



Quality Enhancement Report
for
Willem de Kooning Academy
Rotterdam
The Netherlands
2017

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Introduction

In 2012 the Willem de Kooning Academy (WdKA) invited ELIA (EQ-Arts)¹ to undertake an evaluation process of the Institution as a whole, the Piet Zwart Institute (Post Graduate) and the BA Programmes for both Fine Art and Design. Specifically, WdKA requested that the ELIA (EQ-Arts) team focus on what it referred to as its existing or 'old' BA programmes. This proved to be a difficult as the Academy had already embarked on the re-design and re-organisation of its BA programmes to the model that currently exists. At the time of the 2012 review WdKA staff were focussed on these new developments and the Evaluation Team also perceived that the information it received about the 'new developments' was far more interesting than anything it was being provided about the existing 'old' programmes.² The timing and nature of the evolving situation initially lead to a sense of disappointment by the Management of WdKA who felt that the Evaluation Team had not fully addressed its request to evaluate the 'old' Programmes. In 2012 the Evaluation Team felt a sense of frustration that they were being invited to conduct a Review that was ill timed, as they thought it; too late for the previous Programmes and too early for the 'new' Programmes.

In its desire to enhance the positive, the Evaluation Team expressed enthusiasm and support for the 'new' Programme ideas being described but felt frustrated that it could not obtain enough hard information about them and could not look more deeply at the implications.

Between 2012 and the present WdKA has made virtually all of the changes necessary to implement the 'new programmes' and as a result felt compelled to invite EQ-Arts³ to fully evaluate the new BA Programmes. This Report is the outcome of that process in 2017.

The Evaluation Team (2017) appreciates that WdKA has developed a strong and distinctive strategic mission and vision. Staff and externals have been involved in the building of the new curriculum and the facilities to fully realise the new programmes. There is a clear sense of ownership, commitment and conviction about the value of the new mission from the academic and technical teams.

The Evaluation Team were very impressed by the positive attitude of all those individuals and teams that they met, somewhat in contrast to the atmosphere they perceived in 2012. The Academy now presents itself as a business-like and happy relaxed working environment where all those involved had a sense of place and felt part of a dynamic on-going enterprise. These attributes are the direct result of the vision of the management and the professionalism of the staff in their constructive response to the changes driven by that vision.

This report is built around the quite extensive *Verbal Feedback* provided to the Academy management on the 31 May 2017. It contains seventeen Commendations and seventeen Recommendations. This is large number of each category and this quantity of material reflects the openness and cooperative attitude of those that the ET met and the provision of documentation that was requested and provided particularly between the Preliminary and Main visits.

¹ At that time EQ-Arts was a fledgling QA&E project that had grown out the Artes-Net and Inter-Artes European Networks based within ELIA (European League of Institutes of Arts, Amsterdam)

² See ELIA Verbal Report p.43 of this document

³ In 2015 EQ-Arts became a fully independent Quality Assurance Agency and although affiliated to ELIA is no longer part of it.

This large number of items, Commendations and Recommendations not only generally reflects the quality of the Review experience but also the quantity and quality of the period of extensive change and development that the WdKA has undertaken.

Evaluation Team

This Quality Enhancement process was conducted by:

EQ-Arts – Enhancing Quality in the Arts

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EQ-Arts is an ENQA affiliate.

The Evaluation Team consisted of:

Robert Baker (Chair)

Previously, Head of Fine Art at Limerick School of Art & Design, Limerick Institute of Technology -Ireland.

Presently Chair of the Board of EQ-Arts, Quality Enhancement Agency, Amsterdam.

Member of the EQ-Arts Evaluation Team for the WdKA Review 2012

Maren Schmohl

Vice Rector, Merz Academy, Stuttgart - Germany

Founding Member of EQ-Arts, Quality Enhancement Agency, Amsterdam.

Member of the EQ-Arts Evaluation Team for the WdKA Review 2012

Tamiko OBrien

Principal, City & Guilds of London Art School, London – United Kingdom

Rana Oezturk

Referee Rectorate BTK – University of Art & Design, Berlin - Germany

Description of the process

On the invitation of WdKA and with its agreement EQ-Arts employed its standard two-visit procedure. A Preliminary and Main Visit of two and half days each in the Academy during which it was planned to hold twelve meetings per visit with the Academy's students and staff at all levels.

Prior to the visit the Evaluation Team (ET) studied the Self Evaluation Report (SER) and other documents supplied, see following pages. On the days prior to the two visits the ET met as a team to compare responses, agree strategies and prepared questions for each of the meetings planned for each of the visits.

The Preliminary Visit (March 20-22) aims

To understand the processes undertaken to establish the need for and the appropriateness of any changes, i.e. quality assurance processes, stakeholder feedback, benchmarking and gain some insight into how any changes or developments were made.

To understand the developments and changes made to the institution/programme(s) and their context since 2012, including any changes in:

- the mission, vision operational/organisational structure;
- national and local contexts;
- the quality management policy and operational strategy and the development of a quality culture;
- response to recommendations/conditions made arising from national, internal and EQ-Arts reviews;
- curriculum and the relationship of undergraduate to postgraduate study; research and PhD programmes;
- pedagogy, learning, teaching and assessment (policies & strategies);
- policies/strategies for internationalisation, research, professional/employability;
- staff recruitment procedures and staff development strategies and their relationship to the programme context [part of teaching policies & strategies];

First Visit Schedule

EQ-Arts BA Programme Quality Assurance & Enhancement Review of Willem de Kooning Academy

Timetable for Preliminary Visit 20-22 March 2017

Sunday March 19th

14h00 – 18h00 private meeting Evaluation Team (ET) in the hotel

18.30- Drinks with Dean and Senior Staff followed by dinner

Monday March 20th

09h00 – 09h30 ET operational meeting – set-up base-room, laptops, organisation etc.

09h30 – 10h45 **ET meets with the Liaison person/Quality Assurance Person/SER author to:**

- discuss the process and requirements of the visit
- discuss the SER authorship process and the self-evaluation process
- discuss Institutional and Programme QAE Processes

10h45– 11h00 **ET meets the Dean** to discuss objectives of the review, the institutions expectations and the process of self-evaluation.

11h00 – 11h30	private meeting ET
11h30 – 12h45	ET meets with the Dean and Senior Management Team to discuss recent developments, the quality management and enhancement policies and operational strategy of the Academy.
12h45 – 13h45	working lunch (private ET) in the meeting room.
13h45 – 15h00	ET meet with students from the Academy <u>BA</u> students across programme(s) (2 from each year of each programme, Fine Art Design)
15h00 – 15h30	Private meeting ET
15h30 – 16h30	ET meets with BA course managers to discuss: learning, teaching and assessment; quality management and enhancement; research; staff development; policies and strategies etc.
16h30 – 17h00	private meeting ET
17h00 – 18h00	ET meets with recent graduates/alumni of the Programmes: to discuss their learning experiences and reflections on their courses and preparation for the professional world
18h00- 18h30	private meeting ET
19h.30	private dinner ET
<u>Tuesday March 21st</u>	
09h00 – 09h30	private meeting ET
09h30 – 10h45	ET tour of WdKA with emphasis on the stations
10h45 – 11h30	ET meets with the Work Station staff teams of the Publication, Drawing, Business and Research Stations to discuss operational and organisational processes
11h30 – 12h00	private Meeting ET
12h00 – 12h45	ET meet with the Vice Rector for Quality assurance and Enhancement (?) Rotterdam University of Applied Arts Meeting Cancelled
12h30 – 13h30	working lunch (private ET) in the meeting room
13h30 – 14h30	ET meets with BA & MA teaching staff , including one Study Career Coach, to discuss recent developments in the BA programme(s), research strategies and staff development
14h30 – 15h00	private meeting ET

15h00 – 16h00	ET meets with the Advisory Evaluation Team of representatives of employers, to discuss currency and appropriateness of the courses and the strengths and weaknesses of the graduate's skills and attributes.
16h00 - 16.15	private meeting ET
16h15 – 17h00	ET meets with senior administrative staff (including: Operations Manager and representatives of: International Office, External Relations Office, Secretariat, Quality, Student Support, IT etc.)
17h00 – 18h00	private Meeting ET ET private dinner

Wednesday March 22nd

09h00 – 09h30	ET meets with the Liaison person to discuss next visit
09h30 – 12h30	private meeting ET
12h30 – 13h00	ET meets with Dean and colleagues to agree main visit programme and additional information and documents required
13h00	lunch with Dean, course managers and programme team

The Main Visit (May 29-31) aims

To evaluate the processes undertaken to establish the need for and the appropriateness of these changes, i.e. quality assurance processes, stakeholder feedback, benchmarking and the appropriateness of the change methodologies utilised.

To evaluate the appropriateness and efficacy of any developments and changes made to the programme(s) and their context since 2012, including any changes in-

- the mission, vision, operational/organisational structure;
- impact of recommendations/conditions made arising from national, internal and EQ-Arts reviews;
- curriculum and the relationship of undergraduate to postgraduate study; research and PhD programmes;
- pedagogy, learning and teaching and assessment;
- policies/strategies for internationalisation, research, professional development/employability;
- staff recruitment procedures and staff development strategies and their relationship to the programme context.

To prepare and present a verbal report to be presented at the conclusion of the second visit that will enable the Academy to enhance the areas listed above and to mirror strengths/successes and issues for future consideration. This verbal report will form an accurate basis for the development of a full written report that will contain recommendations.

Schedule Second (Main) Visit

Below is the Timetable supplied to WdKA on 16 May 2017 and apparently agreed to verbally during a telephone call later the same day. The ET planned the questions accordingly to match this Timetable.

EQ-Arts BA Programme Quality Assurance & Enhancement Review of Willem de Kooning Academy

Timetable for Main Visit 29-31 May 2017

Sunday 28 May

14h00 – 18h00 private meeting ET in the breakfast room of the hotel

19h00 Dinner

Monday 29 May

9h00 – 9h15 Operational meeting – laptops, refreshments, organisation etc.

9h15 – 09h30 ET meets Liaison person

9h30 – 10h30	ET meets Dean
10h30 - 10h45	private meeting ET
10h45 – 11h45	ET meets the Academy QA Manager
11h45-12h00	private meeting ET
12h00-12h45	ET meets a group of <u>re-sit students</u> (both who have and who need to re-sit) from a mix of specialisations
12h45 – 13h30	working lunch (private ET) in the meeting room
13h30 – 14h15	ET visits Fine Art Studios
14h15 – 14h30	private meeting ET
14h30 – 15h15	ET meets Vice Rector for Strategic Development
15h15- 15h30	private meeting ET
15h30 – 16h15	ET meets Career Coaches
16h15 – 16h30	private meeting ET
16h30 – 17h-15	ET meets a group of International students
17h15-17h30	private meeting ET
17h30- 18h.15	ET Meets Advisory Board
18.15-18.45	private meeting ET
19h30	private dinner ET

Tuesday 30 May

09h00 – 09h30	private meeting ET
09h30 – 10h15	ET meets two Project Teams from <u>Year 1</u> including part/time guest lecturers
10h15 – 10h30	private meeting ET
10h30 – 11h15	ET meets two Project Teams from <u>Year 3</u> including part/time guest lecturers
11h15 – 11h30	private meeting ET
11h30 – 12h30	ET meets Heads of Practices
12h30 – 13h30	working lunch (private ET) in the meeting room

13h30 – 14h00	ET visits Drawing Station
14h00 – 14h15	private meeting ET
14h15 – 15h00	ET meets Head and Staff of Theory Department
15h00 – 15h15	private meeting ET
15h15 – 16h00	ET meets Student Peer Coaches and Student Instructors from the Stations
16h00 – 18h30	private meeting ET
19h30	private dinner ET

Wednesday 31 May

09h00 – 09h15	ET meets Liaison Person
09h15 – 12h00	private meeting ET
12h00 – 12h30	Feedback to Dean of Faculty and colleagues
Lunch	
14.00	Departure

However, on arrival at the Academy on Monday 29th May at 09h00, the ET were supplied with a replacement timetable. The ET was unprepared for this and the impact meant that questions had to be changed, re-organised or newly written to be able to accommodate the new timetable. Therefore, the private meetings normally undertaken and built into the planned timetable by the ET had to be abandoned and used to organise and write new questions to work within the new timetable.



Timetable EQ-Arts visit May 29th – 31st, 2017

Day 0 – May 28 th , 2017	
14.00 – 18.00	ET meeting in the hotel
19.00	Dinner

Day 1 – Ma 29 th , 2017	
09h00 - 09h15	ET operational meeting
09h15 – 9h30	ET meets with Liaison person Wim de Boer ✓
9h30 – 10h30	ET meets with the Dean Jeroen Chabot ✓
10h30 – 10h45	Private meeting ET
10h45 – 11h45	ET meets with QA Wim de Boer ✓
11h45 - 12h00	Private meeting ET
12h00 – 12h45	ET meets a group of re-sit students from a mix of specialisations <i>TOURAD DRAWING STUDIO.</i> Syree Palm ✓ Michael Schaap Armand Bakx <i>CAN CANARD.</i>
12h45 - 13h45	Working lunch ET in the meeting room
13h30 – 14h15	ET meets a group of International Students <i>2ND YR ARCHITECTS DESIGN.</i> Fine Art Amy Hill Design Nomi Biro Sofia Nissilä
15h00 – 15h30	ET visits Fine Art Studios Karin Arink
15h30 – 16h30	ET meets Heads of Practices Roger Teeuwen Rene Verouden Margo Ludoph Deanna Herst Frans van Lent Isaac Monté
16h30 – 17h15	ET meets Student Peer Coaches and Student Instructors from the stations <i>CAN CANARD.</i> David Gieling Rens van Pinxteren Julia Kul Marjolein Stassen Samira Damato
17h15 – 17h30	Private meeting ET
17h30 – 18h15	ET meets Advisory Board <i>MIT IN MARCH</i> Tanja Karreman - <i>ARTS PACE</i> Weronika Zielinska - <i>ARTS PACE</i> Marcus Vlaar - <i>ARTS PACE</i> <i>30/100</i>
18h15 – 18h45	Private meeting ET
19h30	Private dinner ET

Day 2 – May 30 th , 2017		
09h00 - 9h30	Private meeting ET	
09h30 – 10h15	ET meets two project teams year 1	<u>Advertising</u> Jeroen Bouweriks Matthijs van Haagen Lonneke Mertens Brigit Lichtenegger <u>Product Design</u> Frederike Top – + 1 David Derksen Suzanne Rietdijk <u>Fine Art</u> Lizan Freijssen Juan Beladrich Catherine Somze
10h15 - 10h30	Private meeting ET	
10h30 - 11h15	ET meets two project teams year 3	<u>Fine Art</u> Juan Beladrich Reinaart Vanhoe Paul Cox Fabienne Zuidwijk Esma Moukhtar <u>Cultural Diversity</u> Mark Mulder Teana Boston-Mammah Jan van Heemst <u>Data Design</u> Rogier Klomp <u>Branding</u> Erik Nuijten
11h15 – 11h30	Private meeting ET	
11h30 – 12h30	ET meets Study Career Coaches	Bien vd Voorden Corinna van Diepen Lisan Freijssen Marieke den Dulk Sophie Hamers
12h30 – 13h30	Working Lunch (ET) in meeting room	
13h30 – 14h15	ET meets Vice Rector Strategic Development	Mariska Wit Izaak Dekker
14h15 – 15h00	ET meets Head and Staff of Theory Department	Suzanne Rademaker Jojanneke Gijsen Frank Kauffmann Gert-Jan Pos Sjoerd Westbroek
15h00 – 15h30	Private meeting ET	
15h30 – 16h00	ET visits Drawing Station	Joseph Hughes
16h00 – 16h30	Private Meeting ET	
16h30 – 17h15	ET meets management / coordinator responsible for RASL (double degree programme)	Roger Teeuwen Liesbeth Noordegraaf Elens (EUR) Wander van Baalen
17h15 – 18h30	Private meeting ET	

19h30	Private dinner ET	
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Day 3 – May 31 st , 2017		
09h00 – 9h15	ET meets with Liaison person	
9h30 – 12h00	Private meeting ET	
12h00 – 12h30	Feedback to Dean and colleagues	Jeroen Chabot Roger Teeuwen Rene Verouden Margo Ludoph
Lunch		
14.00	Departure	

Three of the meetings on the replacement timetable above were cancelled through none attendance of the WdKA participants.

1. *Re-Sit Students from a mix of disciplines*
2. *Student Peer Coaches and Student Instructors from the Stations*
3. *Vice Rector for Strategic Development*

The twice-requested meeting with the Vice Rector did not happen on the grounds that no such position exists. The ET was informed of this two minutes before the scheduled time and the replacements substituted did not attend.

It is unfortunate that the EQ-Arts process was constrained and disrupted by the very late change of timetable, as well as, the cancellation of meetings and the reduction of the attendance at others. We hope that this has not impinged on the scope of our report. The meetings we did have were constructive and productive and we would like to thank those people we met for their contribution and open attitude.

Self-Evaluation Report 2017

The WdKA SER provided in 2012 was disappointingly un-informative and failed to capture either the essence of the institution as it stood or the nature and ambition of the planned developments. Much of the time during the 2012 site visits was spent trying to clarify the content, or lack of, of the SER.

Similarly, the Evaluation Team found that the 2017 SER provided did not provide the clarity, quality and quantity of information that would be expected of an institution of the ambition and standing of WdKA.

The ET considers it unfortunate and not a constructive approach to the authorship of an SER to delegate it to one person. No one person, however capable, is in a position to carry out a thorough SER process, and it places that one person in an untenable position to ask them to do so. One person can only ever produce a descriptive document that contains generally accepted common denominators and known norms. Rather than have an individual compile an SER from a selection of extracts of existing documents it is much more valuable to invite a group of committed individuals. A group of individuals that have key responsibilities and knowledge on the planning, operational management and organisation, and represent all levels of the institution, who are able to write a self-critical, comprehensive, accurate and factual statement about the institution/programme. A group that can discuss and even argue about viewpoints and come to an agreed evaluative statement about the nature of an institution. This methodology has the potential to produce an original insight. This more involving and inclusive process has the potential to provide a level of institutional self-awareness and new and refreshing insights.

The authorship of an SER is an opportunity to think through problems and solutions from first principles instead of providing a well-rehearsed and already known version of events. There is a lot for an institution/programme to learn and gain from a wider involvement in the production of an SER, it is not merely a descriptive chore but an opportunity to step back and form a fresh perception that may well be the basis of an important developmental step. Furthermore, an SER should reflect that it is intended for a readership of external experts, whose mission hinges on their ability to: (a) understand the institution thoroughly and (b) substantiate their findings with evidence. It is therefore paramount to describe processes in detail and integrate comprehensive data and appendices in order to support the work they are doing at the institutions request.

Unfortunately, on the two occasions of engagement with EQ-Arts, WdKA has failed to take the opportunity to fully capitalise on a review process and has produced disappointing SER's.

Documents provided

Self- Evaluation Report, February 2017

WdKA A to Z Study Handbook 2016-2017, Fine Art & Design

2017 Year Plan and 2016 Annual Report (one combined document)

Report on the National Student Survey (NSS) Results 2016

Creating Pioneers (Outline Strategic Policy Plan 2016-20)

Research at WdKA draft Policy Memorandum 15 February 2017 Jeroen Chabot

WdKA Strategic Personnel Plan 2017

WdKA Professionalisation Plan 2017

Interview-cycle-form. Lecturer

Job Description – Lecturer

Job Description student assistant

WdKA -Staff Survey 2016 Jan 2017

Course Description Fine Art Theory 2016-2017

Project Brief Illustration Future

Project Brief Graphic Design Q4

Project Assessment Template Q-8-Illustration-assessment-criteria

Assessment form competency Assessment 2

Assessment form competency Assessment 3

Assessment form competency Assessment 4

Module template Fine Art Q4

Module template Animation Q8

Competency matrix BOKS design 16-17

Study Handbook Bachelor Level WdKA 2016-1017

Study Handbook Master's programmes 2016-2017

QA Handbook WdKA 2016-2017

Student Cohort Analysis

NSE Results in Total and by Department

Documents requested and provided between First and Second Visits

1. **Diagrams**

- a. Management organigram
- b. Committee, Boards & Working Groups organigram (governance structure)
- c. Diagram of programme staff (top – bottom)

2. **Terms of reference**

- a. Assessment Board, Curriculum & Programme Committee, workings groups and management team

3. **Quality assurance**

- a. Quality Assurance Handbook
- b. Quality Assurance policy WdKA
- c. Quality assurance cycle diagram
- d. Detailed cohort analysis of each major of the BA programme
- e. The latest National Student Survey (NSS) results: (a) WdKA & (b) average of all Netherlands arts schools

4. **Summary of implementation/address/use/actions taken**

EQ-arts recommendations in the form of a table of the 5 external reference points:

- i. recommendations of the national review accreditation in form of a table
- ii. annual report of external evaluators questionnaires
- iii. internal employer feedback questionnaire
- iv. Advisory Board minutes
- v. arts monitor
- vi. summary of students' feedback reports and the results shown to the management team

5. **Curriculum Material**

- a. Teaching and learning schedule for three student case studies for the 4-year BA cycle
- b. Theory syllabus
- c. Two module handbooks for Fine Art and Design are different, otherwise one
- d. Project briefs for year one and three
- e. Project assessment templates
- f. Assessment forms
- g. Module template

- h. Body of Knowledge and Skills (BOKs) document

6. Human Resources

- a. Staff Development policy and plan
- b. Staff appraisal form (template or a completed anonymised form)
- c. Job Descriptions for teaching staff, student mentors MA, external critics, instructors (only if available)
- d. Analysis of staff report survey

LIST OF COMMENDATIONS

Commendation 1

Mission and vision: there is little doubt that WdKA has developed a striking and distinctive strategic mission and vision. Staff and externals have been involved in the building of the new curriculum and the facilities to fully realise the new programmes. There is a clear sense of ownership and commitment and a conviction of the value of the new mission from the academic and technical teams.

Commendation 2

There is a strong engagement with the local Rotterdam arts and design ecology and social entrepreneurial community. Employing part-time professionals further links the programmes to the field and their choice of tutors appears to reinforce the societal focus.

Commendation 3

The aim to focus on internationalisation takes many forms including: collaborations with (HE) institutions in Europe and the US; student placements and exchanges; and the bi-lingual teaching approach. The ambition, to raise the recruitment of international students to 50%, is related to supporting a rise in standards and peer group learning, while engaging in wider debates about the subjects and is seen as an enrichment process. Recruitment strategies appear to be successful with the recruitment of students from all over the world. Supporting this strategy is evidence of commitment to the bi-lingual delivery through staff language training.

Commendation 4

There appears to have been a good energy and engagement around working groups and study days, when teams focus on issues and areas for further development / idea generation about the curriculum

Commendation 5

There is a positive culture of informal evaluation and discussion acknowledging the importance of feedback. WdKA's ambition (as outlined in the Professionalisation Plan 2017) to share responsibilities widely across the institution appears to have been informally achieved. There is evidence of the engagement and ownership of quality and an understanding of its importance from individuals within academic, student support and technical roles.

Commendation 6

The teaching and technical staff are pro-active and creative in their approach to problem solving. Their dedication to improving the student experience is commendable.

Commendation 7

Enabling students to build self-reflection, self-determination and self-reliance through: a focus on research; use of competency assessments as a tool for learning; and Study Career Coach assignments.

Commendation 8

It is evident that WdKA has been pro-active and successful in engaging and collaborating with industry partners and social entrepreneurs in the shaping and delivery of the

curriculum. This supports students to develop as versatile practitioners equipped for the professional field and capable of generating their own opportunities on graduation.

Commendation 9

The programmes aim to be student centred, offering choice and an open approach that questions the nature of the subject disciplines. Students who are particularly interested in outward facing practice are provided with opportunities to directly test approaches to socially engaged practices and this can enrich and deepen their learning.

Commendation 10

WdKA employs a wide range of approaches to teaching and encourages and enables a responsive, creative and exploratory approach from the teaching and technical team. Students benefit from the innovative learning environment that extends beyond the walls of the Academy.

Commendation 11

WdKA has been active in collaborating with other institutions for example through the new Double Degree RASL programme and this has led to some sharing of good practice and development of new collaborative research programmes.

Commendation 12

WdKA has identified that there are some periods of overload for students and as a response is re-thinking of the curriculum through the working group tasked with this project.

Commendation13

The Theory Working Group has better integrated the theory element to enhance student engagement and completion

Commendation 14

The design and reorganisation of the buildings and the development and equipping of the stations has given a physical reality to the concept of the programmes.

Commendation 15

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

Commendation 16

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

Commendation 17

The policy to employ part-time professionals from a wide range of disciplines to contribute to the learning environment enriches the student and staff experience.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

There are weaknesses around the organisational structure of the Academy and a lack of an internal communication strategy; this problem has been identified by staff and students at all levels.

Recommendation 2

WdKA works towards a more coherent Strategic Plan that:

- outlines issues, linking them to where they have been identified;
- with milestones and key dates;
- designated responsibilities;
- indications of what success will look like.

The ET considers this is essential to map the way forward in an inclusive, systematic and achievable way.

Recommendation 3

WdKA develops a clear governance statement with terms of reference for all decision-making bodies, including student representatives.

Recommendation 4

There is a need for an internationalisation strategy to ensure coherence, consistence and focus. There were various examples where the ambitions of the Academy were not met due to an apparent lack of joined-up thinking/strategy, for example:

- lack of consistency regarding the bilingual approach – certain key documents such as study regulations, assessment policy are not translated;
- international students reported that some classes are not delivered in English and information videos on the intranet are only in Dutch;
- there does not appear to be an analytical approach to the success rate and drop-out rate of existing and potential international students;
- international students reported that the courses were not always as they had understood based on the website;
- while WdKA acknowledges the diverse international population of Rotterdam, there are no apparent outreach programmes to engage these communities and recruit from them.

Recommendation 5

Quality Assurance Frameworks based on the University policies need to be more thoroughly and consistently developed and adapted to the WdKA environment.

Recommendation 6

The necessity to analyse and identify solutions to student and staff feedback, national survey results and completion rates in a systematic, recorded, consistent and comprehensive way does not appear to have been fully realised at all levels. The feedback loop needs to be balanced equally in all directions.

Recommendation 7

The Quality Assurance Handbook is not yet fully fit for purpose. We recommend a rethink of the Student Quality Commission. It does not appear to be sufficiently representing the student voice or supporting developments. The processes employed currently appear to be somewhat unnecessarily convoluted and distancing.

Recommendation 8

It wasn't clear to the Evaluation Team how the previous review from 2012 had been fully utilised. A strategic action list responding to recommendations and tracking achievements against those recommendations would support planning and make better use of external quality reviews and internal evaluation processes.

Recommendation 9

Staff commented on a culture of continuous change that requires them to focus on time-consuming trouble shooting. We recommend that consultation is broadened to capture solutions and that the rate of change is carefully considered, planned and communicated.

Recommendation 10

The WdKA has been through an intense period of change, the Evaluation Team recommends that a Change Management and Implementation Strategy (CMIS) is developed that engages staff and students in full consultation.

Recommendation 11

The elaborate programme structure and its labelling and communication are considered confusing by a proportion of staff and students. It results in extra time invested in explanation and verification. The structure and description requires simplification and refinement to make it more coherent and comprehensible and to ensure that student expectations are met.

Recommendation 12

The Evaluation Team was not convinced that the website and other literature available offered potential applicants a clear explanation of the particular focus and challenges of the programmes. Given the ambitions to recruit more widely from applicants who might not attend Open Days we consider it necessary for the WdKA to re-visit its promotional statements to ensure accuracy.

Recommendation 13

It appears that some tutors are not equipped to engage fully with the *'International Classroom'*, while the length of time required by tutors to translate between Dutch and English causes delays and extra pressure on staff time. We recommend that WdKA identifies solutions to this inconsistency.

Recommendation 14

There is a dissonance between the level of satisfaction across staff levels at WdKA with some areas reporting to the Evaluation Team, and through the Staff Satisfaction Survey (SSS), their concerns regarding work-load and a reduction in staffing. The staffing of core infrastructure appears to be problematic given the ambitions of the Academy and needs to be addressed.

Recommendation 15

The staff deployment across the new programmes appears to be diffuse. The students would benefit from identifying with subject champions. This would enable continuity for the

students' creative journeys and would work to improve the progression and graduation rates.

Recommendation 16

Induction and learning of basic skills appears inconsistent across the various programmes. Reliance on students to identify, at an early stage, the core skills they need for future development needs reviewing. This reliance may also be impacting on progression and completion rates.

Recommendation 17

The Evaluation Team understands that Fine Art is being relocated to new studios next year and recommends consultation with students and staff. The current studios are unsuitable and improved accommodation is required in a location where other resources are readily available.

Commendations and recommendations by theme

1. MISSION, VISION, OPERATION/ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES. CONTEXTS NATIONAL AND LOCAL, INTERNATIONALISATION

1.1 Commendation 1

There is little doubt that WdKA has developed a striking and distinctive strategic mission and vision. Staff and externals have been involved in the building of the new curriculum and the facilities to fully realize the new programmes. There is a clear sense of ownership and commitment and a conviction of the value of the new mission from the academic and technical teams.

1.1.2 Both due to external recommendations to give Netherland's art schools distinct profiles and its own desire to change and move forward, WdKA set out in 2012 to drastically change the design of its Bachelor curriculum. This included a comprehensive redesign of the buildings in which WdKA is situated. WdKA senior management clearly wants the Academy to have a strikingly unique profile and there is little doubt that this has been achieved. The main emphasis of the new 'philosophy'/educational credo is for the arts *"to stay part of society"*, for art education *"to be relevant to society's needs"*, for graduates to be able *"to adapt to the changing world of work"* and give them *"a strong international outlook"* (all quotes from discussions with the Dean).

1.1.3 The new educational model covers the BA programmes of Fine Art and Design. One of its main features is the introduction of three *'practices'*, i.e. overarching topics are presumed to reflect different kinds of real-life working practices and settings (autonomous, commercial, social). The practices in turn are meshed with a longer list of *'minors'* (i.e. current topics and problems like *'hacking'*, *'branding'*, *'data design'*). WdKA's main tenet is that students need to become creative and innovative in finding their own position as designers and/or artists as the prospect of a single, fixed career seems to vanish.

1.1.4 The new curriculum with its strong focus on intensive project work, guided by a team of tutors, has found its physical manifestation in the opening up and combining workshops into integrated teaching, learning and working areas.

1.1.5 The Evaluation Team has heard ample evidence that the school found a commendable way to include internal and external key stakeholders in the process of developing the new curriculum. This inclusive format now pays off in a strong sense of ownership across all levels of staff and many external partners. Staff members (particularly those who were not personally involved in the development phase) participated in and profited from information events and training sessions which helped them to adapt to new forms of teaching and assessment. Evaluation Team congratulates the Academy on this achievement and encourages it to maintain this policy of inclusion, transparency and training.

1.1.6 Based on talks with staff and students across the Academy, the Evaluation Team came to the conclusion that the new model suits the design majors more than the Fine Art majors. Similarly, some of the pedagogic intentions (stimulating collaboration, curiosity etc.) clearly seem to be well supported by the new spatial set-up. Others (e.g. orientation towards research) are less easily translated into physical space and have as yet not been

fully developed. The Evaluation Team cautions the Academy to remain open to the possibility that the new system may not work for all intended goals equally well and the Academy should not be overly rigid in applying the system to every area and activity.

1.1.7 The complex curricular system has led to an increase in teaching staff and fulltime teaching and counselling positions which the school seems to have been able to fulfil. On the other hand, some administrative positions had to be cut - which is clearly not helpful, particularly in view of the Academy's ambition to increase international students.

1.2 Commendation 2

There is a strong engagement with the local Rotterdam arts and design ecology and social entrepreneurial community. Employing part time professionals further links the programmes to the field and their choice of tutors appears to reinforce the societal focus.

1.2.1 The idea of '*relevancy*' as the Academy defines it is centred on close ties to the local business and arts community. Many projects try to integrate real life work situations in the learning experience of the students. The Academy has put a lot of resources into fulfilling the demands of supporting a '*commercial practice*' (every project needs a real-life partner) as well as instilling business sense and skills in all students.

1.2.3 Students generally appreciated this and found the connection to creative professionals helpful, stimulating and an attractive '*USP*' for the school. Some mentioned a tension arising out of '*real life*' commercial projects and the exploration of more artistic, individual choices for their work.

1.2.4 The external partners whom the Evaluation Team met in general felt very positive about the curricular changes, particularly in relation to the '*commercial practice*'. They also consider it an asset that students have a firm knowledge of contexts into which they will enter after graduation. Some were more cautious with regard to the education of fine artists as they have not yet seen results of the new format. Generally, there was admiration for the boldness of the new vision and the changes the Academy underwent and they were positive about changes in students' work they have seen so far. In order to fulfil its mission to become a fully international Academy, the fact that international students may return to their native country (where the context of creative industries may differ) should be part of future consideration.

1.2.5 The external partners whom the Evaluation Team met were involved in projects but also during final exams (where they ask questions and give opinions) and/or give guest lectures. Some externals are engaged in an advisory capacity. Some related that they supported the Academy during the period of intensive work on the new curricular format. This engagement of the Academy seems to have been scaled back recently and most external advising on curricular development seems to happen on an ad hoc basis. While the Academy's management points out that there are no longer fixed professional communities and entities, the externals whom the Evaluation Team met clearly voiced their willingness and interest to be involved on an on-going basis and the Evaluation Team encourages the Academy to put the contact again on a more formalised basis as it clearly profits from the input. In any case the Academy needs to update its information accordingly as both in the QA Handbook and the SER an '*Advisory Board*' is mentioned, which, as the Evaluation Team discovered, obviously currently does not exist.

1.3 Commendation 3

The aim to focus on internationalisation takes many forms including: collaborations with (HE) institutions in Europe and the US; student placements and exchanges; and the bi-lingual teaching approach. The ambition, to raise the recruitment of international students to 50%, is related to supporting a rise in standards and peer group learning, while engaging in wider debates about the subjects and is seen as an enrichment process. Recruitment strategies appear to be successful with students from all over the world. Meanwhile there is evidence of commitment to the bi-lingual delivery through staff language training.

1.4 Commendation 4

There appears to have been a good energy and engagement around working groups and study days, when teams focus on issues and areas for further development / idea generation about the curriculum.

1.4.1 Whilst the energy these working groups and study days engendered they appear to have been organised on an ad-hoc basis to address specific issues. Perhaps a way can be found, or built into the management system to capitalise on this release of energy on an on-going basis and more consistently.

1.5 Recommendation 1

There is a need for a written internationalisation strategy, which is approved by the respective positions or committees to ensure coherence, consistence and focus.

1.5.1 The Academy has been successful in recruiting international students and intends to enhance the number of international graduates considerably. The Evaluation Team met a small number of international students who overall have had a positive experience. However, the Evaluation Team felt that – concerning the Academy’s overall ambition of internationalisation – the transition to a truly international Academy has not been yet been fully realised.

1.5.2 International students reported that the courses were not always as they had understood based on the website. There appears to be a lack of consistency regarding the bilingual approach – certain key documents such as Study Regulations, Assessment Policy are not translated and many information videos about projects, practices etc. on the intranet appear to be only in Dutch. (The Evaluation Team notes that in an accreditation process this would be framed as a condition to be fulfilled within a certain time frame). International students mentioned that “everyone is confused [about the study programmes] at the beginning”, which make the holes in the information flow even more substantial for non-Dutch speakers.

1.5.3 The Evaluation Team was told that ca. 70 students are on mobility per semester, which comes to a percentage of 5,8%⁴, a very low rate, considering the EU’s target number for student mobility of 20%⁵. Staff noted that the changes in the curriculum makes mobility more challenging as partner institutions need to fit the demands of the WdKA curriculum. The Evaluation Team encourages WdKA to undertake efforts to raise the mobility rate, as

⁴ According to the SER there are ca. 1300 Fine Art and Design Student. The mobility rate would be even lower if Art Education and Leisure Management students are included in the 70 outgoing students.

⁵ See for example: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/higher-education/mobility-cbc_en

the experience of travelling and studying abroad would be an asset to the Academy's ambition to prepare (Dutch and international) students for international careers.

1.5.4 Members of management, staff and students pointed to the diversity of the city as a largely untapped opportunity for internationalisation and mentioned their ambition to change this. The Evaluation Team has heard similar intentions on its first visit in 2012, but can report no apparent changes. The Evaluation Team thus strongly encourages WdKA to seriously consider this issue and formulate its position towards it. Its close ties to many levels of the creative and cultural sectors could offer opportunities for example to establish outreach programmes or offer pre-training courses specifically to diverse communities.

1.5.5 The strong international ambition makes high and increasing demands on teaching and support staff, which makes the recent cuts in support personnel particularly painful.

1.5.6 The Evaluation Team considers it important to maintain the possibility to train staff in English as part of their paid engagement with WdKA.

1.5.7 Overall the Evaluation Team thinks the Academy would benefit from a comprehensive Strategy for Internationalisation which considers the many ramifications particularly of enhanced international recruitment.

1.6 Recommendation 2

There are weaknesses around the organisational structure and a lack of a communication strategy. This has been identified by staff and students at all levels.

The Evaluation Team recommends that WdKA develops a clear governance statement with terms of reference for all decision-making bodies, including student representatives.

1.6.1 During the two visits the Evaluation Team did not see a more detailed organigram than the one in the SER (Appendix 2) which visualises structural units and some areas of responsibility. The Academy does not appear to have an organigram which shows the main decision-making bodies and their connections. And while everyone in the Academy seemed able to point towards '*the management*' as a seat of considerable power and the locus where most of the important decision are being made, the actual process of how information, which informs this decision-making, travels from unit to unit was considerably less clear to many members of staff, students (and possibly the management itself).

1.6.1 The main document the Evaluation Team has seen to describe how and where decision making processes are initiated and ultimately concluded (with regard to enhancement processes of learning and teaching) is the QA Handbook. The QA Handbook describes in general terms the workings and procedures of the existing committees. The Evaluation Team appreciates the effort to explain and translate the official or legalistic language of terms of reference to a general reading public of students and staff. Yet the description lacks crucial information and the system itself lacks crucial elements. According to the QA Handbook the majority (5 out of 8 listed '*Evaluating Bodies*') seem to not have (published) terms of reference and the list of bodies seems not be current (as there is no Advisory Board in existence at the moment). It also lacks a description of the membership of these committees, both in general terms by position and currently by name. While most of the relevant information may be there and could be put together by an engaged reader, a visual representation of how the bodies/committees are linked and how information travels from one to the other should be included.

1.6.2 Overall, the Evaluation Team strongly recommends to amend and evolve the existing model of a set of QA tools into an integrated QA system based on the '*plan, do, check, act*' (PDCA) cycle. Such an enhanced system should include transparent and robust lines of feedback, decision-making and reporting, including all relevant units.

1.6.3 In particular the system of student feedback (e.g. the Student Quality Commission) is long-winded and ineffective, as was stated virtually unanimously by the students to the Evaluation Team and should be redesigned in a leaner, more fit for purpose fashion. It should be considered how and where this information would be published since few students and not all staff would be drawn to read the '*QA Handbook*'.

1.6.4 In general the Evaluation Team suggests that it would be helpful if the Academy considered that '*management*' and '*Quality Assurance*' are in fact closely related, intertwined, activities and should be closely linked and inform one another in a PDCA loop.

1.6.5 There is no dearth of explanatory documents in WdKA but there is a lack of overview for an external or not intrinsically involved person (as most teaching staff and students would be).

1.6.6 The Evaluation Team feels that to produce such a comprehensive document of key management and QA&E processes would be both a basic condition to start and a helpful structural tool for '*enhancing organisational excellence*'. This has been identified as a top development priority from top management down to teachers and admin staff and – phrased in other words – by students.

1.6.7 The Evaluation Team found different solutions in different departments, which may not be in the students (and staff's) best interest. For example:

- Some departments seem to have eliminated the role of the main tutor in project teams, which was deplored by staff and students;
- Some Heads of Department seem to write reports about feedback to higher up units, some apparently do not;
- Some teaching staff voiced frustration that they were unclear how and where they could effect change. They felt that their workload increased because of a lack of clarity of decision-making particularly within their respective units (project teams, departments).

The trust in the self-organisation of '*lower*' entities within certain parameters is commendable yet it should be ensured that employing best practice is guaranteed across the institution. A more informal structure rewards people with strong commitment and an agenda - which may not always be the one intended by the management.

1.6.8 With reference to the Year Plan, the Evaluation Team encourages the management to include bottom-up processes in its inception (as intended by a PDCA cycle).

Overall the Evaluation Team recommends that WdKA works towards a more coherent Strategic Plan that:

- outlines issues, linking them to where they have been identified;
- with milestones and key dates;
- designated responsibilities;
- indications of what success will look like.

The Evaluation Team considers this is essential to map the way forward in an inclusive, systematic and achievable way.

1.6.9 Having effected a great number of changes in recent years the Evaluation Team hopes, as do many staff, that the Academy gives itself the time to reflect and analyse both the full consequences of the changes and (old and new) issues that remain/arise to be addressed.

2. QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AND STRATEGY, QUALITY CULTURE AND RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Commendation 1

There is a positive culture of informal evaluation and discussion acknowledging the importance of feedback.

WdKA's ambition (as outlined in the Professionalisation Plan 2017) to share responsibilities widely across the institution appears to have been informally achieved. There is evidence of the engagement and ownership of quality and an understanding of its importance from individuals with academic, student support and technical roles.

2.1.1 The meetings between the Evaluation Team and teaching staff at all levels and with various student groups provided extensive evidence of a very positive attitude and a rapidly developing approach to Quality Assurance management and the collection of improvement indicators. Teaching staff reflected a working knowledge and recognition of the importance of QA&E both to the institution as a whole but also in their own teaching practice.

2.1.2. The Evaluation Team was impressed by the Vision/Strategy that WdKA states in their Policy Document 'Professionalisation within WdKA' December 12th 2017. 1.1 Context states that '*aims to position responsibilities as low as possible within the organisation. Decentralising tasks and responsibilities from academy level to programme level*'. The Evaluation Team perceived that to an extent teaching staff acting individually or in teams have already taken this initiative either through immediate need or perhaps through an understanding of professional standards in university level institutions. Notwithstanding the points made in 1.6.7 above about lack of coherence and the value of some ad-hoc changes.

2.1.3 These factors established a strong impression of evidence of the engagement and ownership of quality and an understanding of its importance from individuals with academic, student support and technical roles.

2.2 Commendation 2

The teaching and technical staff are pro-active and creative in their approach to problem solving. Their dedication to improving the student experience is commendable.

2.2.1 The changes to the curriculum and the physical changes to the building have provided a number of problems in the organisation, scheduling and the efficacy of teaching and learning practices and have challenged teaching and technical support staff and students.

2.2.2 The Evaluation Team when meeting staff and students heard strong anecdotal evidence of pro-active and creative approaches to problem solving. The many minor but no less important day to day issues that a rapid period of change and development naturally produces for staff and students in their immediate working environment have an impact on the student experience both positive and negative

2.2.3 Teaching and support staff expressed an understanding of the importance and a practical approach to these issues and their dedication to improving the student experience is commendable

2.3 Recommendation 1

Quality Assurance Frameworks based on the University policies need to be more thoroughly and consistently developed and adapted to the WdKA environment.

2.3.1 Whilst in general the Rotterdam University's (RU) QA&E policy is coherent and valuable it would seem to define standards and practices that are fit for purpose when considering accreditation cycles and general principles. Obviously WdKA works within the statutory framework of the RU policy, however, it seems that more work is required to define processes that fit the needs and attributes of the art & design community.

2.3.2 In particular an interpretation of the QA&E policy that transparently communicates the value of QA&E to art & design practitioners and describes processes that can be adopted satisfactorily on a day to day basis.

2.3.3 During its meetings the Evaluation Team heard individual examples of best practice within the QA&E domain that could form the content of a QA&E 'Best Practice Handbook'. This in itself would promote the value of QA&E across the Academy and provide in a transparent form methods that staff can be confident about adopting. It would also clearly transfer ownership of QA&E to all levels of the Academy and support development of a 'quality culture'.

2.4 Recommendation 2

The necessity to analyse and identify solutions to student and staff feedback, national survey results and completion rates in a systematic, recorded, consistent and comprehensive way does not appear to have been fully realised at all levels. The feedback loop needs to be balanced equally in all directions.

2.4.1

The Evaluation Team found that there was a plentiful supply of valuable feedback and an awareness of its importance. However, it could not satisfactorily identify a coherent, transparent and inclusive method of how feedback is analysed and how solutions can be identified and adopted.

2.4.2

For example, the Evaluation Team asked consistently about the causes and possible solutions to issues arising from the NSE process and heard a multitude of individual answers. The solutions to the issues raised in the NSE need to be discussed methodically with students and staff in order to establish a coherent inclusive bottom up Academy response. The value, purpose and relevance of the NSE needs clearer explanation to students.

2.4.3 Individual teaching staff and staff teams suggested that their ability to impact and communicate with the senior management team was often unsatisfactory. Whilst it seems that they are made fully aware of the opinions of senior management about developments, results and teaching and learning practises, they do not feel that they have a similar channel of communication to express an opinion or constructive criticism and suggestions about the performance and the decisions of senior management that impinge on their work. In this way, the feedback loop could be balanced and be seen to be balanced in both directions and the senior staff could benefit from the wisdom and experience of all of the Academy's members.

2.5 Recommendation 3

The Quality Assurance Handbook is not yet fully fit for purpose. We recommend a rethink of the Student Quality Commission (SQC). It does not appear to be sufficiently representing the student voice or supporting developments. The processes employed currently appear to be somewhat unnecessarily convoluted and distancing.

2.5.1

As outlined earlier in 1.6.1, 2.3 & 2.3.1 the Quality Assurance Handbook and its contents require a re-think and re-writing in order to define processes that are more user friendly and transparently communicate methods that are owned and can be seen to be owned, relevant and advantageous for an art & design academy.

2.5.2 An area of particular concern is the operation and methodology of the 'Student Quality Commission'. The SQC by its existence and by its operational methods, seems to embody a process that separates 'quality' as an issue instead of integrating 'quality' as essential factor in all processes.

2.5.3 The convoluted and indirect reporting/feedback process of the SQC would appear to delay issues; detach issues and solutions from the people who own them and can solve them; and make direct problem solving and the addressing of important issues in a relevant timeframe impossible. If a true 'quality culture' is to be established a direct method of including students in all management process has to be found and the immediacy of attention to quality assurance and enhancement issues can be achieved.

2.5.4 The Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle requires staff and student involvement equally at all stages. At the present time students and many staff members appear to be involved at the 'Check' stage but not at the other stages. A true 'quality culture' requires equal involvement at all stages. QA&E management is an integrated process not a separate methodology that runs in parallel with other management processes, although the importance of reflection is appreciated by staff members and students WdKA still lacks the capacity to fully enjoy the benefits of the reflective powers of all of its key stakeholders.

2.6 Recommendation 4

It wasn't clear to the Evaluation Team how the previous review from 2012 had been fully utilised. A strategic action list responding to recommendations and tracking achievements against those recommendations would support planning and make better use of external quality reviews and internal evaluation processes.

2.6.1 The Evaluation Team is aware of the immediate response by the Academy to the previous involvement of EQ-Arts in 2012 and the delayed positive appreciation after a period of time and reflection. This delayed appreciation appears to have facilitated the Academy's ability to make fuller use of the review process and to have enhanced the change process and to enjoy a period of positive development.

2.6.2 Following this complex journey of responses the Evaluation Team was at a loss to understand why its work and the results of the previous review and accreditation processes has not been made use of as a direct management tool by analysing and developing its recommendations into a plan of objectives, with a staged action process, achievable completion dates and some description of what a successful outcome to this process might look like for each issue addressed.

2.7 Recommendation 5

Staff commented on a culture of continuous change that requires them to focus on time-consuming trouble shooting. We recommend that consultation is broadened to capture solutions and that the rate of change is carefully considered, planned and communicated.

2.7.1 As described in the SER and other documents the Academy seems to appreciate the complexity and fatiguing nature of the process that the changes to the programmes have involved. Whilst the general response by stakeholders has been highly positive and the results have been characterised as highly positive generally, there is now a declared need for a period of slower evolution and a desire for a period of reflection to fully understand and appreciate the outcomes of the changes.

2.7.2 Whilst there was broad consultation and the inclusion of many individuals in the planning and organisation of the changes which is to be commended. There remains a sense that staff felt that developments are not always communicated thoroughly and they are sometimes unprepared to meet new situations.

2.7.3 Staff have employed a trouble shooting approach to solve the problems that the change process has produced. In doing so they are to be commended for their loyalty and professionalism. As a result of this experience they are in a position to provide positive and useful feedback about the outcome of the changes and their individual responses to it; feedback that could be of great value to the Academy and its future development.

2.7.4 This feedback could provide examples of good practice to be shared and descriptions of misguided pathways that could be avoided in the future. By trying to capitalise on this staff involvement and experience of and with the change process the Academy could greatly enhance its collective institutional knowledge and develop invaluable guidance for the future.

3. LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT, CURRICULUM AND RELATIONSHIPS TO PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND EMPLOYABILITY

3.1. The Evaluation Team was impressed by the commitment, at all levels within the Academy, to positively embrace the new model of art education proposed by the senior management team in 2012. The ET considered that learning, teaching and assessment, curriculum and relationships to professional practice and employability represented an area of particular strength. The Evaluation Team highly commends the considerable and largely successful efforts made by the Academy's team in tackling this '*reinvention of the Art School*' and their continued work in further refining and embedding the changes.

3.2 Commendation 1

The Evaluation Team commends WdKA for its work on enabling students to build self-reflection, self-determination and self-reliance through: a focus on research; use of competency assessments as a tool for learning; and Study Career Coach assignments.

3.2.1 The development of the new programme has been used as an opportunity to devise and embed methods that support students to engage at depth in reflection and the management of their own learning.

3.2.2 Students benefit from the focused approach to research, relating both to their practical and theoretical work. The plans to further develop and promote research through the new '*Research Station*' are welcomed and should further encourage and support students to inform themselves of the context of their practice, providing them with a framework of research skills to further scrutinise and analyse material.

3.2.3 The programme of briefings, workshops and assignments, carefully devised by the Study Career Coaches, sets out to prepare students for the competency assessments. Meanwhile mixed teams of theory and practice tutors employ the competency assessments as an important learning and teaching tool that becomes part of the iterative cycle of evaluation. In this way students are enabled to focus on reflection, evaluating their own learning, identifying their own strengths and areas for development, and recognising assessment as an integral aspect of their learning journey. Study Career Coaches also play an important role in supporting students to navigate the complexities of the curriculum.

While students in general appreciated the format of changing teaching-teams, they also voiced that, as learners, they would like to build stronger, long-term relations with key tutors.

3.2.4 The intention, to provide students with the essential life skills they will need to go on to be '*creative pioneers*' and to flourish in the demanding and competitive fields of Art and Design, is well supported by this focus on evaluation and self-reliance. While enabling students to acquire the key learning skills required to better undertake study at higher education level, the focus on self-reflection and reflexivity helps to equip students for employment and entrepreneurial activity in a range of contexts.

3.3 Commendation 2

It is evident that WdKA has been pro-active and successful in engaging and collaborating with industry partners and social entrepreneurs in the shaping and delivery of the curriculum. This supports students to develop as versatile practitioners equipped for the professional field and capable of generating their own opportunities on graduation.

3.3.1 The Evaluation Team commends WdKA's energetic and strategic engagement with industry partners. The Academy has been successful in working with a wide range of professionals and organisations from across Rotterdam and further afield.

3.3.2 The Academy's efforts in working with art and design organisations and employers through the Advisory Board and the working groups, consulted in the re-thinking of the Academy and shaping of the new curriculum, has proved valuable in a range of ways. The structuring and content of the curriculum is now considered more relevant and dynamic by industry partners, while those who participated in working groups are now members of WdKA's extensive network. There is a strong sense of support and loyalty for the Academy from external participants that is fuelling external projects and placements for students and opportunities for graduates.

3.3.3 The range of external projects and placements offers students important opportunities to test their learning in the '*real world*', and to critique the nature of art and design related employment and current models of socially engaged practices based on first-hand knowledge and experience.

3.3.4 Industry partners and alumni commented on their impression that graduates from WdKA now appear better equipped to tackle the uncertainty and unpredictable nature of employment in the fields of art and design.

3.3.5 The Academy's commitment, to employ a high percentage of practising professionals as part-time tutors, further ensures the currency of the curriculum and embeds networks within the Evaluation Team. The drive for '*relevance*' through engagement in social issues has given members of the staff team a strong sense of purpose and their commitment was evident.

3.4 Commendation 3

The programmes aim to be student-centred, offering choice and an open approach that questions the nature of the subject disciplines. Students who are particularly interested in outward facing practice are provided with opportunities to directly test approaches to socially engaged practices and this can enrich and deepen their learning.

3.4.1 The new curriculum is based on a student-centred approach where student choice and opportunities to collaborate outside of subject disciplines are promoted at all levels. The curriculum is discussed and considered as an active and malleable tool and staff work with students to interrogate the processes of art and design education and question the nature of subject disciplines.

3.4.2 WdKA's reinvention of the Academy champions cross-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary approaches and emphasises practices with a social focus. It provides those students who choose an expanded, participatory and/or socially engaged practice with many opportunities to test and explore collaborations and other non-studio based working methods. The opportunities to work in '*real*' contexts as described in 3.3.3 is of great value to students choosing this form of practice.

3.5 Commendation 4

The WdKA employs a wide range of approaches to teaching and encourages and enables a responsive, creative and exploratory approach from the teaching and technical team.

Students benefit from the innovative learning environment that extends beyond the walls of the Academy.

3.5.1 The new curriculum has been embraced by both academic and technical staff and they are working on a more equal footing with what appears to be a more horizontal structure. This enables the technical teams to be fully integrated in to the creative process of devising and delivering projects. In this way students were being offered a wide range of approaches to teaching and were benefitting from the enthusiasm, creativity and skills of tutors and technicians in what could at times be a highly collaborative and engaging atmosphere.

3.5.2 Staff from a wide range of backgrounds now work together in cross-disciplinary teams. Sociologists work alongside Graphic Designers, theoreticians and Design History specialists to deliver projects that are based on practice seen through the lens of context. This teamwork can engender highly innovative project material and a range of teaching practices. Students benefit from the range of inputs from the cross-disciplinary staff teams, with evidence that some teams approached teaching as a creative and reflexive practice.

3.5.3 As described in 3.3.3 students benefit from the opportunity of working in relation to the wider network of the creative industries in Rotterdam and further afield. For the more entrepreneurial students this sense that the Academy was centred in a network of creative possibilities was highly stimulating and valuable.

3.6 Commendation 5

WdKA has been active in collaborating with other institutions for example through the new Double Degree RASL programme and this has led to some sharing of good practice and development of new collaborative research programmes.

3.6.1 The RASL Double Degree initiative launched in 2017 involving collaborative programmes with the Erasmus University College and Codarts offers students an opportunity of combining subjects not otherwise available in the Netherlands. This initiative is yet to prove itself, however this collaborative venture appears to be carefully organised and evaluation if fully embedded.

3.6.2 The opportunity to share good practice and collaboratively problem solve with colleagues at other institutions has been recognised as an important opportunity for WdKA. Meanwhile colleagues from Erasmus University College considered WdKA's network approach to be an example of good practice that they wished to extend to their own institution.

3.7 Commendation 6

We commend WdKA for identifying that there are some periods of work overload for students and staff and support the re-thinking of the curriculum through the working group tasked with this project.

3.7.1 The Evaluation Team affirms WdKA's actions in responding to staff and student feedback to refine the schedule to better pace the curriculum. After speaking to working group members it was evident that much discussion and planning has taken place over the last year and a viable plan will be proposed for the next academic year. It is important that these changes and their rationale are carefully and comprehensively communicated to all students and staff as early as possible to avoid any confusion or further issues.

3.8 Commendation 7

We commend and support the work and intentions of the Theory Working Group to better integrate the theory element enhance student engagement and completion.

3.8.1 The Evaluation Team affirms WdKA's actions in responding to staff and student feedback regarding the relevance of the theory content and delivery. The plans to better integrate theory and to reconsider the pattern of delivery should support the Academy's efforts in tackling the issues related to missed submission deadlines and a relatively low pass rate that can impact on results at completion stage.

3.9 Recommendation 1

The WdKA has been through an intense period of change, the Evaluation Team recommends that a Change Management and Implementation Strategy (CMIS) is developed that engages staff and students in full consultation.

3.9.1 In 2012 the WdKA set out a major change of culture by '*reinventing the art school*'. Completely new curricula across all courses necessitated a new model of learning and teaching and the Academy moved away from discrete discipline specific studios and work-spaces and chose to embrace a more '*open*' approach with greater collaboration and teaching by cross-disciplinary teams. This cultural shift has inevitably proved highly challenging and, while there was evidence that a great deal of effort had gone in to communication and engaging teams in discussion, it is clear that a change management and implementation strategy is now required to avoid further '*change fatigue*'.

3.9.2 It appeared that while there was a great deal of good will, energy and enthusiasm for the new scheme from many tutors and technical staff, there is a very real danger that '*change fatigue*' could impact upon the students' experience. One tutor commented that the Academy had moved in to a culture of '*change and run and change and run.*' and we were informed that staff would welcome some time to fine tune and reflect, while changes mid-year were very confusing for students. It is timely for the Academy to reflect upon the successes and areas that could have gone better. Reviewing the implementation with staff and student input should prove valuable in preparing for any further changes and refinements.

3.10 Recommendation 2

The elaborate structure and its labelling and communication are considered confusing by a proportion of staff and students. It results in extra time invested in explanation and verification. The structure and description requires simplification and refinement to make it more coherent and comprehensible and to ensure that student expectations are met.

3.10.1 The new structure as discussed in 3.9.1 has brought with it a major cultural shift for the Academy. While this has been welcomed by staff, students and industry partners, it requires a considerable investment of time from Study Career Coaches and tutors, in explaining and communicating the meaning of the various labels and structures. The handbooks, guides and the student and staff intranet attempt to clearly explain the structure. Meanwhile different staff members have ways of explaining how the different elements can be viewed, for example that '*the Practices*' should only be considered as themes; that '*the Minor*' is really only another way of labelling the first quarter of the final

year; and that *'the Majors'* are the subject disciplines that students are gradually moved away from during the first 2 years of study.

3.10.2 The Evaluation Team recommends that there is a fresh overview of the structure and the labels given to different elements so that there can be a clearer diagram and explanation for potential applicants, students and staff.

3.11 Recommendation 3

The Evaluation Team was not convinced that the website and other literature available offered potential applicants a clear explanation of the particular focus and challenges of the programmes. Given the ambitions to recruit more widely from applicants who might not attend Open Days we consider it necessary for the WdKA to re-visit its promotional statements to ensure accuracy.

3.11.1 While the website and other literature provide information about WdKA's emphasis on professional practice and networks, it would still be possible for potential applicants to not understand certain key differences between the WdKA offer and that of other comparable institutions. A number of International institutions describe similar opportunities to work on external projects with an expanded field of practice. It is possible that the very significant differences, which could impact upon student choice, are not clear to potential applicants. It was evident from the students we met that they had not anticipated that the subject disciplines would be less clearly identifiable and that, while the stations were considered to be an excellent resource, they had not anticipated that studio space would not be available (apart from Fine Art 2nd, 3rd and 4th year students).

3.11.2 The Evaluation Team recommends that WdKA clearly describes the context in which successful applicants will work and the emphasis on practices over subject disciplines. Applicants should be aware that they are entering a significantly different learning context to other comparable institutions before making their choice of institution. This is particularly critical for International students who may not be able to attend an Open Day.

3.12 Recommendation 4

It appears that some tutors are not equipped to engage fully with the 'International Classroom', while the length of time required by tutors to translate between Dutch and English causes delays and extra pressure on staff time. We recommend that WdKA identifies solutions to this inconsistency.

The Evaluation Team has heard that some staff and students struggle to fully work within the prescribed mode of the *'international classroom'*. On-going language training opportunities may be necessary to fully realise it. International students reported that they felt some teachers resisted the need to deliver their classes in English and students felt they had little means of recourse to change this.

1.4.3 There does not appear to be an analytical approach to trace and evaluate the success rate and drop-out rate of international students. This is of particular importance for the desired expansion of the quota of international students.

3.12.2 The majority of tutors who met the Evaluation Team were highly proficient in spoken English and described a relative ease in moving between the 2 languages. However a number were less confident. In most cases tutors described situations where they were

required to go over material once in English and then again in Dutch for students who were less proficient in English and this meant that they might not cover as much material as intended.

3.12.3 As described above in section 1, there was evidence of inconsistency in relation to the availability of translations in to English of key documents for students and a number of videos on the intranet were only available in Dutch.

3.12.4 We strongly recommend that WdKA acts promptly to resolve these issues so that International students are able to access the full range of material.⁶ The Academy is also advised to consider teaching delivery and how best to support students and staff with the challenges of the International Classroom.

⁶ The Evaluation Team notes that in an accreditation process this would be framed as a condition to be fulfilled within a certain time frame.

4. RESOURCES: TEACHING STAFF, STAFF RECRUITMENT, DEVELOPMENT, DEPLOYMENT AND SATISFACTION, PHYSICAL RESOURCES.

4.1 The Evaluation Team was highly impressed by the amount of investment, not only financial but also the commitment by the whole WdKA team taken recently to reorganise and reconstruct the Academy and its learning environment according to the needs of the new curriculum structure. The plan to re-invent the Academy was conceived and organised by the senior management team in collaboration with the whole academic team and approved by the University. The changes are considered to be an improvement to the Academy by external partners, WdKA staff at all levels, as well as alumni.

4.2 Commendation 1

The design and reorganisation of the buildings and the development and equipping of the stations has given a physical reality to the concept of the programmes.

4.2.1 The redesign of the building around the working stations as the centre of the learning is an innovative approach and exemplifies a new type of working environment. Stations are well equipped, easily accessible and are managed by station managers. They are used on a multi-purpose basis, and by the students individually, when working in groups or as integrated working spaces during classes. The station managers support students as well as project classes and are integrated as teachers into project teams when required.

4.3 Commendation 2

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

4.3.1 The stations provide the students with the tools needed to approach their projects through different methodologies: by choosing which methods and tools to work with the students are encouraged to work on their projects with a creative and autonomous approach. The students are introduced to more traditional techniques through the availability of analogue methods and equipment as well as digital practices and processes.

4.4. Commendation 3

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

4.4.1 During the recent changes staff have been trained according to the new curriculum. The importance and enhanced responsibility of the station managers has been accompanied by relevant pedagogical training. The enhanced responsibility has been valued with enhanced status within the organisation.

4.5 Commendation 4

The policy to employ part-time professionals from a wide range of disciplines to contribute to the learning environment enriches the student and staff experience.

4.5.1 Professionals from the design and creative fields of the city are not only invited to teach, but also for the final exams during the exhibition period. This professional exam approach, according to the way the creative and arts fields work, gives the students not only an external 'real-world' view, but also prepares them for the job market of their respective field.

4.6 Recommendation 1

There is a dissonance between the level of satisfaction across staff levels at WdKA with some areas reporting to the Evaluation Team, and through the Staff Satisfaction Survey, their concerns regarding workload and a reduction in staffing. The staffing of core infrastructure appears to be problematic given the ambitions of the Academy and needs to be addressed.

4.6.1 The reorganisation has given some faculty members more responsibility, but also brought shortage in staffing, especially in the administrative area. In order to continue the re-structuring and general strategic approaches such as internationalisation sufficient staffing will be needed if the goals set are to be viable.

4.6.2 Some roles and responsibilities seemed to be unclear and lead to confusion between curriculum guidance, psychological support and academic feedback and administrative functions. More clearly identifying the responsibilities for the staff and responsibilities of staff for students would help internal communication, but also provide students with a better overview whom to contact for which question or problem.

4.7 Recommendation 2

The staff deployment across the new programmes appears to be diffuse. The students would benefit from identifying with subject champions. This would enable continuity for the students' creative journeys and would work to improve the progression and graduation rates.

4.7.1 Whilst the Academy's approach is interdisciplinary in subject and methodologies, subject champions could serve as mentors to provide orientation for students to identify with. Some further continuation of contact with teachers could enhance the student's focus, and also reinforce preparation for future roles and the job market.

4.8 Recommendation 3

Induction and learning of basic skills appears inconsistent across the various programmes. Reliance on students to identify, at an early stage, the core skills they need for future development needs reviewing. This reliance may also be impacting on progression and completion rates.

4.8.1 A core foundation programme, as it is practiced in some programmes, could be structurally adapted and would give students a more precise overview of their programme content. Core skills could be repeated in projects or requested to be implemented in some projects in later semesters, in order to give support to those students who have difficulties pursuing autonomous approaches.

4.9 Recommendation 4

The Evaluation Team understands that Fine Art is being relocated to new studios next year and recommends consultation with students and staff. The current studios are unsuitable and improved accommodation is required in a location where other resources are readily available.

4.9.1 As it presently stands the Fine Art work space is less than satisfactory. It is not large enough, is unsympathetic and does not allow for the production of individual works on even a temporary basis. Closer consultation is needed to establish the needs and requirements of

staff and students for the forthcoming new Fine Art area that will support artistic and personal development.

VERBAL REPORT 2012 (for comparison)

Introduction

The new programme proposals represent a brave vision that could be unique and brilliant, but there are risks that need to be recognized and accounted for during further development. We want to support the ambitious programmes envisaged. It has been difficult to gain a full picture due to the sequenced delivery of documentation.

The quantity of information provided is extensive. However the institutional and the BA SER have not captured the essence required. Some useful documents were discovered and provided too late for us to assimilate. Everything we asked for has been provided but the Academy could have been more proactive in ensuring we had the really relevant documentation related to the proposed changes earlier.

The Evaluation Team have been presented with a partial schematic outline of the proposed new programme structure. While the broad thrust of the proposal to restructure the BA programme has been presented the Evaluation Team has insufficient evidence to allow it to make a clear evaluation of the new programme. A description of the philosophy, rationale, programme aims and objectives with a diagram describing the structure of each year and the relationship between all years of the programme needs to be produced.

The ET finds it difficult to make a very conclusive statement about the impact or correctness of this radical strategy (inversion of the pyramid) because of the late introduction of this to the Evaluation Team, we have not really been able to test the proposal. We have found that the Academy will need to make sure that the proposed new programmes are really thought through and that all staff and students will really understand the value of the change.

Commendations

The ET commends the Academy on...

- The general climate of openness and enthusiasm for change. Great trust on all levels, that the changes will result in an enhanced learning experience and that problems occurring on the way will be handled in a pragmatic way and facilitated by the great engagement of staff.
- The strong desire and great energy coming from the senior management level and staff to effect drastic change for the enhancement of the school.
- WdKA's and PZI's student output, its contribution and general engagement with its stakeholders is valued by representatives of the cultural and professional scene.
- External stakeholders are convinced that their input, their concerns and demands are being heard by the Academy and are addressed.
- Students, Alumni and employers are very positive about the opportunities to give feedback to the Academy and have their contribution valued.
- Master Handbook is commendable as well as the effort we have seen on the BA level to work with mapped learning outcomes and consistent assessment criteria.

- The aspiration to provide individual paths for the students in the curriculum and later stages of their studies.
- Strong structure of student support and guidance
- Staff work as professionals in the field. Young and dynamic group of teaching staff.
- Internships are valued by the students to give them a good insight into the workplace and demands placed on them in the workforce.

Recommendations

Vision and mission

- Define and promote more clearly and coherently a convincing description of the distinctive features of the Academy;
- Formulate a clear and convincing definition of internationalization for the Academy and the programmes and outline the rationale, benefits and aims;

Management/organisational structure

- Improved communication and clarity of information for all stakeholders is imperative in such a period of radical change to achieve team cohesion;
- It is not clear to the ET whether the existing committee structure which is supposed to facilitate involvement of staff and students and devolvement of responsibility is effective and robust enough to handle the proposed changes.
- The fact that the responsibilities and workload of the QA office will expand must be taken into consideration.

Communication

- It is imperative that all Bachelor programmes produce a handbook
- The academy should take care to maintain a balance between the general and the detailed when producing course documents in order not to appear over prescriptive or unclear;

QA processes

- The senior management must ensure that the proposed new BA programme is compliant with the University regulations for programme minor modification if it is not to present a full documentation for a review and validation for a start in September 2013.
- The University at the earliest possible opportunity must define clear quality indicators that it wants the Academy to use to evaluate the quality of its programmes. Then the academy should make sure that their quality handbook is revised and that the indicators are built into the programmes annual reports to the academy and the Academy 's annual report to the university.
- The Academy has a quality manual but could improve its use of statistics/quality indicators more concisely and critically in the quality evaluation process evidencing enhancement actions and outcomes. This information becomes tools

for defence (QA, political) and for marketing promotion (recruitment of staff and students, reputation);

- The Academy must improve the rigor of student programme questionnaires and feedback response rate as part of a quality process with emphasis on programme quality strength and weaknesses;

Research

- The ET supports the development of a strategy to recruit research professors, to pursue accreditation as an academic MA and seek suitable partners in the university sector to accredit a PhD programme. It links to the need for the MA programme to be competitive. This is essential to ensure the international reputation of the MA programme.

BA

Programme philosophy and structure:

- Define and promote more clearly a convincing student profile for the three graduating profiles;
- The description of the philosophy, rationale, programme aims and objectives with a diagram describing the structure of each year and the relationship between all years of the programme needs to be produced.
- The restructuring of the BA programme in the way it has been presented to us is in an untested form. It should include a very strong evaluative follow-up process to see what is working well and what is not so that the Academy can respond quickly to issues and difficulties as they arise.
- The ET believes that there would be an advantage to the Academy if there were greater integration of BA and MA. This was also addressed by students. We have been informed by the Dean that certain actions are being carried out to support this need including mentoring BA students by MA students. There is mutual advantage to closer integration for both BA and MA programme.
- The Academy needs to encourage by the structure and content of its BA programme more students to progress from the BA programme to the MA programme.

Curriculum:

- The documentation should not be over prescriptive and specify programmes with a one-size-fits-all strategy. This was an issue raised by students and staff. Over prescription could impact on exploration, experimentation and risk taking that is the ethos of all art and design higher education.
- Organising the programmes in (discrete) quarters or projects should take into account that individual learning processes of students often work in loops and circles and students need to have a chance to revisit territory (themes, skills, competences), which they have been exposed to earlier in their studies.
- It should be considered that the new programme maintain a balance. So that it provides open-ended as well as prescribed learning experiences that promote the ideal of a proactive individual as well as a reactive one.

- We agree with the internal audit that concrete formulation of the final qualifications for the three formal graduation profiles is a key factor

Assessment:

- The Academy must ensure all assessment contributing to the award of the student, must relate to designated programme learning outcomes and related assessment criteria and the assessment team must contain members of academic staff experienced in the assessment process.
- The University and the Academy need to address the issue of students failing modules and the impact on their level of achievement. The current system would seem to advantage failing students by giving them more time to complete their project with no detrimental effect on their grades.
- The Assessment Board needs to develop a robust methodology to evaluate the quality of evaluations

Resources:

- The development of the stations represents a big investment and requires more critical evaluation. There are several factors to consider: confidentiality, privacy, noise pollution and the range of teaching and learning methods use. When they are introduced and induction programme may be required for staff and students.

MA

Programme philosophy and structure

- Define and promote more clearly a convincing student profile for the programme;
- In light of comments from current staff and students, alumni and employers, and the reduction in recruitment the senior management must critically evaluate the new combined MA and consider whether it could create an MA framework with generic learning outcomes with a number of named pathways thus retaining distinctive identity and recruitment strength.
- The Academy needs to encourage more students to progress from the BA programme to the MA programme. The way students are moulded into more professionally and market-aware modes would help them progress more easily (than external students) to the MA programme (which is adopting the same culture). This is a factor in sustainability, society and community and involvement in them.

Curriculum:

- The handbook still needs refining to include better alignment of the generic learning outcomes and assessment criteria and ensure that they map to the *“graduation requirements supplied skills 3.2”*- matrix. Also, to align the learning outcomes in the modules with the appropriate assessment criteria (including a balance between learning outcomes and assessment criteria). Ensure alignment between the Academy Handbook and the *“University guide”*;

This ELIA evaluation process is designed to be developmental and supportive to the Faculty. However, the ET would wish to point out that under ENQA approved accreditation processes

current in Higher Education a number of the recommendations above would normally be expressed as conditions.

Rotterdam, 23.05.2012

