



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Šiaulių universiteto  
***DAILĖS PROGRAMOS (621W10012)***  
**VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

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**EVALUATION REPORT**  
**OF *FINE ARTS (621W10012)***  
**STUDY PROGRAMME**  
at Šiauliai University

Grupės vadovas: Prof. dr. h.c. John Butler  
Team leader:

Grupės nariai: Rugilė Ališauskaitė  
Team members: Virginija Januškevičiūtė  
Prof. dr. Atis Kampars  
Prof. dr. Vojtěch Lahoda

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## DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Dailė</i>
Valstybinis kodas	621W10012
Studijų sritis	menai
Studijų kryptis	dailė
Studijų programos rūšis	universitetinės
Studijų pakopa	antroji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	nuolatinė (1,5)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	90
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	dailės magistras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	1997-05-19

## INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	<i>Fine Art</i>
State code	621W10012
Study area	Art
Study field	Fine Arts
Kind of the study programme	University studies
Study cycle	Second
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time (1,5)
Volume of the study programme in credits	90
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master of Fine Art
Date of registration of the study programme	1997-05-19

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## I. INTRODUCTION

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

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

The Team visited Šiauliai University and the Arts Faculty on Wednesday 23rd October 2013 after they had carried out a rigorous analysis of the MA Fine Art Self Evaluation Report (SER), the previous Accreditation Reports of 2008 and 2011 and the preparation of Preliminary Reports.

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

The visit to the University and Faculty involved the Team meeting with the following groups:

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

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

Šiauliai University Faculty of Arts delivers the Fine Art study programme in two full-time cycles. The first is Bachelor's studies, which after completion a Bachelor's Degree in Fine Art is awarded. The second cycle Master's studies, which after completion graduates are awarded a Master of Fine Art degree. The Master's study programme (hereinafter referred to as the programme) has specialisations in Graphics, Painting, Design, Leather and Textile, with duration of studies of 1.5 years and a study volume of 90 credits.

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

## II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

### 1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

In the SER (p.8) the programme aims are stated as:

*“To educate professional artists who are able to conceptually assess socio-cultural phenomena, in their creative work; to apply gained knowledge and methods of art research; to demonstrate personal, social and special abilities presenting their artworks in the fine art life in Lithuania and foreign countries; who are able to work in institutions of art, culture, various levels of public administration, in non-governmental and private organisations.”*

The Team think this aim is clear and concise and it is largely possible to achieve if the student fully understands the meaning and value of the well-articulated learning outcomes. The Team noted the considerable development by the University, following the recommendation of the last ‘Expert Review’ of 2010, in better defining the learning outcomes around the categories (knowledge and its application; ability to carry out research; and special, social and personal abilities), and clearly mapping them to the study programme.

But when meeting the students during this visit it became clear to the Team that the students did not fully appreciate the purpose and value of the learning outcomes. Nor did they understand the intellectual and practical development from Bachelor to Master’s level, mostly thinking it was ‘more of the same’. The programme teaching staff will need to work closely with the students to help them fully understand the function and value of learning outcomes in the learning process. This is made more complex when considering such diverse ‘Fine Art’ practices and ensuring the same critical aesthetic, technical and intellectual rigor. The Team found it difficult to see the fine art Master’s level to a student who claimed her final project was to design a new teapot. This was also reflected in the variance in the quality and standard of the Master’s thesis across the five pathways.

The Team think that the aims and learning outcomes meet the professional requirements and are fully supported and endorsed by the professions.

Teachers of the design specialty emphasised their close watch of the latest standards of industry to avoid gaps in the alumni’s technical skills.

The interviewed employees emphasised that the alumni poses a desirable combination of practical skills, continuous active involvement with the field of studies, and manifold creativity that translates to various activities.

The Team acknowledge the considerable work the programme has taken in referencing national and European laws and guidelines in arriving at their learning outcomes including the European Higher Education Space Framework of Qualifications for the second cycle, Level 7, and Level 7 of the qualification requirements defined in Lithuanian Framework of Qualifications. The outcomes are also consistent to the Master’s level as listed in the *Dublin Descriptors* and make reference to key provisions of the Meeting of Ministers Communiqués Bergen (2005), London (2007) and Leuven (2009).

The Team supports the ambition of the programme with its five specialisms, but it is not convinced the name of the programme, its learning outcomes, content and the qualification offered are compatible with each other. It is not sure if the title Fine Arts is being applied as it is used in the USA where it is a generic term describing all the arts including design, or all the specialisms are carrying out fine art practice. When the Team looked at the work produced

across the specialisms there appears to be a strong design ethos across a number of them. This ambiguity could restrict recruitment to the programme and the Team recommend this should be reviewed.

The Team also thinks that the programme will have to increase the theoretical content of the programme (contemporary discourse in art and philosophy, professional development skills and critical writing and research skills) if “*students will perceive and be able to analyse major artistic, cultural ideas, processes, theories, traditions, will ground on them when creating projects, will create professional art, will use well-mastered technologies in the branch of fine art*”. (SER p.7)

## **2. Curriculum design**

The programme complies with national legal acts and regulations and meets the minimum General Requirements for postgraduate study programmes in Lithuania, with a volume of studies of 90 credits and a duration of studies of 1,5 years.

The study subjects and modules are equitably spread across the years giving the students a balanced workload and the module content is consistent with the level of studies.

The content of the study subjects is predominantly directly related to speciality studies. There are two courses ‘Integral Art Project’ and ‘Research on a Master’s Thesis Theme’, both of 6 credits, in the curriculum planned to provide integration of knowledge of the ‘other speciality’. Both courses are located in the second semester thus leaving very small amount of time for critical reflections before the focus on graduation thesis in the third (final) semester. Only a very small portion of the courses depart from the specialty studies, thus the scope of knowledge provided by the programme is rather narrow for MA studies.

Overall the Team found an imbalance between the practical and theoretical elements within the content of the programme. The Team believes the main obstacle for the achievement of the Learning Outcomes is the length of the programme that limits students’ possibilities to critically evaluate the standard characteristics of speciality and procedures of studies and, consequently, make research.

While the programme seems to provide basic social and entrepreneurial skills, there is an apparent inclination in some specialties towards craft (graphics, leather) alone or combined with a loosely defined experimenting (painting, textile, as well as the joint interdisciplinary project) when it comes to teaching the specialty’s core subjects.

The array of knowledge and skills provided to students is rather narrow in part due to the subjects in some specialties being split (in the curriculum) on the craft/theory axis but still being taught by the same teachers; there is a risk that the exchange will never exceed the range of knowledge that can be provided by just one of those subjects, and that the split thus simulates a wide array of knowledge without providing it.

The number of electives is narrow and most of them are aspects of the specialty subjects rather than additional subjects in the curriculum.

This same problem is even more apparent when the supervisors of graduation works are only selected (by the students, as described by teachers in an interview) from the same pool: it is not very clear if the supervisors have to be part of the programme’s staff, but p.16 of SER reads: “*In academic year 2012–2013, one Master’s students’ academic supervisor had to supervise 3.4 students.*”

As stated in the SER *“The basis of the MA Fine Art study programme structure consists of delivering the course into four groups of subjects:*

- *the first group of subjects (SER Table 5 p.15) providing knowledge and abilities needed to develop Project Performance in Art and focus on formation of a conceptual point of view;*
- *the second group of subjects providing knowledge and abilities needed to develop Research Performance in Art, related to contextualisation of contemporary art;*
- *the third group of subjects providing knowledge and abilities needed for development of Integral Artistic Performance related to integrity of contemporary art;*
- *the fourth group of subjects developing Performance of Personal and Professional Development”.*

But the Team found that the research content of the programme could be improved and the standard of written dissertations could be more consistent across specialisms (the dissertations ranged from short descriptions of the practical process employed by students with no or little contextualisation, analysis or synthesis and little critical evaluation required of at Master's level) - the Team found examples of good practice in interior design which fully engaged with all aspects of the aforementioned. Also the outputs of the Art Research Centre could be better utilised in the curriculum and the teacher's research should be better integrated into the curriculum.

According to the teachers, digital technologies are barely used in the study process apart of social exchange, distribution of information bulletins for extra-curriculum activities, and specialised classes that directly involve use of computers.

The use of new resources such as the photo lab and computer lab could also be better integrated into the programme and this could lead to new modules and possibly to establishing a new specialism.

The breadth of the disciplines and range of practices is relevant to contemporary practice and has specific value and importance to the region, but the limitation of time does not allow a full development of knowledge through practical artistic experiments.

The Team found the introduction of the cross-disciplinary projects within the programme is a very positive direction and should be developed, but there should be more consideration to what the enhancement value is to the student's learning experience. Often what the Team experienced was the second discipline was a decoration of the first discipline (a student described how the print media was just used to decorate her teapot and the challenge was that this was a new media), which at Master's level is minimal and superficial. The new resources should lead to more experimental practices and the programme team should consider if other mediums and practices would be more appropriate to raise the profile and uniqueness of the programme and increase the employability of the students.

When the Team met the students they found a lack of critical rigour in the discussions about their ambition and expectation and the national and international references when talking about their work. The Team recommends the programme to address the course content to ensure it meets Master's level standards with specific reference to contemporary discourse in art and philosophy, professional development skills and critical writing and research skills.

### 3. Staff

The staffing legal requirements set in the *General Requirements for Master's Degree Study Programmes* (3rd June 2010), article 19 and qualification requirements set for positions of teaching staff which are indicated in *The Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania* (2009), article 58 and *Šiauliai University Regulations for Certification of University Research Staff and Teaching Staff and Competitions for Holding Positions*, are met.

Teaching staff working on the programme are four professors (23.5 %), eleven associate professors (64.7 %) and two lecturers (11.7 %). The Professors deliver more than 20 % of the volume of study field subjects.

The teaching staff are specialists in the study subjects they deliver and are acknowledged artists.

During the period under review the Fine Art Master's study programme employed seventeen teachers, which with the number of students enrolled on the course is sufficient to deliver the learning outcomes. The staff/student ratio (SER Table 7 p.28) is very positive in comparison to comparable national and international European higher arts education institutions.

Although the core teaching staff are highly thought of and praised by the students and alumni they all (across art and design) thought it would benefit the programme if there was a broader, increased teaching input from national and international artist/designers. The programme does bring in international artists and they are much appreciated, but the number is small and not adequate. The Team believe the number of the teaching staff is adequate to ensure the achievement of the learning outcomes, but it would benefit greatly by increased teaching input from national and international artist/designers.

During this review period the programme experienced minimal change in teaching staff, with one additional lecturer joining the teaching team. It is noticeable to the Team that 94% of the staff are over 40 years old and 82% of staff have more than 20 years' service, with the last member joining 11 years ago. This does represent great experience for the student's learning, but the management must plan for succession and it would be advisable to introduce younger artists to the programme. This is acknowledged by the programme within the SER (p.33)

The University does support the professional development of the teaching staff mainly through national and international exchange visits, conferences/seminars and exhibitions. Although the staff are provided with appropriate time in their workload for professional development, the emphasis is on their research practice. The Team think the programme teaching staff would benefit from attending more systematic seminars and workshops looking at the latest developments in learning and teaching at Higher Education level, with more focus on student centred learning including the use of digital technology.

In the SER it states "*The total volume of a full-time teacher's work load is 1584 hrs per academic year and the volume of the pedagogical load per academic year doesn't exceed more than 1056 hrs. Teachers' contact does not exceed 792 hrs per academic year and there is not less than 264 hrs of non-contact work, the remaining 528 hrs (33 % of a full position's volume) are dedicated to scientific and methodical work which is assessed according to qualification requirements for teaching staff every 5 years*". The Team fully supports this balance of workload and thinks the University is providing appropriate time for the staff to carry out research and professional development.

As stated earlier in the report, the Team are very positive about the new Research Centre and the way it is supporting staff. The Team also experienced high level research by teaching staff



within the programme, as demonstrated by the exhibitions and competitions the staff have participated in and won.

#### **4. Facilities and learning resources**

The Team believes the size of premises for studies are adequate and commends the University for the new development of the study premises, computer suites and the new digital photo/video and sound workshops.

The new University gallery is a very positive addition and the Team recommends this space is used to bring national and international artist/designers to the students.

The Team hopes this new equipment and workshops will be fully utilised by all five pathways, but the current state of some workshops raise Health & Safety concerns and this must be addressed. Students not initially prepared for specific material studies should be inducted into any new workshop environment and work under supervision of an instructor.

The Team also applauds the new developments in the workshops, which fully support the specialisations across all five pathways. There is a small reservation as the Team is concerned that the conditions in some of the workshops if left will present clear health hazards to students and staff and do require a speedy full risk assessment.

There also appears to be a disagreement between students and staff regarding which software they are learning to master (student quote: *“but this is maybe not a problem, because we can always learn other things at home”*). Perhaps it is possible to take account of this issue by planning the courses or acquiring software.

The MA programme is delivered across 4 buildings all within 1 kilometre of each other. All studios are equipped with individual computerised work places with printers, photo-video equipment and Internet connection. Each specialisation has learning resource rooms to store students' graduation works and creative pieces; they are accessible to students and act as learning aids. In total, the area used for the study of Fine Art covers 1702 sq. metres, which the Team considers is adequate for the current number of students studying on the MA programme.

The University library is excellent and offers appropriate services to Master's level students. The library has been refurbished and expanded through financial support from BIBLIOREG in 2008. The premises are equipped with multimedia projectors, computers, magnetic white boards and the entire library has wireless internet access. The library enables disability access. The library and the reading room are equipped with *BIS* (library information system) and *Aleph* (communication system). According to the SER *“Currently members of the University community can use 39 subscribed data bases, <http://biblioteka.su.lt/lt/duomenu-bazes-prenumeruojamos/>. Also students and teaching staff of arts specialities can use the data bases from the EBSCO list and the e-catalogue of Šiauliai University library is accessible from all faculty work places and through the LITNET network are accessible from all over Lithuania and the world”*.

#### **5. Study process and student assessment**

Admission to study for the MA programme proceed according to the General Requirements for the Master Degree Study Programmes (3 June 2010, order Nr. V-826), regulations prepared by ŠU for the second and third cycle studies and minutes approved by the Faculty of Arts Council on admission to Fine Art Master's studies (14 February 2012, Nr. 6). The Team notes that the standard for entry to the MA programme has risen with the competition average marks to state-

financed places increasing each year from 16.67 in 2008 to 19.11 point in 2012. The Team believe this demonstrates that the programme is chosen by more highly motivated students (SER Table 12 p.35). The recruitment to the programme has remained fairly constant with an upward trend since 2011, which the Team sees as very positive.

The Team commends the introduction of the student motivation statement at the application point and the interview process to select students.

The Team recommends that the programme reviews their admission requirements that state only students with an Arts BA can enter the MA, to consider students from other disciplines with a BA who are able to demonstrate their creative ability as they could enhance the interdisciplinary aspects and bring other viewpoints to the programme.

The Team commends the programme for the use of the student's individual study plan, which is reviewed and rewritten each semester, although the level of engagement by students was not consistent across all pathways. This is an excellent reflective learning tool and students must fully understand the value of it.

The programme aims at motivating Master's students to become active creators, organisers and participants of creative life, to get integrated into the cultural, artistic life of a town, country, to participate in project activities, to visit museums and exhibitions. The Team found that the programme and students did positively actively engage in this process and activities with good support from arts organisations, other social stakeholders and teachers.

The Team found good examples of students participating in research, artistic and applied research activities in some pathways (e.g. Design) but this needs to be more consistent in all pathways.

Further course developments should be closely coordinated with the curriculum, the teachers and Art Research Centre to assure appropriate scope of knowledge and its depth in the fields most relevant to the programme.

The alumni noted the introduction of "open studios" (showcases of their independent work) as one of the most challenging and exceptionally good features of the programme – along with the technical skills they received, social and "artistic" life permeating the programme, and the gallery's activities.

The programme encourages student's awareness of the latest art and design by providing information about events and exhibitions, and embracing student's own interest and research (providing for it when possible and incorporating it into the teaching process).

Students are encouraged to engage in research, external projects, competitions and exhibitions and they do so, but the teaching team do not accredit their engagement or their output, which is not the best way to encourage such activities (SER p.38). The Team recommends the programme team should find ways to resolving this and build these activities into the curriculum and accredit them.

The SER (p.47) states *Participation of students in the mobility programme is low. This leads to decreased funding for the Erasmus student exchange programme participants overall financial crisis, a large part of the master has a job, lack of motivation.*

The Team noted the number of students that participate in international student mobility programmes appears to be minimal (one in the review period), no students past and present we met experienced an exchange.

The SER (p.38) states “*students of all specialisations actively participate in international and national joint exhibitions and joint projects with teaching staff*”, the Team found little evidence of this and recommends that the programme works hard to build international contacts and develop exchange programmes to test the quality of their programme and give their students this invaluable experience.

Academic support for student achievement and monitoring is performed through:

- literature and various other publications on programmes and cultural events;
- ŠU Department of Studies annual Study Programmes publication;
- Student Counselling,
- Careers Advice through the University Career Centre.

Students have access to the Students’ Representation to all information and social support measures provided by the University including: free psychological consultation; legal assistance; urban clinics; a child care centre and the University chaplain. Students have opportunities to attend various university sports events, Sports Club, Physical Education and Sport Department of Education. They are provided with consultations at the medical centre, the Medical Department, urban clinics and hospital specialists. There is also possible financial hardship support, which is regulated by numerous Lithuanian and University regulations. A total of 32 social grants were distributed between 2008 – 13 which represents 14% of the student body. The Team believe there is good social support for students, but thinks the level of social grant support is relatively low.

The University MA students are assessed on a ten-point criterion-based scale system approved by the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania.

The SER states the “*programme uses the cumulative assessment framework (<http://su.lt/kaupiam-vert>) which aims to ensure: clarity of assessment criteria, objectivity, transparency, reasonableness, constructive evaluation, integrity and unity. Learning outcomes of the assessment principles are governed by the Regulations of Studies, 2011 (Article 4.6). Students’ performance and achievement are assessed each semester and are conducted systematically. The assessment is based on modern didactics and is oriented to the learning outcomes*”. The Team were informed by the students that they were happy with their assessment, they understood the assessment criteria and were given appropriate feedback after assessment to realise their strengths and weaknesses.

The statistics for the past two years present a very high average level of achievement 9.2 in 2012-13 (very good to excellent) and 8.9 (very good) in 2011-12, which the Team thought was very high, as observed when looking at the work presented during the visit, and recommends the staff look closely at the work of some of their higher arts education national and international competitors.

The Team met with more than 20 alumni who were all employed and generally content with their learning experience.

The employers the Team met were very positive about the programme and thought the skills the students graduated with were adequate for the professions. They also thought the students were able to successfully transfer these skills to other professions.

## **6. Programme management**

Quality of studies of the Programme is ensured by the University internal quality assurance management system which presently is being developed under implementation of the project UNI-Q-MAS. *Being developed since 2011, the internal quality management system using CAF methods which will every two years assess achieved results and will find out opportunities.* (SER p.49). The Team note the newness of the system and process and welcome the findings of the first review due this year and fully supports the claim that *Responsibility for quality of studies is assumed on all levels of the academic community: the University, faculty, department, teacher, student* (SER p.50).

The *Faculty of the Arts Committee for Art and Art Pedagogy Study Programmes* is responsible for coordination, correction, perfection of new and delivered study programmes. The Committee consists of 7 members (Dean, Heads of the Departments, representative of ŠU library, representative of another ŠU faculty).

The *Group for Monitoring of Quality of Fine Art Study Programme* is responsible for assurance of Programme's internal quality monitoring, supervision and perfection. The group consists of 7 members: Supervisor of the programme, 4 teachers of the Departments of Fine Art and Design, a social partner, and a student of the study programme.

The Team support this structure and applauds the use of key stakeholders in the process, but recommends that a peer from another Higher Arts Education institution (preferably one that the programme respects for their quality) should be invited on to the committee.

The Team were able to see student: recruitment, profile, progression, retention, achievement, mobility, scholarship and employment data as well as teaching staff: profile, qualifications, research, recruitment etc. This was supported by data on the regulations, programme study plan, premises and student services etc.

This data was made available in the SER and other appendices.

It has been noted during the interview with teachers that current students have very little impact on the programme or ways to affect improvements during its course; in contrast, alumni have a much stronger say, mainly because they are regarded as potential employers. However, the students' motivation expressed through the admission process is regarded as one of the key motives for changes within the programme.

The Team recommends the programme carries out a more systematic self-evaluation through closer consideration of its strengths (including distinctive features), weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The Team found a lot of repetition in the SER without stating what were its clear strengths (which the Team has found many) the weaknesses, threats or opportunities.

The Team welcomes the introduction of the renewed Quality Assurance process of gathering data and is pleased to note that it will be regularly monitored and evaluated every two years.

In the SER (p.13) the programme acknowledges the need to ensure more active participation by the stakeholders to perfect better correlation between its aims and expected outcomes.

The Team met with an impressive group of highly motivated stakeholders which provided evidence of the programme's need and purposefulness; as does the participation of graduates in cultural endeavours, administration apparatus and various industries in the city. There are structures in place to assure their involvement in the programme's improvement. However,

keeping in mind the complex structure of the programme and the vast array of learning outcomes the programme seeks to achieve, the programme must take care that the range of stakeholders represents all aspects relating to the learning outcomes. This could involve inclusion of academic figures from other universities and interrelated fields, non-teaching practitioners of respective fields of art and design, etc.

The employers the Team met were very positive with the collaboration with the programme offering a range of engagements including internships and employment and recognising good practical skills in the graduates. One area they thought should be developed further was the theoretical skills to enable them to articulate better their ideas and concepts. Several of the stakeholders also expressed their wish for more formal exchange with the programme, assuming that this could result in their more productive input.

Due to the programme being embedded in the city's public life on various levels and rather strong management, it seems to have high status in the community, which it continues to hold despite various changes within the programme and the University occurring through the years.

The programme makes good use of public exhibition venues and national and international competitions to partially compensate for the low teacher turnover and student mobility; but it must be understood that the effect of such exposure is much less than of an immersion in different environments.

The Team recommends the programme could make more formal use of the student and employer feedback in developing the curriculum.

The Team also recommend the programme expands its partners beyond the region as the current employers stated they had no knowledge of the programme's national or international competitors so found it hard to compare them to other MA graduates.

The University has developed a robust internal quality assurance policy and process, but it needs to be better embedded in the Faculty and programme.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Team recommends:

1. teaching staff will need to work closely with the students to help them fully understand the function and value of learning outcomes in the learning process.
2. the name of the programme, in relation to its learning outcomes and content should be reviewed.
3. the programme to review and increase the theoretical content of the programme.
4. the new resources should lead to more experimental practices and the programme team should consider if other mediums and practices would be more appropriate to raise the profile and uniqueness of the programme and increase the employability of the students.
5. the programme to address the course content to ensure it meets Master's level standards with specific reference to contemporary discourse in art and philosophy, professional development skills and critical writing and research skills.
6. the programme to consider how the interdisciplinary aspect can better enhance the Master's level learning experience of the students, beyond introduction to a new medium or process.
7. increased teaching input from national and international artist/designers.
8. more systematic seminars and workshops looking at the latest developments in learning and teaching.
9. the University and Faculty finds ways to support more staff to participate in international exchanges and conferences.
10. the University and Faculty supports a greater turnover of staff to introduce younger staff to the programme.
11. a full Health & Safety risk assessment of the workshops, which if left some will present health hazards to students and staff.
12. the programme reviews their admission requirements that state only students with an Arts BA can enter the MA.
13. the programme introduces staff and student training to ensure the quality and use of the student's individual study plan across the pathways.
14. the programme team builds external activities into the curriculum and accredits them.
15. the programme builds international contacts and develops exchange programmes.
16. the staff look closely at the work of some of their higher arts education national and international competitors.
17. a peer from another Higher Arts Education institution (preferably one that the programme respects for their quality) should be invited on to the *Group for Monitoring of Quality of Fine Art Study Programme* committee.
18. the programme carries out a more systematic self-evaluation through closer consideration of its strengths (including distinctive features), weaknesses, opportunities and threats.
19. theoretical skills could be developed to enable them to articulate better their ideas and concepts.
20. the programme could make more formal use of the student and employer feedback in developing the curriculum and expands its partners beyond the region.
21. the internal quality assurance policy and process needs to be better embedded in the Faculty and programme.

## **IV. SUMMARY**

### ***1. Programme aims and learning outcomes***

The programme aim is clear and concise and it is largely possible to achieve if the student fully understands the meaning and value of the well-articulated learning outcomes. There was considerable development by the University, following the recommendation of the last 'Expert Review' of 2010, in better defining the learning outcomes. The aims and learning outcomes meet the professional requirements and are fully supported and endorsed by the professions. Employers emphasised that the alumni pose a desirable combination of practical skills, continuous active involvement with the field of studies, and manifold creativity that translates to various activities. The Team also notes the ambition of the programme with its five specialisms.

The students did not fully appreciate the purpose and value of the learning outcomes, nor did they understand the intellectual and practical development from Bachelor to Master's level. The Team are not convinced the name of the programme, its learning outcomes, content and the qualification offered are compatible with each other. The students lack understanding of Master's level requirements.

### ***2. Curriculum design***

The programme complies with national legal acts and regulations and meets the minimum General Requirements for postgraduate study programmes. The study subjects and modules are equitably spread across the years giving the students a balanced workload and the module content is consistent with the level of studies. There are examples of good practice in interior design in the standard of written dissertations. The breadth of the disciplines and range of practices is relevant to contemporary practice and has specific value and importance to the region. The Team supports the introduction of the cross-disciplinary projects within the programme.

Only a very small portion of the courses depart from the specialty studies, thus the scope of knowledge provided by the programme is rather narrow for MA studies. There is an imbalance between the practical and theoretical elements within the content of the programme. The length of the programme limits students' possibilities to critically evaluate the standard characteristics of speciality and procedures of studies and, consequently, make research. The research content of the programme could be improved and the standard of written dissertations could be more consistent across specialisms. The outputs of the Art Research Centre and the teacher's research should be better integrated into the curriculum. Digital technologies are barely used in the study process. There should be more consideration of what the enhancement value is to the students' learning experience in the cross-disciplinary projects. There was a lack of critical rigour in the discussions about students' ambition and expectation and the national and international references when talking about their work.

### ***3. Staff***

The staffing meets legal requirements. The teaching staff are specialists in the study subjects they deliver and are acknowledged artists. The staff/student ratio is very positive. The core teaching staff are highly thought of and praised by the students and alumni. The number of the teaching staff is adequate to ensure the achievement of the learning outcomes. The University does support the professional development of the teaching staff and is providing appropriate time for the staff to carry out research. The Team commends the new Research Centre and the way it is supporting staff and high level research by the teaching staff.

All students (across art and design) thought it would benefit the programme if there was a broader, increased teaching input from national and international artist/designers. There is minimal change in teaching staff. Teaching staff would benefit from attending more systematic seminars and workshops looking at the latest developments in learning and teaching. There should be more focus on student centred learning including the use of digital technology.

#### ***4. Facilities and learning resources***

The size of the premises is adequate for the study programme. There has been new development of the study premises, computer suites and the new digital photo/video and sound workshops, the new developments in the workshops, which fully support the specialisations across all five pathways, and the establishment of the new University gallery. Studios are equipped with individual computerised work places with printers, photo-video equipment and Internet connection. The University library is excellent and offers appropriate services to Master's level students.

The current state of some workshops raises Health & Safety concerns. Software training needs to be appropriate to subject demands.

#### ***5. Study process and student assessment***

The standard for entry to the MA programme has risen with the competition average marks to state-financed places increasing each year since 2008. Recruitment to the programme has remained fairly constant with an upward trend since 2011. The student motivation statement at the application point and the interview process to select students have been introduced. There is a student's individual study plan, which is reviewed and rewritten each semester. Students become active creators, organisers and participants of creative life, to get integrated into the cultural, artistic life of a town, country. Students participate in research, artistic and applied research activities. The Team notes the introduction of "open studios" which showcases their independent work. Information about events and exhibitions is distributed. There is good social support for students. Students are happy with the assessment process, they understood the assessment criteria and were given appropriate feedback after assessment to realise their strengths and weaknesses. Alumni were all employed and generally content with their learning experience. Employers were very positive about the programme and thought the skills were adequate for the professions and transferable.

Admission requirements that state only students with an Arts BA can enter the MA should be reviewed. The level of engagement by students with the individual study plan was not consistent across all pathways. Student participation in research, artistic and applied research activities needs to be more consistent in all pathways. Course developments should be closely coordinated with the curriculum, the teachers and Art Research Centre. Student participation in international student mobility programmes is minimal.

#### ***6. Programme management***

The Team notes the new Quality Assurance process of gathering data. Quality of studies of the programme is ensured by the University internal quality assurance management system. The *Faculty of the Arts Committee for Art and Art Pedagogy Study Programmes* is responsible for coordination, correction, perfection of new and delivered study programmes. The *Group for Monitoring of Quality of Fine Art Study Programme* is responsible for assurance of Programme's



internal quality monitoring, supervision and perfection. Key stakeholders are involved in the QA process. There are records for student recruitment, profile, progression, retention, achievement, mobility, scholarship and employment as well as teaching staff profile, qualifications, research, recruitment data. Stakeholders the Team met are highly motivated.

Current students have very little impact on the programme or ways to affect improvements during its course. There was repetition in the self-evaluation report without stating what were its clear strengths, the weaknesses, threats and opportunities. The programme should ensure more active participation by the stakeholders. The range of stakeholders should represent all aspects relating to the learning outcomes including academic. The theoretical skills could be developed to enable students to articulate better their ideas and concepts.

## V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Fine Art* (state code – 621W10012) at Šiauliai University is given **positive/negative** evaluation.

*Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas.*

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation Area in Points*
1.	Programme aims and learning outcomes	3
2.	Curriculum design	2
3.	Staff	3
4.	Material resources	3
5.	Study process and assessment (student admission, study process student support, achievement assessment)	3
6.	Programme management (programme administration, internal quality assurance)	3
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>17</b>

\*1 (unsatisfactory) - there are essential shortcomings that must be eliminated;

2 (satisfactory) - meets the established minimum requirements, needs improvement;

3 (good) - the field develops systematically, has distinctive features;

4 (very good) - the field is exceptionally good.

Grupės vadovas:  
Team leader:

Prof. dr. h.c. John Butler

Grupės nariai:  
Team members:

Rugilė Ališauskaitė

Virginija Januškevičiūtė

Prof. dr. Atis Kampars

Prof. dr. Vojtěch Lahoda