



CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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**EVALUATION REPORT**  
**STUDY FIELD of THEATRE**  
at Vilnius College of Design

**Expert panel:**

1. Prof. dr. Jonathan Pitches (chair of the panel), academic;
2. Doc. Dr. Hana Pruchova academic;
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4. Doc. dr. Rūta Mažeikienė, academic;
5. Mr Laurynas Nikelis, *students' representative*.

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Report language – English

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## Study Field Data\*

Title of the study programme	<b><i>Performance Acting</i></b>
State code	6531PX007
Type of studies	College studies
Cycle of studies	First study cycle
Mode of study and duration (in years)	Full-time, 3 years
Credit volume	180
Qualification degree and (or) professional qualification	Professional degree of bachelor of
Language of instruction	Lithuanian
Minimum education required	Secondary education
Registration date of the study programme	28/05/2015

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# CONTENTS

<b>I. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS.....	4
1.2. EXPERT PANEL .....	4
1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION .....	5
1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY FIELD/STUDY FIELD POSITION/STATUS AND SIGNIFICANCE IN THE HEI .....	5
<b>II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>7</b>
3.1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM .....	7
3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES.....	10
3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT .....	13
3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT .....	16
3.5. TEACHING STAFF.....	20
3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES .....	22
3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION.....	23
<b>IV. RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>V. SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>30</b>

## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation of study fields is based on the Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC) 31 December 2019 Order [No. V-149](#).

The evaluation is intended to help higher education institutions to constantly improve their study process and to inform the public about the quality of studies.

The evaluation process consists of the main following stages: 1) *self-evaluation and self-evaluation report prepared by Higher Education Institution (hereafter – HEI); 2) site visit of the expert panel to the higher education institution; 3) production of the external evaluation report (EER) by the expert panel and its publication; 4) follow-up activities.*

On the basis of this external evaluation report of the study field SKVC takes a decision to accredit study field either for 7 years or for 3 years. If the field evaluation is negative then the study field is not accredited.

The study field and cycle are **accredited for 7 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as exceptional (5 points), very good (4 points) or good (3 points).

The study field and cycle are **accredited for 3 years** if one of the evaluation areas was evaluated as satisfactory (2 points).

The study field and cycle are **not accredited** if at least one of evaluation areas was evaluated as unsatisfactory (1 point).

### 1.2. EXPERT PANEL

The expert panel was assigned according to the Experts Selection Procedure (hereinafter referred to as the Procedure) as approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 [Order No. V-149](#). The site visit to the HEI was conducted by the panel on 12 May, 2021.

- 1. Prof. dr. Jonathan Pitches (chair of the panel)**, *Head of School of Performance and Cultural Industries at University of Leeds, United Kingdom;*
- 2. Doc. dr. Hana Pruchova (academic)**, *Vice-Dean for Research at Janacek Academy of Performing Arts, Theatre Faculty, Czech Republic;*
- 3. Doc. dr. Stefan Aquilina (academic)**, *Director at School of Performing Arts and Senior Lecturer at the Department of Theatre Studies, University of Malta, Malta;*
- 4. Doc. dr. Rūta Mažeikienė (academic)**, *Vice-dean of the Faculty of Arts and Associate professor at Theatre Studies Department, Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania;*
- 5. Mr. Laurynas Nikelis (students' representative)**, *alumni of Master's programme 'Marketing and International Commerce' at Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania.*

### 1.3. GENERAL INFORMATION

The documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by SKVC. Along with the self-evaluation report and annexes, the following additional documents have been provided by the HEI before, during and/or after the site visit:

No.	Name of the document
1.	'Study fields: THEATRE (P04) SELF-EVALUATION REPORT (henceforth abbreviated as the SER)
2.	Examples of theses and final projects (video material).
3.	Introduction to the VDK infrastructure provided in photo and video formats

### 1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY FIELD/STUDY FIELD POSITION/STATUS AND SIGNIFICANCE IN THE HEI

The Theatre study field in Vilnius College of Design (hereafter – College, VDK) consists of one study programme, Performance Acting (hereafter – Programme). The College has five departments, one of which is the Department of Performance Acting that runs the programme being evaluated. The College has several other administration departments that assist with the running of the programme.

The Performance Acting programme was launched in 2018 with the aim of preparing visual theatre professionals, specialist actors who can apply principles of stage action, show entrepreneurial skills, and largely perform in the professional theatre sector. Its stated emphasis is on visual theatre, which the Department uses as a launching pad to nourish multi-skilled and flexible practitioners.

Because of this emphasis on visual theatre, the programme is presented as a unique one in Lithuania. The maximum number of students expected is about 12, making this a rather small and specialised programme.

## II. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Theatre study field and first cycle at Vilnius College of Design is given **positive** evaluation.

*Study field and cycle assessment in points by evaluation areas*

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an Area in points
1.	Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	2
2.	Links between science (art) and studies	2
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	3
5.	Teaching staff	2
6.	Learning facilities and resources	2
7.	Study quality management and public information	2
	Total:	<b>16</b>

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

2 (satisfactory) - The area meets the minimum requirements, and there are fundamental shortcomings that need to be eliminated;

3 (good) - The area is being developed systematically, without any fundamental shortcomings;

4 (very good) - the field is evaluated very well in the national and international context, without any deficiencies;

5 (excellent) - the field is exceptionally good in the national and international context/environment.

### III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

#### 3.1. INTENDED AND ACHIEVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

*Study aims, outcomes and content shall be assessed in accordance with the following indicators:*

*3.1.1. Evaluation of the conformity of the aims and outcomes of the field and cycle study programmes to the needs of the society and/or the labour market (not applicable to HEIs operating in exile conditions)*

*(1) Factual situation*

The Performance Acting programme is a three-year full-time programme, covering six semesters and 180 credits. The programme was first conceived in 2015 with a view to developing practitioners of visual theatre, whose skill set would be diverse and interdisciplinary. Its relevance to society and the labour market is indicated in the SER as being “directly confirmed by the regional cultural development programme for 2012-2020”. Thus, the programme is designed to enhance cultural activity and cultural production across the country, beyond the capital, in its regions. It is conceived to develop work for alternative venues such as cultural centres and community centres as well as for national and state theatre spaces.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The expert panel found good evidence for the programme’s development of interdisciplinary skills in its students, and supportive testimony from its social partners for the range of performance techniques and flexibility displayed by its graduates. However, it found little evidence of connections between the work generated on the programme and its claim to enhancing regional cultural development. Neither was there substantive evidence shared during the visit of activities and learning which might, in the words of the cultural development programme: “promote the mobility of artists in non-metropolitan areas, disseminate their creative and artistic heritage and preserve memory” (p.11). Throughout the visit, there were multiple understandings of the term visual theatre and expectations of what a graduate in Performance Acting should look like.

*3.1.2. Evaluation of the conformity of the field and cycle study programme aims and outcomes with the mission, objectives of activities and strategy of the HEI*

*(1) Factual situation*

The Programme nests amongst a number of other arts-based programmes in the College including Fashion Design, Interior Design, Graphic Communication Design, and Applied Photography. In its conception in 2015, historical models of the Bauhaus, and Meyerhold’s collaborations with other artforms and practitioners were instrumental in developing a potential identity for the programme. The place of the Programme and the activities of the students are fully recognised within the wider ecology of the College.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

There is demonstrable enthusiasm and investment from the College's director in the development of the Programme and its staff. But high-level strategic initiatives appear to be owned only by the college leadership, and there are gaps between the strategic narrative and activities and initiatives on the ground, for instance in staffing development policy, which is not experienced by staff on the ground as it was described by senior leadership and (as mentioned above) regional cultural development policy.

### *3.1.3. Evaluation of the compliance of the field and cycle study programme with legal requirements*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

During the period of the evaluation the Description of the Field of Theatre was approved at National level. In that context, several supporting documents are cited in the SER as providing legislative underpinning to the programme design. The programme meets the requirements of higher education in the EU and the Republic of Lithuania and is compliant with legal acts in respect of contact hours and independent work, including the engagement of social partners in the process. 15 ECTS are dedicated to the final study thesis and under the banner of "practical training" 30 ECTS are disaggregated across a number of modules in relation to the specialized internship opportunity.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The evidence digested from the SER and from the expert panel's visit, including the meeting with social partners, supported the view that the programme is compliant with legal acts.

### *3.1.4. Evaluation of compatibility of aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods of the field and cycle study programmes*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

Both the Programme Aims and the learning outcomes are compliant with Lithuanian Qualifications Framework, the recognized First Cycle of Studies and the Bologna Qualification framework. Aims of the programme include: knowing stage action principles in various genres of theatre art, developing entrepreneurial skills, and collaborating with professionals both in their own and other fields. Learning outcomes for the study cycle are matched to the learning outcomes for the programme in Annex 2 of the SER, evidencing how knowledge, research skills, special abilities, social abilities and personal abilities are tested on the Programme, on a module by module basis.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The expert panel noted students' competence and ability to work within and beyond the field of theatre. There was also evidence of entrepreneurial thinking in line with the programme aims and facilitated by the event management module. However, there remained a significant need to clarify what lies at the heart of the programme, and to ensure its identity as a visual theatre programme is brought out and distinguished from the production of multiskilled actors. Core competencies cited, for instance "knowledge of the most important Lithuanian and world theatre phenomena and development stages" or "adapting to [...], the realities of climate change" need to reflect the programme's declared aim of producing visual theatre graduates.

### *3.1.5. Evaluation of the totality of the field and cycle study programme subjects/modules, which ensures consistent development of competences of students*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

The totality of the field of study on the programme of Performance Acting is comprised in Annex 2. Theoretical subjects, such as history of theatre and specialised language development are taught alongside practical subjects on acting and directing as well as screen performance. Music, stage movement and dance, alongside script writing and events management are taught later into the degree leading up to the final thesis. A programme of cultural events and appreciation is also scheduled throughout the three years.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The wide spread of individual competencies identified above point to a programme still attempting to define its identity and stretching students in multiple directions. There is little shared territory across the staff in relation to what defines a Performance Acting student and what distinguishes them from other programmes in the country, beyond their ability to be creatively flexible. Core competencies cited (p.13) need to reflect more explicitly and strategically the programme's declared aim of producing visual theatre graduates.

### *3.1.6. Evaluation of opportunities for students to personalise the structure of field study programmes according to their personal learning objectives and intended learning outcomes*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

Specialisation opportunities are offered in the final phase of the degree (Semester 4 onwards), in relation to stage project, creative project, pre-degree creative practical training, and final thesis. What is called an internship programme, but which is more accurately a summer school set of opportunities, also allows for individualised competency development.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

Evidence garnered in the visit pointed to student specialisation as a strength of the programme and alumni were able to celebrate this aspect of the programme. Given the multiskilled, total actor emphasis within the programme, specialisation is in some ways anathema and the future development of the programme will need to address the balance of multiple skills development, with a deepening of specialised skills in its students.

### *3.1.7. Evaluation of compliance of final theses with the field and cycle requirements*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

The credit compliance and quality assurance of the final thesis is identified in Annex 3 of the SER. At 15 ECTS, the programme's final thesis complies with the legal requirement of a minimum of 9 ECTS. Students either propose a theme or select from a range of proposed themes, and are supported by a supervisor. Defence of the theses is organised publicly and the creative work submission is accompanied by a reflective log, covering three years.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

Social partners' engagement and support for the final thesis was noted by the panel. The accompaniment of the creative component of the final thesis with a reflective portfolio was seen as good practice in that it helped bring a longitudinal, reflexive perspective to the final practice thesis, helping to integrate previous critical thinking introduced on the programme.

### ***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

#### ***(1) Strengths:***

1. The production of multiskilled, entrepreneurially minded students;
2. The opportunity for specialisation on the programme from semester four;
3. The combination of reflective portfolio *and* creative practice in the final thesis.

#### ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. The mismatch between high-level strategic promises, and on-the-ground operational realities;
2. The confusion and lack of shared vision in relation to the programme identity and its sustainability as a visual theatre degree;
3. The proposed regional contribution of the programme to cultural development, which was not evident in practice.

## **3.2. LINKS BETWEEN SCIENCE (ART) AND STUDIES**

***Links between science (art) and study activities shall be assessed in accordance with the following indicators:***

***3.2.1. Evaluation of the sufficiency of the science (applied science, art) activities implemented by the HEI for the field of research (art) related to the field of study***

#### ***(1) Factual situation***

The links between research (art) and study activities are described in a rather short entry in the SER documents where reference to College-wide activities are made (e.g. cooperation agreements with social partners in 2018 and two conferences in 2019 and 2020). Other notes given relate to updates made to the programme, sometimes in very broad terms based on internal and informal discussions and opportunities for showcasing the students' work.

#### ***(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis***

From discussions carried out during the visit, it was clear that there are difficulties related to the use of the term 'research'. It is strictly linked to the production of artistic activities. Examples of research given were all student-oriented, as the background work they carry out to accomplish specific tasks. On the other hand, interdisciplinarity works because it is given concrete planning attention – classes are connected through shared tasks set, which happens across the College, allowing Programme students to link with photography, filming, etc.

The panel believes that a clarification of what research entails, including artistic research, would help the College and programme to concretise its objective of encouraging teachers to prepare research and artistic publications and engage in research. Research includes producing research findings, results, and outputs transmittable beyond performance audiences, and this should be foregrounded when:

1. considering embedding research evaluations and plans within broader professional development programmes of staff;
2. setting up staff training in research processes;
3. the hiring of staff that would be directly engaged to develop the research culture of the College/Programme.

Students also have the chance of performing within the context of their lecturers' work and productions outside of the College. Since teachers are all professional practitioners in the field, these opportunities are numerous (adding to the students' involvement in the field - see point 3.2.3). What is stressed here is that by working in and drawing directly from their professional experience allows teachers to strengthen their practical training to the students.

### *3.2.2. Evaluation of the link between the content of studies and the latest developments in science, art and technology*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

The Programme declares an emphasis on visual theatre but delivers a multi-skilled programme where a vast range of skills and competencies are delivered - this is a point that has recurred at various instances throughout the visit, namely when discussing with senior management, social partners, and students. A recurrent reference made was on puppet theatre for which a Lithuanian market seems to be existing. The reference points to what visual theatre is sourced from the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Bauhaus, Meyerhold), with some acknowledgment of postdramatic theatre and an ad hoc reference to documentary theatre.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

While the breadth of the programme in terms of its content is appreciated by both students and social partners, the panel believes that what the term visual theatre means - a key conceptual core of the Programme - is understood too differently among the lecturers. This might allow for discussion and different perspectives, but it dilutes a concerted identification and definition of what the Programme does, which remains 'a bit of everything'. The panel recommends a strategic and ongoing discussion to expand the understanding of the term 'visual theatre' to include more contemporary reference points (e.g. immersive theatre). This discussion could be rooted in some studies of comparable programmes delivered abroad, as Management and Staff understand that no other similar programme exist in Lithuania, making such international comparisons helpful. A wider understanding of digital technologies would help in expanding this understanding of visual theatre and make it more contemporary. There would be a stronger link between the studies' content and the latest development in the science if more attention is given to postdramatic theatre for example, and if teachers

undertake proper training in the latest understanding of artistic research (on lines described above) as a way of incorporating this in the classroom.

### *3.2.3. Evaluation of conditions for students to get involved in scientific (applied science, art) activities consistent with their study cycle*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

A substantial amount is done to involve students in related activities - this is a place where the College and the programme score well. These activities include the annual International University Theatre Forum, creative workshops, presentation of work to schools, museums, etc., and site workshops. Summer internships are also used and embedded in the programme. Students have ample concrete possibilities to carry out (accredited) placements within the industry, a result of a broad range of social partners. This broadness was considered important because it was remarked that alumni eventually tend to find employment in different sectors, at times on a freelance basis. The small number of students' cohorts facilitates further the students' involvement in artistic activities. It also allows students' requests, including for technical equipment, and pedagogical needs, to be dealt with easily. Students are given a lot of personal attention, where their performance in artistic activities is monitored every step of the way. The interdisciplinary links between programmes within the College was also underlined during the meetings with students.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

With students showing clear satisfaction with their level of involvement in related activities in Lithuania, more ways through which to offer more international experiences to the students can be considered. These can take various forms. For example, there are unspent funds for ERASMUS+ students' mobility. The international week typically organised in April is a good idea that should continue even next year, with some online contribution used as needed. During the meeting with the Staff responsible for preparing the SER it was mentioned that more international partners could be invited to work on joint-projects. Senior Management can thus review the work expectations from staff. With an emphasis that is almost completely laid on teaching, staff lack the time and expertise necessary to submit funding applications, run such international projects etc. These projects would not only feed directly the research culture of the College and programme (see above) but also allow students more international perspectives.

### *Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:*

#### *(1) Strengths:*

1. Students are engaged in a considerable range of artistic activities which facilitates their integration in the workforce;
2. Teachers are all professional practitioners in the field, and keep their practice going while teaching, (although this does not translate to a rigorous and consistent reflection on artistic practice).

#### *(2) Weaknesses:*

1. Staff understanding of research is clearly at a very early stage, and its use as a term is not understood collectively or deeply;
2. The programme's declared focus on visual theatre is not developed, leading to certain repercussions in relation to the identity of the programme, which remains broad and eclectic, and resulting in a narrow understanding of what research is and, consequently, of the research object (narrowing visual theatre primarily to the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century - Bauhaus and Meyerhold). It is recommended that mechanisms are established to have a deep and inclusive discussion about programme identity, and to include more contemporary milestones. This emphasis on contemporary perspectives is important to broaden the reference points of the programme beyond turn-of-the-twentieth century parameters.

### 3.3. STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

*Student admission and support shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:*

#### *3.3.1. Evaluation of the suitability and publicity of student selection and admission criteria and process*

##### *(1) Factual situation*

Programme has a clear admission system and requirements that meet the criteria set by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania. These requirements and the whole process are published on the College's website and are clearly presented in the Self-evaluation report. Students have the opportunity to participate in a direct admission organized by the College or in a joint admission process through LAMA BPO (Lietuvos aukštųjų mokyklų asociaciją bendrajam priėmimui organizuoti (eng. Lithuanian Association of Higher Education Institutions for organizing joint admission)). The competitive score for admitting students is rising every year, and the number of people willing to enroll remains relatively stable. Students are required to take entrance exams, during which their preparation, competencies and motivation are assessed. Students find out the results of entrance exams within seven days. As meetings with the social partners have shown, it is important to mention that the potential student can obtain the necessary information about study opportunities from the social partners, theatres and other art institutions. Prospective or current students can find the study Programme and its requirements on the College's website, which provides all the necessary information. An open door event is also organized, during which those interested in the Programme can participate in creative workshops.

##### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The admissions system is designed to be well-adapted, rising entrance competition scores help maintain a high level of competition, and the college can select the most motivated students during entrance examinations. However, it is recommended to disclose the study programme plan, goals and process in more detail, as a significant number of students drop out before the end of the study programme, which may be influenced by the fact that not all students' expectations have been met. However, it is difficult for experts to assess the reasons for the exit, as they were not identified or detailed either in the self-assessment report or during the meetings.

### *3.3.2. Evaluation of the procedure of recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning and its application*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

This whole system of recognition of qualification, other study subjects, credits is described in the College regulation of studies. Upon arrival of students from another higher education institution, subjects and lectures are recognized according to the eligibility for a maximum of 90 ECTS. These subjects must also correspond to the content of the study programme, and the student is obliged to submit all the necessary documents. When it comes to international studies, the College takes care in advance of the compatibility of the study content, study volumes and period. The International Relations and Project Management Department maintains constant contact with outgoing and incoming participants in mobility programmes, they also receive additional meetings to introduce and explain to them the intercultural aspect and they are also provided with virtual linguistic support. Once a student has successfully completed the program within the allotted period, the decision on the formal recognition of study results, taking into account all the requirements, is made by the head of the department.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

To date, there have not been many examples of international exchanges in the study programme. According to the self-evaluation report, so far the study results have been recognised only for two students who participated in the erasmus + project. However, it can be seen that students who had gone to foreign higher education institutions had completed all the formalities and all the credits of the study subjects had been recognised. The College regulation of studies document mentioned that students can apply for the evaluation and recognition of their competences acquired by way of non-formal education and self-education. However, in a self-evaluation report and after meetings experts couldn't find an explanation about this system.

### *3.3.3. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring academic mobility of students.*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

In the programme, international relations are still being developed and so far only one foreign student has chosen a College through the Erasmus + mobility programme. Nevertheless, the College is ready for growth, and with the advent of this programme new partnerships with acting and theatre study programmes abroad were immediately formed. The International Relations and Project Management Division is responsible for all relevant processes, information, financial and learning aspects. Currently, College students have the opportunity to participate in 3 Erasmus+ international projects. Students can find information about their opportunities on the website, in public presentations outside the College and during individual consultations in College events. The College is in constant contact with outgoing and incoming students. So far, 3 students of Vilnius College of Design have signed Erasmus+ project agreements with foreign higher education institutions. The College is also looking for prospects for student internships abroad and partnerships with academic staff.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

There is a clear focus on increasing student mobility. Important steps have been taken to extend the process, provide the necessary information and develop new partnerships with foreign academic institutions. However, such a new study programme still requires a lot of effort to attract students from abroad in order to maintain balance, and the study process is not hampered by the declining number of students when they go abroad. Experts recommend paying more attention to the search for short-term internships. Student mobility would also be enhanced by more frequent visits by foreign teachers, experts or practitioners.

#### *3.3.4. Assessment of the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support provided to the students of the field*

##### *(1) Factual situation*

College students have the opportunity to receive financial support such as incentive and social scholarships, loans, and first-year students can apply for partial tuition fee funding. Support is also provided to the foreigners of Lithuanian origin. Students who have completed the relevant study period in non-state-funded study places are entitled to the tuition fee paid. Students can also receive state support to cover the cost of tuition and accommodation. The small number of students in the programme enables the more individual attention from the teachers, who are able to take into account the uniqueness of students' personalities. In this way, teachers get to know students better, understand their needs more easily, and therefore give students the opportunity to identify what problems arise in the study process, and how teachers can help solve them. The teachers managed the pandemic situation well, and helped to keep the students motivated and consulted regularly. The administrative and academic staff of the College advises students on various issues related to their studies or in case of problems. The college-based psychologist also provides psychological support to students who need help with issues related not only to their studies but also to their personal lives.

##### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

There is a strong sense of community among all levels in the College. Support and assistance to students are provided not only in a formal way, through financial means, learning counselling or psychological assistance, but also through individual communication with teachers and course leaders. All of this adds uniqueness to the programme, no less important part, that the students are informed of the financial and psychological support offered by the college.

#### *3.3.5 Evaluation of the sufficiency of study information and student counselling*

##### *(1) Factual situation*

At the College, information about studies is provided before entering the study programme. All information about the study programme is provided by the representatives of the College student council. Throughout their studies, students can be consulted by administrative and academic staff. Students are provided with counselling on various issues at the College, for example, lecturers advise on study-related issues, and lecturers also collect methodological material that is freely available to students when questions arise. A College psychologist also advises students on issues that relate not only to their studies but also to their emotional health. Academic support is also provided to students as consultations by

lecturers, the Head of the Department, employees of the Study Department, International Relations and Project Management Department, library, and Information Centre

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

It is very important that the academic staff of the study programme makes great efforts in informing and advising students. It is clear that important information can be found even before entering the study programme. At all levels, there is an opportunity to communicate, receive important information directly from the academic and non-academic staff of the programme.

***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

***(1) Strengths:***

1. There is a strong sense of community at all levels, a feeling that informal, organic and ad hoc approaches are best suited to delivering the student experience;
2. Students receive the help and support they need in a timely manner, which is fully justified by their clearly visible level of satisfaction;
3. The number of applicants to join this program remains stable despite rising competitive scores. It can be said that the need for such studies exists and the college can select the most talented students every year.

***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. Dropout rates need looking at urgently. Pre-entry information and guidance onto the Programme can be improved to develop better understandings of the programme's content and offer for incoming students;
2. Every effort should be made to increase student mobility. Especially with regard to the involvement of foreign students and short-term internships of local students;
3. There is a need to detail non-formal and informal learning and its application not only in the documents, but also in communication with students.

**3.4. TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND GRADUATE  
EMPLOYMENT**

***Studying, student performance and graduate employment shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:***

*3.4.1. Evaluation of the teaching and learning process that enables to take into account the needs of the students and enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes*

***(1) Factual situation***

The number of students in a class is very small (up to ten students in each year) which is an important advantage for individualized approach. Students and teachers of the Programme confirmed close relationships with each other and appreciated the familiar and open atmosphere at the department. Students are provided with constant and more informal feedback within the learning process. Discussion among teachers and students, both within

individual and group activities, is continuous, thus individual needs and dispositions of a student can be and are taken into consideration. Strong focus of the head of the department and teaching staff on students was proved within the expert panel visit. Regarding the artistic character of the Programme and higher demands on self-study and individual work, classrooms and special times for student's self-preparation are allocated.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

Small number of students each year and open atmosphere at the department enable personalized approach and attention to each student, his/her needs and uniqueness. The teaching methods used in the programme support the individualization of the study process (e.g. engagement in creative projects and performances, individual activities and tasks, consultations and feedback in one-to-one mode). A strong sense of community across students, teaching staff and the head of the department was noted within the expert panel visit, which positively influences the atmosphere in the Programme and readiness to listen and react to individual needs of students. Levels of students' satisfaction are clear on the programme.

*3.4.2. Evaluation of conditions ensuring access to study for socially vulnerable groups and students with special needs*

*(1) Factual situation*

The Programme is prepared to accept students with special needs, especially those with partial hearing, visual and mobility impairments. With relation to its newness, there have not been students with special needs at the department so far. Teachers are ready to adjust the teaching process to different needs of students with some kind of limits. Students in a difficult financial situation can ask for social support and they can also use the possibility of free meals in the College's dining area. A possibility of psychological consultation and a high level of communication among students, teachers and administration within the pandemic was appreciated by students within the expert panel visit.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The atmosphere at the College is sensitive and open to the needs of students with special needs. Students are provided with financial, psychological and mental support, if needed. Close relationships among students and teaching staff enable them to uncover and react to potential problems.

*3.4.3. Evaluation of the systematic nature of the monitoring of student study progress and feedback to students to promote self-assessment and subsequent planning of study progress*

*(1) Factual situation*

Processes related to monitoring and assessing students' study progress are based both on partially formalized methods and informal approaches. At the beginning of each semester students are acquainted with information on aims, tasks and assessment criteria of each subject (teachers prepare the *Calendar, Thematic, and Tasks Plans*). Students are given constant and informal feedback on their achievements within the learning process. Their strengths and weaknesses are discussed individually, successively areas for improvement are defined. Learning outcomes and achievements are formally reviewed at the end of each semester within interim and final reviews. Teaching staff's discussions on each student's

results in interim and final reviews are an important part of the process. If any problems in the learning process are indicated, they are solved individually with a student. While the first and second year offer a quite full and diversified study programme, the third year enables students to specialize and plan their study progress according to their future career plans and abilities.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The informal approach to monitoring students' achievements, based on personalized and constant feedback within the teaching process, prevails in the Programme. Students' outcomes are assessed traditionally in the interim and final reviews. Even the process of the monitoring of student study progress is formalized, the way how the knowledge from informal discussions and feedback is documented and analysed is unclear. The data from the SER shows high dropout rates, however the reasons for the situation are not analysed in the report and they were explicitly answered within the expert panel visit neither. Thus, in the view of the panel, the dropout rates need looking at urgently.

*3.4.4. Evaluation of employability of graduates and graduate career tracking in the study field.*

*(1) Factual situation*

The Programme is quite new (just two groups of graduates left the College until the time of evaluation in place), therefore the data on graduates' employment are not very comprehensive. Information on graduates' careers is collected by the Information department of the College. They are based on the data from the Employment Services, the Government Strategic Analysis Centre and surveys carried out by the College among graduates and employers. Since the Programme is quite new, no survey on the employers was carried out within the monitored period.

Students are vibrantly expressive, confident, and creative, benefitting from a focus on entrepreneurialism, real life skills development and problem-solving. Skills like thinking out-of-the-box, openness and versatility were appreciated by social partners within the expert panel visit. After graduation, students can work in different fields of the creative industries, television, and theatre, or they can continue in artistic oriented master studies at other HEI. The expert panel noted that students lack the promotional support of the Programme in an external environment and thus consider getting into the labour market hard. Also uncertainty about what the Programme focus on visual theatre means was noted within the discussions with employers, students and staff.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

Even though the Programme is quite new and just about 15 graduates left the College, there are several issues which the expert panel wants to point out. Students' creative and open mindset and entrepreneurial and practice-oriented competencies are important and appreciated advantages when entering the labour market. Embedding these skills in a summer school (not technically an internship ) for students is commendable. The Programme needs to be given an external platform, brand and identity, to help students' work become more visible in the professional marketplace. The impact of the Programme on regional cultural policy remains unclear, and the routes for employability in these areas need

clarifying. Regarding the potentially high number of graduates working on a self-employed basis, it is recommended to set up a system of monitoring this in the future.

### *3.4.5. Evaluation of the implementation of policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

The policies concerning academic integrity and ethics are formalized by the College. Basic principles are determined in the Code of Ethics of the College which is supervised by the Ethics Supervision Commission of the College. The principles relate both to students, teachers, administration, and other staff activities. Information on academic honesty is distributed to students from the very beginning of the study. Students are acquainted with ethical principles before beginning his/her studies at the College and confirm it by signing the Declaration of the Student's Integrity. By signing this declaration they confirm that they are aware of principles of academic integrity and they commit to the Code of Ethics and other ethical standards. No cases of academic dishonesty were identified within the period under evaluation.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The policies to ensure academic integrity and ethics are set-up and implemented at the institution. Discussion with students and teachers within the expert panel visit proved the familiar and safe atmosphere in the Programme which helps to prevent potential problems related to the issue.

### *3.4.6. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the application of procedures for the submission and examination of appeals and complaints regarding the study process within the field studies*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

The process of appeals and complaints is formalized at the College. The principles and procedures are described in detail in the *Study Regulation of Vilnius College of Design, Annex No 3, Section 6 the Procedure for the Submission and Consideration of Appeals*. Within the expert panel visit it was noted that the Department and its teachers are open to hear, discuss and look for solutions to students' appeals and complaints. These issues are sorted out personally and more informally within the Department. No appeal or complaint was officially submitted within the monitored period.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The formal process of submitting appeals and complaints is set up at the College, however less formal way of discussing problems and weaknesses at the department plays the main role in the study programme improvement. The newly established Students Union as an independent unit representing all study programmes at the college can be an important intermediary and it is highly recommended to support its activities in near future.

### ***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

#### ***(1) Strengths:***

1. Familiar, informal and student-oriented atmosphere at the department enabling open discussion and individualized approach to each student;

2. Students' creative and open mindset and entrepreneurial and practice-oriented competencies are important and appreciated advantages when entering the labour market. Embedding these skills in a summer internship for students is commendable;
3. Financial, psychological and moral support are provided to students.

***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. The process of monitoring of student study progress remains unformalized, and the means by which the knowledge from informal discussions and feedback is documented and analysed is unclear.
2. Dropout rates need looking at urgently;
3. The programme needs to be given an external platform, brand and identity, to help students' work become more visible in the professional marketplace;
4. The impact of the programme on regional cultural policy remains unclear, and the routes for employability in these areas need clarifying.

### **3.5. TEACHING STAFF**

***Study field teaching staff shall be evaluated in accordance with the following indicators:***

*3.5.1. Evaluation of the adequacy of the number, qualification and competence (scientific, didactic, professional) of teaching staff within a field study programme(s) at the HEI in order to achieve the learning outcomes*

***(1) Factual situation***

The number, qualification and competence of the staff at the College is listed in Annex 6. 14 members of staff are listed on contracts from 0.25 through to 0.75. These data conflict with the table in the SER, which lists 19 teachers for the 2020-21 academic year, down from 26 in the previous year. There is also a discrepancy in relation to the table on p.30 of the SER, which suggests 79% of the staff is full time, whereas the table in Annex 6 lists no full-time staff. It is assumed the distinction being made here is between regular contributing staff and temporary hires. Members of the programme team are undertaking artistic activities and receiving national awards for their performances and directed stage plays. One contributor to the programme has a doctorate. They are the only member of staff to produce written publications. The rest of the outputs are in artistic activities, including directing, singing, acting and puppetry.

***(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis***

Members of the programme team are skilled artists in their own right, and demonstrably passing these skills on to the students. Given the make up and fractional contribution staff make to the programme, there is little sense of cohesion as a team and evidence that individuals make their own solo contributions within their classes, and then leave. By any measure, the staff team is small and this has advantages and disadvantages. There are close relations with students, a sense of family and informality in the student-teacher interactions. But systems are often improvised and/or applied and understood in different ways across the staff.

### *3.5.2. Evaluation of conditions for ensuring teaching staffs' academic mobility (not applicable to studies carried out by HEIs operating under the conditions of exile)*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

Staff mobility on the programme is restricted to just five higher education partners, out of a total of 70 for the College as a whole. There are aspirations identified in the SER to expand the list of partners for the Performance Acting programme and this is identified as a key strategic direction for the College. There are 5 examples of incoming international exchange identified in the SER and 3 outgoing visits, all short term (from pre pandemic data). Teacher mobility mechanisms are identified on p.21: through “seminars abroad, teaching in foreign partner higher education institutions, targeted study visits, and international conferences and exhibitions of creative works”. Funding for Erasmus + for teachers fell from €870 in 2018 to nothing in 2019 and 2020.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

During the visit, claims were made for “a lot of staff taking up Erasmus plus”, but there was little substantive evidence to back this claim up. There are very few opportunities for formal international exchange, and an over reliance on one or two international partners, (predominantly the Janacek Academy of Music and Performing Arts). The need to grow the international opportunities for exchange for staff is recognised by the College, and was clearly affected by the pandemic in the last year. However, the College needs to move beyond abstract strategic aspirations and towards mobilising the international relations division to support staff in this area of activity in tangible terms.

### *3.5.3. Evaluation of the conditions to improve the competences of the teaching staff*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

The SER identifies strengthening of staff's qualifications as part of its strategic operating plan from 2014 to 2020. A new policy for compensation and promotion along with an incentivised competence development scheme is listed as an outcome of this operating plan. No further details are identified in relation to any beneficiaries of this policy development. Likewise, staff development and support for research and artistic publications is also identified in the SER.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

During the expert panel visit staff development opportunities, incentives and policies were raised both with the College leadership and with staff themselves. The panel found that there was a mismatch between strategic aspirations to improve staff qualifications and international mobility, and the experience on the ground. In the meeting with staff, development opportunities were not understood or experienced, and there was no indication of the impact of any college wide scheme or institutional kitemark. Staff appraisal was not being undertaken systematically and the fragmentary make-up of the team was evidenced as a barrier.

### ***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

#### ***(1) Strengths:***

1. Some staff are nationally and internationally visible in their own artistic right and are able to pass on these competences to students.

## ***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. International mobility both outgoing and incoming remains underdeveloped and under-resourced;
2. International partners are few and far between and there is an over reliance on one or two established partnerships;
3. Abstract policy in staff development is not aligned with actions on the ground and staff are unaware of mechanisms to help improve their qualifications and competencies;
4. Processes of appraisal are ad hoc and unsystematic and staff take-up is minimal.

## **3.6. LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES**

***Study field learning facilities and resources should be evaluated according to the following criteria:***

***3.6.1. Evaluation of the suitability and adequacy of the physical, informational and financial resources of the field studies to ensure an effective learning process***

### ***(1) Factual situation***

A list of the study material resources has been shared that highlights, among others, acting classrooms, dance and movement spaces, more presumably multipurpose rooms designated as Creative Workshop, rehearsal rooms, make-up areas etc. There is a clear inventory of the specifications of the rooms, including the technical equipment of each, which should make the planning and efficient use easier. These rooms are widely available for students (from 8:00 to 21:00).

### ***(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis***

The spaces are considered sufficient to run the Programme, though of course there is always the wish to have more (see below). Actors seem to have the bigger spaces in the College, and some of these have also been recently renovated (e.g. new auditoriums). There is also a fair amount of sharing of spaces going on (e.g. actors at times use photography studios). Resources used in specific projects are kept rather than disposed of, where possible, so that they can be reused by different people and on different projects.

***3.6.2. Evaluation of the planning and upgrading of resources needed to carry out the field studies***

### ***(1) Factual situation***

Staff ask for any resources at the beginning of the semester, which means that resources are, to a certain extent, planned for. However, the fact that needs for resources seem to keep arising during term implies that this planning is not strong or systematic enough.

Senior management tries to fulfil all needs of teachers and students, even when these are expensive. At times the needs for resources are fulfilled through the intervention of

social partners. The students themselves remarked about the possibility of asking for resources and equipment, and they are comfortable in doing so. These requirements have been met in the past. Required extra lights, an example given by the students during the meeting with the expert panel, were provided when necessary.

*(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The staff described spaces and rooms as spacious and airy, and that they meet the requirements for running the programme. More resources are of course always welcome. In the discussions two needs were mentioned:

- the need for bigger storage rooms, presumably for scenery and props
- the purchase of microphones

***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

***(1) Strengths:***

1. The culture exists where the needs of students and teachers are actively met - this is commendable.

***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. The number of electronic study resources, especially those that pertain to training and performance, are less than expected - in the context of the pandemic, these resources were essential learning tools;
2. Planning for resources is not systematic enough or not necessarily thought of well ahead, leading to urgent requests mid-term;
3. There is no system through which students borrow equipment to ensure accountability.

### **3.7. STUDY QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION**

***Study quality management and publicity shall be evaluated according to the following indicators:***

***3.7.1. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system of the studies***

***(1) Factual situation***

According to SER the College has an internal study quality management system, which corresponds to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area and to the quality management standard ISO9001, and is described in The Quality Manual. The Quality manual is named as the main document, which informs the College's employees and social partners about the internal study quality management system. Although, according to the College's Regulation of Studies (13.2.2.), the Quality Manual has to be publicly available on the College's website, the Panel was not able to find it publicly available.

According to the College's Regulation of Studies, the study quality management system of the College described in the Quality Manual "shall be binding on all employees, pedagogical and academic staff of the College, who directly influence the quality of the provided services of studies" (13.2.3). The administration of the College has established the obligation for all employees to perform in accordance with the descriptions provided in the Quality Manual and states that this way the quality of studies is ensured (Regulation of Studies, 13.2.4). However, during the meetings with the teachers the Panel was not convinced that the pedagogical and academic staff is fully aware of the internal quality assurance system and actively participates in its implementation.

The SER describes in detail the quality management system of the College, its aims and modes of operation, including the processes for managing the study programmes and the study processes. The document also presents the process of quality improvement, lists the measures of external and internal quality assurance, describes the periodicity of external and internal measurements and assessments). Based on the SER, the internal quality management system of the College appears to be well designed and corresponding to the requirements of European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance. However the SER lacks analysis and self-assessment / evaluation of the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system of the studies, especially in regard to the implementation of the study field of theatre at the College.

The Programme is implemented by the Performance Acting Department. As this study programme does not have a study programme committee, the monitoring of the Programme and its curriculum is carried out by the Head of the Performance Acting Department. Although the College states that all stakeholders are involved in the process of improving the Programme, a key role in the monitoring and improving the Programme plays the Head of the Department, who once a year reviews and approves the study plan, and once a year approves updated study subjects. The Panel thinks that in the process of implementation and improvement of the Programme too much responsibility is assigned to the Head of the Department. Low participation of teachers and other stakeholders in the internal quality assurance system (improvement of Programme) is evidenced by the fact that teachers and social partners (and, students, to some extent) understand and define the identity of the Programme rather differently. The Panel thinks that in the case of this Programme (perhaps due to the fact that the Performance Acting Department has no permanent Head and is temporarily headed by the head of the Department of Applied Photography) such a system of implementation and monitoring of the study field is not effective. It may be worthwhile to consider the possibility to form a Study Programme Committee and to delegate the main function of internal Programme quality assessment and renewal to it.

## *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

Based on the SER, the internal study quality management system of the College appears to be well designed and corresponding to the requirements of European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance. However, the Panel lacks evidence that this system works effectively while implementing and monitoring the study field of theatre at the College.

The Panels considers that too much responsibility for the quality of the Programme is assigned to the Head of the Performance Acting Department and the participation of other stakeholders in the internal quality assurance system is low. It is recommended that high-level strategic thinking within the senior administration is married to operational processes at the grassroots more systematically and effectively.

### *3.7.2. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the involvement of stakeholders (students and other stakeholders) in internal quality assurance*

#### *(1) Factual situation*

According to the SER, social partners are very important players in the internal study quality assurance system: their opinion is taken into account in formulating the aim and learning outcomes on the Programme and in annual reviewing of the study plan. According to SER, social partners “express their opinions and thus help to improve the curriculum and tasks of the Programme, ensuring the best possible learning outcomes”. Unfortunately, none of the social partners confirmed these statements during the meeting with the Panel. The social partners could not comment on the study plan and the uniqueness of this Programme. Probably due to the fact that most of the social partners (present at the meeting) were not from the theatre field, but from the field of creative industries in the broadest sense.

It is stated in SER that the college organizes an annual (not earlier than 2 years after the first generation of graduates in the programme) survey of social partners / employers “on the professional readiness of the graduates and their ability to apply the acquired knowledge in practice”. In the case of this Programme, no surveys of social partners were organized as the first generation of graduates completed their studies only 2 years ago. However, during the meeting, the social partners confirmed that the graduates of acting programmes (not necessarily this specific one) are in demand in the field of creative industries, and that the professional level of the graduates of this Programme is growing every year.

According to SER, the College organized annual surveys of students and graduates. Neither the SER nor during the meetings the results of these surveys were presented. During the meeting students confirmed that the anonymous students’ surveys are conducted every year, but they prefer direct and informal ways of giving their feedback to the administration of the Department and / or the College. Students claimed that their opinions concerning teaching and learning processes are taken into account.

#### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

Although, according to the SER, the College “seeks to maintain two-way communication with stakeholders to ensure the delivery of the highest-quality and most reliable solutions, studies and education that meet needs and exceed expectations”, the Panel was not convinced that the College ensures the involvement of different stakeholders in the internal study quality assurance system. The panel notes that the internal quality management system of the College formally provides the involvement of all stakeholders, but the Panel lacks evidence that the system works efficiently, and that the involvement of the stakeholders contributes to the improvements in the Programme.

### *3.7.3. Evaluation of the collection, use and publication of information on studies, their evaluation and improvement processes and outcomes*

### *(1) Factual situation*

According to SER, the information on studies is gathered regularly in order to improve the quality of the field studies. The College has the IT tool for the management of documents and data records. The following data and documents are collected and stored in the College: data on the study Programme and admission requirements, students' assessment records, data of surveys, data on employment provided by the Employment Service. As mentioned before, the college annually conducts the surveys of students, teachers, graduates and employers. The SER does not present any concrete examples of how the results of the formal surveys (or any other data) were used to evaluate and improve the quality of the field studies.

Although SER states, that the College regularly publish "the latest accurate and impartial quantitative and qualitative information" on the Programme on the College's website, Facebook account, and Instagram account, the Panel notes that there are no published information concerning the quality of the field studies (e.g. reports on surveys, reports on annual internal analysis, etc.) on Internet in the meantime. The College publishes only the main information on the Programme on the College's website (annotation, aims and learning outcomes of the Programme).

### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

The panel assesses that the general collection of information on studies (as described in SER) is appropriate, but the Panel was not convinced that the collected data is properly analysed and evaluated in order to assure regular self-assessment and improvement of the field studies. The Panel notes that the publication of information on the field studies needs to be strengthened: the Programme needs to be given an external platform, brand and identity, to help students' work become more visible in the professional marketplace.

## *3.7.4. Evaluation of the opinion of the field students (collected in the ways and by the means chosen by the SKVC or the HEI) about the quality of the studies at the HEI*

### *(1) Factual situation*

In order to find out the students' opinion on the quality of the studies, "student surveys are conducted at the College once a year". It is specified in SER that "students are asked about the qualification and competencies of teachers, the relevance and completeness of the subjects taught, the assessment system, non-formal education, and the organization of studies". It is also stated that "the results of students' assessment are discussed during the Management Assessment Analysis, where all stakeholders are invited". However, the SER does not present and analyse the results of students' surveys, therefore the opinion of the students in the field on the quality of the studies is not evaluated in the SER. During the meetings with students and alumni, the Panel found out that the general students opinion about the quality of studies is good.

### *(2) Expert judgement/indicator analysis*

Although, according to the SER and the administration of the College, the opinion of the field students about the quality of studies is regularly collected via annual anonymous surveys, the Panel lacked evidence that such a feedback system works well, and that the results of the surveys are effectively used in the process of improvement of studies. During

the meetings with students the Panel realized that students can easily communicate with administration and express their opinion about the studies in informal ways. However, that Panel notes that the student feedback needs to be gathered systematically and anonymously and formal processes need to be established, to complement the informal, verbal way of communication.

***Strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation area:***

***(1) Strengths:***

1. The internal study quality management system of the College is designed in correspondence to the requirements of European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance.

***(2) Weaknesses:***

1. The internal study quality management system of the College does not work effectively while implementing and monitoring the study field of theatre at the College;
2. The programme doesn't have a study programme committee. Too much responsibility for the quality of the Programme is assigned to one person (the Head of the Performance Acting Department) and the participation of other stakeholders in the internal quality assurance system is low;
3. Most of the social partners are not from the theatre field, but from the field of creative industries in the broadest sense;
4. The collected data on the field studies is not properly analysed and evaluated in order to assure regular self-assessment and improvement of the field studies.

## IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Area	Recommendations for the Evaluation Area (study cycle)
Intended and achieved learning outcomes and curriculum	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Address the mismatch between high-level strategic promises, and on-the-ground operational realities by establishing an appropriate governance structure.</li> <li>2. Form a working group to facilitate and develop a shared vision of the programme identity, focusing on its long-term sustainability as a degree in visual theatre.</li> <li>3. Work to make real the regional contribution of the programme to cultural development, through wider stakeholder involvement.</li> </ol>
Links between science (art) and studies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Seek to embed, support and assess staff research and artistic activity.</li> <li>2. Enrich the programme by drawing further on contemporary models and understandings of visual theatre to complement the current emphasis on twentieth century practice.</li> </ol>
Student admission and support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Urgently look at dropout rates, in relation to pre-entry information and guidance onto the programme to develop better understandings of the programme's content and offer for incoming students.</li> <li>2. Increase opportunities for student mobility, especially with regard to the involvement of foreign students and short-term internships of local students.</li> </ol>
Teaching and learning, student performance and graduate employment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop an external platform, brand and identity, to help students' work become more visible in the professional marketplace.</li> <li>2. Formalise the processes of formative and summative feedback to students.</li> <li>3. Revise the current "practical trainings" umbrella of modules into a recognisable discrete offering of 30ECTS.</li> </ol>
Teaching staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Resource, organise and offer equitably opportunities for staff international mobility, both outgoing and incoming.</li> <li>2. Seek to build the range of international partners and move away from an over reliance on one or two established partnerships.</li> <li>3. Develop an appropriately robust and authentic policy for staff development in order to improve qualifications and competences.</li> <li>4. Develop an appropriately robust and authentic policy for staff appraisal, and monitor staff take-up.</li> </ol>
Learning facilities and resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase the number of electronic resources, especially those that pertain to training and performance.</li> <li>2. Consider making planning of resources at the end of a year (for the forthcoming one) rather than at the beginning, to minimise urgent requests</li> <li>3. Formalise systems through which students borrow</li> </ol>

	equipment, to ensure accountability.
Study quality management and public information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Effect a root and branch overhaul of the quality management systems for the programme, to include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. the institution of a Study Programme Committee,</li> <li>b. quality assurance data gathering on student performance and destination.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Attract social partners more clearly aligned with the study programme of Visual Theatre and engage them meaningfully in the development of the programme.</li> <li>3. Gather student feedback systematically and anonymously by establishing formal processes to complement the informal, verbal process currently being exercised.</li> </ol>

## V. SUMMARY

### **Main positive and negative quality aspects of each evaluation area of the study field Theatre at Vilnius College of Design:**

The panel was impressed by the strong sense of community at all levels at VDK, a feeling that informal, organic and ad hoc approaches are best suited to delivering the student experience. Teaching staff are devoted, focusing their attentions on a highly individualised student experience and responding to the challenges of the pandemic quickly and effectively. There is demonstrable support for interdisciplinary working and resources are deployed where needed to support this. Students are vibrantly expressive, confident and creative, benefitting from a focus on entrepreneurialism, real life skills development and problem-solving; levels of satisfaction clearly reflect this approach and embedding these skills in a summer school for students is commendable. Clear academic development from foundation skills at level one through to specialisation possibilities at level two and three were noted and there are social partners feeding into the programme from beyond the field.

The panel felt strongly that the prevalence of informal processes particularly in relation to administration leads to an arbitrariness of provision and a lack of systematisation for key processes such as student evaluation gathering and planning for staff development. The high-level strategic thinking within the Senior Team needs to be married to operational processes at the grassroots more systematically and effectively. The impact of the programme on regional cultural policy remains vague, and the routes for employability in these areas need clarifying. There are several issues to be addressed in relation to programme identity. The programme's declared focus on visual theatre is not sustained, and is understood differently by employers, students and staff. Mechanisms must be established to facilitate a deep and inclusive discussion about programme identity, across the teaching team, with students and with social partners. The possibilities of visual theatre as a focus are not being fully exploited, and the reference points culturally and historically can be further updated; new technologies can form an important part of this refreshing of the programme content. In relation to professional development, there is a lack of strategic direction and policy and this needs to be designed and implemented. Staff understanding of research is at a very early stage and there is little space for critical reflection around artistic practice. The panel found that the programme is not serviced well in terms of its external identity and needs to be given a far more effective platform, brand and identity, to help students' work become more visible in the professional market place. Student feedback needs to be gathered systematically and anonymously and formal processes need to be established, to complement the informal, verbal processes currently being exercised. Relatedly, dropout rates need looking at urgently, and pre-entry information and guidance onto the programme can be improved to develop better understandings of the programme's content and offer for incoming students.

**The panel chair's signature:**

**Prof. dr. Jonathan Pitches, academic.**