

The Review of the ad FFA QAE Report 18 August 2007 and the Reflection on the Evaluation Team (ET) Output

(September 12, 2007)

Having received the evaluation report, the FaVU Self-evaluation Team (FaVUSET) have studied it and will present its abstract to the dean of the faculty and the members of the dean's advisory board at their next meeting, and to the Academic Senate of the FaVU and to all academia (teachers and students) at the beginning of the new semester. The report will be translated into Czech and both its full and concise version will be made available to the Academic Senate and faculty staff. Based on the report, decisions will be made to enhance the quality of teaching at the FaVU.

The evaluation report is a structured, systematically constructed document. It begins with the description of the institution, its management structure (specific to a small faculty within a large technical university), structure of its teaching programs, and the way it is incorporated into the context of national and regional institutions. The evaluation team (ET) is introduced with its tasks and responsibilities. Although the ET presented these points during the introductory talks, it was necessary to elaborate on them for the uninformed participants (outside FaVUSET) during the internal discussions, after which the initial uneasiness was overcome. Because of the differences in the historical, cultural and political contexts, both teams, FaVUSET and ET, gradually had to find a way of co-operation. This consisted in structured discussions, studying of documents, and informal discussions in which the FaVU representatives and employees learned about functioning, structure and management forms of comparable higher fine art educational institutions (academies and faculties) in Europe. The tuning of communication was thus necessary not only between the ET and the FaVUSET, but also between FaVUSET and other teachers and students of the FaVU.

The report describes the process of review and points out the difficulties the FaVUSET had to cope with – in the first place, it was the distrust towards administration in general, stemming from the historical experience from the period of totalitarianism, but also from the number of changes after 1989. The evaluation process encouraged a debate about further development opportunities for the FaVU within the framework of the Bologna system.

The preliminary visit on May 2 – 4, 2007 was very beneficial for the atmosphere in the FaVU team and for evoking feelings of trust. The evaluation committee appreciated the documentation supplied by the FaVU and objectively discussed points which were unclear and missing documents in order to be able to competently look into the FaVU and its functioning. This useful visit helped prepare the program for the main visit in June 2007. The work of the committee was excellently structured and efficient. The ET investigated the situation both at the level of the faculty and its departments and at the level of the technical university, and the basic issues of communication between them.

The main visit took place on 4 - 7 June 2007. It was only during the evaluation process that some of the FaVU workers realized that the ET, which made the impression of a perfectly functioning organism, meets ad hoc and tunes up to well-defined tasks. This professional approach can be a model example for the FaVU as well. During this visit the ET met various teams, bodies and groups.

As regards the Bologna Declaration, the ET found out that the FaVU complies with Declaration principles, but there is still a space for improvement (for example there are

possibilities of better use of the advantages of the system, expansion of the PhD program, and in the research area). Also the already introduced ECTS system is not fully used by the staff, and thus not integrated into the QAE systems. The ET suggests that the staff be trained and the FaVU puts more emphasis on its output. Based on the SWOT analysis and their own inquiries, the ET recommends to introduce a special QAE management. Quality Assessment within BUT is endorsed but the ET finds that its full implementation is hindered by its declarative and centralistic character, reflected by the faculties with a degree of scepticism. That is why the ET recommends the FaVU to introduce its own QAE mechanisms. These already exist in the current system but they are necessary to be standardized.

The ET paid much attention to the internal communication at the FaVU and found out that the communication is good at the level of dean and vice-deans, but there are problems in communication between the dean's board and the Academic Senate. The participation of teachers in assessment committees, including final state examination committees, is insufficient. Also horizontal relations between practical departments, and between practical departments and the Art Theory Department need improving.

The ET recommends that a position of a Quality Director should be established at the level of the dean's board, which will be supported by his/her own advisory board. The ET also recommends a whole list of advisable reviewing activities. It is also necessary to increase staff qualifications in a systematic way and develop the participation of students in quality assessment at all levels.

The ET has focused its attention on the painting and sculpture departments. They found communication with the studios satisfactory and in the report they have also reflected a substantial improvement of the understanding of evaluatory and self-evaluatory processes which do not present just another bureaucratic discipline, but rather they show a way in which individual departments can work more efficiently. "Curriculum development" (understood as "The Creation of Curricular Plans") represents a significant issue in the Report. The plans should be formulated clearly and lead to palpable outputs ("The Graduate Profile"). "Discipline descriptors" specify the qualifications which the students reach within the individual phases of their studies, while the difference between the lower and the higher phase is significant. "Learning outcomes" define the skills and abilities which the students attain in the particular course; the quality of those will be reflected in the evaluation system. The ET recommends to continually monitor, critically observe, and gradually change the teaching process. At present, teaching is based on the university lectures model, typical for Central Europe, combined with individual tutorials within the studio practice. The ET recommends the introduction and development of e-learning and other methods which will enhance the efficiency of teaching. As far as this aspect of the teaching issue is concerned, the FaVU has some weak points on the one hand, but a good potential on the other. The feedback between teachers and student is very intensive. The Report even mentions the development of a "student-centered learning," in which the present informal methods should be codified and systematized. The studio practice should be structured more clearly as it will have to comply with the accredited module system of the curriculum.

As far as the research development possibilities are concerned, the FaVU is determined by a specific situation given by the faculty's existence within a framework of the university of technology. So far, the possibilities have not been fully utilized due to the short existence of the faculty. It is also essential to enhance the cooperation between individual departments on

the research projects as well as to strengthen contacts with other fine art faculties and academies.

“Student progression – achievement” presents an issue on its own. It is vital to heighten the importance of learning evaluation, to monitor its development with each student, and to focus on other variables (i.e. demographical aspects) in each class. Public relations represents another area in which the FaVU still has some drawbacks. As far as student grants are concerned, there is a number of informal mechanisms which enable the FaVU to support its students; these, including health care, should be systematized.

The employability of FaVU graduates, often underestimated in the Czech Republic in general, presents another important criterion on which the ET focused. An unprecedented and systematic survey was carried out by the ET focusing on the graduates and their employers. The ET have noted a remarkable discrepancy between the sometimes vague notions of the students related to their visions of their future career and the pragmatic approach of successful graduates. The survey results looked quite optimistic, which was maybe due to its focus on traceable (and therefore successful) graduates. Such a survey needs, however, a more profound understanding of the various specifics of central European environment, which is a task that the ET cannot fulfill to a sufficient degree even despite their best efforts. The ET methods and ways of looking at things are, nevertheless, extremely valuable and inspiring for the FaVU. A more thorough focus on a graduate profile, the interconnection of the learning process and the practical activities, and collaboration with potential employers and other institutions during the studies seems to be the primary task for the FaVU. Following the ET recommendation, situating the presentation of the faculty into one gallery space in the city centre will present a part of this process.

The ET has concluded that the FaVU is a relatively new faculty with flexible management. In its Mission statement, the faculty clearly asserts itself as a part of the Bologna system whose full utilization will lead to a greater efficiency of the teaching process.

The Report is concluded by a summary of “Identified examples of good practice” and offers a list of Recommendations, which are graded according to their relevance. The conclusion of the report also contains used terminology and a list of acronyms. The FaVU management greatly appreciates the report for several reasons. First, this has been the first in-depth extensive and systematic survey that has been carried out in the 14 years of the faculty existence. The hitherto attempts either have not been finalized (prof. Zhor’s survey of 1997), or their aim was to deal with practical problems and discussions with parent Brno University of Technology, or they were a part of the accreditation and re-accreditation process. Thanks to ELIA, the FaVU has now at its disposal a survey that has reported a number of hitherto unknown facts, and that offers many practical recommendations leading to the enhancement of the teaching process.

The ET has undertaken their task in a remarkable manner. The members of the FaVUSET realize only in retrospect the professionalism and compactness of the ET, and they also appreciate their friendly communication methods. It was only during the discussions that the members of the ET were sometimes perplexed by the complex realities of a post-totalitarian society, whose cultural and educational institutions and art find their role in the society only very slowly. The FaVU appreciates that the committee members were willing to listen to the our explanations of the advantages and disadvantages of such situation, and that they

reflected these in their final Report. Such a Report represents a crucial step forward determining the faculty's progress towards a standard fine art school in a free society.