OVERVIEW REPORT

for

THEATRE AND FILM FIELD PROGRAMMES

This report is based on quality assessments of theatre and film field programmes in three institutions (LMTA, KU, SU) which were conducted by an international expert panel in September 2011. In total 10 programmes were evaluated, in the areas of Theatre Studies, Acting, Directing. The programmes comprised 6 bachelor's and 4 master's programmes.

**Programme aims and learning outcomes**

On the whole, the aims of the programmes are consistent with the type and cycle of the studies and provide sufficient study volume in terms of scope of subjects and credits. In some cases the name of the programme does not appropriately reflect its identity, either because it offers too many substrands of specialisation or because the programme's profile and its intended learning outcomes are not clearly defined and articulated. Also, the distinction between B.A. and M.A. level in the same subject area is not always sufficiently and clearly delineated.

All programmes seek to meet national and/or regional needs, although information on the labour market situation and on employment possibilities is obtained informally. Creating a database of labour market statistics would be helpful in defining the optimum capacity (upper limit of admitted students in accordance with existing potential – facilities, staff, etc.) and recruitment frequency. Judging by the students' intake ratio and by the first priority choices, demand for some programmes is high but others have to work proactively for an increase in   the numbers of applications. To some extent the new admission system may be a disbalancing factor. The national entrance examinations for all theatre field programmes may have synergies, but the system does not take sufficiently into account the specific nature of the art education admission procedure and makes it difficult to profile the programmes strategically and to search for talented and motivated students.

Despite common areas of interest, there is relatively little interaction between programmes in the same subject area. The expert group suggests closer co-operation with kindred programmes regionally, nationally and internationally.

**Curriculum design**

The programmes are in compliance with the relevant legal acts and provide a sufficient study volume. In most cases the programme content is clearly described and the constituent themes reflect the overall programme aims. At the same time, the intended learning outcomes for some courses need to be fine-tuned in order to become more realistic and attainable.

The relative volume of compulsory as opposed to optional subjects in the overall structure of curriculum is, in general, appropriate. A more diverse and detailed planning for the use of self-study hours would contribute to the quality of teaching and learning.

The experts are of the opinion that incorporation of more interdisciplinary content and options would improve and diversify the curricula of the analysed programmes. Curricula should also include more widely the latest world trends and developments in the general field and in the specific subjects. Internationalisation is a sphere which all programmes need to expand and enhance. A greater provision of opportunities to develop foreign language competences for both staff and students is necessary.

There is evidence of regular review of the curricula and updating of the learning outcomes. However, there is often no clear description of how the changes are initiated and monitored.

**Staff**

Teachers meet legal requirements and have the appropriate knowledge, expertise and experience to ensure an effective teaching and learning process. During the site visit the expert panel formed the impression that the vast majority of teachers working on the assessed programmes carry out their main artistic activities in other institutions as well. Most of them have a direct involvement in practical and professional activities, which contributes to the attractiveness of the programmes. However, it should be taken into consideration that although the new version of the Descriptor of the General Requirements for First Level and Integrated Study Programmes Granting a Degree contains no requirements concerning the ratio of full-time to visiting teachers, the programme should take steps to ensure a certain number of teaching staff members employed on a full-time basis, in order to assure continuity and systematic development of the quality of education. This would also help to enhance the research and publication activity of the staff. In the present situation which offers no clear definition of the full-time status, a number of teachers' workloads are too high if they are to engage effectively in research and other professional development activities.

Teacher/student ratio in the assessed programmes varies in accordance to the particular nature of the subjects (whether individual tuition is required as with some of the practical special subjects, or the subject is taught in the form of lectures, seminars, etc.) Technical support staff numbers are sufficient.

Staff turnover is, in general, sufficient. In some cases wider recruitment of younger teachers would refresh and diversify the composition of the staff.

Although teachers undertake professional development, this is often the result of personal initiative and activities rather than institutional policy. The suspension of sabbatical leave entitlement seriously limits teachers' opportunities to refresh and enhance their professional competences. The management strategy on staff recruitment and development should be improved by providing more institutional support for teacher development and stimulating the research and publication activities of the staff.

The experts are of the opinion that wider exposure of staff on all assessed programmes to academic and professional exchange and to practice in other countries would be helpful in ensuring that programmes reflect international standards and the latest developments in the given field of study. Initiatives should also be taken to enhance the participation of visiting teachers from other countries and institutions in the programmes.

**Facilities and learning resources**

Facilities and learning resources in the assessed programmes differ in quality, quantity and accessibility, but in all cases there are some features which need to be updated, upgraded and augmented. In general, rehearsal space is limited and/or not properly refurbished. Showers and warm rehearsal rooms with flexible floors are crucial when studying theatre subjects. Specialist equipment is often outdated and in need of replacement.

The library provision in all programmes is in need of enhancement, particularly concerning international stock and latest specialised literature in the field. In some cases computing facilities are inadequate and the number of workstations is insufficient. Limited opening times often restrict students' opportunities for independent study.

Generally, students did not have complains about insufficient dormitory placement, but it was noted that dormitories need improvement and maintenance repair.

**Study process and student assessment**

All evaluated programmes have special requirements for admission to the studies, which are incorporated in the entrance examinations. Student recruitment varies from year to year, with most of the programmes recruiting every two or more years. The system of irregular recruitment may be useful for ensuring better placement possibilities for the future graduates; but, on the other hand, the irregular implementation of the study programmes may have a negative impact on the quality assurance and enhancement process; also, it means that some students will have to spend a year or more after school waiting for entry which may be de-motivating.

Timetabling of classes and examinations is generally acceptable. Students in some of the programmes reported considerable gaps between classes and insufficient possibilities for self-training and rehearsal, especially in the evening hours.

Assessment criteria reflect the intended learning outcomes of the courses and take into account knowledge and skills; but in some cases assessment criteria need to be more clearly defined and articulated.

In general, students feel adequately informed about the programmes, although there were some isolated cases in which students complained about lack of information, in particular about international student exchange possibilities.

Counselling of students about their career possibilities does not appear to be very active or structured. Institutionally there is no clear system of supporting students in their pursuit of career.

Student mobility is generally low. All programmes should adopt a more proactive approach to encouraging student mobility and exchange in various forms.

In general, students are provided with the necessary psychological, sports, health and cultural support. The student's participation in extra-academic cultural events is also encouraged; but there is relatively little or no recognition of students' non-formal achievements.

**Programme management**

All institutions report that they regularly review and evaluate their programmes. However, the evaluation criteria are not always stated clearly and the self-assessment reports often do not give specific examples what improvements have resulted as an outcome of this process. Much of the programme management is conducted at faculty and institutional level, with little input at the operational level of the programme. Teachers can have some bearing on quality matters through formal participation in task forces or departmental meetings. However, in most cases there are no specific instances of teachers' impact on the quality assurance process.

 The organisation and management of the programmes needs more clear articulation and responsibility allocation. The appointment of a programme leader or manager – a member of the teaching staff, with a vision for the content and development of the programme, and/or of a programme committee with participation of student representative(s) would enhance the effectiveness of the programmes on operational level.

All programmes are advised to formalise their quality assurance systems and to improve means of obtaining and using student feedback.

There is a need for most of the programmes to establish a more formal and effective system of involving stakeholders (alumni, employers, external experts, people/institutions with vested interests) at an operational level. An employers' forum or advisory board would play a useful role in the regular evaluations of the programmes and enhance the public commitment to graduates' professional careers.


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