

# Assessment Report

## Arts

Tallinn University

University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy

Tartu Art College

2018

## Contents

INTRODUCTION .....	3
GENERAL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	4
1. ASSESSMENT REPORT OF THE ARTS STUDY PROGRAMME GROUP AT TALLINN UNIVERSITY .....	9
1.1. INTRODUCTION .....	9
1.2. GENERAL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS AT STUDY PROGRAMME GROUP LEVEL .....	11
1.3. STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF THE STUDY PROGRAMMES BY ASSESSMENT AREAS .....	13
1.3.1. HANDICRAFT TECHNOLOGY AND DESIGN PHEP; INTEGRATED CRAFT AND HOME ECONOMICS TECHNOLOGIES BA .....	13
1.3.2. FILM ARTS PHEP; AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA BA; AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA; TELEVISION/DOCUMENTARY FILM MA; INTEGRATED ARTS, MUSIC AND MULTIMEDIA BA; CROSSMEDIA IN FILM AND TELEVISION BA; TELEVISION PRODUCTION MA; CONTEMPORARY MEDIA MA.....	27
2. ASSESSMENT REPORT OF THE ARTS SPG AT UNIVERSITY OF TARTU VIJANDI CULTURE ACADEMY .....	40
2.1. INTRODUCTION .....	40
2.2. GENERAL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS AT STUDY PROGRAMME GROUP LEVEL .....	42
2.3. STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF STUDY PROGRAMMES BY ASSESSMENT AREAS .....	44
2.3.1. ESTONIAN NATIVE CRAFTS PHEP; NATIVE CRAFTS MA.....	44
3. ASSESSMENT REPORT OF THE ARTS SPG AT THE TARTU ART COLLEGE .....	54
3.1. INTRODUCTION .....	54
3.2. GENERAL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS AT STUDY PROGRAMME GROUP LEVEL .....	55
3.3. STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF STUDY PROGRAMMES BY ASSESSMENT AREAS .....	58
3.3.1. PAINTING AND RESTORATION PHEP; SCULPTURE PHEP; TEXTILE PHEP; FURNITURE DESIGN AND RESTORATION PHPE; LEATHER DESIGN AND RESTORATION PHEP .....	58
3.3.2. PHOTOGRAPHY PHEP; MEDIA AND ADVERTISEMENT DESIGN PHEP.....	69

## Introduction

Quality assessment of a study programme group involves the assessment of the conformity of study programmes and the studies and development activities that take place on their basis to legislation, national and international standards and developmental directions with the purpose of providing recommendations to improve the quality of studies.

The goal of quality assessment of a study programme group is supporting the internal evaluation and self-development of the institution of higher education. Quality assessment of study programme groups is not followed by sanctions: expert assessments should be considered recommendations.

Quality assessment of a study programme group takes place at least once every 7 years based on the regulation approved by EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education [\*Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education\*](#).

The aim of the assessment team was the evaluation of the Study Programme Group (SPG) of Arts in three higher education institutions: Tallinn University; University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy and Tartu Art College.

The team was asked to assess the conformity of the study programmes belonging to the study programme group and the instruction provided on the basis thereof to legislation and to national and international standards and/or recommendations, including the assessment of the level of the corresponding theoretical and practical instruction, the research and pedagogical qualification of the teaching staff and research staff, and the sufficiency of resources for the provision of instruction.

The following persons formed the assessment team:

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The assessment process was coordinated by Karin Laansoo (EKKA).

After the preparation phase, the work of the assessment team in Estonia started on Monday, 13 November 2017, with an introduction to the Higher Education System as well as the assessment procedure by EKKA, the Estonian Quality Assurance Organization for Higher and Vocational Education. The members of the team agreed the overall questions and areas to discuss with each group at the two institutions, who were part of the assessment process. The distribution of tasks between the members of the assessment team was organised and the detailed schedule of the site visits agreed.

During the following days, meetings were held with the representatives of Tallinn University (Tuesday and Wednesday, 14-15 November); Tartu University Viljandi Culture Academy (Wednesday 15 November) and Tartu Art College (Thursday 16 November). In all cases, the schedule for discussion on site for each of the various study programmes only allowed for short time slots to be available for team members to exchange information, discuss conclusions and implications for further questions.

On Friday, 17 November, the team held an all-day meeting, during which both the structure of the final report was agreed and findings of team meetings were compiled in a first draft of the assessment report. This work was executed in a cooperative way and the members of the team intensively discussed their individual views on the relevant topics.

In the following two sections, the assessment team summarise their general findings, conclusions and recommendations which are relevant across the whole SPG. In so doing, the team provides an external and objective perspective on the programmes and the contexts within which they are delivered. Ultimately, the intention is to provide constructive comment and critique which may form the basis upon which improvements in the quality of the programmes may be achieved. In formulating its recommendations, however, the assessment team has not evaluated the financial feasibility associated with their implementation.

## **General findings and recommendations**

Overall the programmes subject to the assessment conform to the standards of education appropriate to the academic levels within the subject disciplines. The evaluation team witnessed robust communities of learning, that are stable and well resourced. Institutions benefit from effective leadership and programmes are managed and taught by motivated and well qualified professors and teachers. Facilities and equipment are generally good and programmes benefit from being part of a University infrastructure (Tallinn University and University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy). The teaching environment is characterised by a relatively small scale of class / group size allowing for students to benefit from personalised teaching support.

The programmes include diverse specialist subject areas from traditional craft and home economics to digital media disciplines. There is clearly a strong desire to retain traditional craft skills as key component of the Arts and Design provision,

alongside a clear commitment to ensuring that all students are equipped with entrepreneurial skills and abilities.

The assessment team encountered teachers who are committed and motivated individuals, who are for the most part actively engaged in developing their teaching methods and subject knowledge and are supported to do so by their institutions. As is common and appropriate within Arts and Design HE institutions, many teaching staff combine part-time teaching with their professional and or industry practice. It was also evident that the programme administration teams and individual coordinators play a crucial role in dealing with student enquiries, staff briefing and schedules, and a wide range of day-to-day management issues.

In some programmes it was noticeable that the younger, recently appointed teaching staff were especially articulate and convincing in their understanding of the necessity for students to develop a self-critical approach to their practice informed by rigorous enquiry and practice based approach to research and related contextual and theoretical knowledge.

However, it was also apparent that the competition for teaching posts within programmes is low, with the suggestion that the modest salaries offered are one of the main causes for this. Meanwhile, many programmes declared a commitment to diversifying the range of teaching input by hosting international visiting staff (some through Erasmus mobility exchange) but there was little evidence to measure the impact of this. Meanwhile, if salaries are not at least relatively competitive with other EU and international Universities, securing visiting teachers will continue to be a significant challenge.

There is a mixed picture as far as student participation in Erasmus and other international exchange is concerned. For some students the process-orientated method of study can make it difficult to take extended periods of time abroad, for others, family and/or work commitments are prohibitive, and in some cases there are simply not enough comparable programmes in the specific areas of specialization outside Estonia (Native Crafts for example). However, more rather than less mobility would be advantageous. Having access to guest lecturers who have visited the study programmes is something that is specifically emphasized and appreciated by students.

In general the programmes are characterised by a strong practice/making based ethos in which practical and professional skills and applied craft and creativity form an important part of the learning process. Programmes generally offer a flexible range of elective options that enable students to make choices beyond their area of specialisation and in some cases collaborate in interdisciplinary projects. Work placements, internships and commissioned projects enable students to gain valuable work experience, often in association with cooperation partners that programmes have cultivated fruitful relationships with. Almost without exception the evaluation team encountered highly motivated and enthusiastic students who express a loyalty and commitment to their teachers and institutions.

Theory, and its relation to practice is understood very differently within the programmes. In some cases it is regarded as literally the theoretical aspects of the craft or method being used for creative work. Theory that explicitly introduces different philosophical positions and related discourses that inform a critical and reflexive approach to creative practice is less easy to identify in the curriculum content.

Based on the SER documents, the assessment team experienced some difficulty in understanding how the student navigates their journey and progression through their programme of study, and in most cases this was not described in any detail. Some institutions have introduced a specific module or induction events that help students to orientate themselves and become familiar with the academic expectations involved in student centered learning, and this appears to be an example of good practice. At a more local level it was clear that many programmes rely on staff giving verbal briefings and updates, and while a proportion of students felt this was adequate, others felt there was a need for more formalized but 'student friendly' information to be available. While the evaluation team understand that it is not currently the practice to provide student handbooks, including for example the structure, content, teaching methods and assessment processes, it is recommended that some form of handbook is produced in consultation with students in the future.

Entrepreneurship has been adopted and incorporated into all programmes to a greater or lesser extent, and is explicitly referenced in the SER documents. There are many positive signs that students are benefitting directly and/or indirectly from this topic being included in the curriculum, and the initiative has evidently been enthusiastically supported by alumni and cooperation partners.

The assessment team experienced varying degrees of clarity in relation to assessment procedures and principles. In many cases students (and occasionally staff) did not seem to be aware of the assessment criteria and there was little evidence to suggest that a distinction is made between formative and summative assessment. It is common practice for programmes to invite external experts to join assessment events. This practice raises some concerns regarding the protocols governing the assessment process, and how consistency and fairness is maintained. Students commonly receive verbal feedback during or following their assessment, and only in very few cases is feedback conveyed in written form. However, while there may be advantages with this approach, it prevents students (and staff) from keeping a record of their progress.

Although e-learning teaching methods have been adopted effectively in some programmes, there is clearly scope to extend and innovate different approaches in the future. Meanwhile, it is important to ensure that there is an appropriate balance between assignments and the credits awarded, an issue commented on by some students.

Research cultures are beginning to be established as more Arts and Design students take up PhD's. There is a mixed picture regarding the extent to which research communities engage with international discourses regarding practice

based research and it could benefit institutions to join membership organisations such as ELIA (European League of Institutes of Art) that have generated discussion papers and conferences on this topic.

### Strengths

- A commitment to maintaining national craft traditions while also creating opportunities for students to study and cultivate their creativity in relation to new technologies.
- A willingness on the part of teaching staff to respond to change. This reflects strong and effective institutional and academic leadership characterised by openness and transparency that inspires a high level of trust and confidence.
- Strong emphasis and commitment to teaching practical and professional skills, and how these can be applied in relation to real life projects and contexts.
- Commitment to including entrepreneurship within the curriculum that has been widely adopted, and supported by cooperation partners.
- Good provision of teaching resources with access to well-maintained equipment and study environments for students.
- Motivated and engaged students who value the study process and close contact with teaching staff who typically have appropriate qualifications and professional reputation.

### Recommendations

- The panel recommends that a review of the arts, crafts and design provision should be commissioned at a national level in order to share best practice and better understand the relationship between the four main providers of Arts education. This could enable each provider to share best practice and better understand how the range of programmes offered contribute to a comprehensive and balanced provision of subject areas and fields of study across the higher education sector.
- Review teacher education to ensure that the school curriculum can benefit from inspired energetic and motivated teachers who have contemporary art and design knowledge and skills, that includes Digital Media practices (not just digital skills). It is essential that teachers are able to inspire more school leavers to pursue HE in creative fields relevant to the emerging

global creative industries. This review might also look at possible collaboration with partner institutions in different subject fields.

- Review teacher salaries in relation to low applications for posts, and in order to attract qualified and experienced international talent.
- Consider ways in which programmes can provide more explicit information about the student journey as a process of progression from the start of the study programme to the end. This could be conveyed in visual form incorporating student friendly language.
- Given that entrepreneurship is a relatively new component of the curriculum in most programmes, the evaluation team suggest that institutions disseminate outcomes in order to exchange knowledge and share examples of good practice. This could also involve other institutions such as the Estonia Business School in recognition of the fact that cultural and social entrepreneurship, in the form of creative producers are important players in the creation of new public platforms for arts and cultural activity.
- Review assessment procedures and teaching methods and evaluate how students engage with the process and outcome. In addition programmes should consider formalising assessment feedback in written form to encourage students to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses after the assessment event, and be able to keep a record of their progress.
- Review the research environment with particular reference to the development of practice based research at Masters and PhD level that is well established in many Internationally recognized Arts Universities.

# **1. Assessment report of the Arts study programme group at Tallinn University**

## **1.1. Introduction**

Tallinn University is the third largest public university in Estonia and focuses primarily on the fields of humanities and the social and natural sciences. TU is a result of the merger of several higher education institutions (Tallinn Pedagogical University, Academy Nord, Estonian Institute of Humanities, Institute of History of the Estonian Academy of Sciences, Academic Library of Estonia) in Tallinn into a single institution, which resulted in the founding of TU as a public university on 18 March 2005.

TU is currently the largest university of humanities in Tallinn. Tallinn University has more than 8,000 students (with 5.5% of them international), and over 800 employees, including over 400 researchers and lecturers.

According to the Development Plan for 2015–2020, the vision of the University is to play a leading role in promoting and developing an intelligent lifestyle in Estonia, thereby supporting both Estonian sustainability and the self-actualisation of individuals. The University sees its mission as supporting the sustainable development of Estonia through high quality research and study, the education of intellectuals, public discussions and the promotion of academic partnership. In its activities, the university adheres to the following basic values – openness, quality, professionalism and unity.

The strategic objective of TU for 2015–2020 is to consolidate its activities into five focus fields: educational innovation; digital and media culture; cultural competences; healthy and sustainable lifestyle; and society and open governance. Educational innovation (as the priority for the University) aims to support the development and implementation of 21st century learning culture in the Estonian education sphere.

The main responsibility for developing a focus field lies with the academic unit that has been formed as a result of consolidation of resources and activities, involving other academic units indicated in the implementation strategy.

Study programmes on Arts are offered by three academic units of the university – the Baltic Film, Media, Arts and Communication School, School of Natural Sciences and Health and Haapsalu College.

The BFM study programmes fall under the university's focus field of digital and media culture. All these study programmes are unique because of the strong link between teaching theoretical knowledge and developing and applying practical skills. The most modern learning environment in the Baltic States in terms of its film, television and sound studio, video editing and computer classes creates excellent preconditions for teaching and learning.

The objectives of the Integrated Craft and Home Economics Technologies BSc study programmes are in full compliance with the University's objectives to offer higher education based on integrated study, research and creative activities. As the structure and content of the Integrated Craft and Home Economics Technologies study programme (previous title Handicraft and Home Economics) largely result from the need to prepare students for the Master's programme in teacher training (speciality-specific basic training), the study area has close contacts with general education schools and teachers' professional organisations.

Aggregate data about Arts study programmes

Table 1.

	<b>Handicraft Technology and Design</b>	<b>Film Arts</b>	<b>Audio-visual Media</b>	<b>Crossmedia in Film and Television</b>	<b>Integrated Arts, Music and Multi-media</b>	<b>Integrated Craft and Home Economics Technologies</b>	<b>Audiovisual Media: Television / Documentary Film</b>	<b>Television Production/ Contemporary Media</b>
Study level	PHEP	PHEP	BA	BA	BA	BA	MA	MA
Language of instruction	Estonian	Estonian	English	English	Estonian	Estonian	English	Estonian
ECTS credits	240	240	180	180	180	180	120	120
Current version of the study programme	2016	2016	2016	2016	2016	2016	2017	2016
Year of programme launch	2011	1992	2007	2012	2016	2002	2012	2015/2016
Number of students 1 Nov 2016	44	36 (50 BA)	128	59	29	12 (35)	16	32

Table 2.

	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
Matriculation (including no. of international students)	112 (22)	92 (24)	179 (23)
Graduation	49	93	75
Dropout	63	47	69
Outgoing students (mobility)	28	12	16
Incoming students (mobility)	36	77	71

## 1.2. General findings and recommendations at study programme group level

The SER provided a comprehensive overview of the University's strategic vision and the rationale for the current position and development of the Arts study programmes.

It is clear that each of the study programmes assessed in this report have been subject to various degrees of change and development since the last assessment in 2010, including change of buildings and locations. These changes have in part been driven by the need to consolidate resources and activities, and address competition for students due to the country's demographic situation. While the panel recognise the logic of positioning of the programmes across 3 academic units of the University (as indicated in point 4 on page 12 of the SER), it is not so easy to see how this increases the possibility of integration through common creative projects - referred to in the final paragraph on page 11 of the SER.

The study programmes conform to the relevant academic quality standards and appropriate strategies are in place to inform the development of the programmes based on clearly stated objectives and analysis of the local and regional educational context in which they operate.

The study programmes appear to fulfill the academic mission of the University and declared needs of the labour market, taking into account the key economic and evolving cultural conditions at national and international level.

While not always easy to navigate, the SER document provided a formal overview of the aims and objectives of programmes and outline structure of the curriculum relating to them. The outcome of the evaluation panel meetings confirm that learning outcomes support students to meet appropriate levels of achievement - although there is a degree of variation regarding the extent to which these standards are met in relation to specific programmes. Likewise, the panel concur that in response to very different agendas and objectives, the programmes provide students with a coherent learning experience delivered with a strong emphasis on practical training.

While formal systems for collecting student feedback are only partially effective (as indicated in point 4 on page 12 of the SER), a close connection between staff and students ensures that the student voice is heard and responded to in reviewing and shaping the students learning experience.

### Strengths:

- The support systems outlined in the SER document (under 1.3) with a focus on student centered learning, including ÖIS, ASIO and e-learning

environment and student counseling service indicate that the programmes benefit from an effective and well organised University infrastructure.

- Involvement of cooperation partners, employers and alumni in programme development.
- Good, and in some cases excellent opportunities for students to engage in live projects, placements and internships as part of their learning. This is supported by the inclusion of entrepreneurship as a defined aspect of the curriculum.
- The University's introductory 'learning to learn' module provides new students with helpful advice about the institution and how to make best use of learning resources.
- Creating opportunities for entrepreneurship to be an integral part of the curriculum is clearly a positive development that both students and employers commended at interviews.

Areas for improvement and recommendations:

- Consider establishing and articulating academic quality benchmarking. It is not clear in the SER document, or from panel meetings what the learning outcomes and level descriptors within the different study programmes are benchmarked against? Is it possible for example to ensure that the top grade in BA ICHET is equivalent to the top grade in the Prof HE study programme, and how do these compare for example with the Dublin Descriptors that are frequently referred to by other Art and Design institutions?
- While there appears to be a robust assessment framework, there does not appear to be a clear distinction between the function of formative and summative assessment and some staff encounter a certain uncertainty when applying formal assessment/grading criteria to creative work. It was not clear to the panel if there is a University forum where teachers can share and discuss assessment issues with colleagues. Establishing such a forum could be a very positive development. Assessment frequently involves external experts and is conveyed verbally and informally. The panel recommends that written feedback would provide students with a formal indication of their progress and what they need to do to improve the quality of their work.
- Provide student-friendly information regarding the curriculum structure. For example this could include a diagram or 'Map' that describes how the student navigates their learning journey from one stage / level of the curriculum to another within their programme of study. This information could be included in a student handbook that explicitly describes the key

elements of the curriculum, teaching methods and assessment requirements. A handbook could include quotes from former students, images and other useful information for students i.e. it should not be another bureaucratic document!

- Orientation of the study programmes. In the case of BFM, develop a strategic plan that describes the distinction between the individual study programmes and the relationship between them. In ICHET and HDT review the definition of 'handicraft' and 'integrated craft' to ensure that students (including international students) understand the designation and what studying these subjects actually mean. Moreover, the Arts study programme group as a whole appears to lack overall leadership as a result of each programme residing in different schools or academic units.
- Addressing the drop-out rate. Although the drop-out varies between programmes, building dynamic communities of practice could help individual students to be supported by their peer group. This appears to happen successfully within the HTD programme so perhaps there are examples of good practice that can be applied across all the programmes.
- Low uptake of Erasmus opportunities was noted across the programmes, however it is understood the difficulties mobility presents to many students who have other commitments during their studies. It would be worth looking at Erasmus + initiatives, or other opportunities for students to travel to other institutions in small groups for exchange projects for short periods (2 weeks).

### 1.3. Strengths and areas for improvement of the study programmes by assessment areas

#### 1.3.1. Handicraft Technology and Design (HTD)PHEP; Integrated Craft and Home Economics Technologies (ICHET)BA

##### **Study programme and study programme development**

###### Standards

- ✓ The launch or development of the study programme is based on the Standard of Higher Education and other legislation, development plans, analyses (including labour market and feasibility analyses), and professional standards; and the best quality is being sought.
- ✓ The structure and content of modules and courses in a study programme support achievement of the objectives and designed learning outcomes of

- the study programme.
- ✓ Different parts of the study programme form a coherent whole.
- ✓ The study programme includes practical training, the content and scope of which are based on the planned learning outcomes of the study programme.
- ✓ The study programme development takes into account feedback from students, employers, alumni and other stakeholders.

In the case of ICHET and HTD it is clear that both programmes offer a coherent curriculum and broadly enable students to acquire appropriate levels of knowledge and skills commensurate with the overall aims of each programme. The curricula at BA and Prof HE levels have been subject to changes and developments that reflect current and predicted labour conditions within the cultural, creative, health and educational fields. These changes have been developed in response to, and in consultation with key stakeholders and alumni.

### **ICHET**

This study programme is distinct from others in the Arts study group in that its primary role is to lay the foundations for students to become arts and craft teachers. Students have to complete their training by progressing to an MA programme that belongs to a separate study programme group that is not subject to this assessment. The study programme has clearly been subject to significant and complex review (outlined extensively on page 11 of the SER) in an effort to harmonise and integrate an apparently disparate group of subject areas within the School of Natural Science and Health. While the curriculum offers students a wide range of study choices the panel recognize that the desire to integrate the various components of the study programme may still be a work in progress.

Against the backdrop of decreasing numbers of school leavers choosing the creative arts as a HE option, the issue of teacher education is particularly critical. To make matters more problematic, it appears that fewer graduates are attracted to the teaching profession due to poor salaries and lack of prestige attached to this career option. Given that the BA ICHET programme at TU is currently one of the primary options for students to prepare for qualifying as art teachers brings a sharp focus to the situation. While locating the foundation of art and craft teachers education within the Estonian craft tradition is understandable, including film and media (taught within the BFM programme) would seem to be as, if not more relevant to secondary school leavers, who have grown up with digital media.

The overall structure and curriculum content of this programmes at BA level is satisfactory. Students are given a high degree of autonomy and flexibility within a structured learning environment to take responsibility and determine their own creative direction. There are many opportunities for students to choose from an extensive menu of modules in other programmes and schools within the University and it is understood that recent structural changes have made this form of academic mobility easier for students.

While the panel is aware that the ICHET programme has changed location several times over the last few years, the current learning environment is clinical and uninspiring. The quality of work on display was of an average standard and there was minimal evidence of work on view that stood out as exceptional. While the basic demands of the curriculum are being realized, the work appeared to lack a contemporary focus. The panel was not convinced, on the basis of the works presented, that new teachers are being equipped or prepared to inspire a new generation of creative individuals.

## **HTD**

Unfortunately, the tight assessment schedule prevented the panel from visiting the Haapsalu campus. However, examples of final projects and reports and assignments were available to look at. These materials evidenced work of high quality in which students had been actively encouraged to develop their individual interests. The strong connections with local cooperation partners have clearly produced a vibrant context in which students can test the realisation of their ideas in the context of real life situations and challenges.

It was clear that the programme is well equipped and prepared to educate students from diverse backgrounds. The fact that the average age of HTD students is 37 means that students are motivated and already have life experiences to share with their peer group. The strong emphasis on practical skill development appears to be supported by comprehensive workshops and resources. A live project based approach to learning ensures that students are enabled to acquire knowledge and build their confidence through a sequence of assignments at each stage of the programme.

### Strengths

- The HTD and ICHET programmes are embedded in and supported by tightly knit academic and professional communities dedicated to the development of sustainable contemporary craft and design cultures.
- Based on interviews with students and alumni from both programmes, it seems that both appreciate their choice of education and are very articulate and positive in reflecting on the role of contemporary craft in society, including challenges such as gender divisions.

## **ICHET**

- The integration of the two former programmes in Handicraft and Home Economics and Craft and Technology is progressive for both academic and cultural reasons. For students it offers a broader set of roles and role models in craft itself and in craft teaching.
- Students develop good writing and communication skills and abilities through an integrated approach to practice and pedagogic theory.
- Content of programme includes relevant modern general competences such as digital literacy, entrepreneurship communication and teamwork.
- Effective participation in study councils that enable cooperation partners, students, alumni and employers to influence programme development.

## **HTD**

- Very clearly articulated programme aims and curriculum content that demonstrate a particularly coherent approach to the subject.
- Strong focus on, and value given to applied design and practical making skills within a 'real life' context.
- Well-developed pedagogy in relation to a culture of entrepreneurship that successfully links traditional craft and new technology.
- The programme caters for students from a wide range of backgrounds through flexible modes of study.
- The strategic partnerships between the HCT programme and regional partners seem to be working well and be mutually beneficial to the involved partners.

### Areas for improvement and recommendations:

## **ICHET**

- Recruitment of students to the ICHET programme is a challenge that requires close attention, preferably related to a thorough rethinking of the profile of the programme and its affiliation to and impact on primary education. A clear and explicit vision for the further development and positioning of the programme should be established in cooperation with all involved parties, especially the students. For Estonia to sustain the high quality of its craft culture the importance of educating dedicated and

inspiring teachers should not be underestimated. The position of the programme in the national educational context should be considered and followed up by the management. Skills taught in the ICHET programme can also be applied to many different aspects of culture besides secondary schools - within museums, arts centres, galleries through workshops, festivals and numerous other contexts.

- The programme management should consider integrating design related subjects, such as design thinking, design process and methods, for a wider design understanding relevant to crafts. Expanding the scope of the design field to incorporate contemporary design theories and practices, reflecting a rapidly changing job market could help attract more students
- Consider expanding the focus of the programme to more explicitly include the quality of well-being in private and public environments, sustainability and ecology, requiring an alternative experimental learning space.
- Review the ICHET study programme title. Although it's purpose is to include each area of the programme, the title (in English) is clumsy and difficult to situate within the cultural field (a student in the panel meeting had to look at his name sign in front of him to check the programme name!). Consider for example, Integrated Crafts and Technologies, or Domestic crafts and technologies? More generally, the panel recommends reviewing this programme's curriculum in relation to teacher education preparation and maximise and promote a dynamic and contemporary approach to art and design provision in school education. At present the focus appears to be dominated by an orientation to traditional crafts and related domestic technologies. While digital media technologies are offered within electives, the panel suggests that audio visual media as a creative subject area could have a more prominent position within the curriculum.
- Work to create a more inspiring and lively learning environment and promote creative practice across different media and approach to encourage and enthuse more applicants.

**HTD:**

- Improve opportunities for students to experience and engage with international peers and or visiting teachers and practitioners.

## Resources

### Standards

- ✓ Resources (teaching and learning environments, teaching materials, teaching aids and equipment, premises, financial resources) support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.
- ✓ There is a sufficient supply of textbooks and other teaching aids and they are available.
- ✓ Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).
- ✓ Resource development is sustainable.

### **ICHET**

After the structural changes in the University, resulting in three relocations and harmonisation of the learning content, the ICHET study programme now appears to have some stability being located in one building on several floors.

The building is renovated and students with physical disabilities have access to lecture halls and facilities.

The learning environment in ICHET programme is supported by technology-equipped teaching and learning spaces - auditoriums, labs, workshops that include a comprehensive range of well maintained equipment that provide students access to traditional and new technologies.

ICHET programme students can use all the library resources of the Tallinn University by using traditional and advanced search platforms in a library or access databases via the Internet.

### **HTD**

The resources, equipment and technology for the HTD program appear to be adequate to support the curriculum. The panel were shown images of - lecture halls, computer labs, painting and drawing classroom, workshops/labs for woodworking, welding, model making room, metal workshop, vacuum press to treat plastics, auxiliary rooms with special features. Students can use central (paid) printer for printing and copy making, which is connected to each student's personal user account in the college's computer system.

In common with all TU students study materials and syllabi are distributed electronically via ÖIS or on Moodle. However, students of HTD prefer direct contact, or contact via e-mail with the study coordinator or head of the program. This is seen as a key benefit of the small scale of the Haapsalu community.

In addition to the study budget the evaluation team understands that Haapsalu College generates up to 50% of its income through external projects, that is invested in equipment and supporting external projects.

The use of the learning environments and workshops are based on applied design processes, and includes provision for all stages of practical research, problem definition and solution finding.

In relation to this the use of different materials and processes goes beyond the handicraft tradition, to address contemporary problems through applied design methodologies and it provides more opportunities for research and experiment.

#### Strengths:

##### **ICHET**

- A wide range of elective options provide students with access to an equally wide range of resources and technical equipment. The students use the resources of the whole Tallinn University.

##### **HTD**

- The quality of the learning environment and technology equipment appears to encourage and support a particularly high level of skill development and creative practice.
- HDT programme at Haapsalu College takes advantage of local and regional resources and cooperation partnerships. The local health center providing the context for socially responsible design projects by students is a particularly good example of this.

#### Areas for improvement and recommendations:

##### **ICHET**

- Consider mapping existing resources available within the University in order to facilitate more cross-disciplinary approaches to the use of resources.
- Develop a strategy to attract additional financial resources. For example, this could include offering the ICHET program facilities as rental spaces for life long community learning, maker space, crafts circles or summer universities to generate additional funds.

- Create a more inspiring learning environment for the modern understanding and learning of handicraft, home economics crafts and technology.

## **HTD**

- To consider making labs and workshops available for students on non-lecture days

## **Teaching and learning**

### Standards

- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learners' individual and social development.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning is flexible, takes into account the specifics of the form of study and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.
- ✓ Teaching methods and tools used in teaching are modern, effective and support the development of digital culture.
- ✓ Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.
- ✓ The organisation and the content of practical training support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learning mobility.
- ✓ Assessment of learning outcomes is appropriate, transparent and objective, and supports the development of learners.

The names suggest that the HTD and ICHET programmes are interrelated. To a limited extent they are, yet the two programmes have distinctly different profiles. Recent developments in the four year HTD programme include focus on strategic design processes, development of digital competences and entrepreneurial skills, extended professional placement and more weight put on theoretical reflection related to the students' graduation work. The three year ICHT programme offers specialisations in Crafts and Technology and Handicraft and Home Economics. It is closely linked to curricular developments in Estonian primary education, a major aim is to qualify students for teacher education at MA level.

Our meetings with management, heads of programmes, teachers, students and external stakeholders confirm that both programmes maintain the required standards of teaching and learning in higher education. The introductory course about "learning at the university" is perceived by both students and teachers as a relevant platform for students' continual individual and social development. Theory

and practice are integrated and balanced according to the specific contents and profiles of the programmes. Experiential learning and knowledge is at the core, contributing to practice based and flexible learning processes. Digital literacies are ensured, practical training is aligned with the programme learning outcomes as well as the needs of important stakeholders. Having said that, learning mobility is limited and assessment criteria pertaining to creative work are presented as somehow unclear. Limited recruitment of students to the ICHET programme and students dropping out are present challenges.

Strengths:

- Flexible student centered approach to learning.
- In the HTD programme collaboration and teamwork is actively encouraged and this helps build the student group dynamic.
- In the HTD programme students are actively encouraged to participate in live external problem solving projects – as demonstrated by recent local health care initiatives. Cooperation partners and placements clearly provide an important aspect of student learning.
- The Diploma thesis presented as examples of HTD student projects demonstrated a high quality of research analysis, technical skills and applied creativity to problem solving.
- The HTD programme has a substantial regional impact. It attracts mature students who are able to study part time to strengthen their design thinking skills and entrepreneurial competences through close cooperation with regional enterprises.

Areas of improvement and recommendations:

- To reduce the amount of dropout students, the programme content and teaching methods should be reviewed to secure inclusive, interdisciplinary, project based, co-working and challenging teaching and learning.
- The integration of research, creative work, teaching and innovation should be considered in a strategic perspective, which may also shed light on options for further development of the programmes.
- Assessment criteria for creative work should be clarified, as pointed out in the SER.
- In the ICHET programme consider developing a more contemporary approach to materials and techniques alongside traditional crafts in order to engage young people who will inevitably need to respond to the craft of new technologies and materials.

- Consider increasing the cooperation between the ICHET and HTD programmes (as inner resource of Tallinn University) and Estonian Art Academy for closer collaboration, domestic mobility and knowledge exchange.
- Learning mobility should be encouraged and increased.

## Teaching staff

### Standards

- ✓ There is teaching staff with adequate qualifications to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.
- ✓ Overall student assessment on teaching skills of the teaching staff is positive.
- ✓ The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the higher education institution and with partners outside of the higher education institution (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other Estonian or foreign higher education institutions).
- ✓ Recognised foreign and visiting members of the teaching staff and practitioners participate in teaching the study programme.
- ✓ The teaching staff is routinely engaged in professional and teaching-skills development. Assessment of the work by members of the teaching staff (including staff evaluation) takes into account the quality of their teaching as well as of their research, development and creative work, including development of their teaching skills, and their international mobility.

The teaching staff involved in the two programmes, including the ones who teach in both programmes, are committed to their teaching role and highlight the importance of their collegial communities, which are closely related to professional communities outside the university. As stated in the SER, they update their teaching qualifications through training, courses, seminars and conferences. They appreciate the availability of courses at university level as well as tailor-made courses offered at school or college level. Internal training may be organized according to feedback from students in regular evaluations. With small student groups teachers in both programmes underline that teaching and learning processes are easily addressed and discussed by staff and students in a setting where they work together in a practice based academic community.

At Haapsalu College team teaching is central. Yet it seems a challenge to have all teachers commit to formal requirements relating to reporting and documentation. The HTD programme meets the minimum requirements for teaching staff qualifications whereas 28% of the teachers involved in the ICHET programme hold doctoral degrees or the equivalent and three teachers are doctoral students at Helsinki University. International staff mobility is limited and the SER provides

scarce information on how education relates to the research and creative work of teachers.

Strengths:

- Dedicated and experienced team of staff who share good practice and have close contact with students.
- Teachers work together and cooperate, also with external partners and stakeholders.
- Students, alumni and partners provide positive feedback on their teaching, and report that their feedback is taken into account also when improvements are proposed.

Areas of improvement and recommendations:

- International outreach beyond the Nordic-Baltic region should be considered and encouraged. The teaching staff involved in the ICHET programme work hard to uphold the programme under shifting conditions, including three recent relocations and should be supported more by the school management. Given the complexity of this study programme, and comments made in panel meetings with teachers regarding assessment, management should consider establishing a teachers forum to share best practice.
- Although the distance between the locations at Haapsalu and the Tallinn University campus obviously limit communication, it would seem that many of the teaching methods and contemporary subject knowledge developed within HTD could be shared with the ICHET programme.
- Some students commented that Haapsalu can suffer from being too isolated and small - 'everyone soon knows everyone'. Inviting more international, external speakers and practitioners would be received well by the students.

**Students**

Standards

- ✓ Student places are filled with motivated and capable students.
- ✓ The dropout rate is low; the proportion of students graduating within the standard period of study is large.

- ✓ Students are motivated to learn and their satisfaction with the content, form and methods of their studies is high.
- ✓ As part of their studies, students attend other Estonian and/or foreign higher education institutions as visiting or international students.
- ✓ Employment rate of alumni is high.
- ✓ Alumni and their employers are pleased with their professional preparation and social competencies.

Despite the present challenges related to the recruitment and graduation of students within each programme (but particularly so in ICHET), it is promising to learn that employers and cooperation partners value the professional qualifications and employability of the graduates. It is also encouraging that present students have a broad perspective on their own future and point out that self-employment is also an option.

The evaluation team acknowledges that the recruitment situation is multifaceted and that there are many considerations to be made. A question arises whether there might be a missing link when it comes to teaching and learning craft in upper secondary education, or whether the teaching profession is valued enough? Substantial and joint efforts are required over time and in this regard the voice of the students is crucial. To state the obvious, today's learners are the craft practitioners and teachers of tomorrow.

#### Strengths:

- Based on interviews with students and alumni from both programmes, it seems that both appreciate their choice of education and are very articulate and precise in their reflections on the role of craft in contemporary society.
- Students appreciate a widened scope for their employability even though they do also underline the vital importance of craft teaching and learning throughout the school system.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations:

- Communication is a key issue. Equal importance should be given to targeted communication with potential and prospective students, on the one hand, and present students on the other. For both target groups the need to understand and describe the student's journey through the programme is basic. The success of alumni in the labour market should be measured and monitored. Regular contact, feedback and improvement of curricula should be taken into consideration by the study board and the advisory board. The amount and time of internships in real labour circumstances may be augmented.

- To attract more applicants, more weight on individual creative practice might be considered.
- Students' involvement and participation could be facilitated by the wider use of major joint university resources in different faculties and schools to increase the internal cross-disciplinary cooperation, which may be more in line with present labour market requirements.
- Student mobility should be increased in different ways: domestic – within the Tallinn University, within the other HEI of Estonia; internationally within the European and global context.

## **HTD**

The HDT student panel was represented by a diverse range of students from different backgrounds and subject areas. A relatively high proportion of the student cohort have previous experience in labour market and are highly motivated to take advantage of the opportunity to either cultivate new knowledge and skills or further develop and professionalise their existing knowledge base. Students confirmed that they are satisfied with the structure of the programmes, curriculum content and teaching methods.

The programme is characterized by its student centered approach, and focus on enabling designer makers to apply design processes, craft skills, teamwork and entrepreneurial strategies to address real life situations and contexts. Students benefit from an academic and creative learning environment that enables them to professionalize their practice and either participate directly in the labour market, start their business and/or continue their studies at master's level.

While a member of the employer panel made very positive comments about the students' / graduates' craft skills, it was pointed out that there is always scope to review and improve students' *design thinking* knowledge and skills.

Students responded that they were mostly content with the assessment procedures and with feedback being delivered orally by teachers and invited specialists who attend assessment events. Meanwhile, students confirmed that they are in turn invited to offer feedback to their teachers concerning the study content, study organization and developments in teaching and learning, and that their comments and opinions are responded to effectively.

As a consequence of being based at the Haapsalu campus, HDT students do not have easy or frequent access to resources at the University's main campus. While there are no doubt some advantages to being part of a relatively autonomous campus, some students did comment that they feel a little isolated and would benefit from some more external visiting tutors.

In common with other programmes, the international mobility of students from HTD programme is limited. The reasons for this are well documented in the SER document.

Strengths:

- Students provided very positive feedback regarding their overall experience of the programme, and the value of acquiring craft making knowledge.
- Students value the clearly defined remit of the programme with its strong focus on the application of practical skills in the context of live “real world” projects.
- The emphasis on entrepreneurship supports the development of professional practice and employment opportunities.
- Students value the preparation and support they receive in developing their research writing skills that are directly linked to practical projects.
- The programme encourages a group dynamic that supports a high level of student engagement and low dropout rate.

Areas for improvement and recommendations:

- Regarding the admissions process some students commented that beyond promotional material about the programme on the website, it was not easy to access more detailed information about the curriculum and the structure of the course in relation to for example core and elective elements. Students confirmed that more detailed published material could be provided about programme content, regarding the student journey.
- Students indicated that while there are advantages to being part of a small community, they would like to have more contact with external and international visiting tutors from the wider cultural community. It is recommended to consult students about improving assessment feedback, and consider written feedback for major projects or assignments.

### 1.3.2. Film Arts PHEP; Audiovisual Media BA; Audiovisual Media;Television/Documentary Film MA; Integrated Arts, Music and Multimedia BA; Crossmedia in Film and Television BA; Television Production MA; Contemporary Media MA

#### Study programme and study programme development

##### Standards

- ✓ The launch or development of the study programme is based on the Standard of Higher Education and other legislation, development plans, analyses (including labour market and feasibility analyses), and professional standards; and the best quality is being sought.
- ✓ The structure and content of modules and courses in a study programme support achievement of the objectives and designed learning outcomes of the study programme.
- ✓ Different parts of the study programme form a coherent whole.
- ✓ The study programme includes practical training, the content and scope of which are based on the planned learning outcomes of the study programme.
- ✓ The study programme development takes into account feedback from students, employers, alumni and other stakeholders.

The seven Study Programmes grouped under the provisional umbrella of the Tallinn University's Baltic Film, Media, Arts and Communication School's (BFM), the Arts Study Programme (ASP) represents a grouping of 3 academic levels (PHEP, BA and MA) arranged along 2 linguistic pathways (Estonian / English) and grounding the educational process within the expanded framework of audiovisual production. Overall it is evident that BFM have established robust and meaningful curricula focused on a specific subject matter with sufficient flexibility to facilitate artistic endeavor.

ASP offers a logical and consequential learning framework where curricular modules form a comprehensive package commensurate with specific goals set by each programme. The composition of the module structure is designed to support the gradual professionalization of the field-specific skillset - a process reinforced by a theoretical dimension that evolves from general knowledge into the area of specialization.

All study programmes were revised in 2016 - a fact that underlines certain difficulty in obtaining a meaningful amount of quantitative data in judging the long-term impact of the existing programmes. Furthermore, the programmes have undergone a continuous renaming process: from Film and Video (2010) to Film Arts (2016); the closing of Art Education and the Music study programme in 2020, will form the basis for the development of the new IAMM (Integrated Arts, Music and Multimedia) study programme; Media, now titled 'Audiovisual Media' ; the

Film and Video Arts MA programme (which is not part of this evaluation) will be replaced by Film Arts and Cinematography programmes. There are also several other programmes (BA Advertising and imagery and Film Arts (Kino Eyes) MA) which were not assessed during the evaluation but which form part of the Arts Study Programs, and therefore share the same material and curricular resources, and provide an active academic context to all other programmes in question. Not having access to these programmes as part of the evaluation presented an additional challenge to the panel in seeking a better understanding of the possible advantages of the whole collaborative framework.

With the launch in 2016 of the Film Arts PHEP (essentially a rewrite of the previous BA programme) with a clearly articulated goal to provide one additional year of practical knowledge to the students, BFM has clearly positioned itself within the Copenhagen process, which "... specifically seeks open pathways and parity of esteem between vocational education and training, and general/higher education". BFM indicated that "Graduation on time became very complicated for film arts students after the study programme was integrated with the Bologna system and shortened to three years in length". It should be noted however, that the extension of the programme could have been achieved within Bologna's BA framework, which allows for a flexible programme architecture 3-4 years, or of between 180–240 ECTS credits (with a minimum of 60 credits per academic year).

During interviews the assessment panel found that curricular development in the school is prompt and effective and involves a wide range stakeholders including students, alumni and professionals from outside of the school.

The following paragraphs offer a thematic analysis of the curricular components of assessed study programmes:

ELU - Enhanced Learning Unlimited (6 ECTS), a compulsory course of every study programme, received a mixed evaluation by the students panels. Overall, students like the possibility to work with their peers from other faculties, to work in groups, to negotiate tasks and self-manage a wide range of skills. The critique of the course most often came from organizational aspects: in case of larger student groups learning became unmanageable and ineffective. Therefore it would make sense to keep a participating number of a course to no more than a dozen students. In case of larger numbers, splitting in different groups would be advisable.

Lifelong learning (Continuing education) courses are extensive, well attended, systematically offered and serve a wider segment of society. BFM offers 63 such courses alone from 2015-2016 in the fields of Media, Crossmedia and Film, and the panel interviews demonstrated that the teaching staff were very positive about delivering such courses.

Visiting and outgoing students: An ever-increasing number of students participating in the Erasmus programme (plus direct exchanges between BFM and partner institutions) should be welcomed, but, in certain circumstances, caution

should be displayed too. For example, when the student volumes are large, this influx of new students could cause incomplete and missed courses, unfinished projects and loss of teamwork spirit when fellow students leave for a semester abroad. Teamwork is an important educational framework (especially when it comes to project based learning) in practically all the programmes offered at BFM.

Practical Training comprises a profound presence in ASP and is a key educational vehicle for giving a “real world” test to knowledge acquired in the classroom. During the interviews with participating students the importance and effectiveness of this aspect of the programme structure was clearly evident. However, it was noted that there could be a tighter oversight (in task setting and progress evaluation) of such training from the academic staff of BFM.

### **Bachelor’s and Professional Higher Education studies**

Audiovisual Media BA (2017) – a 3 year 180 ECTS programme offers 156ECTS in Television and Audiovisual Media with two speciality tracks: Film(36 ECTS) or TV (24 ECTS). The programme lists as its objective: “To support the attainment of both theoretical knowledge and practical skills that will nurture creative development and prepare students for careers in both creative and managerial roles in the television or film industry” . The panel felt that this focus is too narrow and that it would be beneficial for this programme to introduce students to a wider range of media.

Crossmedia in Film and Television BA is a 3 year 180 ECTS program which specifically focuses on Crossmedia (139 ECTS). This programme has strong social engagement as one of its learning outcomes i.e. “– to be motivated to actively participate in civil society and support the principles of democracy, especially freedom of speech and pluralism of opinions.” Another point worth mentioning regarding the strength of this programme is its wide range of disciplines, ranging from core disciplines of Transmedia to Creative Thinking, Computer Games and Virtual Reality. The programme nicely collates all of these disciplines into one clear, conceptual core, enshrined in storytelling. The elective course policy is sound and flexible and encourages innovation and transdisciplinarity, by allowing 18 ECTS of Crossmedia and 19 ECTS university-wide electives.

Integrated Arts, Music and Multimedia BA offers an academic track that splits into two areas of specialization, namely Art and Design and Music. Both tracks account for 48 ECTS, which is extensive enough to get an understanding of the field but not deep enough to master a satisfactory skill-set. This program would benefit, however, by extending its credit value (to perhaps 240 ECTS) and extending the duration of studies from 3 to 4 years, and allocating the 60 extra ECTS to solidify the specialization areas and multimedia track.

Overall, the Study Programme “aims to support the readiness for continual professional creative self-development and continuation of studies on master's

level in teacher training or other creative fields.” In addition one of the key outcomes is to be “able to integrate the art and music creation with the research field”. In order to achieve these goals, 22 ECTS are exclusively dedicated to Cultural Management and Pedagogy, and 25 ECTS to History of Culture and Research courses. Another quite logical aspect of the programme is Multimedia, based on 43 ECTS, which includes animation, typography, computer graphics and stage photography.

Film Arts PHEP is the only professional higher education degree programme offered at the BFM. That said, it has a peculiar curricular structure as it is based upon 240 ECTS spread across 4 study years and also 6 specialization tracks. As a professional degree it focuses primarily on the declared field of study by allocating 206 ECTS to Film Arts, and as a result, leaving only 34 ECTS for all the other subjects out of which only 16 ECTS are open electives. By allowing a higher volume of open electives, Film Arts would strengthen the creative growth of their students. Furthermore, the programme could consider fostering student individual projects by turning one of two 15 ECTS Work Practice modules into an extended Practical Film Projects module of 31 ECTS instead of 16 ECTS as it is now.

The Core Courses (CC) form a pool of 113 ECTS. All students have an in-depth exposure to film as an historic as well as a cultural phenomenon comprised of 29 compulsory and, primarily, history and theory courses. However it appears to provide limited hands-on training in camera, lighting or in any other film techniques. Practical training is delegated to the specialization modules (Elective Core Courses) but these have a volume of 27 ECTS only, and are comprised of little more than 10% of the entire ECTS load of the programme. To deepen students’ professional competence Film Arts should consider offering a larger volume of practical courses.

### **Master’s studies**

The curricula of “Audiovisual Media: Television/Documentary Film MA”(2016 and 2018), “Contemporary Media MA” and “Television Production MA” offer only 6 ECTS as free electives. It is very important, especially at a Master’s level to enable students to benefit from a wider self-initiated learning process that facilitates transdisciplinarity and innovation in ways that may better utilize the benefits of being situated within the large university context with all the variety of courses and classes available. Also, from the above mentioned programmes only AV/Documentary Film MA lists preparing prospective PhD studies as one of the aims of the programme.

Television Production MA - amongst its goals, the study programme lists that, “it can critically evaluate major social and cultural processes and approaches to the media”, this is also referred to in the objectives of the Master Thesis and academic research. This commendable objective could be further strengthened within the module content. At present, the Research Seminar in Television Critics (6 ECTS)

appears to be the only course in the programme that meets this objective. Exposure to deeper critical media methodology (such as McLuhan, Kittler, Deleuze, Latour) and an introduction to visual phenomenology (such as Merleau Ponty) and the politics of image (such as Benjamin, Baudrillard) would be highly beneficial to the programme.

Although the programme is named Contemporary Media, almost half of the content is directly related to TV Production (TV Production and TV Skills modules comprising of the total of 48 ECTS) and is in danger of being interchangeable with Television Production MA programme. It would benefit the Contemporary Media programme if it could introduce students to a broader spectrum of media.

Also, at Master's level, students are expected to graduate with a research thesis and not just with a practical work + Production Book supplement alone.

#### Strengths:

- The BFM study programmes incorporate and embody the stated mission of the University in responding to the needs of the labour market, and the key economic and cultural priorities of the country. Curricular structure and the content of study programmes are sophisticated and highly effective in meeting the needs of contemporary practice in the field.
- Life-long learning programmes serve wider segments of society.
- Development framework and the update of the study programmes are flexible, prompt and systematic.
- BFM programmes are forward looking when it comes to engaging with film festivals. It was encouraging to learn that the BFM has a strong association with Festivals such as 'Dark Nights' and the long established 'Pärnu' festival. That said one recommendation could be the exploration of other International Festivals such as "Sundance".

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations:

- Although programmes cover a wider range of artistic practices of the audiovisual sector, there is a certain amount of overlap when it comes to profiles of the programmes, for instance the MA programmes Television Production and Contemporary Media. Also continuous name changes as well as the frequent launch and closure of programmes are confusing.
- It would be helpful for BFM to have a strategic plan that would systematically describe and help to oversee and coordinate separate study programmes and the relationship between them.

- Internships in the professional industry should be better coordinated within module delivery. There's a need for a formalized mechanism for assessment of skills gained through such internships.
- Increased free electives should be recommended (or included) for some study programs to give students wider opportunities to influence their studies according to their personal interests and needs.
- Transdisciplinary learning is conducted primarily through ELU, which could be improved by a clearer participatory and task allocation structure.
- Students should have a more formalized entrepreneurship education embedded in the programme.
- There needs to be a clearer modular framework for individual projects, perhaps by increasing the allocation of specially designated free electives.
- Introducing innovation and design thinking would benefit the task management, creativity, problem solving and research capacities of students, and should be introduced at least as an elective at BA level.
- The MA programmes need to define their research paradigm and develop a framework for compulsory research modules to be included in the programme. Explicit referencing to European ASP benchmarks and Dublin descriptors could be helpful.

## Resources

### Standards

- ✓ Resources (teaching and learning environments, teaching materials, teaching aids and equipment, premises, financial resources) support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.
- ✓ There is a sufficient supply of textbooks and other teaching aids and they are available.
- ✓ Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).
- ✓ Resource development is sustainable.

Over the last 10 years, Tallinn University has renovated its buildings and BFM has specially built and equipped its premises (incl. studios, storerooms etc.) for film and TV production studies, which were visited by the evaluation panel. BFM has a sufficient film & media literature library (incl. films and programmes on DVD) and students can also use the Tallinn University's academic library.

Moreover, BFM has well equipped computer classrooms for study and also for students' personal use when not occupied for their programme studies. Students

can also use classrooms (and other premises) and technology for their creative activities with a special permit from a designated member of staff.

There is cohesion between production and teaching departments and the peaks in resource planning at the end of a semester are increasingly better managed<sup>1</sup>. Although classrooms are sometimes in short supply, the arrival of the new building in 2019 will help alleviate some of the space issues<sup>2</sup>.

It was very encouraging for the panel to note that stakeholders have a very positive view on the available technical equipment used by students, which exceeds compliance with local media industry suppliers<sup>3</sup>.

#### Strengths:

- A good range of audio-visual equipment was on display and, coupled with excellent studio facilities, the objectives of the BFM study program are clearly supported.
- Students get access to a range of camera equipment from Black Magic to Panasonic 4k cameras. These are easily accessible in a student-friendly managed kit storeroom and they can only book equipment out once they've had a specific tutorial or training with the camera requested and after approval from teaching staff<sup>4</sup>.
- Students have access to very good colour grading /editing facilities. It was encouraging to witness outside agencies such as the Estonian Film Institute using BFM's grading facilities and offering excellent work experience opportunities to students.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations:

- The BFM is the biggest film producer in Estonia – with 120 student films made last year, compared to 60 in the Estonian Film Industry – so scheduling of resources is always going to prove challenging. Despite hearing that technical planning is improving, it appears that there is often a shortfall in the budget for each film produced. The stipend is small and never enough to support student productions from 'script to screen'. One recommendation to help with this would be to build crowd-funding techniques into all practical module delivery.
- Employers cited some examples of how they have been previously involved in giving advice on the design and procurement of technical resources e.g. the

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<sup>1</sup> Meeting with BFM heads of study programmes

<sup>2</sup> Meeting with BFM lecturers

<sup>3</sup> Meeting with employers

<sup>4</sup> Tour around BFM premises

equipping of BFM's TV Studio 4 years ago, they would like to give more input on a resource at a technical level. Our recommendation is that local media employers / collaborators are invited regularly to attend technical planning meetings.

## Teaching and learning

### Standards

- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learners' individual and social development.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning is flexible, takes into account the specifics of the form of study and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.
- ✓ Teaching methods and tools used in teaching are modern, effective and support the development of digital culture.
- ✓ Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.
- ✓ The organisation and the content of practical training support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learning mobility.
- ✓ Assessment of learning outcomes is appropriate, transparent and objective, and supports the development of learners.

During the assessment, members of the panel found that the process of teaching and learning takes into account individual needs of students and industry alike. A variety of teaching methods are used during the study process and BFM staff are highly responsive to students' needs and act quickly in finding solutions to their enquiries.

Teachers explain and discuss assessment criteria with students. The assessment process is transparent, and students active participation in this process ensures that it is understood as being an integral part of their learning<sup>5</sup>; while involving guest lecturers in the Master's programme assessment events is clearly very positive, clearer guidance should be developed regarding the assessment procedures.

The Study process emphasizes field practice (especially in PHP) but theoretical studies should also be closely connected to practical studies as a coherent part of the study process. The panel found that the student support system is acknowledged and sufficient. Students confirmed that the SIS feedback system is working and 'live' informal feedback is highly regarded among teachers and students alike and made possible due to the small size of study groups.

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<sup>5</sup> Meeting with BFM students

### Strengths:

- Teaching and learning process are delivered by well qualified professionals and are closely connected to the industry's needs.
- Students practical work and study outcomes (films, Crossmedia products, etc.) are widely presented to public through local media and international festivals and are highly regarded for their high quality both technically and artistically.
- Teaching and learning methods are flexible and work effectively in giving students more social security and economic stability that helps to minimize dropout rates.
- The PHP study programme supports an effective collaborative environment in which the six specializations collaborate on study projects within project teams.
- Joint course ELU brings together students from different study programs into one study group to engage in "real life" tasks and problem solving.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations:

- We have found some areas for improvement regarding the work placements or internships. Based on the interviews, students need more guidance on how to secure work placements. Also employers accepting students for work placement should be better informed and made aware of the aims and goals of work placement as part of the learning process<sup>6</sup>.
- ÖIS is a positive system in terms of the availability of module descriptors. The formal online feedback system is too extensive and therefore slow to use according to student interviews.
- Although practical and theoretical studies in the school are interconnected, it would be highly beneficial to find a more formal research framework at MA level. TU Centre of Excellence on Media Innovation and Digital Culture (MEDIT), for instance, could be better tied into student research<sup>7</sup>.

## **Teaching staff**

### Standards

- ✓ There is teaching staff with adequate qualifications to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.

<sup>6</sup> Interviews with employers and students

<sup>7</sup> Interviews with BFM heads of study programmes and lecturers

- ✓ Overall student assessment on teaching skills of the teaching staff is positive.
- ✓ The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the higher education institution and with partners outside of the higher education institution (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other Estonian or foreign higher education institutions).
- ✓ Recognised foreign and visiting members of the teaching staff and practitioners participate in teaching the study programme.
- ✓ The teaching staff is routinely engaged in professional and teaching-skills development.
- ✓ Assessment of the work by members of the teaching staff (including staff evaluation) takes into account the quality of their teaching as well as of their research, development and creative work, including development of their teaching skills, and their international mobility.

As described in the SER, the different BFM programmes of the arts study group are made up of a team of teaching staff who have sufficient qualifications to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programmes<sup>8</sup>. The teaching staff have strong connections with the film and media industry and most at BFM are involved in teaching on a part-time basis. Feedback has been positive on the quality, composition and variety of staff members both for BA and MA programmes<sup>9</sup>.

The teaching staff indicated that they are engaged in professional development activities through creative work and (pedagogical) training. Staff receive support from management and Tallinn University in these activities, "*although it is not very well coordinated*"<sup>10</sup>. Heads of study programmes conduct yearly development interviews with staff and staff receive formal assessments during elections (every 5 years).<sup>11</sup>

Teaching staff collaborate within BFM<sup>12</sup> and Tallinn University, for instance through the MEDIT,<sup>13</sup> interdisciplinary ELU projects<sup>14</sup>; with partners outside of the higher education institution both in creative projects, research and teaching. Foreign and visiting members of the teaching staff and practitioners from EU as well as non-EU countries participate in teaching in the study programme. From the SER<sup>15</sup> and the panels' evaluation visit it was indicated that some staff members who have strong commitments or deadlines with their professional creative work should be substituted. The panel supports the ambition of the department to develop a system for accomplishing this.

BFM implemented a new teaching assistant profile, where recent graduates are hired to help out regular teaching staff with coordination and organization of

<sup>8</sup> SER, p 99, appendices D2, D4, D5, D6, D7, D8, D9.

<sup>9</sup> Meetings with students

<sup>10</sup> Meeting with heads of study programmes

<sup>11</sup> SER, p7, meeting with BFM management

<sup>12</sup> Meeting with BFM heads of study programmes and teaching staff

<sup>13</sup> SER, p 17, meetings with heads of study programmes and teaching staff.

<sup>14</sup> SER, p54, Meeting with heads of study programmes

<sup>15</sup> SER, p 29, 39, 99

educational activities. While this is a positive initiative, the task-list of the teaching assistant needs to be better specified as in some cases it serves as a substitute for a teacher.

Strengths:

- Highly motivated and pro-active teaching staff that are responsive to changes and opportunities in the industry and have an open attitude towards feedback.
- Teaching staff's strong connections with industry and media practice.
- Qualifications of employed staff members combining creative, research and teaching practice and the overall balance of staff members.
- Yearly personal development interviews by heads of department with teaching staff and BFM support of professional development activities such as conferences, publications and exhibitions.<sup>16</sup>
- Opportunities for staff development offered by the TU, among others focusing on pedagogical and teaching skills, are extensive and adopted by teaching staff.
- International orientation of staff, their internal and external mobility.<sup>17</sup>

Areas of improvement and recommendations:

- MEDIT and ELU projects are an excellent vehicle to increase the interdisciplinary creative and research work and collaborations among staff and students for the future.
- It is recommended to develop a system for substitution of lecturers who are engaged with active creative processes<sup>18</sup>. The task-list of the teaching assistant needs to be better specified as in some cases it serves as a substitute for a teacher.

## Students

Standards
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<sup>16</sup> Meetings with management, heads BFM study programmes and teaching staff.

<sup>17</sup> SER p60, p63, p70, Meeting with BFM teaching staff, students

<sup>18</sup> SER, p 99

- ✓ Student places are filled with motivated and capable students.
- ✓ The dropout rate is low; the proportion of students graduating within the standard period of study is large.
- ✓ Students are motivated to learn and their satisfaction with the content, form and methods of their studies is high.
- ✓ As part of their studies, students attend other Estonian and/or foreign higher education institutions as visiting or international students.
- ✓ Employment rate of alumni is high.
- ✓ Alumni and their employers are pleased with their professional preparation and social competencies.

Students are highly motivated and committed to their programme, teaching staff and BFM in general<sup>19</sup>. They are very satisfied with the programme, teaching staff, teaching and learning and resources. As and when they have a critique or constructive feedback, they find it easy to share their opinions with teaching staff in organized meetings<sup>20</sup>. In addition, student feedback is also responded to in a direct and informal manner and their suggestions are followed up<sup>21</sup>. Students expressed satisfaction with the student councilor in managing a wide range of studies related issues<sup>22</sup>. An online institutional formal feedback system ÕIS, part of the Study Information System, is in place.<sup>23</sup> Its functionality has been demonstrated to the evaluating panel during the visit. However, students indicated that these online questionnaires tend to be too lengthy and burdensome to complete.

The drop-out rates of the programmes are high, although lower than the national average in Estonia<sup>24</sup>. Management indicated that the main problem occurs in the first year, with a drop-out rate of 30%. These rates cause financial losses and management has to make allowances for potential drop-outs in their budgets. The causes for dropping out are mainly financial as it is difficult for students to find enough funds to participate in the English-language programmes<sup>25</sup>. Reducing student dropout and increasing the number of students that are completing the Study Programmes in the normal time period is a priority for the programme<sup>26</sup>. The Film Art PHEP programme has managed to reduce drop-outs by encouraging a culture of peer support and this in turn makes their commitment to the programme stronger<sup>27</sup>.

BFM is satisfied with its number of applicants. For almost all Study Programmes, applications have remained high, allowing selection of the best candidates. At the same time the selection ratio is lower than similar programmes across Europe due to the demographic situation in Estonia<sup>28</sup>. Many students are motivated and active

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<sup>19</sup> Meeting with BA & MA students

<sup>20</sup> Meeting with heads BFM study programmes, students

<sup>21</sup> Meetings with management, heads BFM study programmes and students.

<sup>22</sup> Meeting with BA & MA students.

<sup>23</sup> SER p 6, demonstration ÕIS academic affairs office, meeting with students

<sup>24</sup> Meeting with management

<sup>25</sup> Meeting with management

<sup>26</sup> SER 99

<sup>27</sup> Meeting heads BFM study programmes

<sup>28</sup> Meeting with BFM lecturers

in their field of study, and they participate successfully in festivals and competitions<sup>29</sup>. Some programmes, such as the Master's degree in Audiovisual Media: Television/Documentary Film indicate a necessity to increase the number of students applying<sup>30</sup>.

Students outgoing (international) mobility rates are substantially lower than the number of students incoming in the BFM arts study programmes and needs better balancing<sup>31</sup>.

Graduates and alumni find employment in the industry and employers and alumni are very satisfied with the structure and content of the curriculum and learning outcomes in terms of professional, technical and creative development and competency.

#### Strengths:

- Students are highly motivated and committed to their programme, teaching staff and BFM in general. Students seem to manage to deal with high study load
- BFM maintains a highly diverse student body in terms of background and also qualifications<sup>32</sup>.
- Alumni find employment in the industry and employers and alumni are very satisfied with the level of professional, technical and creative education provided by the programmes<sup>33</sup>.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations:

- Strengthen international networks at MA level to improve student mobility.
- Define actions to reduce the drop-out rate.

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<sup>29</sup> SER 99

<sup>30</sup> SER p87

<sup>31</sup> SER p9, table 3

<sup>32</sup> SER p9, table 3

<sup>33</sup> Meeting with alumni, employers

## **2. Assessment report of the Arts SPG at University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy**

### **2.1. Introduction**

In 2017, the University of Tartu (UT) celebrated the 385th anniversary of its founding. The University of Tartu that was established in 1632 as Academia Gustaviana has been reborn a number of times throughout its history.

According to the University of Tartu Act adopted on 16 February 1995, the University of Tartu is the national university of the Republic of Estonia. Its mission is to advance science and culture, provide the possibilities for the acquisition of higher education based on the development of science and technology on the three levels of higher education in the field of humanities, social, medical and natural sciences and to provide public services based on teaching, research and other creative activities.

Development objectives according to the Strategic Plan of the University of Tartu for 2015 – 2021 are the following:

1. Graduates who change the world;
2. Research and development work that has a global impact and guides the development of Estonia;
3. Innovation and enterprising spirit through which knowledge finds its way into the economy;
4. Organisation that inspires and unites people;
5. Continuous development that reinforces the survival of Estonian language and national culture.

All the curricula in the Arts study programme group are led by the University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy. Tartu University Viljandi Culture Academy is a regional college that belongs to the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at UT.

There are four academic departments in the Culture Academy: the Department of Performing Arts, the Department of Music, the Department of Culture Education and the Department of Native Crafts. The curricula included in the Arts study programme group all belong to the Department of Native Crafts.

Programmes assessed are marked in white background.

Study programme	Code	Level of study	Year of opening	ECTS	Nominal duration (years)	Language of Instruction	Year of closing	Institute/ University
Painting	2411	BA	2001	180	3	Estonian	2019	UT HVCU <sup>2</sup>
Painting	2536	MA	2001	120	2	Estonian		UT HVKU
Estonian Native Textile	80292	Prof. HE <sup>1</sup>	1994	240	4	Estonian	2020	UT VCA <sup>3</sup>
Estonian Native Construction	80291	Prof. HE	2005	240	4	Estonian	2021	UT VCA
Estonian Native Metalwork	108205	Prof. HE	2011	240	4	Estonian	2021	UT VCA
Estonian Native Crafts	146997	Prof. HE	2016	240	4	Estonian		UT VCA
Native Crafts	108204	Master's	2011	120	2	Estonian		UT VCA

Study programme	2012				2013				2014				2015				2016				Av. drop-out rate 2012-2016
	No of students enrolled	No of students	Number of drop-outs	No of graduates	No of students enrolled	No of students	Number of drop-outs	No of graduates	No of students enrolled	No of students	Number of drop-outs	No of graduates	No of students enrolled	No of students	Number of drop-outs	No of graduates	No of students enrolled	No of students	Number of drop-outs	No of graduates	
Estonian Native Textile (Prof. HE) non-distance learning	7	23	1	8	-	18	1	-	8	18	1	2	-	15	2	4	-	9	2	2	6%
Estonian Native Textile (Prof. HE) Open University	17	27	1	13	-	30	1	-	19	42	1	10	-	34	4	1	-	28	2	6	6%
Estonian Native Construction (Prof. HE)	-	29	4	2	13	37	2	3	-	32	3	2	9	32	4	5	-	27	2	-	9%
Estonian Native Metalwork (Prof. HE)	-	8	0	-	11	19	0	-	-	19	0	-	3	19	0	3	-	19	2	-	2%
Estonian Native Crafts (Prof. HE) native	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	0	-	0%

textile non-distance learning																						
Estonian Native Crafts (Prof. HE) native textile Open University	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	21	21	0	-	0%	
Native Crafts (MA)	6	14	0	-	6	14	0	6	11	23	0	2	-	17	2	4	12	21	0	7	2%	
TOTAL	30	101	6	23	30	118	4	9	38	134	5	16	12	117	12	17	34	126	8	15		

## 2.2. General findings and recommendations at study programme group level

The subject areas referred to in this report (Native Textiles, Construction and Metal) have recently been brought together into a single programme / department in which each subject is a distinct but connected craft discipline / pathways offered at PHEP and incrementally at MA level. Panel meetings were held with representative staff and students from each of the three subjects areas collectively.

The SER document provided an excellent overview of the Culture Academy’s position within the University as part of a recently formed Faculty of Arts and Humanities. It also provided the panel with clear and detailed descriptions, data and information about all aspects of the programme. The document in itself indicated a distinctive level of confidence, ambition and awareness of issues and opportunities critical to the success of a higher education arts academy.

The determination and ambition to position Estonian Native Crafts as a vital and relevant area of practice and scholarship came across strongly. It was evident that the benefits of being an integral part of an academic peer group within a large faculty and University infrastructure was recognized by staff and students. It was also pointed out (by students) that the Academy’s unique approach to craft and creative education also has much to offer the University!

Estonian Native Crafts operate alongside three other departments. It is evident that the Academy has created an effective, inclusive and responsive management structure that encourages cooperation and communication within and between departments. The fact that the 17 heads of programmes are now included in regular management meetings is a clear sign that a horizontal structure is being actively promoted in order to maximize a sense of shared ownership and purpose.

Strengths:

- An effective and inclusive management structure that gives key staff an opportunity to influence decisions and understand and recognize wider institutional challenges. This horizontal approach could also be seen as an effective form of mentoring for future academic leaders.
- The Academy's positive relationship with the University creates opportunities for mutual knowledge exchange and creates a bridge between traditional academic subjects and craft cultures and creative practices.
- Clear understanding and awareness of contemporary pedagogy underpinned by a strong commitment to the relationship between practice based learning, critical thinking, creativity and research.
- The annual summer craft camp is a good example of the Academy's outreach initiative, that pro-actively engages local, regional and international 'craft tourists' with Estonian Native crafts and the value of learning through making more generally.

Areas for improvement and recommendations:

- The Academy's international agenda clearly needs to be supported by the University. If as is suggested in the SER University academic regulations inhibit rather than encourage international exchange and mobility then this should be examined and reviewed as a matter of urgency.
- While staff development opportunities within the University are offered and taken up by staff, there does not appear to be a systematic approach to annual performance management and enhancement of staff by line managers. The self-assessment aspect of this process can in itself identify development needs, but it could also enable the programme to support a strategically important area of development.

## 2.3. Strengths and areas for improvement of study programmes by assessment areas

### 2.3.1. Estonian Native Crafts PHEP; Native Crafts MA

#### Study programme and study programme development

##### Standards

- ✓ The launch or development of the study programme is based on the Standard of Higher Education and other legislation, development plans, analyses (including labour market and feasibility analyses), and professional standards; and the best quality is being sought.
- ✓ The structure and content of modules and courses in a study programme support achievement of the objectives and designed learning outcomes of the study programme.
- ✓ Different parts of the study programme form a coherent whole.
- ✓ The study programme includes practical training, the content and scope of which are based on the planned learning outcomes of the study programme.
- ✓ The study programme development takes into account feedback from students, employers, alumni and other stakeholders.

The panel was extremely impressed by many aspects of the programmes that enable students to develop very high levels of practice based craft skill from entry level to MA.

The curriculum content, learning outcomes, teaching methods and assessment processes are very well articulated, and module topics indicate that there is an appropriate balance between theory and practice.

The panel recognizes and agrees with the programmes' comprehensive analysis of its strengths and areas for improvement (rather than repeat these within the report, only those areas that are seen to be most relevant will be highlighted.)

The quality of the student work presented in all craft fields was of a very high standard. The quality of MA projects and dissertations in particular demonstrated an impressive range of research topics within textiles, metal and construction. These projects indicate that the work undertaken by students goes well beyond an academic and skill based remit concerned only with tradition and historical analysis. Some of the projects presented address the ways in which traditional craft techniques can be applied conceptually and practically and inform current design opportunities and challenges.

The panel visited a former factory part, which has been taken over by the Academy as an incubator space. This resource appears to be available to current students as well as providing cooperative workshop space to alumni and other entrepreneurs. This initiative supports knowledge exchange, student employability

and provides a practical example of entrepreneurship in action. It also gives the programme an important platform to highlight and promote both the commercial and social potential of a highly developed native crafts culture at a local, regional national and international level.

The increase in student applications and comparatively low drop-out rate are a testimony to a dynamic student community. The panel understands that the open university students from far afield share accommodation during their attendance week and that this helps to create a mutually supportive peer group.

Students are able to collaborate across disciplines and have a high level of flexibility in determining their own learning through electives and informal exchange arrangements between workshops.

#### Strengths:

- The programmes offer a highly distinctive and radical approach to the study and practice of Estonian Native Crafts informed by rigorous scholarship, creative enquiry and very high levels of craft skill.
- Emerging confidence and sophistication within the field of practice based research, as demonstrated by the publication of *Studio Vernacular*, now in its 8<sup>th</sup> edition. The opportunity for students to have papers peer reviewed and published is excellent.
- Positive and pro-active policy of encouraging and facilitating interdisciplinary collaboration through extra-curricular projects.
- The increase in student applications (against falling numbers elsewhere) reflects the success of the Academy's mission to promote the value and relevance of Native Crafts in a contemporary cultural context.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations:

- The Programmes recognize that improving their international profile and student / staff mobility is a key challenge. Given the programme's highly specialized area of focus, and current developments in research, there must be opportunities to strengthen and build on existing international networks. This could be assisted through membership of organizations such as ELIA (European League of Institutes of Art).

## Resources

### Standards

- ✓ Resources (teaching and learning environments, teaching materials, teaching aids and equipment, premises, financial resources) support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.
- ✓ There is a sufficient supply of textbooks and other teaching aids and they are available.
- ✓ Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).
- ✓ Resource development is sustainable.

Classes of the Native Crafts department mainly take place in the recently renovated Vilma building of VCA which includes the specialized workshops for different crafts. The main building of VCA is also available for the department.

VCA's library is a branch of the University of Tartu library with a good collection of specific literature which is open six days a week. Additionally, students have access to the main UT library in Tartu. Through the digital library database students can access materials of all Estonian higher education institutions.

Feedback surveys have shown that both students and teaching staff are satisfied with the department's resources<sup>34</sup>. This was again confirmed by the students and staff in the interviews with the panel.

Financial resources of VCA depend on the number of students and credits offered. The Native Crafts department has its own budget, which is spent on the basis of a collegial decision. This allows the department to freely decide on the distribution of resources within the budget limits<sup>35</sup>.

In 2017, the Department of Native Crafts organized the fourth international Estonian native crafts summer school Craft Camp, which is becoming more and more popular each year<sup>36</sup>. This Craft Camp could become an important driver for both financial resources and international recognition.

The department's latest project concerns the preparation of tutorial videos. The project will provide additional improvement of already existing digital teaching and learning materials used by students and teaching staff. This project is highly relevant to the needs of open university students as well.

Study materials are available to students via SIS (study information system) and the related Moodle environment. Facebook is also used by some teachers as a faster way to share the visual content.

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<sup>34</sup> Self-Evaluation Report, p. 39.

<sup>35</sup> Self-Evaluation Report, p. 40.

<sup>36</sup> Self-Evaluation Report, p. 38.

An upcoming project will be dedicated to instructing the teaching staff on how to prepare digital teaching materials.

Study rooms are equipped with computers and free internet access for students.

The well-developed learning environment supports practical research in ancient crafts parallel with access to new technologies. For example, the blacksmith's workshop offers conditions to create work through very traditional methods, while the new wool laboratory creates the opportunity to get acquainted with the modern aspects of industrial technologies.

The Native Crafts PHEP and MA programmes are already able to use all the facilities of the entire Viljandi Culture Academy and vice versa, as well as resources of the Tartu University. Planning and reservation of classrooms is managed via the internet, using special software which provides statistical information about the occupancy of premises.

Based on both the self-evaluation report and the findings of the panel's site-visit, it can be concluded that VCA resources are of good quality and comply with the standards. Resources (material and technical base, digital learning environment, etc.) fully support the study process. This level of resource quality is reached through collegial decisions and effective collaboration among VCA administrative- and management structures.

#### Strengths:

- The department's budget has recently increased due to a growing numbers of students<sup>37</sup>. Additional budget is received from project funding.
- Spatial resources have recently become very good. The renovated Vilma building has enough space for many specialized workshops and general facilities. VCA's constant improvement of the infrastructure corresponds to the needs and development of the curricula.
- The Native Crafts department is also running an incubator called Viljandi County Creative Industries Centre, which is offering support and a well-equipped space for young crafts-entrepreneurs to work on their start-ups.
- Students and teaching staff can freely use the workshops outside of teaching hours to work on projects. Use of the machinery and equipment is only allowed if a student has received instruction on how to use it and has enough experience to work with it independently. Additionally, technical assistants or teachers are often present.

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<sup>37</sup> Self-Evaluation Report, p. 37.

- The continuous development of the e-learning environment – materials, methods, archive - corresponds to the contemporary requirements of the study environment for both full-time and distance learning.

Areas of improvement and recommendations:

- The cooperation and collaboration with different local and international partners should be increased to ensure the efficient use of the workshops and technologies.

## Teaching and learning

### Standards

- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learners' individual and social development.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning is flexible, takes into account the specifics of the form of study and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.
- ✓ Teaching methods and tools used in teaching are modern, effective and support the development of digital culture.
- ✓ Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.
- ✓ The organisation and the content of practical training support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learning mobility.
- ✓ Assessment of learning outcomes is appropriate, transparent and objective, and supports the development of learners.

At Viljandi Culture Academy "native crafts" are understood as creative technical and cultural practices, applications and developments based on traditional local craft techniques, design principles and skills. Our meeting with the PHEP and MA students and their work confirms that the academy is a dynamic organization that values, inspires and connects people. Teaching and learning processes in the two programmes are diverse and flexible, allowing for individual progress, practice and specialization, as well as interdisciplinary cooperation across the academy. Practice and theory are very well integrated and balanced according to a pedagogic-didactic model which underpin independent learning and support the development of relevant research skills. Students are actively involved in the production of exhibitions and other professional events arranged by the Department of Estonian Native Crafts, MA students may be involved in research carried out by their tutors.

Students in the PHEP programme underline the value of an academic environment where learning takes place in small groups, workshop facilities are of high quality

and guest teachers bring in specialist knowledge from their professional contexts. Students in the MA programme carry out independent graduation projects including thorough research, distinct results and dissemination at a professional level. From an international perspective it is slightly discouraging to learn that not many international students find their way to this stimulating academic environment – and the other way around.

The integration of knowledge required for creative and restoration practices in the programmes is innovative, providing students with broad approaches to their future professional life. Students are digitally competent and well aware of how digital media may contribute to contemporary crafts practices. Documentation and communication of MA graduation projects have high priority, which is also reflected in the presentation of selected projects in the research journal "Studia Vernacula". Assessment is based on explicit criteria and learning is supported by formative and outcome-based assessment.

Strengths:

- Sustainable and adaptable models for teaching and learning have been developed over time in an open minded and confident academic community which accommodates feedback from students, alumni, employers and partners.
- Teaching, learning, research and innovation are clearly interrelated in the programmes.
- The integration of knowledge required for creative and restoration practices in the programmes is innovative.
- MA students are integrated in the research community, selected MA graduation projects are presented in the research journal "Studia Vernacula".
- Assessment procedures are transparent and predictable, based on explicit assessment criteria.

Areas of improvement and recommendations:

- Given the open approach to native crafts and the academy's development goal to be a recognized centre of expertise, both in Estonia and internationally, it is not easy to understand why international outreach is limited in teaching and learning. This issue is addressed in the SER and should be explored further in a wider comparative perspective by the academy.

## Teaching staff

### Standards

- ✓ There is teaching staff with adequate qualifications to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.
- ✓ Overall student assessment on teaching skills of the teaching staff is positive.
- ✓ The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the higher education institution and with partners outside of the higher education institution (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other Estonian or foreign higher education institutions).
- ✓ Recognised foreign and visiting members of the teaching staff and practitioners participate in teaching the study programme.
- ✓ The teaching staff is routinely engaged in professional and teaching-skills development.
- ✓ Assessment of the work by members of the teaching staff (including staff evaluation) takes into account the quality of their teaching as well as of their research, development and creative work, including development of their teaching skills, and their international mobility.

The SER positions the PHEP and MA programmes in a highly ambitious and confident collegial community where quality issues in education and research are reviewed and discussed openly. Teaching staff acknowledge their integrated roles as teachers, researchers and practitioners. Their cooperation with relevant professional partners outside the academy is extensive. The relationship between the academy and the Viljandi Centre for Creative Industries stands out as an example of excellent practice. Common to the academy and the centre is a practice based approach to entrepreneurship. Furthermore the entrepreneurial mindsets carved out here are grounded in regional and national needs for development within crafts culture.

Highly qualified and dedicated staff are key to the continued development of the Department of Estonian Native Crafts as well as the academy, which seems to benefit professionally and strategically from its affiliation with the University of Tartu. Staff development is pointed out as an area where the Academy relies on courses provided or tailor made by the university. Staff members have, for example, attended the university's course in outcome-based assessment. Students value both the professional and the teaching skills of their professors, as well as the human dimension they bring to the learning environment.

In the SER, the department reflects strategically on its own role in the education of future teachers and researcher of Estonian Native Crafts, and points to a dilemma: Education at PhD level is needed but options are limited. The national focus of the subject area does also explain why few international teachers are involved in the programmes.

Strengths:

- The collegial community share high quality standards for their own work as well as the work of their students.
- The practice-based approach to entrepreneurship shared by the staff and the centre for creative industries contributes substantially to both to academic and professional development – inside and outside the Academy. This example of committed strategic cooperation leading to tangible results as well as viable practices should be shared in all relevant contexts.
- Teaching is explicitly based on research in line with the strategy of the academy, which is well aware of its role within the university.

Areas of improvement and recommendations:

- Our meetings with management, staff, students, alumni employers and cooperation partners confirm that the Department of Native Estonian Crafts, and the academy itself, constitute a knowledge culture which is innovative in its bridging of experiential and theoretical knowledge. Against this backdrop it should be mentioned that the artistic research carried out in the department should be acknowledged and valued. To contextualize this point further we encourage the University of Tartu to consider whether a PhD in artistic research may be a worthwhile national undertaking.

## Students

Standards

- ✓ Student places are filled with motivated and capable students.
- ✓ The dropout rate is low; the proportion of students graduating within the standard period of study is large.
- ✓ Students are motivated to learn and their satisfaction with the content, form and methods of their studies is high.
- ✓ As part of their studies, students attend other Estonian and/or foreign higher education institutions as visiting or international students.
- ✓ Employment rate of alumni is high.
- ✓ Alumni and their employers are pleased with their professional preparation and social competencies.

The number of graduates fluctuates, since admission to the programmes takes place biannually: in even years, students can apply for the Estonian Native Textile

PHEP and the Estonian Native Crafts MA, and in odd years for Estonian Native Construction PHEP and Estonian Native Metalwork PHEP<sup>38</sup>.

Student feedback is collected via online surveys and through conversations with teaching staff. Regular meetings between students and staff are organized to discuss problems and ideas. Students are also part of the admission committee.

The University of Tartu offers VCA students an option for counselling, but most students prefer to consult their teachers if they are experiencing problems. Students have indicated at the interview with the panel that they are satisfied with the amount of support they receive during their studies.

Feedback from alumni is collected through regular surveys.

Student places are filled with motivated and capable students, even though competition for admission in the Native Crafts programmes is relatively low.

Prior education of the MA students is very diverse. Many of them have obtained a BA degree 5-10 years ago. Only a small proportion of students applies for the MA immediately or 1-3 years after graduating from BA or PHEP programmes.

Dropout rates are low compared to the UT average. The two main reasons for students to drop out are insufficient financial resources and the incompatibility of the volume of studies with a job or family life.

During the site visit, the panel met with a very motivated student panel, represented by the students and alumni from all three specializations and two study levels.

Students are satisfied with the flexibility of the curriculum, the study hours and workshop availability. Students also value the amount of direct contact with the tutors and even with the heads of department, which is possible because of the small scale of the programmes.

Students at MA level are asked to do research and academic writing. The ENC program is offering a number of possible areas for research. Estonian Native Textile students have been involved in the preparation of specialised publications (on Mulk folk costumes).

Many MA students are engaged in creative work in their own workplace or in creative activities in the PHEP or MA programmes. This is supported by the flexible organization of the curricula.

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<sup>38</sup> Self-Evaluation Report, p. 13.

Strengths:

- Students form a close community which functions as a support network. The diverse professional/academic backgrounds of students enable them to share their knowledge and skills.
- The option to study in the Open University provides flexibility for students who combine studies with a job or family life. Open University students only come to Viljandi every other week from Thursday to Saturday, but their total work load is the same as for the other students<sup>39</sup>.
- Students are able to switch their specializations relatively easily.
- The employment rate of alumni is high. VCA alumni have won many awards and have started successful businesses. Employers are satisfied with the competences and skills of alumni.

Areas of improvement and recommendations:

- The average age of students is relatively high and the programme has difficulty attracting younger applicants. Investing in crafts courses in high schools could be a way to have young people experience crafts and to awaken their interest for it.
- Given the distinctive quality of the Native Crafts programmes VCA should continue to enhance and develop international recognition as a craft research centre. Expanding and promoting international research activity could help attract foreign students.
- International mobility is limited, since many students have a job or family they cannot leave behind for a longer period. The heads of VCA indicated this as their key challenge in the interview with the panel. This complex problem is related to the higher average age of VCA's students as well, since younger students are less likely to have children or a full-time job. For the older students, shorter study trips abroad could be a good way to introduce mobility.

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<sup>39</sup> Self-Evaluation Report, p. 11.

## **3. Assessment report of the Arts SPG at the Tartu Art College**

### **3.1. Introduction**

TAC was founded on 1 August 2000 and is, on a continuity basis, a successor to a private educational institution established by the art society Pallas in 1919. Since those times, the College has existed as both a secondary-level school and an institution of higher art education; see history. On the basis of historical continuity, TAC retains the values of Pallas, incl. openness and modernity. Founded in Tartu, Pallas was the first Estonian institution of higher art education and laid down the basis for professional Estonian art. In addition to Pallas's values, TAC still undertakes the mission of providing the best contemporary education in the arts.

TAC is the only institution of higher education in the field of applied arts in Estonia. Degree studies are taught based on seven curricula of professional higher education; the period of studies is four years and the study volume is 240 ECTS.

The TAC Development Plan 2016-2020 lists the following development objectives:

- Alumni who increase the creative potential of society;
- Promotion of innovative and sustainable thinking through entrepreneurship and life-long learning;
- Conservation of cultural heritage and transmission of cultural memory;
- creating a better living environment through the arts, design and conservation/restoration;
- An organisation that encourages creativity, promotes research and is open to cooperation.

The seven curricula of TAC (opened on 23 August 2002) are coordinated and managed by the respective specialty departments.

Number of students (incl. foreign students) 2012/2013-2016/2017 as of 10 November 2016 (S – students, E – external students)

	2012/ 2013		2013/ 2014		2014/ 2015		2015/ 2016		2016/ 2017	
	S	E	S	E	S	E	S	E	S	E
<b>Curriculum</b>										
Photography	50 <sup>1)</sup>	5	53 <sup>2)</sup>	6	47	7	49	8	47	9
Painting and Restoration	36	1	40	1	36	0	38	0	46	0
Media and Advertisement Design	58	4	60 <sup>3)</sup>	4	53 <sup>4)</sup>	8	53	8	53	9
Furniture Design and Restoration	47	9	50	5	52	6	50	8	49	10
Leather Design and Restoration	37	3	35	3	35	3	34	3	35	4
Sculpture	35	1	34	1	39	2	39	2	39	3
Textile	43	2	46	1	47	1	42	1	44 <sup>5)</sup>	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Total number students</b>	<b>331</b>		<b>339</b>		<b>336</b>		<b>335</b>		<b>351</b>	

### 3.2. General findings and recommendations at study programme group level

The SER document provides a clear and comprehensive description of TAC’s programmes and the institutional context in which they operate. The panel appreciated the arrangements put in place to meet a range of staff, students, alumni and employers in order to gain a better understanding of the different departments. TAC has a clear mission through its study programs to uphold high educational standards based on practical skills and traditional values

TAC positions itself as an Art College offering specialized programmes of study within Fine Arts, Craft and restoration, Media and Design. The college maintains a strong focus on teaching applied and practice based skills within an academic framework that successfully prepares students for careers in the creative industries, and in a wider sense ‘promotes the development of a creative society’.

Subsequent to extensive curriculum reforms in 2014, TAC went through an institutional accreditation process that was completed in 2016 – with a clearly positive outcome. In its report the committee responsible for the institutional assessment states that “all forms of cooperation and exchange between departments were strongly appreciated by students and in general are appropriate

to the demands of the context of a rapidly changing, multidisciplinary sector". Furthermore the committee "understands the tension arising out of the wish to maintain distinct, traditional art forms on the one hand and the demands to incorporate current, global themes and technologies that are not tied to specific national contexts and traditions and supports TACs efforts to strike an appropriate balance between the two". During the visit the evaluation team saw and heard nothing that contradicted these statements.

Curriculum development at TAC is regulated by Curriculum Statutes of the Tartu Art College<sup>40</sup>, which provide a clear legal framework for initiation or amendment of curricular content. The development process for curricula has several stages and involves different stakeholders such as employers and alumni, students and teaching staff.<sup>41</sup> Employer representatives and specialists participate through feedback on Curriculum Councils, assessment committees, surveys and practical training<sup>42</sup>. TAC collects feedback on knowledge and skills acquired during studies in order to improve curricula. The process seems to be fruitful as the surveys from 2015 and 2017 shows increased satisfaction with acquired professional technical knowledge (from 66% to 71%) and practical skills (from 84% to 96%).

Operating within a tight-knit community, the college is sensitive to the challenge of maintaining high levels of professional competency and at same time retaining enough flexibility within the academic structure to enable students to extend and develop their creativity across and between disciplines. The move to build more critical thinking and contextual theory within *general studies* modules, will almost inevitably generate interdisciplinary dialogue and exchange that is increasingly believed (in other EU institutions) to be a positive and necessary development in the context of contemporary art and design practices.

TAC has one of the highest percentages of students involved in international mobility, based principally on the Erasmus programme. In the 2016/2017 academic year 13 (8,6 %) students participated in exchanges. The number of outgoing students for study placement abroad was 16 and the trend has been growing since 2013. The number of incoming foreign students is also growing and was 18 in study year 2016/2017.

TAC's active involvement in the cultural and economic life of Tartu beyond the city's limits is to be commended. The Noorus gallery has become a central venue in the city's cultural scene, and there is a fruitful co-operation with the Tartu Art Museum and Tartu Center for Creative Industries.

### Strengths

- Study programmes maintain their currency through direct contact with co-operation partners and teaching staff that are largely dedicated
-

- professionals within their field, and through students exposure and access to advanced technologies (both within TAC and places of student placement).
- The curricular structure and content of study programmes is coherent, relevant, and flexible and is well adapted to achieve learning outcomes.
  - Life-long learning programmes are well integrated within studies environment and serve as a meaningful part of the curricular whole.
  - The curriculum development framework, feedback mechanism and enhancement processes of the study programmes are carried out effectively and systematically.
  - External professionals and employers within the field are involved directly in study program development through Curricula Councils<sup>43</sup>.
  - Management and teaching staff are committed in their support of students, and regular personal contact ensures good communication and effective informal feedback at all levels.
  - Strong connections with co-operation partners, local cultural traditions and practitioners creates strong support from the local community.
  - Following recent curriculum development specific theoretical aspects of the field increasingly support practical studies.

#### Areas for improvement and recommendations

- Continue to develop and enhance the inclusion of contemporary art and design theories (design thinking, critical thinking etc.) through modules that increase and widen the theoretical and contextual level of studies, and appointing more staff with relevant expertise from outside Estonia.
- The rules and procedures for the Curriculum Councils from September 2016 (Annex 5 of TAC SER) confirm the principles governing the function and operation of the council in relation to the curriculum development. Regarding the Councils constituency, it is not clear what percentage of its members represent external experts and industry professionals or how are they are selected (are they invited by departments, proposed by artist's organization of field etc). It is recommended to have at least 50% of council members from outside TAC to ensure the clear voice of the professional field.
- The panel recommends that TAC consider taking a leading role in developing new hybrid subject areas that respond to contemporary art and design practices. This could strengthen TAC's position in the field of higher

arts and design education, and diversify the provision within Estonia. In addition, the panel also encourages departments to create new study programs/ modules that could enable students to explore interdisciplinary (or even transdisciplinary) and collaborative areas of practice.

- Although informal feedback is highly valued across TAC, offering students a more formal, structured method of providing feedback is recommended in order to assess and monitor a long-term overview of students (and employers) opinions and statements. While it is recognized that student engagement with the formal SIS feedback process is limited, cross department or college wide feedback forums could help in creating a road-map to inform the long term strategic development of study programs.
- Entrepreneurship education is clearly becoming well established, but it is recommended to strengthen the cooperation with the Centre of Creative Industries in Tartu (based on the interview with representatives of employers).
- Internships in the professional industry and commissioned projects should be better coordinated within module delivery and in the case of Photography should overall have a stronger curricular presence.
- The College could benefit from a stronger international presence. This could be achieved by establishing one English language PHEP program combining relevant aspects of the other programmes into the transdisciplinary whole. For example, Media and Photography could easily collaborate in this structure.

### 3.3. Strengths and areas for improvement of study programmes by assessment areas

#### 3.3.1. Painting and Restoration PHEP; Sculpture PHEP; Textile PHEP; Furniture Design and Restoration PHPE; Leather Design and Restoration PHEP

## Study programme and study programme development

### Standards

- ✓ The launch or development of the study programme is based on the Standard of Higher Education and other legislation, development plans, analyses (including labour market and feasibility analyses), and professional standards; and the best quality is being sought.
- ✓ The structure and content of modules and courses in a study programme support achievement of the objectives and designed learning outcomes of the study programme.
- ✓ Different parts of the study programme form a coherent whole.
- ✓ The study programme includes practical training, the content and scope of which are based on the planned learning outcomes of the study programme.
- ✓ The study programme development takes into account feedback from students, employers, alumni and other stakeholders.

Practical training is core to the programmes that each have distinct profiles, yet share common content and modules. Programmes are coherent, teaching, learning and assessment are aligned and the curriculum supports students to meet the required standards. It is clear that appropriate institutional processes are in place to monitor the students' learning experience and enhance the development of the curriculum in response to feedback from students, staff and external partners, including a board of advisers.

The curricular architecture of the programmes is based on the PHEP model that enables students to study for 4 years (instead of BA's traditional three years) that allows a wider and deeper curricular engagement resulting in students who are well prepared, for both professional and individual artistic progression. In addition to full and part time studies there's also a possibility to engage with study programmes as a visiting or external student, or as a learner of continuing education programmes.

The structure of study programmes and the rules for their development is described by the Board of TAC in Curricula Statutes. Study programmes consist of general modules, elective modules covering optional subjects, specialty modules or specialty module + specialization modules, practice modules and a final project module. The subject and content in every module is determined and formulated by departments in consultation with relevant programme curriculum councils, or in the case of the general studies the council of general modules. Students are allowed to take a free elective from other institutions of higher education (incl. Estonian Academy of Arts, University of Tartu etc.) but according to the SER this opportunity has not been taken up.

Study programs are strongly practice orientated and support self-employed creative graduates, and those entering the labor market having completed their studies. Programmes incorporate work placements and participation in international design fairs, competitions, commissions and other such events as

part of the curriculum. As became evident during the visit of the evaluation panel (and also noted in the self-evaluation report), employers highly appreciate the teamwork, practical skills, independence and decisiveness of the TAC graduates and alumni.

Students commented very positively on the support they receive in finding and arranging Erasmus exchanges, and the process is clearly very well organized. As there are no study programmes delivered in English, incoming exchange students are individually guided through practical subjects. In addition, special subjects have been created for incoming students that are taught in English.

Overall, the evaluation panel encountered students, staff and employers and alumni who feel that their views and opinions are valued by an institution that has an open and transparent management and organizational structure. Approx. 5% of the college's income is generated through local and regional cooperation partner projects and commissions, and this income is used to improve the college's resources and student opportunities. Staff are supported and encouraged in their development both as teachers, academics and arts practitioners, through the College HR services, but also through direct contact with the Rector who has convened performance meetings with over 100 staff (referred to in the panel meeting).

Finally, the evaluation panel were impressed to learn that within 3 years of completing their studies between 80 – 90% of TAC graduates gain employment in a related field (SER). This statistic suggest that the balance between, practical and creative skills, academic knowledge informed by research, workplace projects and entrepreneurship both equips and challenges students very effectively.

#### Strengths:

- TAC programmes are clearly structured and interrelated, offering a high level of practical specialization in art, design and conservation/restoration.
- Programme development is a collective undertaking taking into account formal requirements, professional standards, societal needs and relevant approaches to teaching and learning in higher education. Departments have adopted recent changes to the curriculum structure and are willing to revise teaching and learning processes in their programmes.
- Although still requiring some further refinement, the introduction of theory and context based teaching across programmes through general studies modules is a positive development.
- Curricula are flexible and student-centered; students are allowed to select 21 ECTS in electives and optional classes, which can include courses from other institutions or other TAC curricula.

- Open and responsive management of the College that is regarded very positively by students, staff and cooperation partners.

Areas of improvement and recommendations:

- Programme development is carried out according to a development plan including mainly quantitative quality criteria. This may be understood as an instrumental approach to higher arts education, which is probably not the case. TAC should however consider the possibility of developing relevant qualitative criteria as well.
- The evaluation panel struggled to establish a clear sense of the students' journey and progression through their programme of study, and students indicated that apart from some introductory verbal briefings, little information is readily available to them. While this was not raised as a serious issue, the panel recommends that the college create a visual map that demonstrates how a typical student navigates core and optional modules during the 4 years of their study. (This could also be helpful for visiting staff).
- Review the general studies curriculum and ensure that all staff develop a shared understanding of the definition, purpose and content of theory modules, and the contemporary context in which they contribute to students' critical understanding of contemporary culture. (It is worth noting that the new, younger members of staff appeared to have a clear understanding of this).
- Provide a more critical feedback from the teaching staff during the assessments (based on student panel comment). Improve cooperation and collaboration between departments to enable students more opportunities to work across disciplines (based on student panel comment).
- Continue to monitor and review the content and delivery of entrepreneurial skills and professional practice-based modules /projects and how these could further developed and increased within the curriculum.

## Resources

Standards

- ✓ Resources (teaching and learning environments, teaching materials, teaching aids and equipment, premises, financial resources) support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.
- ✓ There is a sufficient supply of textbooks and other teaching aids and they are available.

- ✓ Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).
- ✓ Resource development is sustainable.

The panel found the facilities adequate and appropriate for the teaching and study environment. Teaching materials, teaching aids and equipment support the specific needs of each department and speciality.

The Learning environment and resources are continuously improved with investment funding from TAC's own funds and also through strategic use of EU structural funds. The modernisation of study and working environment is based on programme delivery, accessibility, health protection, and sustainability.

Resources in the form of equipment, digital technologies and materials relevant to the delivery of traditional and contemporary practices are provided in relation to the needs of each department. It is clear from feedback that in general terms, students and teaching staff are satisfied with the range and quality of these resources.

The equipment of the textile department in particular provides very well equipped teaching and learning circumstances (workshops, studios, classrooms, students lounge); students have an opportunity to learn all kind of textile techniques and technologies (weaving, printing, dyeing, digital weaving, fashion) in craft, art and design fields.

The painting department is well equipped with one big and multifunctional workshop and several smaller workshops for the various painting techniques; there is also room for students' meeting, communication and planning for their own needs. Teaching spaces appear to be versatile and adaptable for different purposes and tasks.

Other departments- Furniture Design and Restoration, Leather Design and Restoration and Sculpture – also have separate units, adequately equipped with everything necessary to carry out the training according to the subject speciality and curriculum requirements.

Despite the fluctuation of student applications and enrolments the resource budget appears to be well managed in relation to changing numbers of students or dropouts.

TAC has its own library, and students and teachers also have access to the main library of the University of Tartu. The TAC library contains books, electronic items and periodicals and it has the biggest collection of art related books stock in South Estonia. The majority of the books are in English.

Resources and technical equipment in TAC are adequate and well managed in every department. There is sufficient accommodation and recreational facilities for student body and teaching staff.

Generally, the resources comply with all the required standards and department staff are regularly consulted regarding further improvement and development.

Strengths:

- In each of the Departments, students have an opportunity to work with contemporary technologies and materials. Workspace is available for students outside official teaching hours.
- Income generated through external projects is used effectively to improve resources within the college.
- As far as possible, the TAC buildings are equipped with the ramps, wheelchair lift, toilets and thus are accessible to individuals with disabilities.
- TAC runs and uses the Noorus Gallery. This is a key asset for the college that enables students and teachers to present artistic works. The gallery is well known by Tartu citizens and appreciated by tourists.

Areas of improvement and recommendations:

- Use resources and equipment to develop and facilitate greater mutual cooperation between departments in order to foster interdisciplinary collaboration.

## Teaching and learning

Standards

- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learners' individual and social development.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning is flexible, takes into account the specifics of the form of study and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.
- ✓ Teaching methods and tools used in teaching are modern, effective and support the development of digital culture.
- ✓ Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.
- ✓ The organisation and the content of practical training support achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learning mobility.
- ✓ Assessment of learning outcomes is appropriate, transparent and objective, and supports the development of learners.

From the SER and from the panel meetings with management, programme leaders, staff, students, alumni and external stakeholders the evaluation team understand that the Tartu Art College remains loyal to the concept of 'applied arts' as an umbrella for higher education in 'arts, design, conservation and restoration'. Over recent years, teaching and learning practices have been reviewed and updated in line with curriculum development processes leading to extended cooperation between programmes offered by the college and the identification of three pathways: restoration, design and art.

Students and staff appreciate the review and redesign of the programmes and acknowledge the ongoing changes that are being adopted to a greater or lesser extent by each department. Students and teachers involved in the textile programme for example confirm that the programme has a broad outreach, allowing students to work independently and be actively engaged in applied research.

Teaching and learning processes are flexible and digital skills relevant to applied art are taught in all programmes. Practice and theory appear to be well integrated, and the changes introduced to strengthen the theoretical and contextual content of the general studies module are beginning to have some impact. However, assessment procedures are perceived by some staff and students to be somewhat unclear in relation to the criteria applied, and the feedback provided during or following the assessment event.

It is evident that work placements are widely regarded as an important element of the learning process that both support students' individual development, and improves job opportunities post graduation. This view was confirmed during the panel meeting with students who valued their placement experience highly in England, Germany and Iceland, for example. Partners and employers from private and public sectors, including an incubator for entrepreneurs, provided positive feedback regarding student skills and competencies.

Teaching staff are specialists in their field and engage actively in professional creative practice or academic research. The evaluation team understands that many of the staff combine part-time teaching with their professional practice, and that the teaching community includes long serving individuals and younger recent appointments. While staff have been involved in recent changes to the curriculum structure, there is some disparity regarding a common understanding of what the term 'contemporary teaching methods' actually means in practice. This suggests that a wider understanding of contemporary pedagogy in higher education and the introduction of best practices of other institutions should be included into staff development plans.

#### Strengths:

- The integration of regional and national needs with a broad international outreach is encouraging and highly appreciated by students.

- Students are encouraged and very well supported to organise international exchanges (confirmed by student panel).
- Students are actively encouraged to participate in work placements, external projects and commissions.
- The scale of the College and quality of the learning environment is appreciated by students, creating a cooperative spirit that supports a high level of peer learning.

Areas of improvement and recommendations:

- With a portfolio of stable and consolidated programmes, TAC may consider looking at subject developments in other institutions (internationally) that expand the definition of traditional applied arts and crafts. For example, areas of spatial design, surface design, bio textiles, art and science or curatorial arts management.
- Assessment procedures should be clarified with a distinction made for example between formative and summative assessment. In addition departments need to ensure that there is a published assessment criteria based on learning outcomes.
- There is currently an over reliance on verbal feedback during assessment events. The evaluation panel suggest introducing a more formalized method of assessment feedback that enables students to reflect on their strengths and weakness.
- Wider understanding of contemporary teaching methods in higher education and introduction of best practices of other institutions to be included into staff development plans.

## Teaching staff

Standards

- ✓ There is teaching staff with adequate qualifications to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.
- ✓ Overall student assessment on teaching skills of the teaching staff is positive.
- ✓ The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the higher education institution and with partners outside of the higher education institution (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other Estonian or foreign higher education institutions).
- ✓ Recognised foreign and visiting members of the teaching staff and practitioners participate in teaching the study programme.

- ✓ The teaching staff is routinely engaged in professional and teaching-skills development.
- ✓ Assessment of the work by members of the teaching staff (including staff evaluation) takes into account the quality of their teaching as well as of their research, development and creative work, including development of their teaching skills, and their international mobility.

During the assessment visit it was pointed out by heads of programmes and teachers that TAC offers relevant training for staff who wish to develop their teaching skills and strengthen their research. Staff mobility is in place and planning of teaching and learning is a collective collegial undertaking. Staff members are also professional practitioners who cooperate with a range of partners, in Estonia and abroad. There is however space for more international teachers in the programmes.

The number of professors in TAC has become stable in recent years and there is no plan to introduce more professor positions. The average age of staff in 2016 was 49 years. The RDC, including individual creative projects, are strongly supported by TAC as part of its development plan. The Erasmus+ programme is often used by teaching staff (in study year 2015/2016 17,9% of employees used Erasmus program for teaching or training purposes abroad) for self-educational purposes in other higher education institutions. According to the objective set in the development plan, the percentage of work travel via the Erasmus+ programme must be 25% of all assignments abroad by 2020.

Competition to higher teaching positions and heads of departments is limited (1-2 applicants per position during 2013-2015). It is high on lecturer level (6-10 candidates) presumably due to the lower personal responsibility related to study programmes and at an institutional level.

Students' feedback is important to teachers. Both staff and students provided examples of how proposals from students had been taken into account and resulted in specific changes within or across subjects. Teachers in some departments find it challenging that the role of teachers is changing and that students come with more varied backgrounds than they did previously. Nonetheless, the panel's overall impression is that staff members are dedicated to their teaching and to their students. Students value the continued support from and dialogue with their teachers in a practice based learning environment. Although staff value and appreciate informal feedback from students, it is clear that participation in formal feedback through SIS is very low.

How teaching and research is interrelated seem to vary between the departments, some teachers were even hesitant to address the issue and to discuss how contemporary practices affect or inform their teaching.

Strengths:

- RDC activities are very much supported by the TAC management.
- The close contact between staff and students facilitates an environment in which staff are responsive to students needs and minor challenges may be promptly addressed and solved.
- Management, programme leaders and staff are determined to work together for the best of their students.
- Young members of teaching staff have been hired recently and it is evident that they have a sophisticated understanding of the wider context of their subjects and contemporary teaching methods.

Areas of improvement and recommendations:

- The research basis for teaching should be openly discussed and developed further, at department level and across the college.
- How the concept “applied arts” inform and affect teaching and research may be straight forward to the TAC management and staff, but in TACs communication with the outside world it may be conveyed more clearly.
- Despite exceeding the target set, more visiting international teachers should be invited where and when possible. This view was supported by students during the visit. Programmes need staff with educational backgrounds other than Estonian, and in particular individuals with knowledge of critical contemporary art and theory.

## Students

Standards

- ✓ Student places are filled with motivated and capable students.
- ✓ The dropout rate is low; the proportion of students graduating within the standard period of study is large.
- ✓ Students are motivated to learn and their satisfaction with the content, form and methods of their studies is high.
- ✓ As part of their studies, students attend other Estonian and/or foreign higher education institutions as visiting or international students.
- ✓ Employment rate of alumni is high.
- ✓ Alumni and their employers are pleased with their professional preparation and social competencies.

Student places are filled with very motivated students, many of whom have already a background in other educational fields (for example physics, music, philology). Students are clear about their decision to study within the programmes subject to this assessment. Although not growing, student numbers are stable and there is a gradual increase in applications in relation to available study places.

The qualification of teaching staff, content of curricula, teaching methods, study environment and general atmosphere at TAC is highly valued by students. Student feedback is gathered via online surveys in the SIS, and students also have the opportunity to express their views informally within each department.

Student admission procedure is regulated by clearly stated admission rules, and selection procedure is determined through entrance exams and students' ability to demonstrate their motivation and ability to learn. These procedures appear to be effective in selecting students who are both suitably qualified at the appropriate level, and demonstrate an appetite for developing their knowledge and creative abilities.

Students have certain flexibility to change the selected specialty in TAC after the first study year. They can also choose part of the content of their curricula through the elective options that may include subjects from other TAC specialties or the University of Tartu.

Students are involved in the Curriculum Council and their feedback and constructive advice is taken into account and can influence decisions.

Students report positively about their relationship with teachers and that any study or personal problems can be primarily taken care of by the head of department or other teachers. This is seen as one of the key benefits of being a student in a small institution.

There are several ways for international mobility through the Erasmus+ or Nordplus programs. Students also benefit from participating in study trips abroad organized by each department. Students are very positive about the support and encouragement they receive in negotiating an Erasmus exchange.

Regarding employment, TAC estimates that between 80-90% of graduates work in a field related to the art, design or craft sectors, and many are self-employed or start their own businesses.

The Employer panel members praised the practical and theoretical competencies and motivation of TAC graduates. Live projects, competitions, commissions and entrepreneurship initiatives generate excellent opportunities for students to professionalise their practice and gain valuable work experience prior to their graduation. It is clear that TAC has numerous co-operation partners across the social, cultural and economic sectors within the region that facilitate student opportunities and in some cases provide income for the college.

Strengths:

- TAC attracts sufficient number of student applications to enable the programmes to select and enroll highly motivated and talented students that helps to maintain the reputation and quality of education at TAC.
- High level of support offered to students who participate in international mobility and exchange, and a positive approach to internationalisation of the study process through staff exchange.
- High percentage of students gain employment linked to their studies.

### 3.3.2. Photography PHEP; Media and Advertisement Design PHEP

#### **Study programme and study programme development**

Standards

- ✓ The launch or development of the study programme is based on the Standard of Higher Education and other legislation, development plans, analyses (including labour market and feasibility analyses), and professional standards; and the best quality is being sought.
- ✓ The structure and content of modules and courses in a study programme support achievement of the objectives and designed learning outcomes of the study programme.
- ✓ Different parts of the study programme form a coherent whole.
- ✓ The study programme includes practical training, the content and scope of which are based on the planned learning outcomes of the study programme.
- ✓ The study programme development takes into account feedback from students, employers, alumni and other stakeholders.

TAC maintains a specific curricular architecture comprised of a wide variety of fields ranging from fine arts, contemporary media and design to specialised areas of restoration.

The Photography PHEP; Media and Advertisement Design PHEP study programmes conform to the standards of the Higher Education of Estonia, and the assessment team can confirm that the curriculum structure and content is coherent and supports the key learning outcomes and objectives of each department.

The programmes are defined by their focus on practical training that is, for the most part, orientated to equip students with the skills, knowledge and contextual

and theoretical awareness they need in order to gain employment within industry and or establish themselves as freelance practitioners.

It was evident during the visit of the evaluation panel (and also noted in the self-evaluation report<sup>44</sup>) that employers recognize and appreciate the teamwork and practical skills, independence and decisiveness of the graduates.

Student participation in projects as part of their studies satisfaction survey<sup>45</sup> conducted in 2017 reveals a dramatic disparity among Photography and Media department students satisfaction levels, revealing that there are a 52,6% mostly dissatisfied students in Photography and 75.7% very satisfied students in Media. The Photography department should address this issue promptly and provide students with meaningful outside opportunities beyond the classroom walls. They should also form a working group with their Media colleagues and look at examples of Media best practices in securing high student satisfaction levels.

Internships and commissioned projects are part of the Media and Advertisement Design curriculum and the results of internships are assessed by practical training supervisors and, in the case of projects and commissioned work, external partners and commissioners. Feedback from practical training supervisors is collected electronically and analysed by specialty departments. Commissioned work for Media and Advertisement Design is being regarded positively by participating students (as found during the interviews) and also generates some income - part of which can be later spent on student projects. However, under certain circumstances internships can be replaced by “simulated work environments” conducted in the classroom under the supervision of a supervisor<sup>46</sup>—a practice which shouldn’t be regarded as norm but rather an exception.

### **Photography PHEP**

Photography PHEP (PP) is part of the art curriculum at the TAC and as such it allocates a sufficient amount of study time to Specialty and Practice Modules<sup>47</sup>. The Programme’s objectives are ambitious and they “Provide high-quality, internationally recognized professional higher education in the field of photography and contemporary visual arts” and are tuned to nurture an artist not just a photo technician: “Educate the next generation of specialists and/or creative artists who manifest independent thinking and decision-making ability and adaptability”.

In this regard, PP exhibits a few original aspects: “Experimental creative photo project, 9 ECTS”, which exposes student to underwater photography, aerial photography (drone), infrared photography, and other alternative photographic processes. The list could also be extended by including large volume laser scanning techniques and non-optic imagery such as sonar, for example. Also, uniquely to PP,

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<sup>44</sup> TAC ENG 06.09.2017 FINAL.docx (page 23)

<sup>45</sup> TAC ENG 06.09.2017 FINAL.docx (page 53, Table 30B)

<sup>46</sup> Annex\_08\_Guidelines\_for\_Organisation\_of\_Practical\_Training.pdf

<sup>47</sup> Annex\_12\_1\_Curriculum\_Photography.pdf

the programme grounds its critical, knowledge-based foundation on semiotic methods of meaning creation (Y.Lotman and Tartu-Moscow School of Semiotics). Plus, being a 4-year programme PP has an advantage of offering a broader range of subjects, which its 3-year counterpart programme cannot match. The strong history and criticism block: History of Photography, Photography Theory and Criticism I and II, and Art Theory and Criticism I and II, serves as a good foundation to the students considering art career or subsequent MA studies in photography or art history.

As part of PP curriculum, there are a few other structural elements worth mentioning: a significant amount of modules dedicated to film: "Film Project (9 ECTS) which consists of the following: Film Project (3 ECTS), Cinematography (2 ECTS), Digital Film Editing (2 ECTS), Introduction to Film Directing (2 ECTS), etc.)"<sup>48</sup>; a strong presence of theory, history and philosophy and semiotics courses. It is therefore not surprising that PP served as the model for the theoretical block for the other arts programmes<sup>49</sup>. On the other hand, a practical aspect of curriculum is also well represented: Practical Module, 36 ECTS and Photographic equipment and technology, 11 ECTS. The programme is also addressing the material basis of the photographic process as students can learn old photography techniques (bromide oil and cyanotype and pinhole photography). During the course of the programme student receives a significant exposure to the digital techniques: Computer graphics and digital photo processing, 18 ECTS.

### **Media and Advertisement Design (PHEP)**

The curriculum of Media and Advertisement Design (later MAD) "consists of many tangible and interconnected parts: visual identity, typography, illustration, 3D graphics, web design, advertising, animation, practical video project, scriptwriting, creative writing, etc."<sup>50</sup>. It is unique among similar programmes as it combines moving picture practice with graphic design. However, with a significant exposure to film art and video, MAD runs a risk of losing its own identity and being overshadowed by the Baltic Film and Media School— which offers a wide range of well-established specialty programmes in film and television. It would be beneficial for MAD to consider deepening its curricular engagement with new media such as AR and VR, also 3D, and perhaps with a combination of the previous two as a part of interactive platform (Unity3D and/or UnrealEngine) as well as the other interactive platforms (Arduino and LilyPad which connects interactive media with textiles) and real-time image manipulation (VVVV and MaxMSP or similar) and sound media (which is barely focused on at MAD, with a paltry 3 ECTS for Sound Design).

MAD is grounded upon a strong classical arts foundation such as painting, drawing, colour and composition studies, with a subsequent exposure to entrepreneurship and pedagogy. Later on, students receive a wide range of printing technology 8 ECTS and digital technology 4 ECTS skills.

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<sup>48</sup> Annex\_17\_Comparison\_of TAC\_curricula\_and\_curricula\_of\_other\_institutions\_of\_higher\_education.pdf

<sup>49</sup> TAC ENG 06.09.2017 FINAL.docx (page 38)

<sup>50</sup> Annex\_17\_Comparison\_of TAC\_curricula\_and\_curricula\_of\_other\_institutions\_of\_higher\_education.pdf

Overall, the programme exhibits a wide range and meaningful composition of variety of subjects, besides specialty-related modules also teaching students a number of theoretical fields, such as "Semiotics and Communication Theory", "Advertising Psychology" and "Creative Thinking" and facilitating entrepreneurship and business basics through "Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship" and "Design Management and Marketing" courses.

Evaluation Committee's findings during the interviews with students, alumni and employers, revealed a good vertical connection between MAD and the institutions outside the TAC, primarily through practical training and commissioned projects. Both students and employers expressed satisfaction with this curricular module. One however could wish a better track record when it comes to internal (horizontal) collaboration. MAD is ideally positioned to connect to such fields as photography and textiles, resulting in deepening of understanding of image and style/fashion.

#### Strengths:

- Study programs are directly linked to the academic purposes of the institution; they demonstrate a viable connection with local cultural institutions and the labour market and follow the key economic and cultural priorities of the country.
- Curricular structure and the content of study programmes is modern, flexible and allows for an individual tuning and is well suited for achieving the planned learning outcomes of the school. Students can switch their specialization and choose from a wide range of electives and optional courses for a total of 21 ECTS.
- The curricular structure is fully compliant with the framework of learner-centred education.
- Study programmes meet the needs of professional stakeholders and also prepare students for an independent artistic career or continuation of studies at the MA level.
- Life-long learning programmes are well integrated within studies environment and serve as a meaningful part of the curricular whole.
- Development framework, feedback mechanism and amendments of the study programmes are flexible, prompt and systematic.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations:

- Internships in the professional industry and commissioned projects should be better coordinated within module delivery. And in case of Photography should overall have a stronger curricular presence.
- The school might benefit from a stronger international presence. This could be achieved by establishing one English language PHEP program combining relevant aspects of the other programmes into the transdisciplinary whole. For example, Media and Photography could easily collaborate in this structure.

## Resources

### Standards

- ✓ Resources (teaching and learning environments, teaching materials, teaching aids and equipment, premises, financial resources) support the achievement of objectives in the study programme.
- ✓ There is a sufficient supply of textbooks and other teaching aids and they are available.
- ✓ Adequacy of resources is ensured for changing circumstances (change in student numbers, etc.).
- ✓ Resource development is sustainable.

The assessment committee found facilities and the other material resources of the TAC to be adequate in matching the needs of the curriculum as described in the study programme document. Financial resources gained from external income such as commissioned works stay within the department and are mainly invested in equipment and student travel<sup>51</sup>. Students are involved in the process of choosing how to spend the budget.

Overall, students are satisfied with the state of TAC's facilities and equipment. In 2017 the level of student satisfaction had risen by 11.6%: in 2017, 79.2% of respondents were satisfied with the condition of study facilities<sup>52</sup>, also the satisfaction with availability of study software has risen from 42.6% to 85.5%<sup>53</sup>. The resources of TAC are in some cases even better than those in the industry. This was mentioned in the interviews with both students/alumni and employers<sup>54</sup>.

Other highlights for the panel in relation to resources included TAC's own well stocked library (with additional access, if need, to the University of Tartu's library) with capable and motivated staff; a large and spacious photography laboratory, which attracts many exchange students; and finally, it was encouraging for the panel to note that the Media and Advertisement Design programme has effectively utilised external grants (EU) and is well equipped (large format printer and up-to

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<sup>51</sup> Interview with students.

<sup>52</sup> SER, page 45.

<sup>53</sup> SER, page 45

<sup>54</sup> Interviews with teaching staff and the students.

date computer laboratory) and maintains 5 speciality laboratories and a sound studio.

### Strengths:

- In the photography department, a deal has been established with a retail company to let students use camera equipment for two weeks without charge if they write product reviews in turn. A lack of financial resources is in this case resolved in a creative way.
- Workshops are well equipped and students are free to use them for side projects or personal work. The resource base enables students learn to work with new technologies and materials.
- The Noorus Gallery provides students and teachers with a chance to publicly display their works and simultaneously aids the recognition of TAC among the general public.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations:

- Students previously had 24/7 access to workshop facilities but this is no longer allowed and they now close at 11.00pm (including Sat and Sun). Students did try to introduce a system of Student Supervisors to retain access at night but this did not turn out to be a sustainable practice. It would be highly beneficial to the learning process (especially in light of EU's directives in student-centered learning SCL<sup>55</sup>), to further extend after-hour student access to all, or at least some dedicated studio spaces where students could unrestrictedly continue work on their projects.

## **Teaching and learning**

### Standards

- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learners' individual and social development.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning is flexible, takes into account the specifics of the form of study and facilitates the achievement of planned learning outcomes.
- ✓ Teaching methods and tools used in teaching are modern, effective and support the development of digital culture.
- ✓ Practical and theoretical studies are interconnected.
- ✓ The organisation and the content of practical training support

<sup>55</sup> Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve Ministerial Conference 2009

- achievement of planned learning outcomes and meet the needs of the stakeholders.
- ✓ The process of teaching and learning supports learning mobility.
  - ✓ Assessment of learning outcomes is appropriate, transparent and objective, and supports the development of learners.

The panel was informed that experienced tutors teach students in a variety of pedagogical settings– from small groups to one-to-one tutorials. The process of teaching and learning is flexible and takes into account the specifics of the form of study and planned learning. Furthermore, the organisation and content of practical training support meets the needs of students and employers interviewed by the panel. Practical training in a work environment is included in the curriculum and practical training supervisors assess the outcomes of these internships<sup>56</sup>.

The evaluation panel noted that assessment of practical work takes place twice annually and that a committee of teaching staff and external professionals (including employers) is responsible for the grading<sup>57</sup>. It also noted by the panel that student learning mobility is supported through the Erasmus Study Programme and the possibility to take electives from other Estonian higher education institutions. This also applies to staff that are strongly encouraged to undertake Erasmus staff mobility exchanges and knowledge is then transferred to other TAC staff members via information sessions in the library.

#### Strengths:

- TAC has taken significant steps to improve the quality of outcome-based learning and expanded the implementation of APEL. Professional training and study trips have improved the efficiency of strategic management and TAC has conducted surveys and analyses, published study guides and organised events to support students<sup>58</sup>.
- Practical training is very good, students learn to work with different equipment and media and gain important experience from commissioned work projects.
- Final year students are involved with external employers and the community as part of their project work.
- Assessment methods are communicated to the students at the start of each course. The students have indicated in the interview that they perceive assessment to be fair and transparent.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations:

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<sup>56</sup> Self-Evaluation Report, p. 31.

<sup>57</sup> Self-Evaluation Report, p. 58.

<sup>58</sup> SER, p64, meeting with heads of study programmes

- While students are obligated to 'participate' in academic work (Annex 3 in the report) attendance is not mandatory for most courses. Students indicated during the interview with the panel that they would prefer to have clearer and stricter rules about attendance. The lack of attendance by some students can have a detrimental impact on the student who do attend *i.e.* there is a lack of critical mass etc.
- While the theoretical content of the studies are prominent, an employer indicated during the interview that TAC students would particularly benefit from curriculum content with a focus on user experience.

## Teaching staff

### Standards

- ✓ There is teaching staff with adequate qualifications to achieve the objectives and planned learning outcomes of the study programme, and to ensure quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning.
- ✓ Overall student assessment on teaching skills of the teaching staff is positive.
- ✓ The teaching staff collaborate in the fields of teaching and research within the higher education institution and with partners outside of the higher education institution (practitioners in their fields, employers, and staff members at other Estonian or foreign higher education institutions).
- ✓ Recognised foreign and visiting members of the teaching staff and practitioners participate in teaching the study programme.
- ✓ The teaching staff is routinely engaged in professional and teaching-skills development.
- ✓ Assessment of the work by members of the teaching staff (including staff evaluation) takes into account the quality of their teaching as well as of their research, development and creative work, including development of their teaching skills, and their international mobility.

As described in the SER and appendices, the programmes are taught by a team of teaching staff who have sufficient qualifications to achieve the objectives and planned learning of the study programmes<sup>59</sup>, although five staff members lack a professional higher education level. It is not entirely clear whether they are involved in the Photography and/or Media and Advertisement Design. There is a small number of core staff (3 for Media and Advertisement Design and 4 for Photography) and many visiting lecturers (approximately forty per sp)<sup>60</sup>. The composition of the Photography team with 70% male teaching staff needs improvement to better balance the team.

Regarding managing performance, the HR manager establishes and acts upon training plans and TAC supports staff in continuation of studies, participation in

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<sup>59</sup> SER, p60, table B.25 / B.26

<sup>60</sup> SAER, p60, table B.26, meeting with Heads of study programmes,

conferences, Erasmus etc. When staff return from an international exchange they present and reflect on their findings in an information session at the TAC library. An annual budget is calculated for staff development. There is no formal institutional professional development plan available<sup>61</sup>. Staff members are also supported to participate in teacher qualification courses at the University of Tartu and some have started or finished their PhD. Staff evaluations are conducted every three years and students give feedback on staff teaching quality<sup>62</sup>. The teaching staff has indicated engagement in professional development activities through practical creative work as part of their own professional practice, but couldn't provide specific examples of how management supports them in hours or kind to develop their research or professional development<sup>63</sup>.

Teaching staff have strong connections with the film and media industry and the majority combine teaching part-time and maintaining professional work<sup>64</sup>. Feedback has been positive on the quality, composition and variety of staff members both for Photography and Media and Advertisement Design<sup>65</sup>.

Teaching staff collaborate within TAC and with partners outside of the higher education institution for instance in their professional work, but also in commissioned creative projects, or internships and as such teaching. "*The field is so small, you know everyone*"<sup>66</sup>.

#### Strengths:

- Teaching staff's strong connections with industry and media practice also through the commissioned student projects and other practical work.
- The practice to include alumni as (visiting) lecturers in the different programmes<sup>67</sup>.
- Collection of feedback in relation to staff performance via surveys in SIS<sup>68</sup> appears to be used effectively to support programme and institutional development. This is further backed up by opportunities for teaching staff to discuss their performance with college management and the Universities HR services.

#### Areas of improvement and recommendations:

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<sup>61</sup> Meeting with TAC management

<sup>62</sup> SER p59, Meeting with Heads of study programme

<sup>63</sup> Meeting with lecturers

<sup>64</sup> Meeting with heads of study programmes, lecturers

<sup>65</sup> Meetings with students and alumni

<sup>66</sup> Meeting with lecturers

<sup>67</sup> SER, p62, table B.28

<sup>68</sup> SER, p65

- Develop clear procedures, criteria or policy for involvement of part-time and full-time staff in research and professional development activities compliant with national standards.
- The composition of the Photography team is dominated by male teaching staff (70%). In the opinion of the evaluation panel the programme should take steps to have a more balanced male/female team of teaching staff.

## Students

### Standards

- ✓ Student places are filled with motivated and capable students.
- ✓ The dropout rate is low; the proportion of students graduating within the standard period of study is large.
- ✓ Students are motivated to learn and their satisfaction with the content, form and methods of their studies is high.
- ✓ As part of their studies, students attend other Estonian and/or foreign higher education institutions as visiting or international students.
- ✓ Employment rate of alumni is high.
- ✓ Alumni and their employers are pleased with their professional preparation and social competencies.

The students that were interviewed by the evaluation panel were highly motivated and committed to their programme, teaching staff and TAC. Students value the learning atmosphere at TAC, which is friendly and provides an easy access to teachers and other resources<sup>69</sup>.

Student intake is highly selective and regulated by the statutes of student admission at TAC<sup>70</sup>. This results in highly talented students being enrolled to study within the programmes. In the last 4 years TAC has managed to attract a larger number of applicants, which guarantee a high number of applications per study place<sup>71</sup>. TAC's decision not to increase the current student numbers is seen as an effective way to maintain existing high standards.

Student feedback is collected via online surveys in the study information system.

There is a student council, which discusses problems and proposals with the Heads of Department. Students indicated in the interview with the panel that they feel their feedback is adequately handled<sup>72</sup>, although the online feedback system could be streamlined and made more user-friendly. Feedback from graduates is collected in an annual survey. Alumni have over the past years become increasingly satisfied with the skills they acquired in the programmes.

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<sup>69</sup> Interview with students.

<sup>70</sup> Annex\_06\_Rules\_for\_Student\_Admission.pdf

<sup>71</sup> SER, page 69, Figure B.43.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with students.

Student-staff communication reaps the benefits of a small institution: communication is informal, prompt and highly individualized. Formal procedures (SIS and others<sup>73</sup>) are in place however, to ensure that objective and impartial and anonymous views can be expressed. Students can turn to their teachers, the Academic Affairs Office or to the Heads of Department if they need individual mentoring or counseling.

Regarding student mobility, TAC organizes exchange activities primarily through three pathways: Erasmus+, Nordplus and International Study trips organized by specialty departments. Student satisfaction with participation in Erasmus+ programme has increased by 9%<sup>74</sup>, although some students indicate narrow geographical choices for the prospective exchange<sup>75</sup>.

Employers describe TAC graduates as self-motivated, professional, highly skilled and flexible and appreciate their knowledge of new technologies and creativity.

Generally, the programmes comply with all the standards mentioned above.

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<sup>73</sup> Annex\_11\_Feedback\_and\_Monitoring\_System.pdf

<sup>74</sup> SER, page 72, Figure B.48.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with students.

### Strengths

- TAC continuously receives enough applications per study place to select only the most motivated and capable students while keeping student numbers stable. In 2016, there were ten applications per study place for Photography and nine for Media and Advertisement Design (SER p. 69).
- Opportunities for (international) exchange are good and mobility rates are high.
- Dropout rates are low compared to other universities of applied sciences in Estonia.

### Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Despite the official Study Information System (SIS) being in place communication about practical matters between teachers and students could be more transparent. Students explained to the panel that teachers for example, tend to communicate via the university email system that most students do not check on a daily basis. A conversation between students and teachers to agree on a more effective form of communication could be helpful.
- Students seem to have adopted pragmatic view of being an artist but also needing an industry job / career that pays. Although this could be seen as a positive, students need to ensure that they don't self-censor their work for fear of being branded too abstract and non-commercial.