

## Decision Regarding Institutional Accreditation Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre

10/03/2017

**The Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education decided to accredit the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre for seven years**

On the basis of clause 12 (2) 1) and subsection 10 (4) of the Universities Act, point 3.7.3 of the Statutes of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (hereinafter referred to as 'EKKA') and point 48.1 of the document, 'Conditions and Procedure for Institutional Accreditation', authorised in point 3.7.1 of the above-mentioned EKKA Statutes; the EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as 'the Council') affirms the following:

1. On 10.12.2015 the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre and EKKA agreed upon a time frame to conduct institutional accreditation.
2. The Director of EKKA, by her order on 30.08.2016, approved the following membership of the committee for the institutional accreditation of the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre (hereinafter referred to as 'the Committee'):

<b>Mist Thorkesdottir – Chair of the Committee</b>	Chair of the Committee, Senior Advisor to the Dean on International Relations, Thornton School of Music, University of Southern California, U.S.A (Iceland)
<b>Hannu Apajalahti</b>	Member of the teaching staff, Sibelius Academy/University of the Arts Helsinki (Finland)
<b>Eirik Birkeland</b>	Member of the teaching staff, Norwegian Academy of Music (Norway)
<b>Mateusz Celmer</b>	Student member of the Committee, Wrocław University of Technology (Poland)
<b>Jari Kukkonen</b>	Non-university member of the Committee, Vitalonga OÜ (Estonia)

3. The Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre submitted a self-evaluation report to the EKKA Bureau on 3.10.2016 and the assessment coordinator forwarded it to the Committee on 12.10.2016.
4. An assessment visit was made to the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre during 13–15.12.2016.

5. The Committee sent its draft assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 26.01.2017, EKKA forwarded it to the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre for its comments on 27.01.2017 and the Academy delivered its response on 13.02.2017.
6. The Committee submitted its final assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 15.02.2017. That assessment report is an integral part of the decision, and is available on the EKKA website.
7. The Secretary of the Council forwarded the Committee’s final assessment report along with the Academy’s self-evaluation report to the Council members on 21.02.2017.
8. The Committee presented the following component assessments:

Organisational management and performance	Conforms to requirements
Teaching and learning	Conforms to requirements
Research, development and/or other creative activity (RDC)	Conforms to requirements
Service to society	Conforms to requirements

9. The Council with 9 members present discussed these received documents in its session on 10.03.2017 and, based on the assessment report, decided to point out the following strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations regarding the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre.

### **Organisational management and performance**

#### Strengths

- 1) The following activities by the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre (EAMT) deserve special recognition:
  - the Academy’s impressive commitment to internationalisation and ability to attract strong international partners and external funding;
  - a well-developed, well-managed and attractive library which fully meets the needs of the Academy and also serves public interests – 60% of library users come from outside the Academy.
- 2) The EAMT’s staff and students are very committed and satisfied, and have a strong sense of community.
- 3) The EAMT’s Student Union functions well.
- 4) The infrastructure is of good quality. The planned new concert hall will fill an important gap in both the theatrical and musical landscapes. The exceptional atmosphere of the Drama School building is an essential part of its strong identity.
- 5) The information systems are user-friendly and support the EAMT’s core processes.
- 6) The International and Public Relations Department works efficiently and proactively.
- 7) Flexible opportunities for professional development have been created for the teaching staff, including their participation in international activities and exchange programmes.
- 8) Professional organisations and practitioners, with whom the Academy is in close contact, provide versatile and useful feedback to the Academy, both formal and informal.
- 9) Teaching staff’s participation rates for international mobility are high. The EAMT participates in international projects and performances as an active partner.

#### Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) The EAMT’s organisational structure should be simplified to some extent, in order to improve the information flow and to clarify the division of responsibilities for adopting and implementing decisions related to strategic objectives of the Academy. This may in turn increase employees’ motivation to participate in the decision-making process.

- 2) The departments of music and theatre should collaboratively map EAMT's strengths and then set clear priorities based on these strengths. In order to achieve its main objectives, the EAMT might consider reallocating its resources.
- 3) The EAMT's internal quality assurance system should be developed further in order to produce a stronger quality culture at the Academy. Along with this it is important to make sure that the data collected is used in a continuous improvement process.
- 4) The EAMT lacks a systemic approach to risk management.
- 5) The construction of a new concert hall will involve financial risks, which should certainly be taken into account while planning future spending.
- 6) It is advisable to review the performance indicators of the development plan and assess their appropriateness.
- 7) Interaction and collaboration between the Music departments and Drama School should be improved, especially with regard to the black box theatre in the planned new concert hall.
- 8) A more dynamic approach could be applied to the implementation of plans: to convene working groups that bring together different stakeholders to launch interdisciplinary initiatives and development projects in their academic, creative and research activities.

## **Teaching and learning**

### Strengths

- 1) Students are satisfied with the quality of the learning environment and the teaching. Students have a wealth of opportunities to participate in international mobility programmes and in various international projects that they also actively use. One of the aims of theatre studies is to give international experience to every single student. A large number of foreign students study at the Academy.
- 2) Graduates' competencies enable them to succeed in the labour market.
- 3) The Academy encourages both professional and civic participation by the teaching staff.
- 4) The final examinations at the Estonian music schools and the entrance examinations for EAMT are interconnected.
- 5) Due to close interaction between the EAMT and its stakeholders, the new study programmes of the Academy meet the needs of society and the labour market.
- 6) The EAMT launches and successfully implements joint programmes with both local and international partners.
- 7) The information systems for monitoring student progress and the support systems for teaching staff are of good quality.
- 8) The EAMT offers its students (including international students) efficient academic and career counselling.

### Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) Research, development and creative activities should be better reflected in the learning and teaching process.
- 2) It would be advisable to convene a working group of lecturers and students which would discuss how to modernise the process of learning and teaching. Discussions involving artistic staff and students could be held to address the issues of student assessment, as well as feedback and its role in the learning process.
- 3) Students should be motivated to provide more feedback.
- 4) Graduates' employment should be monitored to a greater extent, especially their careers in the international labour market. Information collected could be used in a more formal and systematic manner when developing study programmes and in the learning and teaching processes.

- 5) Requirements for language proficiency of the international students should be clarified. It is recommended that the Academy use TOEFL or similar tests to determine the linguistic ability of applicants.
- 6) The EAMT might consider having forums in order to discuss new opportunities in the rapidly changing world of art and to use those ideas when developing study programmes.
- 7) Learning outcomes must be clearly linked to assessment criteria which are transparent and public.
- 8) It should be thoroughly analysed as to why only a few students complete their studies within the standard period of time.

### **Research, development and/or other creative activity**

#### Strengths

- 1) The EAMT conducts effective research in the fields of musicology, music pedagogy, theatre history and contemporary theatre practice.
- 2) It must be highlighted that in 2015 the EAMT Speech and Music research group was acknowledged as a partner in the Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies.
- 3) The EAMT has a number of specialties at an internationally leading artistic level, for example, composition, conducting and improvisation.
- 4) A considerable number of doctoral students study at the EMTA, of whom more than 20% are doctoral students from abroad.
- 5) The EMTA has established clear requirements for the staff's research and creative activities and verifies compliance on an annual basis.
- 6) A well-functioning support system for research and creative activities has been established at the Academy.
- 7) The EAMT engages in many professional networks and organises international research conferences.
- 8) The EAMT's research into the societal impact of cultural management has achieved international success.
- 9) Doctoral students are supported financially enabling them to take part in international conferences and to spend longer periods studying abroad.
- 10) The EAMT has an adequate number of highly-qualified supervisors. The Doctoral Committee ensures that all doctoral students have competent supervisors and, if necessary, seeks co-supervisors from other higher education institutions. Foreign lecturers are also involved in supervising and reviewing doctoral theses and projects.

#### Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) Research and creative work could be more integrated. Additional resources should be allocated to engage artistic staff in R&D projects to a greater extent.
- 2) The EAMT is encouraged to continue its work in establishing a national funding programme for artistic research.
- 3) The EAMT should develop a more detailed strategy for further development of its research, development and creative activities. In this context, it is important to develop focus areas based on the Academy's strengths and to increase the proportion of RDC funding in the Academy's budget.
- 4) Students of artistic specialities should be offered better opportunities to engage in research projects at the doctoral level.
- 5) Doctoral students should be better motivated to complete their studies in a timely manner.

## Service to society

### Strengths

- 1) Creative activities in the field of music and theatre are at the core of EAMT's learning, teaching and research activities. Therefore the Academy has to be outward oriented by its very nature. The EAMT does it very well, being indeed central to the development of Estonian cultural life.
- 2) Due to a close cooperation with the leaders of various events, performance places and festivals, the EAMT has become an integral part of Estonian culture.
- 3) The EAMT organises various public performances and concerts which should gain momentum when the new concert hall is completed.
- 4) Members of the teaching staff have strong ties with the cultural institutions of Estonia.
- 5) The EAMT successfully brings in notable international artists and lecturers whose performances are public.
- 6) EAMT's teaching staff are generally very active and their representation in the decision-making bodies of Estonian professional associations is impressive. Thereby the EAMT has a significant indirect influence on decisions regarding Estonian cultural life.
- 7) Relationships with the media are very good – the EAMT is a highly respected and visible educational institution in society.
- 8) In-service training and lifelong learning are well organised and an integral part of the activities of the Academy.

### Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) Members of the teaching staff who are exceptionally active in the national cultural arena and thereby enhance the EAMT's reputation could be offered a special compensation or recognition.
  - 2) Research could be better linked to current trends in the professions and the needs of society.
  - 3) EAMT students could conduct artistic projects at schools, in order to popularise musical education.
  - 4) The EAMT could offer a film acting course for practicing actors within the framework of lifelong learning.
  - 5) The EAMT Music Education Institute could create a forum for young music teachers, where they can connect regularly, ask questions and share ideas.
  - 6) The EAMT lacks suitable spaces for public performances of theatre and music productions. It is therefore crucial that plans to build a concert hall and black box theatre continue as planned.
10. If all component assessments are presented as 'conforms to requirements', the Quality Assessment Council shall conclude that the management, administration, academic and research activity, and academic and research environment meet the requirements; and decide to accredit the institution of higher education for seven years.
11. On the basis of the foregoing, the Council

### **DECIDED**

**to accredit the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre for seven years.**

The decision was adopted by 9 votes in favour and 0 against.

12. This accreditation will be valid until 10.03.2024, and the EKKA Bureau will coordinate a date for the next institutional accreditation with the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre no later than 10.06.2023.
13. The Council also decided to award the EKKA Quality Label to the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre for the period ending on 10.03.2024.

14. A person who finds that his or her rights have been violated or his or her freedoms restricted by this decision may file a challenge with the EKKA Quality Assessment Council within 30 days after the person filing the challenge became or should have become aware of the contested finding. A judicial challenge to this decision is possible within 30 days after its delivery, by filing an action with the Tallinn courthouse of the Tallinn Administrative Court pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Code of Administrative Court Procedure.

**Tõnu Meidla**  
Chair of the Council

**Hillar Bauman**  
Secretary of the Council