving this and build these activities into the curriculum and accredit them.

With a strong emphasis on the interrelationship of theory and practice, the Team observed a notable difference between the use of e-learning strategies (lectures, references, social media and interactive communication tools) by theory staff compared to that by studio practitioners. The Team recommends that all the staff (studio and theory) of the programme should look at the potential for greater use of IT and new strategies for learning and teaching. VDA and the Faculty should introduce a Staff Development programme to train all teachers in the use of these media.

Over the past three years the students of the Painting Studio actively participated in 26 exhibitions organised by the Painting Department and the Department of Public Relations in Kaunas and Kaunas region and the students independently initiated 9 exhibitions.

The Team fully supports the initiative of the Faculty, which in 2011 established the Alumni club. Graduates are invited to join the club and this enables them to use the Faculty laboratories and spaces for agreed fee.

The SER (p.38) states “*It has to be mentioned that master students of VAA KF Painting Studio practically do not have a possibility to participate in the Erasmus exchange programme since no places are given in the Erasmus exchange programme lists, sent by VAA Faculty of Postgraduate Studies, with a single exception in 2012-2013, when one place was given*”. The Team strongly recommends that VAA and the Faculty provides the resources and support to enable MA students to participate in international exchange/visits as this severely restricts the student’s learning experience and can damage the recruitment of students.

Information about the study programme and its changes is spread using the following media: on the information stands, through student representatives, senior students, student union, Internet websites (www.vda.lt and www.vdakf.lt), in the Dean’s office, in the Department through consultations with the Head and teachers. The informative publication of VAA KF ‘Studento atmintinė’ is annually renewed and distributed to students.

The Team commends the programme’s use of social media, where students have a specially created e-mail (tapybosstudija@gmail.com) where they regularly get information related to lectures or art activity (local and international exhibition-competitions). There is also a page created on Facebook *Tapybos studija VDA KF (Painting Studio VAA KF)*, which brings together Painting Studio students and graduates of different generations.

The Faculty and programme also provides: career guidance; links to professional organisations and galleries; transport support; practice and leisure facilities of the Academy in Nida; free access for physical activity in the sports club ‘Daugirdas Gym’; and discounted access to museums and art galleries. The provision of a dormitory at Aleksandras Stulginskis University for students is expedient and the students’ needs are fully met. All students of VAA KF have the possibility to get social and incentive scholarships as well as single social grants.

The Team commends the Academy for providing this broad range of support, which the students were generally happy with.

The study subjects of the programme are assessed with the evaluation of student’s knowledge and abilities using a ten-grade system. After the assessments the results are announced and students have a right to appeal to the Appellation Committee of the faculty.

The assessment criteria of the study programme are based on the learning outcomes and are discussed with students in group discussions and individually if requested. The students stated they fully understood the LOs and assessment criteria and were happy with the assessment process.

The Team noted exceptionally high grades in the assessment of both theory and practice over the past two years. The Team was assured during the review meetings of the introduction of the new methodological guidelines for assessment to be introduced in 2014. We welcome these guidelines, which will help ensure comparability and level of achievement of work produced.

According to the data on graduate employment over the past 5 years (SER Table 13 p.45) and according to comments of employers, graduates of KF Painting Studio work as theatre painters, teachers in art schools, restorers, organisers of cultural events, and Directors of galleries.

The Team was only able to meet a small number of graduates. The SER claims that it is difficult to formally track the alumni and that the choice of extending ties beyond the programme is generally left to the alumni; the meetings with alumni and teachers show that a number of alumni

provide significant support by participating in extra-curriculum activities, critiques and public presentations thus expressing their support and advise, thus indirectly proving their further achievements to the programme.

The meetings with SER group, teachers and staff showed that the aims of the programme and their image of a graduate correlate.

6. Programme management

In discussion with the Senior Management Group and from the SER the Team learnt that the Head of Department is responsible for the administration and coordination of the study programme. Within the study programme there are student groups, which have senior students elected, who moderate the group when decisions are taken, obtain and spread information to the Student Union, administrate and organise various activities.

The highest decision making body in the Department is the General Meeting of its members doing pedagogical and research work. At these meetings, decisions of Senate, the Board of the Faculty and key quality assurance and enhancement issues are discussed. The Team think this process works.

The Study Programme Committee is the main body responsible for quality and renewal of that programme. The programme is using questionnaires and seeking more active involvement of social stakeholders into evaluation of study quality (surveys, discussions, common meetings), and co-operation with other higher education schools. The SER (p.50) states *“The weaknesses of management of the Painting programme are the following: external social stakeholders, especially employers, social partners are little interested in the preparation process of young artists; attempts to establish and develop the activity of the Alumni club have not yet produced desirable results; due to a small number of the teachers in the Department,”* This view regarding the need to increase the engagement with the stakeholders is endorsed by the Senior Management at our meeting with them. The Team recommends the Faculty and programme works hard to engage with these stakeholders to be involved in the ongoing evaluation of the programme.

Analysis of the SER and meetings with Senior Management and teachers indicate that the participation of external social stakeholders also affects the study quality; but in the SER (p.11) it also states *“However, involvement of social stakeholders into the determination of the aim and learning outcomes of the study programme remains rather passive.”* As the Team recommended earlier the programme should increase its engagement with the stakeholders, but also strive to expand the range of their stakeholders (see also paragraph two of the chapter *“The programme aims and learning outcomes”* in this document).

The study quality in the Painting Studio is evaluated at the end of each semester. One of the evaluation methods of the study quality is student surveys. The anonymous survey consists of questions about student needs, study programme curriculum, quality of study subjects, social and academic support. The study quality improvement is also influenced by surveys of social partners and their responses about student achievements and progress in the course of a semester. The Team fully supports these processes but recommends the programme is more strategic in expanding its social partners to gain better, more informative information.

The Administration, the Study Programme Committee and the teachers who are not members of either actively participate in the activity of study programme quality improvement (the statement is supported by arguments in SER (p.43) and interview with SER group). There are consistent

signs of a close dialogue between the teachers and the students that also encourage improvements and the programme's leaning to compensate or encourage student's initial skills (noted in SER (p.45) and in interviews with teachers and alumni).

There appears to be a gap between close informal participation in this process and the formal evaluation; the latter is regarded as a bureaucratic burden (a member of the SER Group admitted the challenge of SER being not the critical evaluation but the need to provide the document) and is thus vaguely regarded as a critical tool. However, the document eloquently explains its own purpose. *"The constant study quality evaluation [regular external and internal evaluations] directly influences the improvement of the programme and study process, development of student individual abilities, formation of their self-critical and critical-analytical attitude, appropriate preparation for independent professional and creative activity, and, consequently, attraction and popularity of the study programme"* (SER p.42). Similar disregard of administrative instruments is seen in several other areas where it gives place for more immediate hands-on approach, namely the involvement of external stakeholders and safety measures at the facilities.

The future steps in the direction of collecting feedback from the social stakeholders regarding the priorities of the programme should be better calculated to reach relevant respondents who are outside of the prepared context which can only provide a predictable response: i.e. reach out for a carefully balanced and diversified selection of art professionals rather than online audience of a website of one or another organisation, which was done in case of an online questionnaire organised together with the Lithuanian Artist's Association. The design of such studies should be more elaborate for the sake of the programme's alumni becoming better embedded in the processes of foreseeable future. This same study manifests a general lack of administration's attention towards the organised shaping of the body of external stakeholders; the issue is raised repeatedly in SER, where it is noted that *"The majority of relations with social partners are established through personal contacts"* (SER p.45) and that *"Contacts with graduates and data about their follow-up activity are obtained irregularly; in many cases, it is difficult to do it and it becomes a private matter"* (SER p.45). While the programme proves to maintain benevolent relationship with existing social partners (SER pp.44-46) and the teachers are able to provide individual attention to each student's need (as confirmed by both teachers and students), the circle of external partners needs to expand to answer to the programme's aims (this also concerns external teaching staff addressed in other section of this report).

The Team found there are effective means in place to assure the quality of the programme. The Team recognises the tensions rising due to the programme's dependence on the headquarters of Vilnius Academy of Arts and the existence of its counterpart Painting programme in Vilnius, and encourages the programme team to use this parallel structure for their mutual advantage. It is to the programme's and students' advantage to encourage exchange and cooperation between different arts programmes across country while at the same time striving to achieve the Faculty's aim to become one of the most significant centres of art studies in the central region of Lithuania (mission explained in SER (p.7).

In the SER (p.46) it states *"The study quality is ensured through the selection of the best teachers and practicing specialists, their assessment procedure, self-evaluation of art activity, art and scientific research and studies, through continual perfection of programmes taking into consideration conclusions of self-evaluation and external evaluation as well as student achievements in the context of the programme, institution, and state and in the international context, through surveys about the study quality and meetings with social stakeholders, during which feedback is gained, through renewal of facilities and, if possible, their application for high-quality studies"* The Team supports the quality management strategy and believes the Faculty is moving in the right direction regarding Quality Assurance and Enhancement but

recommends more clearly defined criteria and metrics/targets (e.g. pedagogic and research; programme: recruitment numbers and qualifications, progression, drop-out, achievement and employment targets; internal and external annual programme evaluation reports) be introduced to 'measure' the programme's success/failings.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Team recommends:

1. the Faculty takes immediate action to ensure the premises meet the legal health and safety measures required. Arrangements for students' practice are barely adequate both in terms of the studio provision and the library.
2. a more considered and rigorous process to gain appropriate data for the evaluation process. The programme should carry out a more systematic self-evaluation through closer consideration of its strengths (including distinctive features), weaknesses, opportunities and threats, with more clearly defined criteria and metrics/targets (e.g. pedagogic and research; programme: recruitment numbers and qualifications, progression, drop-out, achievement and employment targets) introduced to 'measure' the programme's success/failings.
3. a more balanced curriculum – the programme reviews the study content, the balance between 'assignments and individual practice' and 'theory and practice', the teaching strategies and teacher expertise to better facilitate 'the different expressions of painting, and multidisciplinary arts'.
4. to introduce more drawing and digital software training.
5. the programme should look to presenting models of good practice and having clear guidelines for writing a Master's thesis.
6. courses should be open to more independent and creative approaches by students. The programme should find ways to build external activities into the curriculum and accredit them.
7. contemporary visual art theory should be taught by art teachers.
8. a more diverse teaching contribution to increase the contemporary element by national and international visiting teachers.
9. VAA and the Faculty actively support their programme teaching staff to participate in international exchanges/visits.
10. the programme improves the dissemination of information to ensure all students are made aware of all the services (discounts, scholarships etc.).
11. VAA and the Faculty looks to see how it can increase the demand and recruitment of students.
12. all staff teaching on the programme should receive staff development in the use of IT for new strategies in learning and teaching.
13. VAA and the Faculty provides the resources and support to enable MA students to participate in international exchange/visits.
14. the Faculty and programme works hard to engage with the stakeholders to be involved in the ongoing evaluation of the programme.
15. to expand the range of expertise of their social stakeholders.

IV. SUMMARY

1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

This is a balanced programme combining subjects of fine arts, art, humanities, and speciality studies. The programme goals to *Develop an analytically and conceptually thinking personality, able to evaluate and interpret art processes in a broad cultural context, independently formulate art-related tasks, find optimal research and solution methods, and critically evaluate and apply theoretical and practical knowledge in personal practical-creative activity* are largely achieved. Learning Outcomes are well defined and aligned to the programme's aims. The study process emphasises a symbiosis of contemporary art theories, different expressions of painting, and multidisciplinary arts.

The programme has a considerable way to go to see this multidisciplinary environment realised.

2. Curriculum design

Volume of study plan is 120 ECTS over 2 years. Mandatory courses are arranged quite evenly so the workload is evenly spread. Quality of the majority of the MA theses are appropriate to Master's level. Considerable emphasis is put on the research studies starting from the first semester. Structure and content of the programme is sufficient to ensure the students achieve the learning outcomes. There is strong collaboration with the Department of Humanities. There has been an increase of opportunities to introduce students to interdisciplinary projects.

Students would like more drawing and digital software training to enable them to engage more in inter-disciplinary practice and improve their professional presentation skills. Courses should be open to more independent and creative approaches by students. Contemporary visual art theory should be taught by art teachers to unify practical studies with broad theoretical concepts of classical and contemporary art. Art courses should be open for flexible interrelationships with electronic media or spatial studies.

3. Staff

Staffing legal requirements for the MA study programme are met. The qualification of the teachers of the Painting study programme meets the statutory and institutional requirements. A generous number of teaching staff deliver the MA programme with the range of skills and attributes for the students to attain the learning outcomes, supported by other teachers from the Departments of Architecture, Textile, Graphics, and Humanities who deliver theoretical and practical classes. The teaching staff are dedicated and highly motivated, much appreciated by the students and alumni. Professional development of teachers is regulated and carried out by periodic teacher assessment. All the painting studio staff are active artists exhibiting nationally and internationally. Teachers delivering theoretical and practical classes are based in the Departments of Architecture, Textile, Graphics, and Humanities. Students are introduced to a wider scope of techniques, i.e. various techniques of graphic printing.

There should be a greater input from national and international staff. The mandatory part of the MA programme (including graduation work) is provided by only three teachers. There is a lack of academic mobility of teachers and teacher exchanges.

4. Facilities and learning resources

There have been proposals to develop the campus, especially with the new library. Students are satisfied with the studio spaces. Teaching and learning equipment including laboratories and computer equipment are adequate both in size and quality. The new workshops and equipment

have been recently purchased and installed. A good system of inter-library loans in place which goes some way to overcome the shortage in stock. Provides some painting materials and offers a 20% discount for additional materials to students.

The remainder of the building to be renovated is in a primitive state. There is need for consideration to health and safety issues of the building, the premises are totally inadequate in terms of fire precautions, heating, ventilation, toilets and hot water supply. There are no possibilities to fully supply materials necessary for painting studies to students. The current environment of the library and work conditions there are very poor.

5. Study process and student assessment

Students successfully engage in external projects, competitions and exhibitions. There is strong emphasis on the interrelationship of theory and practice. Students actively participated in 26 exhibitions organised by the Painting Department and the Department of Public Relations. Establishment of the Alumni club. Programme. The programme provides career guidance; links to professional organisations and galleries; transport support; practice and leisure facilities and dormitories. All students of VAA KF have the possibility to get social and incentive scholarships as well as single social grants. Students fully understand the Learning Outcomes and assessment criteria and were happy with the assessment process. New methodological guidelines for assessment are being prepared. Graduates work as theatre painters, teachers in art schools, restorers, organisers of cultural events, and Directors of galleries. The aims of the programme and their image of a graduate correlate.

Recruitment on the programme fluctuates between 2 and 8 over the past five years and each year the programme graduates on average 5 students. The programme relies too much on their own undergraduate programme. The teaching team do not accredit student external engagement nor their output. There is a notable inconsistency in the use of e-learning strategies between theoretical and studio practice courses.

6. Programme management

The programme management successfully ensures decision making, responsibilities for the monitoring, evaluation and implementation of the programme are carried out. There are means in place to assure the quality of the programme. Anonymous student surveys about student needs, study programme curriculum, quality of study subjects, social and academic support are conducted. There is a close dialogue between the teachers and the students. The programme is moving in the right direction regarding Quality Assurance and Enhancement.

There is need to increase the engagement with the social stakeholders. There is little critical self-evaluation without clear measures of success and weaknesses. The activity of the Alumni club have not yet produced desirable results. There is disregard of administrative instruments.

V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Painting* (state code – 621W10010) at the Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts, Kaunas Faculty is given **positive** evaluation.

Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas.

| No. | Evaluation Area | Evaluation Area in Points* |
|-----|---|----------------------------|
| 1. | Programme aims and learning outcomes | 3 |
| 2. | Curriculum design | 3 |
| 3. | Staff | 4 |
| 4. | Material resources | 3 |
| 5. | Study process and assessment (student admission, study process student support, achievement assessment) | 3 |
| 6. | Programme management (programme administration, internal quality assurance) | 3 |
| | Total: | 19 |

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