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# Thematic Analysis

EQ-Arts

Quality Assurance Activities  
2017-2020



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# Introduction

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This Thematic Analysis is the first in a series of reports to be published by EQ-Arts over the next three years. Together, they will build on EQ-Arts' substantial experience of Quality Assurance and Enhancement across the European higher education sector for the creative and performing arts and design — so sharing our knowledge widely across the public domain. Through this we aim to identify and highlight developments, trends and areas of good practice, or, indeed, persistent difficulty in order to inform work across the sector.

To achieve our mission of promoting a strong quality culture across the European higher arts education sector EQ-Arts works with colleagues, institutions and agencies to enhance the quality of learning and teaching for a next generation of citizens and practitioners — only through this next generation will our collective futures be secured. We also aim to advance public understanding of, and confidence in, the creative arts sector as a vital force in the social, economic and cultural wellbeing of our communities.

In recent years EQ-Arts has reformed its governance structures to assure all stakeholders that, as an independent sector-specific not-for-profit organisation, all our work is undertaken on an impartial and objective basis that is independent of any vested interests. Here, EQ-Arts aims to be a trusted and independent voice helping to advance the creative arts sector as a whole — seeking to achieve this in ways that respect the unique characteristics of higher arts education and honours the diversity of institutions in which the study of arts practice (in all its variants) is offered. Accordingly, EQ-Arts is also committed to operating within the framework provided by the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) and, therefore, our practices comply with its requirements.

This Thematic Analysis has been commissioned and approved by the EQ-Arts Board whose members are leading experts of the

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highest professional standing drawn from a wide range of arts institutions and organisations across Europe. The Board is indebted to two of its members, Professor Anthony Dean and Dr. Sarah Bennett, for the analysis that underpins their authorship of this report prepared on behalf of the Board.

Finally, EQ-Arts is grateful to all the institutions it has engaged with over the period covered by this Thematic Analysis, and colleagues who have participated as review team members. We have been fortunate to be able to draw on the excellent practice we have found in these institutions and the expertise of our colleagues to aid us in developing this Thematic Analysis, which in turn will enable EQ-Arts to continue to develop its policies, processes and practice.

The unprecedented situation in which all higher education institutions now find themselves demands that EQ-Arts looks for new ways to continue to deliver the highest quality service to the higher arts education sector over the coming years.



Lars Ebert  
Chair, EQ-Arts Board



Professor John Butler  
Chief Executive Officer, EQ-Arts

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A free download of this report can be obtained from the EQ-Arts website at: <http://www.eq-arts.org/thematicanalysis/>

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This report has been commissioned and approved by the EQ-Arts Board and authored on its behalf by the following Board members.

**Professor Anthony Dean** is professor emeritus of the University of Winchester, UK. His career in higher education has been divided between working in the conservatoire sector (Royal Central School of Speech and Drama) and – as professor of performing arts and Dean of Faculty (of Arts) – in the University Sector (University of Winchester). Anthony first became involved in external quality assurance (EQA) in 1998, undertaking a series of subject reviews for the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) England in areas of Performing Arts and Art & Design. In 2001, he was selected as a member of the first subject benchmarking group for Art & Design. Anthony went on to participate as a member of subject and institutional review panels for both QAA Wales and QAA Scotland and a number of other quality assurance agencies. Anthony has participated in international EQA processes in Bulgaria, Lithuania, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Czech Republic and Switzerland, and has been involved in external validation processes throughout the UK and in The Netherlands, Spain, Ireland and Hong Kong. Anthony is a founding board member of EQ-Arts Board and is Chair of the Training Panel, which is responsible for training new EQA panel members.

**Dr. Sarah Bennett** is a practicing artist and academic. She has recently retired as Head of the School of Art and Architecture at Kingston University, London, but continues to supervise PhD candidates and undertake preparations for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) at Kingston. Previous posts include Interim Head of the School of Art and Media, and Head of Fine Art at Plymouth University. She has experience in delivery of international collaborative Masters and PhD programmes in Fine Art. Sarah joined the EQ-Arts Board in 2018 and has participated as both chair and a panel member in international EQA processes in Lithuania, Czech Republic, Belgium and the Netherlands, and has been involved in QA reviews and external validation processes throughout the UK. She is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. Her PhD by practice was awarded in 2010 and her artistic research traverses fine art practice, cultural geography, architectural history, visual anthropology and museology and she regularly exhibits in the UK and Italy.

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# Foreword

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EQ-Arts (Enhancing Quality in the Arts) has always considered that objective analysis is the most important aspect of the role of a quality assurance agency. Therefore, we are proud to publish our first thematic analysis that draws on the outcomes of our external quality assurance (EQA) activities undertaken between March 2017 and March 2020. Focussing on the interrelated processes of assurance and enhancement, this Thematic Analysis aims to provide insights drawn from the objective analysis of these activities to the broader Creative and Performing Arts and Design (CPAD) subject sector.

Since its inception, under the aegis of the European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA), EQ-Arts has been closely involved in key developments within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). For example; in the formulation of generic degree learning outcomes in the Tuning project (TUNING Educational Structures in Europe), that is about to be revisited through the CALOHEX<sup>1</sup> project (aimed at developing Qualifications and Assessment Reference Frameworks and a Framework for Civic, Social and Cultural Engagement), and the European PHEExcel project (investigating models of, and roads to, excellence in Professional Higher Education). Since becoming independent of ELIA in 2015, EQ-Arts has become a key partner in the European Creator Doctus<sup>2</sup> project (investigating and developing models of artistic research at PhD level). Most recently, EQ-Arts was closely involved in the shaping of a definition of artistic research through contributing to the Vienna Declaration<sup>3</sup> policy document. However, the provision of external quality assurance within the Higher Arts Education CPAD sector across the EHEA remains the primary focus of EQ-Arts.

Quality Assurance in higher education, both internal and external, is not simply a matter of good intentions or the skilled presentation of processes. It should truly deal with the actual and systemically planned quality of the provision of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as key elements of their three-fold mission; learning and teaching, research and societal service. That is why the ESG<sup>4</sup> rightly

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<sup>1</sup> More information on <http://www.eq-arts.org/calohex-project/>

<sup>2</sup> More information on [www.creatordoctus.eu](http://www.creatordoctus.eu)

<sup>3</sup> More information on <http://www.eq-arts.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Annex-18-Vienna-Declaration.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015), [https://www.eqar.eu/assets/uploads/2018/04/ESG\\_2015.pdf](https://www.eqar.eu/assets/uploads/2018/04/ESG_2015.pdf)

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<sup>5</sup> *EQ-Arts Framework for External Quality Assurance*, <http://www.eq-arts.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Annex-22-EQ-Arts-Quality-Framework-for-Accreditation-and-Assessment-5.7.20.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015)*, [https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG\\_2015.pdf](https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> *EQAR (2018), Analysis of Register Committee Decisions and Quality Assurance Agencies' Compliance with the ESG, Brussels*, [https://www.eqar.eu/assets/uploads/2018/08/2018\\_08\\_Analysis\\_of\\_RegisterCommittee\\_Decisions\\_v2\\_0.pdf](https://www.eqar.eu/assets/uploads/2018/08/2018_08_Analysis_of_RegisterCommittee_Decisions_v2_0.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> *Tomas, C. & Kelo, M. (2020), ESG 2015-2018 ENQA Agency Reports: Thematic Analysis, ENQA Occasional Paper 28: Brussels*, <https://enqa.eu/index.php/publications/papers-reports/occasional-papers>

states, in standard 1.1, that HEIs should have a quality assurance policy that “forms part their strategic management.” As a sector-specific agency, the approach of EQ-Arts to EQA always starts from the institutional mission and strategy. This approach is formulated in Standard 1 of its own EQA framework,<sup>5</sup> including institutional vision and policies on research. The broader societal mission of HEIs is clearly addressed in EQ-Arts Standard 8, which evaluates public interaction.

The ESG also explicitly prescribes, in Standard 3.4,<sup>6</sup> that Quality Assurance agencies should produce Thematic Analyses that “describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.” This is not always an easy task for agencies to achieve; EQAR’s own analysis<sup>7</sup> of 24 decisions on EQA agencies’ compliance with ESG Standard 3.4 shows that a third of these were evaluated as being only partially compliant. The more recently published EQAR analysis,<sup>8</sup> based on its own reviews of the activities of QA agencies from 2015 to 2018, observes that “the effectiveness of agencies’ approaches to meet this standard is variable.”

This is why this EQ-Arts Thematic Analysis has been prepared through a comprehensive quantitative pre-analysis, counting all commendations and recommendations made against the EQ-Arts EQA standards in order to evaluate their significance. A qualitative analysis of the main commendations and recommendations was then undertaken. In this way, EQ-Arts seeks to share its insights into the qualitative state of the CPAD sector. This Thematic Analysis will form the basis of further papers on specific themes, as set out in Section 3, in order to assist in the enhancement of the quality of the CPAD sector through disseminating findings and examples of good practice that are of strategic relevance to its stakeholders.

*Lucien Bollaert*  
*(EQ-Arts Board Member)*

# SECTION 1. **Context**



# 1. Context

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## The Basis of this Thematic Analysis

In the 14 years since completing its first quality exercise in 2006, EQ-Arts has undertaken 40 EQA exercises, 8 of which have been Quality Assurance and 32 Quality Enhancement exercises. This experience, together with the collective EQA experience of the EQ-Arts Board members and the international experts on its register of reviewers, has provided the organisation with a unique insight into higher arts education across the EHEA. Since 2017, EQ-Arts has experienced a significant increase in its Quality Assurance and Enhancement activity. Between March 2017 and March 2020, EQ-Arts completed 14 external quality reviews (with published reports), and this body of work provides a secure basis for undertaking a critical analysis of the review outcomes and, thereby, meets our stated objective to “consolidate and further develop a shared body of knowledge within the European higher arts education community on quality issues.” EQ-Arts has, therefore, produced this Thematic Analysis – in order to identify, and confidently reflect back to the CPAD sector, examples of good practice, areas for improvement and enhancement and significant developments or trends.

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<sup>9</sup> Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Kazakhstan, The Netherlands and Switzerland.

<sup>10</sup> This includes any recommendations that were expressed as conditions.

<sup>11</sup> Except where EQ-Arts undertook a review with a partner agency.

<sup>12</sup> In the case of Standard 5.1 the more granulated programme review prompts were used.

<sup>13</sup> MusiQuE – the Accreditation and External Evaluation body for music.

The ESG (2015) is the basis of all EQA processes across the EHEA, and the EQ-Arts standards (as is the case with all QA agencies operating within the EHEA) are mapped on to the standards set out in the ESG (see table A). This Thematic Analysis is based upon data drawn from 14 reviews that EQ-Arts has completed over the last three years (all 14 reports are available at [www.eq-arts.org](http://www.eq-arts.org)). The reports all relate to specialist CPAD higher arts institutions (see table B) located across 6 countries<sup>9</sup> within the EHEA. In order to produce a consistent data set, all the commendations and recommendations<sup>10</sup> made by review teams across the 14 reviews were matched against the EQ-Arts standards<sup>11</sup> for institutional review (and their associated prompts),<sup>12</sup> including those arising out of reviews using the variant standards of another agency. Of the 14 completed reviews, 8 used the EQ-Arts External Quality Assurance process, 3 were undertaken in partnership with MusiQuE<sup>13</sup> (using a combined EQA process), 2 were undertaken in partnership with the

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NVAO<sup>14</sup> and 1 with AQ Austria<sup>15</sup> (using a modified version of their respective EQA processes).

In reviewing the data gathered from the reports, it can be seen that particular developments and features of internal quality assurance (IQA) cultures are often shared across institutions operating in the same national context.<sup>16</sup> However, the data also reveals that there are recognisable examples of good practice and areas in need of improvement that transcend national contexts and may be applicable to higher education more generally or – more specifically – to the CPAD subject sector. In interpreting the data, the Thematic Analysis takes account of instances where recommendations occur only or mainly in one national context in contrast to those that recur across several national contexts - such instances have been afforded an appropriate weighting within the analytical process.

## Methodology

The reports that form the foundation of this Thematic Analysis have been generated through EQ-Arts on-going EQA activities (as described above). The quantitative and qualitative data underpinning this Thematic Analysis comprise the collated commendations and recommendations awarded against each standard by the respective

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<sup>14</sup> NVAO – the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders.

<sup>15</sup> AQ Austria – the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Austria.

<sup>16</sup> Taking full account of the specific nature of different national higher education systems.



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review teams in order to reach their judgments on compliance. Starting with a quantitative analysis, the distribution of both commendations and recommendations were plotted – from all 14 review reports – made against each of the EQ-Arts standards, to identify the most recurrent (re)commendations. Qualitative research, through a close-reading of each of the (re)commendations, then made it possible to map each individual (re)commendation against specific aspects of each of the EQ-Arts standards using the prompts – listed under each standard in the EQ-Arts template for Institutional Review Self-Evaluation Reports (SER) and Institutional Review Reports – to produce a comprehensive meta-analysis of all review outcomes.

The prompts within each standard seek to identify the distinct aspects of that standard. For example; Standard 7 (Internal Quality Culture) has 12 prompts, that cover aspects of the standard such as (prompt A) “What quality assurance and enhancement procedures are in place within the institution?” and (prompt B) “How often and by whom are the programmes being reviewed?.” The prompts aid institutions in the preparation of their SERs, guiding their self-assessment of their provision against each standard and, subsequently, they guide review teams in their critical reading of institutional documentation and in preparing their questions for the review site-visit. Through undertaking a detailed analysis of the distribution and thematic content of (re)commendations across each of the related prompts within each standard, it was possible to attribute each (re)commendation to a specific aspect of that standard (as defined by the prompts). For example, in the case of Standard 7 (see above), no recommendations and only 1 commendation were made by review teams against prompt B, whereas 12 recommendations were made against prompt A across the 14 reviews. This careful approach to the quantitative and qualitative interrogation of the review outcomes enabled the development of a Thematic Analysis that provides the CPAD sector with an analysis and critical overview that highlights good practice and identifies areas for improvement within the sector.



Courtesy of University of Kingston, London © Megan Ammiss

In the following 2 sections of this Thematic Analysis, the (re)commendations made by review teams – against each standard of the EQ-Arts Framework for EQA – are analysed in order to identify the main findings made by Review Teams (see Section 2) against each standard and to summarise key findings (see Section 3).

## CPAD Sector Context

EQ-Arts recognises that the CPAD sector has, over time, developed approaches to curriculum design and pedagogical delivery that, while particular to the sector, offer examples of good practice in relation to the Standards set out in the ESG. In this, as well as in other areas of higher education practice, we believe that the CPAD sector has much to offer to the wider field of higher education. However, we are also aware that there has been some resistance within the CPAD subject field towards the Bologna process and the adoption of a pan-European approach to quality assurance, founded on concerns that this initiative has a negative impact on the ecology of approaches to learning and teaching that have evolved across the arts over an extended period. EQ-Arts seeks to both safeguard and further strengthen the inherent areas of good practice already well-established within the CPAD subject field whilst also encouraging the strengthening of identified areas.

This Thematic Analysis will form the basis of further Survey and Policy Reports, supported by published papers on current topics which, respectively, gather and present information on best practices and case studies in thematic areas or address existing and emerging issues that are of strategic relevance to the CPAD sector (see Section 3: Findings).

**Table A:** This Table maps the EQ-Arts Standards used for institutional review against those of Section 1 of the Standards & Guidelines for Internal Quality Assurance found in the ESG (2015). This set of standards provides the basis of this Thematic Analysis. Except in the case of EQ-Arts Standard 5.1, where the more granular programme level standards have been applied.

**ESG Standards\* EQ-Arts Standards (Institutional Review)**

**1.1 Policy for QA**

*\*Although not specifically addressed in ESG Part 1, EQ-Arts Standard 2.2 asks if the institution offers a range of opportunities for students and staff to gain an international perspective.*

<b>Standard 1</b>	The institutional mission and vision are clearly stated
<b>Standard 6.2</b>	The institution has an appropriate organisational structure and clear decision-making processes
<b>Standard 7.1</b>	The institution has a strong internal quality culture, supported by clear and effective quality assurance and enhancements procedures
<b>Standard 8.1</b>	The institution engages with wider cultural, artistic and educational contexts
<b>Standard 8.2</b>	The institution actively promotes links with various sectors of the creative industries and other artistic professions

**1.2 Design and approval of programmes**

<b>Standard 2.1</b>	The goals of the institution are achieved through the content and structure of the study programmes and their methods of delivery
<b>Standard 2.3</b>	Assessment methods are clearly defined and demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes
<b>Standard 5.2</b>	The institution's financial resources enable successful delivery of the study programmes
<b>Standard 6.2</b>	The institution has an appropriate organisational structure and clear decision-making processes

**1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment**

<b>Standard 2.1</b>	The goals of the institution are achieved through the content and structure of the study programmes and their methods of delivery
<b>Standard 2.3</b>	Assessment methods are clearly defined and demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes
<b>Standard 6.1</b>	Effective mechanisms are in place for internal communication within the institution

**1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification**

<b>Standard 3.1</b>	Clear admission criteria exist, which establish artistic/academic suitability of students
<b>Standard 3.2</b>	The institution has a mechanism to formally monitor and review the progression, achievement and subsequent employability of its students

**1.5 Teaching staff**

<b>Standard 4.1</b>	Members of the teaching staff are qualified for their role and are active as artists/pedagogues/researchers
<b>Standard 4.2</b>	There are sufficient qualified teaching staff to effectively deliver the programmes

**1.6 Learning resources and student support**

<b>Standard 5.1</b>	The institution has appropriate resources to support student learning and the delivery of the programmes
<b>Standard 5.2</b>	The institution's financial resources enable successful delivery of the study programmes
<b>Standard 5.3</b>	The institution has sufficient qualified support staff

**1.7 Information management**

<b>Standard 7.1</b>	The institution has a strong internal quality culture, supported by clear and effective quality assurance and enhancements procedures
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**1.8 Public information**

<b>Standard 8.1</b>	The institution engages with wider cultural, artistic and educational contexts
<b>Standard 8.2</b>	The institution actively promotes links with various sectors of the creative industries and other artistic professions
<b>Standard 8.3</b>	Information provided to the public about the institution is clear, consistent and accurate

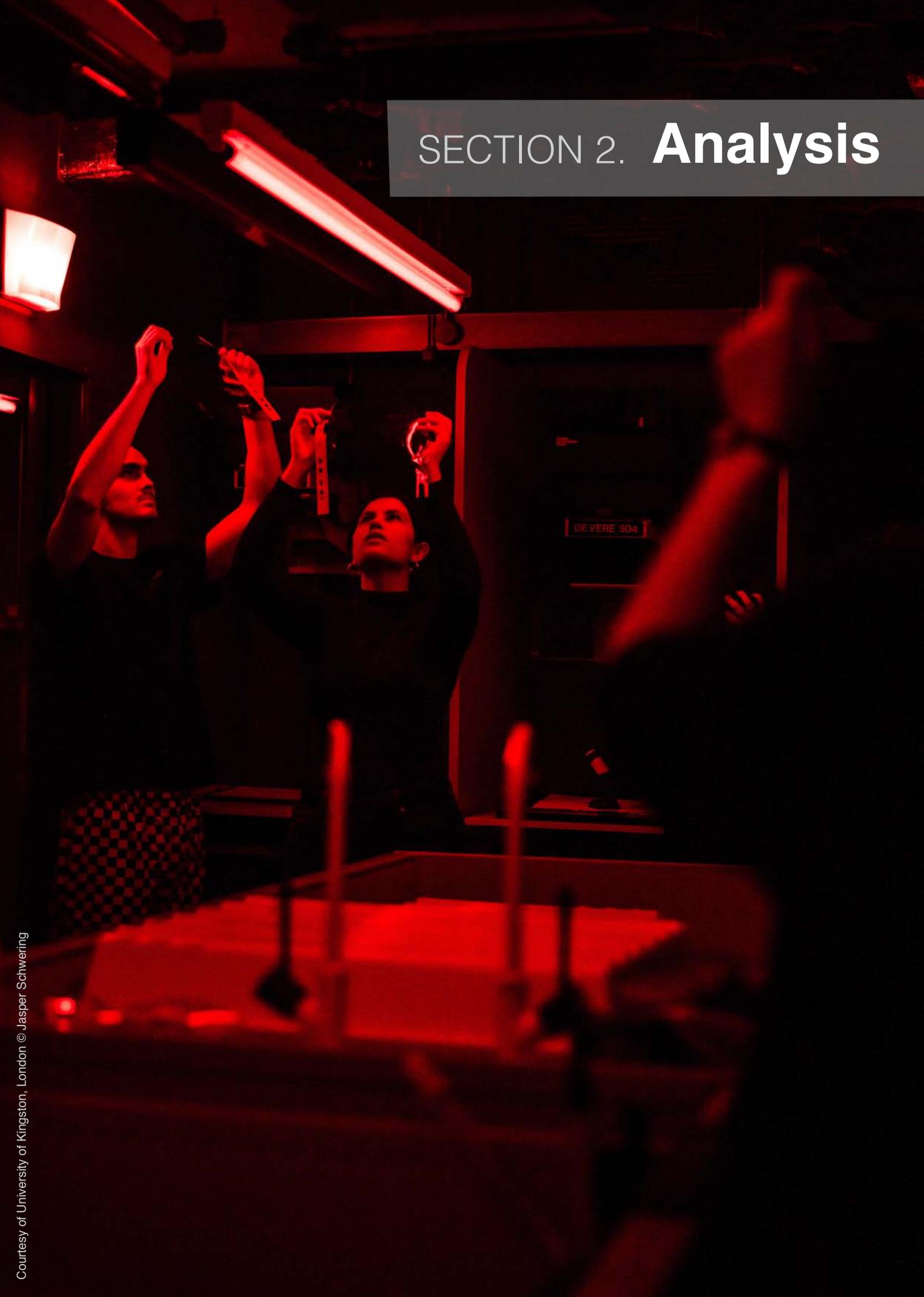


**Table B:** This Table lists the institutions that are the subject of the 14 reviews carried out by EQ-Arts between March 2017 and March 2020. The quoted commendations and recommendations that appear alongside the text under each standard heading in Section 2 of this Thematic Analysis are taken from the reports produced by the review teams who completed the reviews for these institutions.

<p><b>Janáčkova akademie múzických umění v Brně (JAMU)</b>  <i>Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno (JAMU)</i></p>
<p><b>Vysoké učení technické v Brně (VUT)</b>  <i>Brno University of Technology (BUT)</i></p>
<p><b>Қазақ ұлттық музыка академиясы</b>  <i>Kazakh National University of Arts (KazNUA)</i></p>
<p><b>Koninklijke Academie voor Schone Kunsten (KASK)</b>  <i>Royal Academy of Fine Arts (KASK)</i></p>
<p><b>Univerzita Jana Evangelisty Purkyně v Ústí nad Labem (UJEP)</b>  <i>Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem (UJEP)</i></p>
<p><b>Technická Univerzita v Liberci (TUL)</b>  <i>Technical University of Liberec (TUL)</i></p>
<p><b>Universität für künstlerische und industrielle Gestaltung Linz (UfG)</b>  <i>University of Art and Design Linz (UfG)</i></p>

<p><b>Piet Zwart Instituut (PZI)</b>  <i>Piet Zwart Institute (PZI)</i></p>
<p><b>Akademie múzických umění v Praze (AMU)</b>  <i>Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (AMU)</i></p>
<p><b>Vysoká škola uměleckoprůmyslová v Praze (UMPRUM)</b>  <i>Academy of Arts, Architecture &amp; Design in Prague (AAAD)</i></p>
<p><b>Willem de Kooning Academie (WdKA)</b>  <i>Willem de Kooning Academy (WdKA)</i></p>
<p><b>Willem de Kooning Academie: BA Fine Art/Design (WdKA-BA)</b>  <i>Willem de Kooning Academy: BA Fine Art/Design (WdKA-BA)</i></p>
<p><b>Univerzita Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně (TBU)</b>  <i>Tomas Bata University in Zlín (TBU)</i></p>
<p><b>Zürcher Hochschule der Künste (ZHdK)</b>  <i>Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK)</i></p>

## SECTION 2. **Analysis**



# Standard 1

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## Institutional Mission, Vision and Context



# Standard 1

## Institutional Mission, Vision and Context

STANDARD

The institutional mission and vision are clearly stated.

### Commendations

“There is a clear sense of ownership and commitment and a conviction of the value of the new mission.”

“The vision, mission and aims ... are clear and appropriate.”

“[The Review Team commend] the rigour of the self-evaluation process, which has led to such an ambitious set of aims ....”

Standard 1 of the EQ-Arts Standards and Guidelines broadly relates to Standard 1 of Part 1 of the ESG (2015) which states (under Standard 1.1) that “quality assurance policies are most effective when they reflect the relationship between research and learning & teaching and take account of both the national context in which the institution operates, the institutional context and its strategic approach.” Enshrined within this standard is one of the four principles of quality assurance in the EHEA as defined in the ESG: “Quality assurance responds to the diversity of higher education systems, institutions, programmes and students.”<sup>17</sup>

The 9 prompts listed in the EQ-Arts templates for Institutional Review SERs and Institutional Review Reports, reflect the guidelines set out under this ESG standard and include questions regarding: What is the institution’s mission, vision and aims? What is the institution’s long-term strategy and how does it reflect its mission? How do the aims of its educational programmes address the institutional mission? What quantitative and qualitative data/information is collected, and how is it used to support the institutional mission/vision?

The ratio between the commendations and recommendations made by review teams<sup>18</sup> suggests that, for the most part, institutional missions (and the strategic planning processes that support these) are, in general, fit for purpose. The commendations made against this standard recognise the general utility and ambition of institutional missions, the ways in which these clarify the strategic priorities of institutions and reflect the aims of their educational programmes. In one instance, the review panel commended the way in which internal quality assurance processes were used in support of the institution’s mission and vision. However,

<sup>17</sup> ESG (2015) Page 8.

<sup>18</sup> 13 commendations across 8 reports and 23 recommendations across 9 reports.

## Recommendations

“The Review Team recommends that the [institution] revisits its mission-vision statements to ensure their key objectives ... are supported and embedded in the institution and their study programmes.”

“[The Review Team recommends the development of] a clearer strategy and guidelines for the implementation and alignment of ... mission aims.”

“... to fully realise the mission and vision, as well as its own strategic objectives, the Review Team recommends that the Faculty develops a ... methodology for tracking all of its graduates.”

review teams also made recommendations with regard to a lack of constructive alignment between long-term strategic planning priorities, institutional mission and vision, and/or programme learning outcomes.

The majority of the recommendations made by review teams relate to three aspects of this standard.<sup>19</sup> For example, review teams found that some institutional strategic planning processes were not fully reflective of institutional missions, failed to prioritise key objectives effectively, or lacked a constructive alignment of mission, vision and strategic aims. Another area of concern for review teams were significant omissions in the collection, collation and analysis of key quantitative and qualitative data undertaken by institutions in support of their strategic planning processes, and the assessment of their progress in meeting key strategic objectives, particularly in terms of the tracking of their graduates. Review teams, through their recommendations, identified instances where the strategic planning processes that support the achievement of institutional mission needed a greater degree of specificity. Such specificity is required to ensure that institutions are able to capture and correctly prioritise all the key aspects of their mission and provide measurable targets through which progress towards institutional aims can be accurately monitored.

<sup>19</sup> *What is the institution’s long-term strategy and how does it reflect its mission?*

*What are the institutional priorities (in the regional, national and international context) and which areas are emphasised?*

*What quantitative and qualitative data/information is collected, and how is it used to support the institutional mission/vision?*



Photograph courtesy Merz Akademie Stuttgart

# Standard 2

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## Educational Processes



# Standard 2

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## Educational Processes

### 2.1 The Curriculum and its Methods of Delivery

STANDARD

The goals of the institution are achieved through the content and structure of the study programmes and their methods of delivery.

Standard 2.1 of the EQ-Arts Standards and Guidelines relates directly to Standard 1.2 of Part 1 of the ESG (2015). The ESG states that “study programmes are at the core of the higher education institutions’ teaching mission” and, therefore, “institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes” and that theses should be “designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes.” The guidelines also state that programme objectives should be “in line with the institutional strategy.”

The 14 prompts, listed in the EQ-Arts templates for Institutional Review SERs and Institutional Review Reports under this standard, reflect these guidelines and include questions regarding: What is the institutional process in place for the design, approval and re-approval of programmes? What are the processes to ensure objectives and learning outcomes remain current and how are stakeholders involved in these processes? How is the institution utilising different teaching methodologies in the delivery of the programmes? How does the institution provide formal arrangements for students to receive academic, career and personal guidance?

The pattern of commendations and recommendations made against this standard<sup>20</sup> indicated that there is a high degree of variability in the performance of institutions in relation to the successful design and delivery of their curricula<sup>21</sup>, particularly with respect to the constructive alignment of programme objectives and learning outcomes with broader institutional strategic aims.

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<sup>20</sup> Review teams made a total of 35 commendations (across 13 reports) and a total of 55 recommendations, with at least one recommendation in this standard made in 13 reports.

<sup>21</sup> Review teams made 7 commendations and 9 recommendations against this aspect of the standard – How are programmes designed in terms of objectives and intended learning outcomes and how are they aligned with the institutional aims?

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### Commendations

“The Review Team commends the increasing number of optional courses available across the Faculty and across the University.”

“The Review Team found some encouraging examples of good practice at programme level, such as ...flexible study paths.”

“The focus on entrepreneurship and ties to the creative industries ... is clearly reflected in the ethos and mission.”

Commendations made against this standard recognise that some curricula offer a facilitative degree of flexibility, in line with the definition of student-centred learning set out in the ESG<sup>22</sup>, for example, in the availability of flexible study pathways and/or use of individualised study plans. While in general, review teams found that institutional approaches to learning and teaching were broadly student-centred, mechanisms supporting student progression – such as feedback from assessment, academic and pastoral guidance, and addressing student complaints – were often informal and, therefore, risked fairness and consistency in their application.

Review teams commended several institutions on the clarity and focus of the objectives and intended learning outcomes of their programmes, and how these were aligned with broader institutional aims. However, in sharp contrast to these commendations, review teams also made recommendations regarding the need for institutions to review and revise the intended learning outcomes of their programmes in order to more accurately reflect their objectives or effect a closer alignment with assessment criteria.

HEIs in the CPAD sector have traditionally maintained close links with their related fields of professional practice, with these links providing a secure basis for the processes by which institutions ensure the currency of their programme aims and learning outcomes. While commendations made by review teams against this standard identify examples of good practice in this aspect, the recommendations indicate that, in some cases, a greater degree of formality is needed to securely underpin these processes – particularly in terms of external stakeholder involvement and a more effective use of data to inform programme development.

The formal arrangements through which students receive academic, career and personal guidance were also the subject of a number of recommendations<sup>23</sup>, both in terms of professional preparation – informing students of employment opportunities and preparing them for the world of work – and in terms of a need to communicate more clearly with students regarding the availability of academic

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<sup>22</sup>ESG (2015) Standard 1.3: *Student-centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment.*

<sup>23</sup>7 recommendations across 5 reports.



Courtesy of University of Kingston, London © Megan Amis

### Recommendations

“The Review Team recommends that the Faculty makes more effective use of data and feedback from the professional field, students and staff, to help inform the development of the programme.”

“Consideration [should be given to] how to better inform students of employment opportunities and prepare them for the world of work.”

“The Review Team recommends the Faculty re-evaluates its approach to blended learning and in particular reinforces amongst staff the potential of the VLE as auxiliary tools to the teaching and learning process.”

and pastoral support mechanisms. Review teams also noted that the processes for the transfer of knowledge gained through the artistic research undertaken by teaching staff into the curriculum is generally unclear. To address this, institutions should firstly clearly define their understanding of artistic research and should then clarify how this knowledge is integrated into curricula at all study levels.

Another aspect of this standard where review teams made a number of recommendations<sup>24</sup> is the way in which institutions make use of different teaching methodologies in the delivery of their programmes. Significantly, a number of these are concerned with blended or virtual learning. Review teams found that different modes of delivery and a variety of learning and teaching methods were being appropriately utilised across the provision of all institutions. However, some review teams found that the use made by teaching staff – of available Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) resources and tools – to support and enhance student learning was very limited. They found that there was an associated lack of targeted staff development available to support teaching staff in the development of both their technical and pedagogical approach to the application of digital resources.

Another aspect of this standard against which review teams made recommendations was with regard to programme learning outcomes. In particular, that programme specifications should clearly state the learning outcomes students are expected to achieve at each level, the assessment criteria applied, and the incremental level of challenge between study levels should be appropriately calibrated and mapped to the relevant subject benchmarks and/or national qualifications framework.

<sup>24</sup> 6 recommendations across 6 reports.

# Standard 2

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## Educational Processes

### 2.2 International Perspectives

STANDARD

The institution offers a range of opportunities for students and staff to gain an international perspective.

Although this standard is not specifically addressed in Part 1 of the ESG, the established ECTS system and Erasmus+ programme, together with the international character of the CPAD subject area, ensure that the gaining of international perspectives is a significant aspect of the student learning experience. The introductory chapter of the ESG<sup>25</sup> recognises this development, stating that “Higher education institutions also become more diverse in their missions, mode of educational provision and cooperation, including growth of internationalisation ...” and that “the role of quality assurance is crucial in supporting higher education systems and institutions in responding to these changes.”

The 10 prompts listed in the EQ-Arts templates for Institutional Review SERs and Institutional Review Reports, reflect the range of international perspectives set out in the introductory chapter of the ESG, and include questions regarding: What is the institutional strategy for offering international perspectives and experiences to students? How is the international dimension integrated into the curriculum at all levels of study? How is the institution participating in international partnerships/exchanges? Which activities does the institution organise under the umbrella of the internationalisation at home<sup>26</sup> initiative?

The high number of commendations over recommendations made by review teams against this standard<sup>27</sup> was noted, indicating that the CPAD sector sees the inculcation of international perspectives within the student learning experience as an important aspect of study. Significantly, the majority of the commendations relate to the participation of institutions in international partnerships, exchanges

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<sup>25</sup> ESG: Context, Scope, Purpose and Principles (page 6).

<sup>26</sup> The Internationalisation at Home initiative is organised under the umbrella of the European centre for expertise, networking and resources in the internationalisation of higher education (EAIE).

<sup>27</sup> A total of 23 commendations across 13 reports and 14 recommendations across 7 reports.

### Commendations

“Nationally and internationally connected and engaged staff members are clearly valued by students, which enhances their learning experience.”

“The Review Team commends the institution on the ways in which it actively supports and encourages ... the international mobility of both staff and students.”

“[The Review Team commends] the ambition across the university towards greater internationalisation.”

### Recommendations

“The Review Team recommends that the [institution] further reflects on how this [internationalisation] strategy integrates into the curriculum and how international experiences are recognised and accredited.”

“The Review Team ... advises [the institution] to continue working on strengthening the global perspective in the programmes.”

Photograph courtesy University of the Arts Stockholm



and international events, with no recommendations made against this aspect of the standard. The nature of the commendations confirms that the CPAD sector is very active in its encouragement of, and support for, international mobility. These opportunities are highly valued by students and staff and reflect a commitment to the fostering of international perspectives that is often explicitly stated in institutional missions. However, recommendations made by review teams against another aspect<sup>28</sup> of this standard highlight that student mobility is not always securely underpinned by clearly defined academic recognition processes in some institutions, and that there is scope for considerable improvement in the ways that the international experiences of students are formally recognised and accredited.

While the commendations made against this standard broadly confirm that the CPAD sector has embraced internationalisation in relation to student and staff mobility, some recommendations identified a need for a more comprehensive approach in the support provided for incoming and outgoing students and staff by institutions. In particular, it was noted that review teams made recommendations regarding a greater alignment of staff development opportunities with institutional internationalisation strategies, for example the provision of language tuition.

Another aspect of the standard where review teams made recommendations was with regard to the integration of international perspectives into their curricula, both in terms of providing a broader historical and critical context for the study subject and ensuring that this approach is consistently applied across different study programmes. Therefore, there is scope for enhancement in the ways in which international perspectives are both recognised within, and integrated into, curricula across the CPAD sector.

<sup>28</sup> It was decided to address the matter of academic credit recognition mechanisms for study abroad activity here rather than in standard 3.2.

# Standard 2

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## Educational Processes

### 2.3 Assessment

STANDARD

Assessment methods are clearly defined and demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes.

Standard 2.3 of the EQ-Arts Standards and Guidelines relates directly to Standard 1.3 (Student-centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment) of Part 1 of the ESG (2015). This standard is concerned with the design and application of assessment methods, in ways that “respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs” and that “assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved” and “is fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures.”<sup>29</sup>

The 5 prompts listed in EQ-Arts templates for Institutional Review SERs and Institutional Review Reports, under this standard, reflect these guidelines and comprise questions regarding: What are the methods for assessment and how do these methods show the achievement of learning outcomes? How are they being reviewed to consider issues such as consistency and fairness? Are the assessment methods aligned with the teaching and learning methods/formats? Are all assessment criteria and procedures easily accessible to and clearly defined for students and staff? Are students provided with timely and constructive feedback on all forms of assessments?

In three aspects of this standard<sup>30</sup>, review teams made a similar number of commendations and recommendations. Which suggests that the performance of institutions against this standard is inconsistent, with examples of good practice in some institutions contrasting sharply with areas identified by review teams as being in need of improvement in other institutions.

Review teams were able to make a number of commendations<sup>31</sup> regarding the clarity of the procedures and criteria of assessment,

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<sup>29</sup> ESG (2015) 1.3 Student-centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment .

<sup>30</sup> Are the assessment methods aligned with the teaching and learning methods/formats?  
Are all assessment criteria and procedures easily accessible to and clearly defined for students and staff?

Are students provided with timely and constructive feedback on all forms of assessments?

<sup>31</sup> 5 commendations made across 4 reports.

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### Commendations

“Assessment criteria and procedures are clearly defined and easily accessible to staff and students.”

“The [Review] Team established that throughout the curricula there is a clear link between the programme learning outcomes, the learning goals at course level, and assessment modes and the assessment criteria.”

### Recommendations

“The application and use of learning outcomes, and the alignment of assessment criteria to learning outcomes at programme level is inconsistent and needs further standardisation.”

“[The] Faculty should develop written assessment criteria as a means of consolidating the shared understanding of academic standards, applied through the current assessment processes, for use as a pre-published, objective and transparent tool by students, teachers and assessment panels.”

confirming that these processes were well designed and effective in their application and were readily accessible to both students and staff. One review team commended an institution on the constructive alignment of programme learning outcomes, modes of assessment and assessment criteria. However, review teams also made a similar number of recommendations regarding the need for a clearer articulation of the assessment processes and criteria applied to practical work, and for these to be pre-published at the outset of study assignments and made readily available to students. Based on the analysis of evidence there appears to be a general lack of consistency in the transparency of assessment processes and assessment criteria, which are not always clearly defined or pre-published at the outset of study tasks, as set out in the ESG.<sup>32</sup>

Review teams also made commendations<sup>33</sup> regarding the timely and constructive nature of feedback made available to students following formal assessment processes, as attested to by positive student feedback heard by review teams during EQA site-visits. However, it has traditionally been the case in the CPAD subject sector that the majority of summative feedback students receive from the assessment of practical work is oral. While, in general, review teams found that students were satisfied with the timeliness and usefulness of the oral feedback they have been given, this approach precludes the possibility of students’ being able to revisit and reassess the feedback they have received over time and, thereby, hindering student self-reflection and their full engagement in the learning process.

In terms of consistency and fairness of assessment, review teams made commendations regarding the ways that assessment processes are applied within the context of individual programmes or departments. However, review teams also made recommendations in sharp contrast to these commendations, regarding the lack of meta-institutional mechanisms that ensure that these processes are consistently applied across the institution. This shortcoming creates the possibility that comparable student performance can lead to unfair and/or inconsistent assessment outcomes across institutional divisions (programmes, departments, or faculties).

<sup>32</sup> ESG (2015) 1.3 Student-centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment

<sup>33</sup> 4 commendations made across 4 reports.

# Standard 3

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## Student Profiles



# Standard 3

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## Student Profiles

### 3.1 Admission/Entrance Qualifications

STANDARD

The institute has clear criteria for student admission, based on an assessment of their artistic/academic suitability for the programmes.

#### Commendations

“Teaching staff clearly place considerable faith in the rigor of the admissions process and see this as crucial means through which to identify applicants who will go on to be successful graduates.”

“Students appear to be largely satisfied with the admissions process, and felt the documentation reflected the subsequent programmes of study.”

“The Review Team commends the Faculty’s good links to general education, especially to high schools ... which specialise in preparing for proceeding to Higher Art education.”

<sup>34</sup> 10 commendations across 7 reports and 8 recommendations across 6 reports.

<sup>35</sup> 5 commendations across 4 reports.

Standard 3.1 of the EQ-Arts Standards and Guidelines relates directly to Standard 1.4 of Part 1 of the ESG (2015) which states that “Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student ‘life-circle’, e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.” The guidelines for this Standard make clear that “it is important that access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.”

The 3 prompts listed in the EQ-Arts templates for Institutional Review SERs and Institutional Review Reports, reflect the guidelines set out under this standard in the ESG and comprise questions regarding: Does the institution have clear and appropriate criteria for admissions for all types of students? In what ways do the entrance requirements assess the abilities of the applicants to successfully complete the institute’s study programmes? Who is involved in the applicant selection procedure?

The (re)commendations made by review teams against this standard were relatively evenly distributed across the 14 reports.<sup>34</sup> In half of the commendations<sup>35</sup>, review teams acknowledged the rigour of the admissions processes already in place in institutions, in relation to the use of clear admissions criteria. Review teams heard from teachers that they viewed clear admissions processes as an important means of ensuring the suitability of students admitted to their programmes. Two review teams were able to confirm that students were also satisfied with the application process and found it to be fair.

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## Recommendations

“[The Review Team recommend that the institution] further develop[s] the strategy to address the composition of the student body in terms of social characteristics ... to reflect the composition of the ... population.”

“Given the ambitions to recruit more widely from applicants who might not attend Open Days, [the Review Team] consider it necessary for the [the institution] to re-visit its promotional statements to ensure accuracy.”

“The Review Team recommends that the data collected in relation to admissions, is assessed and analysed, as this would contribute in defining the profile of students that apply for entry, as well as demonstrating the [institution’s] equal opportunities policy.”

A related, yet distinct, focus emerged in the recommendations made against this standard, with the majority<sup>36</sup> aimed at supporting and/or developing institutional strategies and positive actions to diversify the range of students recruited, through the fine-tuning of admissions processes. To this end, the clarity, accuracy and accessibility of detailed programme information, was deemed necessary for successfully attracting applicants from other regions, as well as those who could not visit prior to making an application. The clarification of language requirements for international students, both for their participation in the admissions process and while studying on the programme, was also the subject of recommendations. With regard to providing clear information on language requirements, it was also seen that a commitment to bi-lingual delivery on the part of the institution, supported through staff development, could impact positively on the recruitment of international students. Recruitment strategies commended<sup>37</sup> in the reports, included those where programme teams worked closely with feeder schools and/or provided advise to applicants in preparation for entry exams.<sup>38</sup> The availability of scholarships for applicants in financial hardship provided by institutions was also commended, with such provision contributing to advancing diversity within student cohorts.

The constructive feedback, provided by review teams through their recommendations<sup>39</sup>, encouraged institutions in their use of data collection and full-cohort analysis as a means of developing and improving their understanding of applicant profiles – and thereby informing and enhancing their admissions processes. A further recommendation, provided constructive feedback on equal opportunities in recruitment processes, encouraging institutions to give full consideration to the needs of applicants with specific learning requirements in their admissions processes, and to embed these within their equal opportunities policies.

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<sup>36</sup>6 recommendations across 5 reports.

<sup>37</sup>2 commendations across 2 reports.

<sup>38</sup>Where entry exams are a national requirement.

<sup>39</sup>2 recommendations across 2 reports.

# Standard 3

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## Student Profiles

### 3.2 Student Progression, Achievement and Employability

STANDARD

The institution has a mechanism to formally monitor and review the progression, achievement and subsequent employability of its students.

Standard 3.2 of the EQ-Arts Standards and Guidelines relates directly to Part 1 of the ESG (2015) which states (under Standard 1.4) that “Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student ‘life-circle’, e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.” The guidelines for this Standard state that “Institutions need to put in place both processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression.”

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<sup>40</sup> 10 commendations made across 8 reports compared with 23 recommendations made across 10 reports.

<sup>41</sup> How are student progression and achievement monitored within the programme? Is there a policy for data collection on alumni and what information does the programme collect on the professional activities/employment of the students after they complete the programme, and how is this information used?

<sup>42</sup> 4 commendations across 4 reports.

The 6 prompts listed in the EQ-Arts templates for Institutional Review SERs and Institutional Review Reports, reflect the guidelines set out under this standard in the ESG and include questions regarding: How are student progression and achievement monitored within the programme? Is there a policy for data collection on alumni and what information does the programme collect on the professional activities/employment of the students after they complete the programme, and how is this information used? How do graduates contribute to the enhancement of cultural life locally, nationally and internationally?

The relatively low number of commendations made by review teams suggests that there is opportunity to introduce enhancements within the scope of this standard.<sup>40</sup> Significantly, the majority of the recommendations related to just two aspects of the standard<sup>41</sup>, with the majority of commendations<sup>42</sup> made in cases where review teams found that students were well prepared to secure work in the professional sector and contribute to cultural life within the

## Commendations

“The programmes successfully prepare students for a career in the cultural sector and/or for further study at master’s level, going beyond merely supplying graduates for today’s professions and actively contributing to shaping the future cultural sector.”

“The Review Team commends the Faculty for the high involvement of alumni in their activities, ensuring long-duration relationships and work experience for graduates ....”

## Recommendations

“There is room for improvement in the way that the programmes formally collect and analyse the data from graduates and employers as an enhancement tool.”

“The Faculty would benefit from developing a formal way to capture and analyse progress for alumni in their career paths in order to align with University’s strategy for enhancement of the programme.”

“The Review Team recommends that a formalised process of monitoring progression at fixed points of the learning process is installed, which is comparable and transparent across studios.”



region. Good practice was acknowledged by review teams where alumni were engaged in institutional processes aimed at preparing undergraduates for entry into professional practice, while also consolidating connections between institutions and their alumni. However, it was noted from some variance in the comments made by review teams, that where good practice was evident in one programme or department, it was not possible for them to confirm that such good practice extended across the institution as a whole. This led review teams to recommend that institutions adopt a more consistent approach to the guidance and preparation of their students for the world of work.

Although variously described, review teams made a substantial number of recommendations<sup>43</sup> regarding the lack of formal systems or policies for the collection and analysis of data relating to graduate destinations, in some institutions. Where programme teams are reliant on informal and anecdotal means of gathering information on their alumni, the recommendations made by review teams identified the need for more systematic approaches to be implemented at institutional level so that the insights gained from the data gathered could usefully inform programme learning outcomes and shape curricula.

Another aspect of this standard that gave rise to a significant number of recommendations concerned the need for institutions to improve the ways in which they monitor student progression and achievement throughout their study programmes. Close analysis of such data against relevant benchmarks would enable institutions to; enhance the strategic development of programmes, ensure comparability across disciplines, identify reasons for student non-progression, and thereby inform their equal opportunities policies and ensure compliance across the institution.

<sup>43</sup> 10 recommendations across 8 reports.

# Standard 4

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## Teaching



# Standard 4

## Teaching

### 4.1 Staff Qualifications and Professional Activity

STANDARD

Members of the teaching staff are qualified for their role and are active as artists/pedagogues/researchers.

#### Commendations

“The Review Team commends the drive towards professionalisation and the strategic use of staff development processes is encouraging a strong pedagogy and self-reflective teaching methodologies.”

“The career plan forms a useful tool for monitoring on-going staff performance, identifying staff development needs, encouraging staff development activity, and informing strategies for the enhancement of teaching quality.”

“The [Review Team commends the] allocation of a negotiated percentage of time for teachers that supports their own artistic practice/research.”

<sup>46</sup> ESG 2015.

<sup>47</sup> 17 commendations across 10 reports and 26 recommendations across 8 reports.

<sup>48</sup> 8 commendations across 6 reports and 12 recommendations also across 6 reports.

Standard 4.1 of the EQ-Arts Standards and Guidelines relates directly to Standard 1.5 of Part 1 of the ESG (2015) which states that “institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.”<sup>46</sup>

The 5 prompts listed in the EQ-Arts templates for institutional Review SERs and institutional Review Reports, reflect the guidelines set out under this standard in the ESG and include questions regarding: Is there an institutional strategy that supports and enhances the teaching staff’s artistic, pedagogical and research activity? Is there a policy in place for continuing professional development of teaching staff? How are teaching staff engaged in the different activities of the institutions? How are teaching staff encouraged to engage in on-going critical reflection and to develop this quality in their students?

Review teams made a relatively high number of recommendations over commendations in this standard<sup>47</sup>, although one aspect – regarding the institutional strategies that support and enhance the artistic, pedagogical and research activities of teaching staff – attracted a more even balance of (re)commendations.<sup>48</sup> The commendations made against this aspect of the standard broadly acknowledged the ways in which institutions make strategic use of staff development processes to drive improvements in teaching quality, facilitate research, encourage professional engagement, and afford teaching staff appropriate opportunities for their professional development. Likewise, review teams found examples where career planning, used by institutions as part of their performance review processes, worked effectively to link the developmental needs of teachers to appropriate staff development opportunities.

## Recommendations

“The current staff development processes don’t appear to align sufficiently to the appraisal processes ... and more effective use could be made of the ... performance reviews.”

“[The Review Team recommends the development of] a policy and strategy to provide staff members with continuing development with the latest skills and knowledge in teaching and learning and recent developments such as the requirements and guidelines published in the ESG 2015.”

“The Review Team recommends the institution implements a strategy that fosters the reinforcement of research activities with an international dimension, in particular on what concerns a stronger involvement in international research projects and applications.”

Where review teams found that formal staff appraisal processes or performance reviews were being under-utilised or were not in place their re-vivification or implementation was strongly recommended, as were staff development and CPD provision – where these were found to be deficient or in need of significant revision.

Research was the main focus of recommendations against the above aspect. Review teams identified the need for institutions; to clarify their position on – and define their concept of – research, support artistic research through tailored research-methods training, and to establish and/or publish their research policy in order to provide transparency regarding time allocation for staff research activity. One review team identified a need for the introduction of research sabbaticals. Conversely, commendations made against this standard highlighted some examples of good practice, a review team commended an institution for its provision of negotiated time to support the artistic practice of its staff. Other commendations were made by review teams where an institution was specifically targeting financial support towards the research and enterprise activities of its teaching staff, and where provision for research sabbaticals had been established.

From the evidence provided by this Thematic Analysis it is clear that, in general, teaching staff across the CPAD sector are well-qualified and assiduously committed to their students who, in turn, generally respect and value the work of their teachers. A significant number of recommendations were made by review teams regarding institutional policies for the continuing professional development of their teaching staff. These were broadly concerned with the provision of specific and timely staff development interventions for teaching staff<sup>49</sup> aimed at ensuring that staff are kept up to date with any regulatory changes at national and/or sectorial level. For example, these include, updates on changes in national educational policies, changes to academic benchmarking standards, or to facilitate and share good practices – within and across institutions. Review teams also made a number of commendations that recognised the high quality and abundance of the professional artistic practice of teaching staff, including exhibitions, presentations, performances, curatorial projects and other similar initiatives. However, these were balanced out by recommendations reminding institutions of the need for HAE teachers to remain up to date with current artistic, professional and sector-wide trends, including international developments.

<sup>49</sup> 7 recommendations across 4 reports.

# Standard 4

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## Teaching

### 4.2 Size and Composition of the Teaching Staff Body

STANDARD

There are sufficient qualified teaching staff to effectively deliver the programmes.

#### Commendations

“The Review Team commends the [institution] on the introduction of the short (one-year) term contracts for alumni, as this enables new developments within the programmes and allows for further reflection of practical work.”

“A number of PhD candidates employed as junior teaching staff is commendable and is likely to contribute to a further interrelation between research and teaching.”

“The Review Team notes the positive staff student ratios within the Faculty.”

Standard 4.2 of the EQ-Arts Standards and Guidelines relates directly to Standard 1.5 of Part 1 of the ESG (2015) which states that “Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.”<sup>50</sup>

The 3 prompts listed in the EQ-Arts templates for Institutional Review SERs and Institutional Review Reports, reflect the guidelines set out under this standard in the ESG and comprise questions regarding: How does the programme ensure that the number and experience of teaching staff are adequate to cover the volume and range of disciplines? How does the composition of the teaching staff allow adaptation to new professional requirements and changes to the curriculum? How does the recruitment policy foster new developments within the programme?

There were a fairly even number of recommendations and commendations made by review teams against this standard, although these were distributed unevenly across the reports.<sup>51</sup> Institutional staffing strategies aimed at fostering new developments at programme level and supporting staff to adapt to new professional requirements and/or changes in curricula, were the focus of a cluster of commendations made by review teams.<sup>52</sup> These generally involved identifying the benefits arising from varying contractual arrangements such as, the employment of alumni on short contracts and of PhD candidates employed as junior teachers, with the latter being seen to contribute to furthering the connections between research and teaching. Likewise, employment of professionals from the field are seen to emphasise real world perspectives. One review team made a recommendation

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<sup>50</sup> ESG 2015

<sup>51</sup> 10 commendations across 4 reports and 9 recommendations across 6 reports, 7 reports contained no (re)commendations against this standard.

<sup>52</sup> 5 commendations across 3 reports.

## Recommendations

“The development of a recruitment policy for new staff should be aligned with a further strategy into the mission of the Faculty and to the development of teaching excellence and quality measures set against this.”

“The ... Faculty should ensure that it is careful in its approach to maintaining ... diversity, ensuring that it pays close attention to the range of professional and academic expertise available within each discipline, and not simply rely on the relative age of staff members as an indicator of their innovative approach to teaching.”

concerning the high percentage of teachers on part-time or casual contracts having a detrimental impact on learning and teaching. It is recognised that an appropriate balance needs to be established between full-time, part-time and casual contracts in the overall composition of teaching staff.

Several recommendations<sup>53</sup> were made by review teams with the purpose of helping institutions to develop staff recruitment policies or principles aimed at diversifying and enhancing the composition of their teaching staff. Ensuring a correlation between staffing policies and institutional mission and strategic aims was recommended as a means by which institutions can help ensure that the pedagogic expertise of new appointments align with curriculum developments. Equally, review teams recommended that the publicising of new posts, nationally and internationally, would enable institutions to attract, and appoint from, a wider pool of appropriately qualified candidates. Other recommendations made by review teams that were germane to specific institutional contexts, included consideration of the diversity of the educational backgrounds and gender balance within staff profiles when making new appointments, and in succession planning to ensure the timely replacement of staff. These recommendations were made by review teams as a means of encouraging institutions in the fine-tuning the composition of their teaching staff.

While some review teams made commendations<sup>54</sup> that recognised the positive staff/student ratios operating in some institutions, others<sup>55</sup> raised concerns about the uneven distribution of teaching staff, availability of teaching expertise and the parity of workloads across faculty or programme levels.

<sup>53</sup> 3 recommendations across 3 reports.

<sup>54</sup> 2 commendations across 2 reports.

<sup>55</sup> 2 recommendations across 2 reports.



# Standard 5

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## Facilities, Resources and Support



# Standard 5

## Facilities, Resources and Support

### 5.1 Facilities

STANDARD

The institution has appropriate resources to support student learning and delivery of the programmes.

Standard 5.1 of the EQ-Arts Standards and Guidelines relates directly to Standard 1.6 of Part 1 of the ESG (2015) which states that “For a good higher education experience, institutions provide a range of resources to assist student learning ... such as libraries, study facilities and IT infrastructure.”<sup>56</sup>

The 5 prompts listed in the EQ-Arts templates for Programme Review SERs and Programme Review Reports<sup>57</sup>, reflect the guidelines set out under this standard in the ESG and comprise questions regarding: Are the building facilities appropriate to the needs of the professional world? Are the [technical resources] appropriate and up to current standards to meet the demands of the professional world? Are the computing and other technological facilities appropriate and current? Are the library resources and services appropriate? Does the programme utilise a VLE to support the students learning?

The majority of the (re)commendations made by review teams against this standard<sup>58</sup> refer to matters of resourcing that are dependent on strategic planning and decision making at the level of senior management and/or institutional leadership, as most technical facilities and physical resources are – at least to some extent – shared between programmes, and across departments and faculties.

A small number of institutions were commended<sup>59</sup> by review teams for the quality of the entire range of their facilities though, more often, it was the high quality of specific facilities that were commended.<sup>60</sup> In making their commendations, review teams also took account of the added benefits to institutions, where their facilities were also used as an interface with their wider

<sup>56</sup> ESG 2015.

<sup>57</sup> This analysis uses the prompts from the EQ-Arts standards & guidelines for programme review to report on this standard as these are more granulated than those applied to institutional review and, therefore, offer a more detailed analysis of the (re)commendations.

<sup>58</sup> 16 commendations and 20 recommendations across 10 reports.

<sup>59</sup> 3 commendations across 2 reports.

<sup>60</sup> 4 commendations across 4 reports.

## Commendations

“The Review Team commends [the institution] for the exceptionally high quality of the resources on offer.”

“The innovative approach to the learning environment ..., encourages collaboration and a network structure that is relevant to contemporary creative practice and the professional field.”

“The Review Team took positive notice of the existence of spaces and infrastructure specifically dedicated to research, particularly library resources.”

communities, such as the opening of exhibitions and performances to public audiences. Equally, where review teams considered that there was a need to improve learning resources, these are clearly identified in the detail of each recommendation.<sup>61</sup> A key area identified for improvement was the implementation, provision and application of digital systems and online learning platforms. Conversely, review teams were also able to acknowledge examples of good practice, where institutions had developed strong virtual learning environments and/or digital strategies.<sup>62</sup> Online booking and timetabling systems attracted both commendations and recommendations by review teams, reflecting the different stages in the implementation of digital infrastructure projects across the sector.

A significant cluster of recommendations<sup>63</sup> were made by review teams that variously addressed the need for senior managers to develop more inclusive strategies for the planning, utilisation and management of new and existing physical and technical learning resources, through consultation with staff, students, alumni and employers, as appropriate. The overall tone of the recommendations made against this aspect of the Standard, advocated for the efficacy of mechanisms used to ensure the efficient use of these resources (such as timetabling and room booking systems). Review teams also recommended that a regular audit of space and equipment usage takes place to inform planning processes, the procurement of new facilities and equipment, their on-going maintenance or timely replacement. A small number of commendations<sup>64</sup> were made where review teams were able to acknowledge good practice in the management of facilities. An example being an innovative approach – seen to be operating in one institution – to their management of the learning environment, which was commended for facilitating students’ skills acquisition both relevant, and readily transferable, to professional settings.

In analysing the data that relates to this particular aspect of the Standard, it became evident that at the point when reviews took place (between 2017 and 2020), individual institutions were at different stages in the implementation of VLEs, with one institution yet to install a VLE, other institutions were encountering teething problems, or had a VLE system in place but its potential as a teaching and learning tool was yet to be fully realised,<sup>65</sup> or was inconsistently used by teachers and students.

<sup>61</sup> 7 recommendations across 6 reports.

<sup>62</sup> 3 commendations across 3 reports.

<sup>63</sup> 6 recommendations across 6 reports.

<sup>64</sup> 2 commendations across 2 reports.

<sup>65</sup> Due to Covid-19, the EQ- Arts is aware that all Higher Arts Education institutions will have needed to urgently attend to online platforms for information sharing, E-learning, as well as blended approaches to teaching and learning. A number of online conferences have addressed online learning in the Higher Arts Education Area – e.g. ELIA’s ETHO Online Session: Keep the Making Going, April 2020.

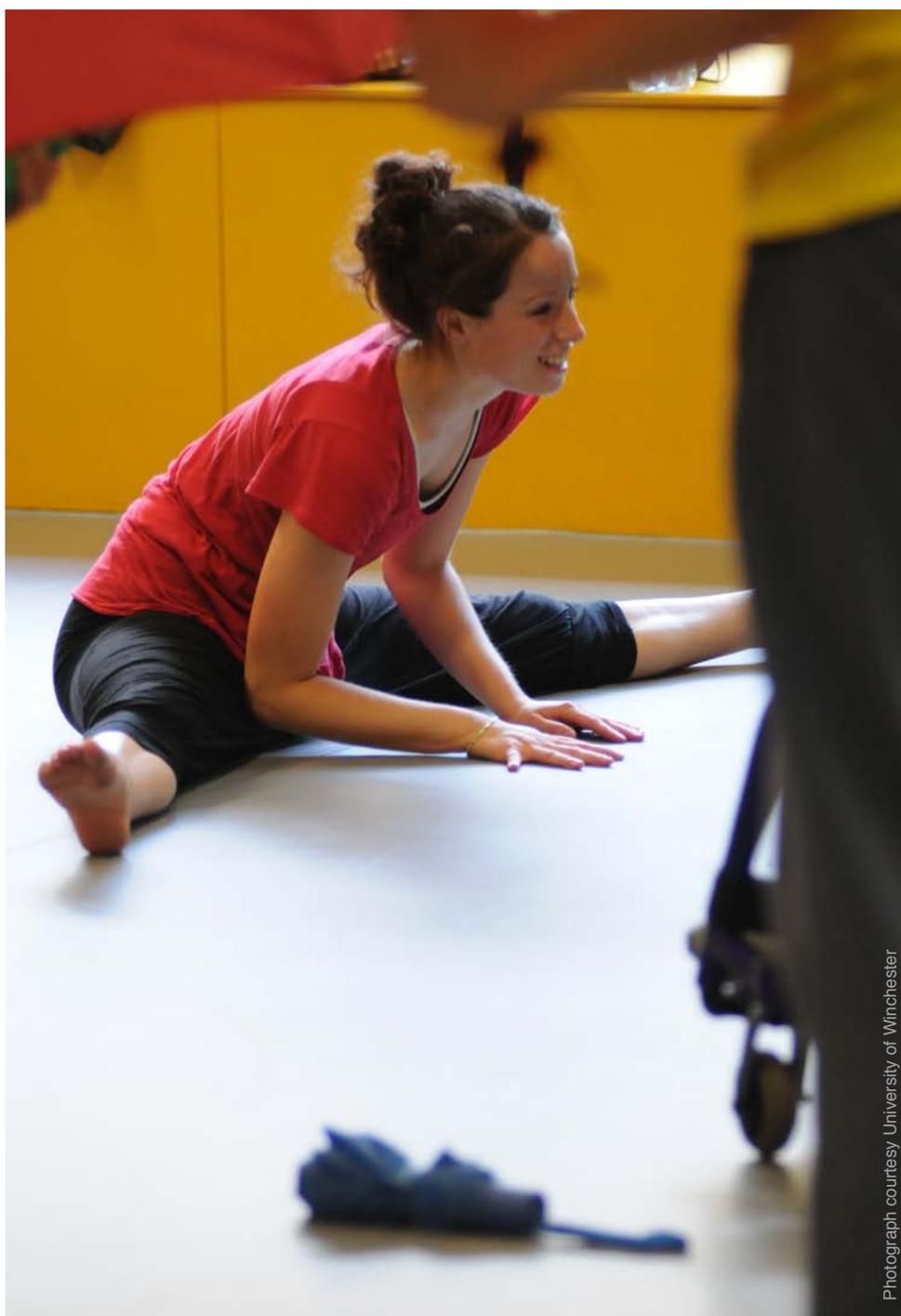
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A further commendation was made in recognition of the specific research focus in the newly built library facility in one institution, review teams also made recommendations with regard to the need for institutions to ensure that library resources (including e-books) are sufficient to support student learning needs, reflect the wider international discourse in the relevant subject fields, and (where available) should include publications in English to support the learning needs of international students.

### Recommendations

“The Review Team recommends senior management discuss the plans for the new building at its early stages of development with current staff and students, as well as with alumni and employers....”

“The Review Team recommends that the institution ensures that effective booking systems (such as digital systems) are in place across the institution to ensure that the use of study spaces, technical facilities and equipment are maximised and, thereby, to ensure the efficient use of existing resource.”



Photograph courtesy University of Winchester

# Standard 5

## Facilities, Resources and Support

### 5.2 Financial Resources

STANDARD

The institution's financial resources enable successful delivery of the study programmes.

#### Commendations

"It is clear to the Review Team that the Academy is currently in a healthy financial position."

"The ... Faculty has been highly successful in its strategic approach to identifying and securing funding from external sources to invest in staff and technical resources as a means of enhancing the student learning experience."

"The Review Team commends the Institution on the implementation of an internal grants system targeting both Master and PhD students and teachers, ... to reinforce the research profile of the institution."

Standard 5.2 of the EQ-Arts Standards and Guidelines relates directly to Standard 1.6 of Part 1 of the ESG (2015) which states that "Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided."<sup>66</sup>

The 5 prompts listed in the EQ-Arts templates for Institutional Review SERs and Institutional Review Reports, reflect the guidelines set out under this standard in the ESG and comprise questions regarding: What are the institution's financial resources and how are these resources guaranteed? How does the institution ensure sustainable funding to run its programmes? How are decisions taken to allocate resources on faculties, departments, study programmes, individual teaching staff members, etc? What are the key features for long-term financial planning? Does the institution have a risk management strategy?

Review teams made a relatively low number of (re)commendations<sup>67</sup> against this standard. A main focus of the commendations<sup>68</sup> was where institutions were successful in securing external (state or private) funding for capital investment. Another being evidence of institutions' sound financial management and maintenance of the viability of their financial positions.<sup>69</sup> Review teams made further commendations where institutions adopted innovative approaches to their internal funding allocation model in order to enrich the student learning experience by, for example, supporting extra curricula activities, student exchanges, and the enhancement of learning resources. In one institution, this included the provision of student bursaries for postgraduate, including 3rd cycle, study as part of a wider strategy to develop their research culture.

<sup>66</sup> ESG 2015.

<sup>67</sup> 9 commendations across 5 reports and 11 recommendations across 6 reports.

<sup>68</sup> 3 commendations across 3 reports.

<sup>69</sup> 2 commendations across 2 reports.

## Recommendations

“The Faculty should continue to participate in lobbying at institutional and national level for the recognition of visual arts programmes and the potential increase in their available budgets, in line with scientific and technological development areas.”

“[The Review Team recommends that] as part of [the institution’s] quality management risk-assessment, in line with its Strategic Plan, it prepares a rolling Programme Budget for all its programmes.”

Review teams made a number of recommendations<sup>70</sup> relating to the ability of institutions to ensure the ongoing sustainability of their programmes through maintaining adequate levels of funding. Due to the different funding systems operating across the EHEA, these recommendations were appropriately nuanced by review teams. It was noted that a cluster of recommendations<sup>71</sup> broadly referring to the need for institutions to improve internal financial management through the alignment of budgets with strategic planning to enhance their learning and teaching activities, and to ensure transparency and the clear communication of decision-making with regards the allocation of financial resources.

<sup>70</sup> 4 across 3 reports.

<sup>71</sup> 5 recommendations across 4 reports.



# Standard 5

## Facilities, Resources and Support

### 5.3 Staff Qualifications and Professional Activity

STANDARD

The institution has sufficient qualified support staff.

#### Commendations

“The Review Team commends ... the high level of engagement of ... support staff who demonstrate a proactive and innovative approach in their support of the teaching, learning and artistic activities of the programmes.”

“The Review Team were impressed by the quality ... and contribution of the ... support staff who are well qualified and dedicated and appeared to be open to direct and flexible collaboration with the disciplines and specialisations in meeting the specific needs of the pedagogical process.”

Standard 5.3 of the EQ-Arts Standards and Guidelines relates directly to Standard 1.6 of Part 1 of the ESG (2015) which states that “In delivering support services the role of support and administrative staff is crucial and therefore they need to be qualified and have opportunities to develop their competencies.”<sup>72</sup>

The 2 prompts listed in the EQ-Arts templates for Institutional Review SERs and Institutional Review Reports, reflect the guidelines set out under this ESG standard and comprise questions regarding: Are there sufficient qualified support staff (technical, administrative, non-teaching staff, etc.) to support the teaching, learning and artistic activities of the programme? Are policies in place for continuing professional development of support staff?

<sup>72</sup> ESG 2015

<sup>73</sup> 4 commendations across 4 reports and 6 recommendations across 5 reports.

<sup>74</sup> 4 recommendations across 4 reports.



Photograph courtesy, University of the Arts Belgrade

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### Recommendations

“... the Review Team recommends that a formal system of appraisals and staff development should be set up, which should also include support staff.”

“The Review Team recommends provision of a formal initiative for the training and development of non-academic staff, which should be linked to the Faculty’s strategic development plans.”

With only 2 aspects for review teams to consider in this standard, a commensurately low number of (re)commendations were made.<sup>73</sup>

The subject of all the commendations made by review teams in this standard related to the quality of the support and technical staff working in support of student learning. Review teams recognised the high levels of dedication and their commitment to supporting programmes, teachers and students in meeting the specific needs of pedagogical processes. Review teams consistently acknowledged that support staff, working closely with students, were well qualified, highly motivated and committed to their roles. However, review teams also found there to be a lack of opportunity for support staff to access formal staff development provision or undertake CPD training programmes or workshops, in a number of institutions. Consequently, the majority of recommendations<sup>74</sup> identified the need for institutions to address this deficiency, for example through involving support staff in formal appraisal processes to ascertain their training needs and shape appropriate CPD provision. Review teams also recognised that institutions need to ensure that within their profile of support staff, there are suitably qualified staff members able to deal with the increasing mental health and related issues that students are experiencing across the higher education sector.

In order to support institutions’ international strategies, the acquisition of English language skills for relevant support staff was recommended<sup>75</sup> by review teams, in order to optimise recruitment to their international programmes and to ensure that international students are able to fully participate in their study programmes. Furthermore, review teams recognised that the linking of CPD provision for support staff to strategic planning processes is of benefit to institutions.

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<sup>73</sup> 4 commendations across 4 reports and 6 recommendations across 5 reports.

<sup>74</sup> 4 recommendations across 4 reports.

<sup>75</sup> 2 recommendations across 2 reports.

# Standard 6

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## Communication, Organisation and Decision-making

# Standard 6

## Communication, Organisation and Decision-making

### 6.1 Internal Communication Process

STANDARD

Effective mechanisms are in place for internal communication within the institution.

#### Commendations

“The ... Faculty provides a supportive environment for its students in which open dialogue and face-to-face communication are encouraged. The Review Team were impressed by teachers’ close understanding of the needs and aspirations of students ...”

“[The Review Team commends the] effective formal and informal channels of communication in place between students and staff.”

Standard 6.1 of the EQ-Arts Standards and Guidelines relates broadly to Standard 1.3 of Part 1 of the ESG (2015), it focusses on the design, operation and effectiveness of internal communication systems between the institution and its students and staff, with a focus on the ways in which these mechanisms support the core activities of learning, teaching and assessment, facilitate communication across programmes and academic divisions, and enable the sharing of good practice.

The 6 prompts listed in the EQ-Arts templates for Institutional Review SERs and Institutional Review Reports, reflect the guidelines set out under this ESG standard and include questions regarding: How does the institution communicate with the students and staff? How do students and staff communicate? How is communication arranged between the different programmes within the institution? How does the institution ensure the continued effectiveness of its communication systems? How does the institution share best practice across the programmes?

Relatively few commendations were made by review teams against this standard.<sup>76</sup> Where commendations were made, they acknowledged the effectiveness of communications between institutions and their staff and students. Review teams found examples of effective communication mechanisms in place (particularly of an informal nature) which promoted a mutual respect between students and teaching staff, providing staff with an effective means of gaining a close understanding of the needs

<sup>76</sup> 7 commendations across 6 reports.

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### Recommendations

“[The Review Team recommends] that the institution evaluates the effectiveness of its current internal communication systems to ensure that its key strategic goals are clearly understood and acknowledged at all levels of operation.”

“[The Review Team recommends that] the University evaluates the usefulness of the [Online Campus Management system] for the entire university of art and its members and presents the results of this evaluation.”

“All the necessary information that a student needs in order to complete their study programme should be collated into a comprehensive programme handbook that is made readily available in electronic form.”

and aspirations of their students. While review teams identified commendable examples of effective informal internal communication systems operating within institutions, the recommendations made against this aspect of the standard suggests that there remains significant scope for improvement in both the design and operation of more formal communication systems. In a number of reports,<sup>77</sup> review teams made recommendations with regard to the ineffectiveness of internal communication systems, particularly in their inability to ensure that key institutional aims and objectives were widely disseminated and understood by internal stakeholders.

Even where review teams were broadly satisfied with the effectiveness of internal communication systems, recommendations were made with regard to the content and purposefulness of the information being communicated. Recommendations often identified deficits in communication loops, or the incompleteness of the information made available. Review teams also found evidence that the selected means of communication, through which various types of information were disseminated, were not always sufficiently well considered at senior management level, and that a more thoughtful approach as to how specific types information were shared with different groups of internal stakeholders could – in some cases – improve receptivity and promote transparency of purpose. Review teams encouraged the improvement of institutional communication strategies and recommended that further consideration be given to the fitness-for-purpose of the selected means of communication used.

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<sup>77</sup> 7 recommendations across 6 reports.

# Standard 6

## Communication, Organisation and Decision-making

### 6.2 Organisational Structure and Decision-making Processes

STANDARD

The institution is supported by an appropriate organisational structure and clear decision-making processes.

#### Commendations

“[The Review Team] commends the [institution] as it is clearly responding to changes that are led by government policy development, students’ interests and staff needs.”

“The complexity of the outputs planned by the Board, involving students from multiple departments in each project and the successful outcomes of these, is an indication of the effectiveness of the decision-making process[es].”

Standard 6.2 of the EQ-Arts Standards and Guidelines relates broadly to Standard 1.1 and 1.2 of Part 1 of the ESG (2015), which state that “Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes”<sup>78</sup> and that the assurance of the quality of these programmes is implemented “through appropriate structures and processes.”<sup>79</sup> The guidelines for ESG Standard 1.2 also state that programme objectives should be “in line with the institutional strategy.”

The 5 prompts listed in the EQ-Arts templates for Institutional Review SERs and Institutional Review Reports, reflect the guidelines set out under this ESG standard and include questions regarding: What is the organisational structure of the institution in terms of committees and senior staff and how is the effectiveness of these monitored? How are key strategic decisions made within the institution? Are the responsibilities of senior staff in the institution clearly defined? Is there sufficient and appropriate representation (e.g. students, staff, external representatives, etc.) within the institution’s organisational structure and decision-making processes?

The commendations<sup>80</sup> made by review teams, predominantly focused on the effectiveness of specific aspects of institutional organisational structures and decision-making processes. For example, review teams found evidence of effective deliberative and executive decision-making processes being in place, that were

<sup>78</sup> ESG (2015) Standard 1.2: Design and Approval of Programmes.

<sup>79</sup> ESG (2015) Standard 1.1: Policy for Quality Assurance.

<sup>80</sup> 7 commendations across 7 reports.

### Recommendations

“Stronger staff engagement in the formal decision-making processes ... would significantly help to build a collegial Quality Culture across the Faculty.”

“The Review Team recommends that the Faculty reviews the effectiveness of its organisational structure and its associated decision-making processes to ensure that the responsibilities assigned ... are clearly defined and allow for effective and agile decision making.”

responsive to external drivers while also taking full account of the needs of students and staff. However, relatively few commendations were made against this standard and are, therefore, outweighed by recommendations,<sup>81</sup> over half of which are with respect to the effectiveness of institutional organisational structures and decision-making processes. For example, review teams identified a lack of clarity in the terms of reference of deliberative and executive bodies, and the need for institutions to streamline their organisational structures and decision-making processes in order to make them more effective. However, review teams also noted that even when they found committee structures to be effective and their terms of reference clear, shortcomings were identified in terms of the membership of these bodies. For example, the extent to which staff, students, alumni and external stakeholders are represented needs to be appropriately inclusive.

<sup>81</sup> A total of 16 recommendations across 9 reports.



Courtesy of University of Kingston, London © Megan Amis

# Standard 7

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## Internal Quality Culture



# Standard 7

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## Internal Quality Culture

STANDARD

The institution has in place effective quality assurance and enhancement procedures.

Standard 7 of the EQ-Arts Standards and Guidelines relates directly to Standard 2 of Part 2 of the ESG<sup>82</sup> which states (under Standard 2.1) that “External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG.” In reviewing an institution against Standard 7, it is important that review teams understand and acknowledge the structural relationships between programmes and the wider institutional context, and the national context in which the HEI operates, including what quality assurance processes are in place at institutional/national level.

The 12 prompts listed in the EQ-Arts templates for Institutional Review SERs and Institutional Review Reports, fully reflect the guidelines set out under this ESG standard and include questions regarding: How and by whom are the quality assurance and enhancement procedures monitored and reviewed at both institutional and programme levels? Does the institution set clear benchmarks/metrics for programmes to measure their success? How are staff, students, alumni, representatives of the creative industries profession and quality assurance experts involved in the quality assurance and enhancement procedures and how is their feedback used to enhance the institution/programme? How are these procedures used to inform decision-making? How are staff and students informed of changes made? How are students and staff informed if their feedback has led to change? How would the overall quality culture within the programme be characterised?

Approximately half<sup>83</sup> the HEIs represented through the 14 reports, operate internal quality management (QM) systems (predominantly based upon the EFQM model) rather than quality assurance

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<sup>82</sup> ESG 2015.

<sup>83</sup> 8 out of 14 institutions.

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### Commendations

“[The Review Team] commends the [institution] on introducing (interim) reviews and 5-year (periodic) reviews.”

“The Review Team commends the ambition in the quality procedures in place as well as the commitment and dedication of staff and the engagement of postgraduate students within the Faculty.”

systems (based upon the ESG). QM systems tend to have a formal focus on the quality of the outputs of student learning and a more informal approach to monitoring the quality of the student learning process. Consequently, a number of recommendations made against this standard relate to there being an apparent operational disconnect between the formal monitoring of student progression and their achievement of learning outcomes, and the predominantly informal evaluation of the student learning experience.

A marked imbalance between the number of commendations and recommendations made by review teams against this standard<sup>84</sup> was noted, with at least one recommendation made against this standard in each of the 14 reports. A number of the institutions included in the range of reports analysed (specifically those located in the Czech Republic) had only recently implemented their current IQA systems in response to a change in national laws governing higher education. Consequently, a number of the commendations made by review panels were in recognition of the effectiveness of specific aspects of QA processes inaugurated within maturing QA systems – aspects that would normally be regarded as standard attributes within more established QA systems, indicating that the establishment of an effective internal quality culture is currently a ‘work-in-progress’ for some HEIs.

Institutions were commended for introducing interim and periodic QA reviews of their provision, the design of specific aspects of their QAE systems and the involvement of representatives from professional fields and other key internal and external stakeholders in IQA processes. However, this should be balanced against the number of recommendations regarding the ways in which institutions need to strengthen and secure the contributions made by both internal and external stakeholders within their IQA processes.<sup>85</sup> Review teams also made recommendations reflecting their reservations regarding the way that some IQA systems have been implemented and/or the ways in which their on-going effectiveness is monitored. In both cases, the recommendations recognise the significant risk to the ability of

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<sup>84</sup> A total of 9 commendations across 4 reports and 57 recommendations across 14 reports.

<sup>85</sup> A total of 15 recommendations across 8 reports.

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### Recommendations

“[The Review Team suggest that the institution] adopt a more systematic and proactive strategy regarding the continuous monitoring and improvement of the programmes and to better evidence (adjustments in) the strategic plans.”

“The University should formalise the procedures that demonstrate how key stakeholders will contribute to the [Quality Assurance] and enhancement process at institutional and programme levels.”

“The Faculty needs to develop a Quality Assurance plan and system, which fits the culture of the Faculty and balances informal and formal procedures, quantitative and qualitative data and criteria.”

these systems to contribute effectively to institutional decision-making processes.

A number of recommendations,<sup>86</sup> although expressed in a variety of ways, identified the need for institutions to strengthen their internal quality culture. A significant proportion of these identified the need for institutions to take a more systematic approach to the assurance and enhancement of the quality of their provision. Review teams also identified the need for some institutions to take a more formal approach towards their QAE processes through, for example, an increased representation of stakeholders on committees, the formal taking of minutes at committee meetings, and establishing an effective balance between informal and formal QA procedures. Recommendations also identified a need for institutions to ensure that internal feedback loops are working effectively, including the incorporation and dissemination of the views of external stakeholders through QAE processes. A number of recommendations comment on the need for IQA systems to be more attuned to broader institutional strategies.

Review teams also reported, through their recommendations, that a number of IQA systems did not currently provide institutions with a sufficiently firm basis for the identification and dissemination of good practices across their academic divisions (faculties, departments, programmes, etc.). In a number of cases – review teams found that there was considerable scope for institutions to take a more granulated approach in the formulation and specification of their qualitative criteria and quantitative metrics used to underpin IQA processes. Recommendations made in this Standard indicate that it was often unclear to review teams how feedback, derived through either internal and/or external QA processes, was used to inform institutional strategic planning. In addition to the points above, review teams also made several recommendations regarding the need for institutions to establish in-house training programmes for the purpose of enabling staff teams to understand, value and discharge their responsibilities within internal quality assurance processes.

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<sup>86</sup> 17 recommendations across 9 reports.

# Standard 8

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## Public Interaction



# Standard 8

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## Public Interaction

### 8.1 Cultural, Artistic and Educational Contexts

STANDARD

The institution engages within wider cultural, artistic and educational contexts.

#### Commendations

“The Review Team ... commends the wide range of interactions by students with arts organisations at international level ....”

“The Review Team commends the ambition of the Faculty’s endeavours particularly ... the energy with which the Faculty has worked within the city and the region to develop the artistic community and public awareness and use of contemporary arts.”

“[The Review Team commends] engagement of the ... Faculty with different levels of education such as pre-University education and life-long learning is a strength of its overall provision.”

Standard 8.1 of the EQ-Arts Standards and Guidelines relates directly to Standard 1.8 of Part 1 of the ESG (2015) which states that “Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible.”<sup>87</sup> This Standard also relates to Standard 1.1 of Part 1 of the ESG (2015) which states that institutions should ensure that their Quality Assurance policies are “publicly available.”

The 5 prompts listed in the EQ-Arts templates for Institutional Review SERs and Institutional Review Reports, reflect the guidelines set out under this ESG standard and comprise questions regarding; Does the institution engage in the public discourse on cultural, artistic, educational policies and/or other relevant issues and if so, how? Is the institution involved in pre-higher education, either in itself or in partnership with other institution(s)? What are the contributions of the institution to cultural, artistic and educational communities at the local, national and international level? Is the institution involved in the development of cultural and social or enterprise projects on the local, national and/or international levels (outside the institution)? Does the institution prepare its students to advance society through the use of their knowledge and skills, and if so, how?

Review teams made just over twice as many commendations as recommendations<sup>88</sup> against this standard. The majority of the commendations<sup>89</sup> were made in recognition of institutional

<sup>87</sup> ESG 2015.

<sup>88</sup> 15 commendations across 9 reports and 7 recommendations across 5 reports.

<sup>89</sup> 13 commendations across 9 reports.

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### Recommendations

“A more formal arrangement would ensure the sustainability of the programme’s activities in these areas ... and enhance the experience for all participants.”

“When new collaborations between the Department and external organisations are established, such external activities would usefully be related to the strategies of the city or the region and based upon clear cooperation policies/agreements and/or protocols.”

engagement with a range of external contexts, such as debates on cultural, artistic and educational policies at local, regional and national level.<sup>90</sup> Another group of commendations recognised the various ways that students benefitted from the external engagement activities of their institutions, for example through; interactions and partnerships with the creative industries, the opening of student exhibitions and performances to public audiences, and an active involvement in social projects. There is considerable evidence of good practice in relation to external activities, some of which also have a successful international dimension.

The recommendations made by review teams<sup>91</sup> against this standard focussed on the extant processes by which institutions organise and manage their external engagements. Review teams noted that, in most cases, the planning and organisation of these activities could be improved through the adoption of a more formally structured approach to the management of collaborative institutional links. For example, through; establishing clear terms of co-operation and engagement, and agreed protocols or compacts, thereby to ensure that these initiatives are sustainable.

Review teams also recognised that some institutions needed to (re) evaluate the effectiveness of their public facing activities, so as to ensure that they continue to be fit-for-purpose and to deliver their intended benefits and/or achieve their key objectives. Through the analysis of reports it was notable that the extent to which institutions assess the impact of their outward-facing activities and initiatives on their wider cultural, artistic and social contexts and/or are mapped to the strategies of the city or the region is very limited.

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<sup>90</sup> *including the active engagement of institutions with pre-tertiary education.*

<sup>91</sup> *6 recommendations across 4 reports.*

# Standard 8

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## Public Interaction

### 8.2 Interactions with the Artistic Professions

STANDARD

The institution actively promotes links with various sectors of the creative industries and other artistic professions.

#### Commendations

“... The Faculty proactively engages with local and regional creative industries in a variety of ways, which clearly enhances the students’ experiences.”

“The extensive links to various regional, national and international professional and artistic activities and events are commendable.”

“[The Review Team commends] the well-established good practice in the close connection between employers and the University in curriculum design as well as planning for future employment needs.”

<sup>92</sup> ESG 2015.

<sup>93</sup> ESG 2015.

<sup>94</sup> 7 commendations made across 5 reports and 5 recommendations made across 4 reports.

Standard 8.2 of the EQ-Arts Standards and Guidelines relates directly to Standard 1.8 of Part 1 of the ESG (2015) which states that “Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible.”<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, the 1.8 ESG (2015) guidelines state that “Information on institutions’ activities is useful for prospective and current students as well as for graduates, other stakeholders and the public.”<sup>93</sup> This Standard also relates to Standard 1.1 of Part 1 of the ESG (2015) which states that institutions should ensure “the involvement of external stakeholders in quality assurance.”

The 5 prompts listed in the EQ-Arts templates for Institutional Review SERs and Institutional Review Reports, reflect the guidelines set out under this ESG standard and comprise questions regarding; How does the institution engage with various sectors of creative industries and other artistic professions? What are the long-term plans for the (continued) development of the links with the artistic professions? How does the institution support its programmes in interacting with the artistic professions? How does the institution assess and monitor the on-going needs of the professions? How does the institution engage in and promote Lifelong Learning opportunities?

Review teams made a comparatively low, but broadly equal, number of (re)commendations against this standard.<sup>94</sup> Across all 14 institutions it was noted that a high proportion of teaching staff

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### Recommendations

“The Review Team recommends that greater effort is made to capture more representative samples of quantitative and qualitative data in order to better integrate the needs of the professional sector with teaching and learning at programme level.”

“The Review Team suggests that ... Faculty establishes formal links that build on the many existing informal connections between Faculty staff and their related fields of professional practice, ensuring that these include new and emerging forms within the creative industries.”

are active practitioners within related artistic and professional fields (as is commonly the case in the CPAD sector). This assures a certain level and scope of interaction with the artistic professions, reflected in examples of good practice commended<sup>95</sup> by review teams – noting in particular; the scope of these interactions (regional, national and international), the mutual benefits they bring to both the students and teaching staff of institutions and the related artistic professions, their positive impact on curriculum design and development, and their ability to signpost future employment trends.

However, through their recommendations, review teams identified instances where a greater degree of institutional oversight – with regard to how professional links are developed and maintained by teaching staff – would help to foster a more productive and comprehensive range of interactions with their related professional fields. This would facilitate the gathering of both quantitative and qualitative data to better integrate the developing needs of professional practice into their curricula. One recommendation, made by a review team, suggested the establishment of an advisory group – formed of employers, professional practitioners, and local and regional civic representatives – as a means of ensuring that the institution is able to monitor the ongoing needs of the professions and the regions.

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<sup>95</sup> 5 out of 7 commendations.

# Standard 8

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## Public Interaction

### 8.3 Information Provided to the Public

STANDARD

The information provided to the public about the institution is clear, consistent and accurate.

#### Commendations

“The Management Information System ... provides consistent and accurate information to applicants and interested parties about the programme.”

“The Review Team commends the clarity and presentation of information on the new institutional websites, that have established clear channels of communication that can be accessed by potential students, stakeholders and the wider national and international public.”

Standard 8.3 of the EQ-Arts Standards and Guidelines relates directly to Standard 1.8 of Part 1 of the ESG (2015) which states that “Information on institutions’ activities is useful for the prospective and current students as well as for graduates, other stakeholders and the public.”<sup>96</sup> The 6 prompts listed in the EQ-Arts templates for Institutional Review SERs and Institutional Review Reports, reflect the guidelines set out under this ESG standard and include questions regarding: What resources and delivery systems are used to convey information to the public? How does the institution ensure that information given to the public is consistent with its activities and programmes? What mechanisms are in place to review information before it goes public? How is the accuracy of the information ensured on an on-going basis? How does the programme ensure ethical considerations are addressed before going public?

The distribution of the (re)commendations made by review teams<sup>97</sup> suggests that there are aspects of this standard that require some attention. Of the relatively few commendations that were made against this standard by review teams, they commended both the resources and delivery systems used to convey information to the public, and the clarity, accuracy and utility of the information being provided. These identified instances where consistent and accurate information about institutional provision was clearly presented, and made readily available to potential applicants, and other external stakeholders, through institutional websites. Review teams also commended the work done by institutional publishing houses in the

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<sup>96</sup> ESG 2015.

<sup>97</sup> 4 commendations across 3 reports and 10 recommendations across 5 reports.

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### Recommendations

“Creating an overarching communication strategy and implementation plan should be prioritised [...] It should also contain processes to ensure the accuracy of information and ethicality of the information communicated.”

“The Review [Team] recommends the development of guidance outlining responsibilities and processes for the approval of public information, particularly the website and for the VLE.”

public dissemination of staff and student research. It appears that that the efficacy of conveying accurate information to the public is co-dependent on the effectiveness of the institutional resources and delivery systems in place.

While the recommendations made against this standard are distributed fairly evenly across each aspect of the standard (as represented by the EQ-Arts prompts), it was evident that these could be grouped around three main topics. The first of which identifies that communications with the public needs to be shaped and guided by an agreed overarching institutional strategy, which also specifies the processes through which the accuracy and integrity of information is assured. The second group of recommendations focus on the utility of internal institutional processes and protocols used for reviewing and approving information prior to publication.

The third cluster of recommendations relate to the need for institutions to make more transparent to the public information about their internal and external quality assurance processes and their outcomes.

## SECTION 3. Findings



# Findings

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<sup>98</sup> *As well as the collective experience of members of the EQ-Arts Board and of external quality experts included in the EQ-Arts Register of Peer Reviewers.*

The main findings presented by EQ-Arts in this section are based upon a careful and critical evaluation of the outcomes of the quantitative and qualitative processes used to develop this Thematic Analysis. In order to provide material that affords a basis for structured analyses across the broader CPAD sector, EQ-Arts has used its wider EQA expertise and experience<sup>98</sup> to give particular focus to examples of good practice and identified areas of improvement that transcend the specific profile of the 14 external quality assurance/enhancement reports that provide the source material for this Thematic Analysis. In so doing, EQ-Arts has sought to highlight findings that represent areas of good practice and persistent difficulty that can contribute to a broader reflection on, and improvement of, CPAD provision and its associated quality assurance policies and processes in institutional, national and international contexts.

# Standard 1

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STANDARD

The institutional mission and vision are clearly stated.

Institutional mission and vision statements, and the strategic planning process that support these, appear to be well-established and fit for purpose across the CPAD sector, they take full account of current and perceived challenges, and clearly emphasise institutional priorities in regional, national and international contexts.

## Key areas for consideration

EQ-Arts believes that strategic planning processes can be strengthened considerably when institutions establish:

- measurable targets or aims in their long-term strategic plans that enable them to track their progress towards key strategic objectives;
- formal processes for the collation and analysis of key quantitative and qualitative data as a means of supporting their strategic planning processes, for example the tracking of graduates as a means of informing curricula design and specifying learning outcomes.

# Standard 2.1

## STANDARD

The goals of the institution are achieved through the content and structure of the study programmes and their methods of delivery.

<sup>99</sup> *In line with Standard 1.3 of the ESG (2015).*

Institutional approaches to learning and teaching were found to be broadly student-centred,<sup>99</sup> commonly offering students optional courses, flexible study pathways and/or individual study plans. Students generally appear to benefit from exposure to a variety of pedagogical methods that, within a framework of guidance and support provided by teachers, actively encourages learner autonomy and promotes mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship.

## Key areas for consideration

- There is scope for institutions to further strengthen their academic support mechanisms (e.g. assessment feedback, academic and pastoral guidance, and student appeals procedures) to ensure that all matters relating to student progression and achievement are subject to formal institution-wide confirmatory processes that are consistently and fairly applied and are clearly signposted.
- The extent to which programme aims and learning outcomes are constructively aligned with institutional mission, vision and strategic objectives is seen by EQ-Arts to vary significantly across the CPAD sector. Where such alignment has already been established, the effective cross-mapping of programme aims and learning outcomes with institutional aims and objectives needs to be subject to regular review as part of institutional strategic planning.
- Higher arts education in the CPAD sector has traditionally sought to ensure the currency of programme curricula, and their associated aims and learning outcomes, through maintaining close links with

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# Standard 2.1

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related fields of professional practice. While this appears to be an established area of good practice across the sector, EQ-Arts believes that benefits of such links can be further enhanced in institutions by adopting a more formal oversight and management of these relationships.

- EQ-Arts acknowledges that the covid-19 pandemic has brought into sharp focus the capacity of e-learning to deliver, support and enhance student learning. While the different modes of delivery and the variety of learning and teaching methodologies are a strength of the CPAD sector, e-learning has been introduced with varying degrees of commitment and efficacy within the student learning experience. EQ-Arts believes that there is significant scope to utilise available e-learning resources and tools much more imaginatively and effectively across curricula.
- EQ-Arts acknowledges the CPAD sector's capacity for high quality research and the potential to drive knowledge gained from research back into the teaching curriculum and thereby enhance the student learning experience. In order to maximise this benefit, institutions should clearly define how their research activity is shared and used to inform study at all levels.

# Standard 2.2

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## STANDARD

The institution offers a range of opportunities for students and staff to gain an international perspective.

<sup>100</sup> Most often based upon bi-lateral Erasmus+ agreements.

Across the CPAD sector, institutions are generally very active in a range of internationalisation activities and are particularly pro-active in promoting international mobility opportunities.<sup>100</sup> EQ-Arts sees this as an area of strength within the CPAD sector, from which both students and staff benefit.

### Key areas for consideration

- In order to further embed these opportunities and encourage more students to participate, institutions need to ensure that they have clearly defined academic recognition processes in place for both outgoing and incoming exchange students.
- While most institutions in the thematic analysis were commended on their commitment to internationalisation activities with regard to student and staff mobility, it is generally much less apparent to EQ-Arts as to how international perspectives are integrated into curricula across the sector.

# Standard 2.3

STANDARD

Assessment methods are clearly defined and demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes.

<sup>101</sup> *Standard 1.3: Student-centred Learning, Teaching & Assessment.* Both the ESG<sup>101</sup> and EQ-Arts<sup>102</sup> standards and guidelines specify that the criteria and methods of assessment used for marking student work should be clearly defined and pre-published at the outset of study tasks.

<sup>102</sup> *Standard 2.3: Assessment.*

## Key areas for consideration

- EQ-Arts acknowledges that assessment practices necessarily vary across both institutions and disciplines within the CPAD sector. However, where it is evident that there is a lack of transparency and/or consistency in the specification of assessment criteria and/or the application of assessment processes, it is difficult for institutions to ensure that comparable student performance (i.e. across departments and/or programmes of study) is being assessed fairly and equitably.
- An area of good practice that has been identified by EQ-Arts arises from CPAD students generally expressing their satisfaction with the timeliness and utility of the oral feedback they received following formal assessment processes. However, EQ-Arts believes that students' active participation in their own learning process can be further encouraged if the well-established mechanisms for the provision of oral feedback are augmented by the co-provision of this feedback in written or audio form.

# Standard 3.1

## STANDARD

Clear admission criteria exist, which establish artistic/academic suitability of students.

EQ-Arts has found plentiful examples of good practice with regard to student selection and admissions processes across institutions. Joined-up admissions processes, including the publishing of clear criteria, support applicants in gaining entry to their chosen programmes and are generally seen as being both rigorous and fair by relevant stakeholders. Students admitted through these processes are usually well placed to benefit from, and proceed successfully through, their chosen study programme. Equally valuable for applicants, is the publication of clear information about study programmes prior to entry, covering all phases of the students' study period, including graduate career destinations.

### Key areas for consideration

- The clarity of admissions procedures, as outlined above, assist institutions in widening their range of successful applicants and, thereby, enable them to increase the diversity of their student cohorts to better represent the profiles of their regional and national population.
- EQ-Arts notes from the thematic analysis that the collection and analysis of data on student progression and achievement by institutions, when mapped against entry criteria, provides valuable insights into the field of potential applicants that can be used to further enhance admissions processes.

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## Standard 3.1

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- EQ-Arts believes it is imperative that, as a key aspect of their admissions processes, institutions should ensure that careful consideration is given to applicants with specific learning needs, and this should be embedded within institutions' Equal Opportunities Policies.
- The clarity of information provided by institutions regarding any necessary language requirements, is seen by EQ-Arts to positively influence international recruitment – especially when supported by institutional investment in developing the language skills of academic, support and admissions staff.

# Standard 3.2

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**STANDARD**

The institution has a mechanism to formally monitor and review the progression, achievement and subsequent employability of its students.

Through this thematic analysis, EQ-Arts has identified that there is scope for improvement in the processes used by CPAD institutions to monitor student achievement and progression, at both institutional and programme level, as part of an institutional commitment to quality assurance that follows the lifecycle of each student.

**Key area for consideration**

- EQ-Arts believes that good practice in this area should, as a *de minimis*, include the collection and analysis of comprehensive data sets that capture student entry profiles, student progression through study programmes and graduate destinations. This would enable institutions to more closely monitor individual student progression and achievement profiles and, thereby, ensure equality of opportunity and further inform their equal opportunities policies.

# Standard 4.1

## STANDARD

The institution has a mechanism to formally monitor and review the progression, achievement and subsequent employability of its students.

<sup>103</sup> *ESG (2015) Standard 1.5: Teaching Staff*

<sup>104</sup> *In some national contexts across the EHEA, some requirements of staff competency are decreed at the level of the ministry of education or equivalent.*

<sup>105</sup> *Including provision for 3rd cycle doctoral programmes*

Institutions are required<sup>103</sup> to assure the competence of their teaching staff, largely through formal strategies and processes determined at institutional level,<sup>104</sup> including formal staff appraisal. These need to be effective in both identifying and addressing the continuing professional development needs of individuals and groups of teaching staff to provide appropriately tailored staff development opportunities. Where such strategies are already in place and operating successfully, EQ-Arts perceives that they are valued by academics and lead to the enhancement of the student learning experience and, therefore, represent good practice within the CPAD sector.

## Key areas for consideration

- EQ-Arts believes, that for the above strategies to be fully effective, staff development should be informed by, and address, relevant:
  - pedagogical and technological advancements;
  - enhancement actions identified through internal and external quality review processes;
  - significant regulatory changes in the national higher education system;
  - sector-wide dialogues that advocate for, and advance developments in artistic research;<sup>105</sup>
  - relevant trends in related professional practices across the CPAD sector.

# Standard 4.1

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- The professional practice of teaching staff and the high level of public engagement achieved by institutions through, for example, exhibitions, performances and other external events, represents an established area of good practice across the CPAD sector, that EQ-Arts endorses and wishes to see sustained:
  - EQ-Arts believe that, where such good practice extends to national and/or international contexts, institutions should acknowledge such activities in their strategic planning processes and identify and seek to secure sustainable funding streams.

# Standard 4.2

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STANDARD

There are sufficient qualified teaching staff to effectively deliver the programmes.

EQ-Arts believes that staff recruitment policies and principles/criteria should be mapped against institutional mission and vision statements and be included in their strategic plans and should be supported by staff development programmes.

## Key areas for consideration

- Without the above alignment, EQ-Arts believes that institutions will find it more difficult to enhance and diversify the composition of its teaching staff and adapt to new requirements in related fields of employment and/or professional practice – and make any appropriate changes to their curricula.
- Once alignment between strategic planning and staff recruitment is established, EQ-Arts believes that institutions need to establish regular review processes that ensure the continued currency of their curricula and, thereby, continue to reflect relevant developments across the CPAD sector.

# Standard 5.1

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## STANDARD

The institution has appropriate resources to support student learning and the delivery of the programmes.

As EQ-Arts is aware of examples of good practice in the implementation and application of VLEs and other digital resources within the CPAD sector, it is consequently aware of the enhancements that they can offer to the student learning experience.

### Key areas for consideration

- However, the evidence provided through this Thematic Analysis, reveals that there remains considerable room for improvement in the application of VLEs systems and other digital resources, particularly in harnessing their full potential to support blended and distance learning.
- EQ-Arts acknowledges the increasing pressure on institutions with regards to the strategic oversight and day-to-day management of physical and technical resources and other learning facilities. To address this, stakeholders should be involved in the planning, allocation and management of existing and new spaces to ensure that the use of such facilities is optimised to enable students to meet their learning outcomes.
- Institutions need to ensure that library stock (including e-books, online journals and other digital resources) is sufficient to support student learning needs. These should reflect the wider international discourse in the field(s), and sector developments – such as resources for artistic research methods and should (where available) include English language versions of key texts.

# Standard 5.2

STANDARD

The institutions financial resources enable successful delivery of the study programmes.

EQ-Arts acknowledges the significant differences that currently exist, across the EHEA, in the levels of recurrent funding distributed to HAE Institutions and the means through which such funding is allocated. EQ-Arts is also aware that, within the CPAD sector, there are positive examples, that relate to institutions securing a sufficiency of financial resources – for example, where institutions have identified opportunities to advocate on a collective basis for improvements in their national funding model.<sup>106</sup> However, the Thematic Analysis reveals a sectorial concern about the sustainability of current provision, where it is based only on the existing and anticipated levels of recurrent funding available to some institutions in the CPAD sector.

<sup>106</sup> *as was found to be the case in the Czech Republic.*

## Key areas for consideration

- Necessarily, some institutions have established a track record of securing additional external funding – often through making successive applications for fixed-term EU project funding and/or hypothecated funding in support of national or regional initiatives – as a means of safeguarding their current provision in the short to medium term.
- EQ-Arts remains concerned about the long-term viability of HAE where institutions fail to explore, develop and establish sustainable models of delivery calibrated against core funding.

# Standard 5.3

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STANDARD

The institution has sufficient qualified support staff.

EQ-Arts sees that the quality and commitment of support staff (both technical and administrative) represents a notable area of strength across the CPAD subject sector, both in terms of their demonstrated level of commitment to supporting student-centred approaches to learning and teaching, and in the level of knowledge and expertise that they bring to their individual roles.

## Key areas for consideration

- EQ-Arts believes that, to maintain the benefits contributed by support staff to the student learning experience, institutions need to establish formal staff development processes that provide support staff with opportunities to maintain their ability to adapt to developments and changing trends across the CPAD sector and the related fields of professional practice. Such processes should be supported at a strategic level and defined and implemented at departmental or programme level.
- In addition to the above, evidence provided through the Thematic Analysis indicates to EQ-Arts that institutions need to ensure that, within their cohort of staff dedicated to supporting student learning, there is a sufficient compliment of appropriately qualified staff able to deal with the increasing social and mental health issues that students are experiencing across higher education in the EHEA.

# Standard 6.1

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**STANDARD**

Effective mechanisms are in place for internal communication within the institution.

While the Thematic Analysis reveals that there are examples of effective internal communication systems operating across the CPAD sector, EQ-Arts notes that there remains significant scope for improvement in both the design and operation of such systems in many institutions – this is particularly in relation to the dissemination and articulation of key institutional strategic objectives.

**Key area for consideration**

- Leaders of institutions and senior managers should consider carefully both the character and means of communication used to disseminate key information. EQ-Arts believes that institutions can bring greater clarity of purpose to internal communication and enhance its receptivity by taking a thoughtful approach as to how specific types of information is shared with their community of staff and students or distributed to specific groups of internal stakeholders.

# Standard 6.2

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## STANDARD

The institution has an appropriate organisational structure and clear decision-making processes.

The Thematic Analysis reveals that there are examples of effective internal communication systems operating across the CPAD sector. However, EQ-Arts notes that there remains significant scope for improvement in both the design and operation of such systems in many institutions – this is particularly in relation to the dissemination and articulation of key institutional strategic objectives.

### Key area for consideration

- The Thematic Analysis reveals that, even when committee structures are seen to be effective and their terms of reference clear, there can still be shortcomings in terms of the extent to which the membership of such bodies are fully inclusive in their representation of all relevant internal and (where appropriate) external stakeholders.

# Standard 7

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**STANDARD**

The institution has a strong internal quality culture, supported by clear and effective quality assurance and enhancements procedures.

The Thematic Analysis reveals that, for some institutions, the achievement of an effective internal quality culture is currently a work-in-progress. EQ-Arts notes that this process could be significantly enhanced through the provision of systematic in-house staff development programmes with the clear purpose of enabling staff teams to fully appreciate and understand the benefits that an effective IQA system delivers and how they are expected to discharge their responsibilities within its processes.

**Key areas for consideration**

- EQ-Arts perceives that many well-established IQA systems still fail to provide institutions with a sufficiently firm basis for the identification and dissemination of good practice across their academic divisions (faculties, departments, programmes, etc.) and, thereby, significantly limit the ability of such systems to deliver the benefits of quality enhancement alongside their fundamental quality assurance functions.
- The Thematic Analysis indicates to EQ-Arts that there is considerable scope for institutions to take a more granulated approach to the formulation and specification of the qualitative

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# Standard 7

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criteria and quantitative metrics collated and analysed as a means of underpinning their IQA processes, so as to realise the full value of these systems.

- The Thematic Analysis also reveals that, when viewed from an external perspective, it is not always evident how feedback – derived through either internal and/or external QA processes – is utilised by institutions to inform their strategic planning processes. Additionally, omissions in the design of IQA systems, or shortcomings in the inclusivity of its processes, can be found to limit the ability of both internal and external stakeholders to contribute effectively to IQA processes.

# Standard 8.1

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STANDARD

The institution engages with wider cultural, artistic and educational contexts.

EQ-Arts note that the Thematic Analysis provides considerable evidence of good practice in relation to institutions' engagement with wider cultural, artistic and educational contexts, many examples of which also have a successful international dimension. It is clear that institutions ensure that both students and staff benefit from participating in these external engagements through a wide range of activities, including public exhibitions, screenings and performances.

## Key areas for consideration

- EQ-Arts believes that such activities can become more sustainable if the terms of engagement with external partners are made clear through mutually agreed protocols or compacts.
- EQ-Arts notes that the CPAD sector has, to some extent, neglected the opportunity to gather evidence about how external stakeholders and the public benefit from the array of external initiatives that institutions are engaged in. There is little evidence of institutions undertaking impact studies that assess and evaluate the cultural, social and economic benefits of such activities, or that such activities are mapped onto local, regional or national strategies.

# Standard 8.2

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STANDARD

The institution actively promotes links with various sectors of the creative industries and other artistic professions.

Links between institutions and their related fields of artistic and professional practice are well established across the CPAD sector, albeit often through the personal networks of individual teachers and researchers.

### Key area for consideration

- EQ-Arts believes that such links and interactions with the related artistic professions, could be enhanced through, for example, the mapping of individual staffs' professional networks, formal partnership agreements led by appointed individuals, and the establishment of professional advisory groups to ensure that the needs of the professions are both reflected in, and met by, the study programmes. These relationships should be supported within the administrative and academic structures of institutions.

# Standard 8.3

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**STANDARD**

Information provided to the public about the institution is clear, consistent and accurate.

EQ-Arts recognise that the efficacy of conveying information to the public is co-dependent on the quality of the delivery systems put in place.

**Key area for consideration**

- Through the Thematic Analysis EQ-Arts has identified three areas of improvement that could be made to the procedures used by institutions to inform the public about their activities:
  - processes and procedures for communicating with the public are most effectively supported when sited within overarching institutional communication strategies;
  - there needs to be a clear, reliable and transparent processes in place within institutions to review information and verify its accuracy before it is made public;
  - institutions should give consideration to the value of using external-facing communication systems (including social media) as a means of promoting the work of students, alumni and teachers to the public.

# Forward Focus

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This Thematic Analysis will provide the foundation for further EQ-Arts policy reports, survey reports, published papers, conference presentations and case studies that gather and present information on best practice in thematic areas or address existing and emerging strategic issues that are of relevance to the CPAD sector. The Thematic Analysis will also inform the EQ-Arts International Quality Assurance Expert training programme. The following thematic areas have, inter alia, been identified by EQ-Arts from this Thematic Analysis as being relevant to the CPAD sector and with a potential for further investigation and dissemination:

## Internationalisation

Internationalisation across Higher Education Institutions has successfully grown through, in the main, a trend towards increased student and staff mobility – often underpinned by the Erasmus+ Programme<sup>107</sup> – or the expansion of international study programmes, as a means of providing students with an international ‘window’. However, to fully embed internationalisation in learning, teaching and assessment,<sup>108</sup> it is apparent that institutions need to invest in revising their curricula in order to represent, and make visible, international perspectives, diverse references and inclusive standpoints. Furthermore, there is a need to determine how such revisions are informed by staff members’ research<sup>109</sup> and professional practice. Any further investigation of this topic should address the need of the CPAD sector to prepare its graduates for professional practice or research careers with international dimensions, and to reflect the changing demographic of populations across Europe which will be increasingly reflected in HAE student cohorts.

<sup>107</sup> *Erasmus+ is the EU’s programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe.*

<sup>108</sup> *Articulating intercultural competencies as learning outcomes.*

<sup>109</sup> *The term ‘research’ is understood to be inclusive of artistic research.*

## Embedding research

The way that research is incrementally introduced, undertaken and embedded across first and second cycles in HAE, is commonly imprecise. Therefore, it follows that the relationship between research

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and curricula content, can be equally elusive, as frequently highlighted through the process of EQ-Arts EQA activities. In contrast, in a number of countries, significant advances have been achieved in the CPAD sector, in the establishing of third cycle doctoral programmes, and in the recognition afforded to artistic research and artistic research methods as distinct and creditable means of knowledge production. EQ-Arts believe that the CPAD sector would benefit from further investigation into the merits of, and the ways in which, research can be embedded at bachelors and masters levels.

## Graduate career data

Based on the evidence of this Thematic Analysis, the CPAD sector appears to depend excessively on informal and arbitrary approaches to tracing and documenting the career trajectories of their graduates. This necessarily limits the extent to which institutions can accurately evaluate the success of their learning and teaching strategies – particularly professional skills preparation – or revise their curricula and learning outcomes, informed by reliable data on the employment or the professional standing of their alumni. EQ-Arts believes additional support is needed, in order to devise and undertake a detailed survey report on this theme; to investigate how systematic approaches to data collection and analysis – that augment more informal means – could aid institutions in gaining accurate and serviceable information on graduate destinations in order to enhance their curricula. The CPAD sector may also benefit if sector-wide data is collated that sheds light on the positive impact made by arts graduates to social, economic, and cultural life, and thereby boost the value accorded to HAE.

## Blended learning

The unprecedented global challenge represented by the Covid-19 pandemic will necessarily influence the sector's thinking about the future needs of HAE across the EHEA. While prior to the pandemic,

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the active use of VLEs, and/or online learning was more advanced in some institutions than others, it has now become imperative that the whole CPAD sector establishes flexible modes of delivery and blended learning models in order to facilitate student learning, achievement and progression when access to campus facilities is limited. This is no doubt a challenge in the CPAD sector, which traditionally emphasises face-to-face teaching and delivery, and especially in its disciplines in which collective, collaborative or embodied learning activities – such as in filmmaking and performance (as well as studio-based and intensive workshop practices) – are key methods within the learning process. Through their own professional affiliations and pedagogic experience, the EQ-Arts Board are cognisant of measures taken across the CPAD sector to urgently establish new approaches to learning, teaching and assessment during the global Covid-19 pandemic. These have included, for example, the rapid introduction and/or expansion of online teaching, adjustments to delivery methods and patterns of learning, and the modification of assessment tasks and assessment feedback methods. It is the considered view of EQ-Arts, that this aspect of HAE needs urgent attention through a survey report that draws together best practice (and related resources) developed across the sector, and to disseminate this accordingly.

# Glossary

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- AQ Austria** Die Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung, Austria Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Austria
- CALOHEX** The Measuring and Comparing Achievements of Learning Outcomes in Higher Education in Europe Extension Project
- CPAD** Creative and Performing Arts and Design
- CPD** Continuing Professional Development
- EAIE** European centre for expertise, networking and resources in the internationalisation of higher education
- ECTS** European Credits Transfer and Accumulation System
- EFQM** European Foundation for Quality Management
- EHEA** European Higher Education Area
- ELIA** European League of the Institutes of the Arts
- EQA** External Quality Assurance
- EQ-Arts** Enhancing Quality in the Arts
- ESG** European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance
- ETHO** Network of higher art education technical staff
- HAE** Higher Arts Education
- HEI** Higher Education Institute
- IQA** Internal Quality Assurance
- MusiQuE** An external evaluation body dedicated to the continuous improvement of the quality of higher music education across Europe
- NVAO** The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders
- PHExcel** A Project investigating models of excellence in Professional Higher Education
- QA** Quality Assurance
- QAE** Quality Assurance and Enhancement
- QM** Quality Management
- SER** Self-Evaluation Report
- VLE** Virtual Learning Environment