

Accreditation Report

Arts

Iceland Academy of the Arts

Expert Committee

July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2007

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 The Expert Committee

- Dr.-Ing. Gerd Zimmermann, Professor of Architecture and Rector of Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, Germany (chair).
- Dr. Kathleen F. Conlin, Barnard Hewitt Chair in Directing, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA.
- Dr. Rita McAllister, until October 2006 Vice-Principal of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama.
- Dr. Eiríkur Smári Sigurðarson, Senior Advisor, Division of Research and Innovation, The Icelandic Centre for Research – RANNIS, Reykjavik, Iceland (Liaison Officer).

### 1.2 Terms of Reference

The Accreditation Committee was appointed to carry out a review of the Iceland Academy of Arts, according to Article 3 of Higher Education Act, no. 63/2006. Rules no. 1067/2006 give the following instructions to the committee:

‘The committee of experts shall provide the Minister of Education, Science and Culture with a report that outlines the results of the evaluation of items a to i, Article 2, paragraph 3 of the Rules<sup>1</sup>, based on the application and information provided by Higher Education Institutions in Iceland (HEIs) in accordance with article 2, in addition to evaluation of the following factors:

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<sup>1</sup> Items a to i referred to above are: *a. Objectives and Roles; b. Administration and Organisation; c. Organisation of teaching and research; d. Personnel qualifications requirements; e. Admission requirements and student rights and obligations; f. Teacher and student facilities and services; g. Internal quality system; h. Description of study according to learning outcomes; i. Finances.*

1. Academic knowledge and competence of HEI within the relevant field of study and subdivisions thereof, pertaining to the quality of teaching and research, academic facilities, dissemination of knowledge and connection to community.
2. The support structure of the HEI for the academic community, teachers and experts in the relevant field of study and the education and training of students.
3. Special attention shall be paid to the strengths of the fields of study and the subdivisions thereof, with reference to course plans, particularly in relevance to links to undergraduate and graduate studies and towards other appropriate fields of study.
4. Academic standard of the field of study and subdivision thereof, in national and international context. Regard shall be taken of national and international cooperation between HEI and other institutions.<sup>2</sup>

Should the conclusions of the committee be not to recommend accreditation then it shall provide a detailed report of any failure on the part of the HEI to fulfil the regulations according to article 2 or any recommendations for reparations that the HEI must undertake before accreditation for that particular field of study is awarded. In receipt of such a report, the Minister of Education, Science and Culture will afford the HEI a specific extension to make any amendments needed. The amendments will be evaluated by the expert committee in question, who will provide the Minister of Education, Science and Culture with a report detailing the aptness of the amendments. Final decision regarding accreditation will be announced to the HEI.’

### **1.3 Working Method**

The Accreditation Committee received an English translation of the accreditation application with appendices from the Iceland Academy of the Arts on 29 March 2007. At its first meeting at the Academy on Wednesday 25 April the committee received a folder with additional documents it had asked for (see Appendix II: Documents Received).

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<sup>2</sup> Translation of points 1-4 is based on a revised version of ‘Checklist on structure and approach on Expert Committee report and recommendations’.

The Accreditation Committee had a first meeting on Wednesday 25 April, followed by a visit to the Academy. The following Thursday was spent at the Academy, in its three separate locations. The committee met and had free discussions with members of staff – tenured staff, sessional teachers, technical staff, students and departmental and central administration (see Appendix 1: Visit to the Iceland Academy of the Arts). On Friday 26 April the committee met to discuss the application and the visit, it decided on how to proceed in writing the report and divided tasks among its members. In the afternoon the committee met with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and the ministry group responsible for the Accreditation process. On Saturday one committee member, Rita McAllister, travelled to Akureyri to see the final production of the Student Theatre (the fourth year group from the Department of Theatre).

The Academy received a first draft of chapters 2-10 of the report, minus conclusions, for corrections of factual errors and misinterpretations on Saturday 9 June. The Accreditation Committee received detailed comments from the Academy Tuesday 19 June and prepared its final report taking the comments into account.

#### ***1.4 Short Evaluation of the Work Process***

In general the work process went very well.

The accreditation panel from the UK, the US and Germany formed an appropriate combination of specialists to evaluate the disciplines of the Academy: Architecture, Art, Design, Drama and Music. All members of the panel are experienced in accreditation. The work process was managed and supported by RANNIS in a perfect manner.

Meetings with the rector and the administrative staff of the Academy greatly enhanced the evaluation team's comprehension of the Academy's origin, its initial attempts at curriculum building, and its development towards an interdisciplinary vision.

Subsequent meetings with faculty (both core and sessionals), staff, and students were frank and supportive with commentary that enriched the team's understanding of day-to-day operations. Tours of the facilities demonstrated the conditions which have supported the programming to date, but also indicated the pressing need for a unified building to embrace and facilitate the vision of the Academy and its faculty and students.

On the other hand the accreditation panel was facing two main difficulties.

The first problem was a *lack of detailed paperwork* in the beginning of the accreditation process leading to some critical misunderstanding and speculation about what the school is doing or not.

It is symptomatic of the problem that each of the panel members started this process with a quite different, and much less favourable, impression of the institution than that gained from personal encounter. The paperwork should be such that the institution can do itself justice from initial impression.

The institution applying for accreditation needs to be asked for the right material upon which the panel can make evaluative judgements, where these are called for. In particular, details of course/programme content should be asked for – not just the names, summary content and learning outcomes of the modules but also the rationale, structure and objectives of courses/programmes, and possibly also of subject areas.

A second challenge emerges from the nature of institutional accreditation itself which cannot really evaluate study programmes in detail and cannot evaluate finally the quality of students work, research work of the professors or the standards of awards, in comparison with best practice internationally. This limits the nature of the evaluation that can be included in section 11.

It must be emphasized that beyond the initial institutional accreditation, a subsequent peer evaluation of each degree programme is required with focused attention on course descriptions, faculty curricula vitae, students' work and performances, and review of administrative processes specific to student recruitment, achievement, and professional placement after graduation.

## **2. Objectives and roles**

When the Academy of the Arts was founded in 1999 this without doubt was crucial for the development of higher education in arts in Iceland – an important step forward, compared to the former separate schools. There are four departments now, forming a promising combination of fields of work: Department of Fine Arts, Department of Design and Architecture, Department of Theatre, Department of Music. The education in all departments is on the level of Bachelor degrees. There is a 1-2 year diploma study in Art Education.

The institution has set out its aims and objectives clearly enough and the panel agrees with the five stated objectives for the institution's existing programmes (p 5 paragraph 1)

The accreditation panel had the impression that after seven years of existence the Academy has to face now the next remarkable step of its development. Therefore a *strategy* is needed, which is not yet elaborated very clearly.

The Academy has made proposals for new study programmes (Masters Programmes and Bachelor Programmes). These are Masters Programmes in Fine Arts, Design/Architecture, Music, Theatre and a programme for teachers in art education, as well as interdisciplinary Masters Programme and two new Bachelor Programmes in Dance and in Film Studies. In a recently written paper 'Master's Program for Artists and Academics' the Academy describes the plan to establish altogether 8 new Masters degrees programmes. The list of all these new programmes seems rather arbitrary and in general too long. The scale of change in such a short time is too great, there is probably too much diversification in the plans, and the consequences of all these proposals may not have been wholly thought through.

We have to remember the limited resources of the Academy and the evident fact that the existing Bachelor Programmes are suffering from a lack of personnel. In Architecture, for example, there is an evident need to strengthen the education in the fields of construction,

technology and management. The Bachelor Program in Architecture is a non-professional programme and the students have architectural practices in architectural offices in Iceland. Nevertheless there is a need to stabilise that field of education within the educational programme by hiring personnel and strengthening the cooperation with the University of Iceland and the University of Reykjavik.

Planning new Masters Programmes of the Academy in general needs very careful consideration of these basic conditions and resources of education in existing fields and in proposals for the future.

The accreditation panel suggests focussing upon five main objectives:

- in strengthening the *interdisciplinary potential* of the Academy in conjunction with the process of conceiving the new Academy building, it is of greatest importance to build according to a concept ('Art School Buildings are built Art Theory')
- the elaboration of a *unique Icelandic profile* of the Academy in teaching and research thus producing an identifiable 'brand' in the international context
- the precise conception of a very small number of *Masters Programmes* leading to interdisciplinarity and contributing to that unique Icelandic profile and finally attracting students and professors from abroad
- the establishment of a small but focused *research unit* within the Academy possibly starting work on the history of art in Iceland
- strengthening the international cooperation by developing internationally-orientated Master Programmes together with foreign universities and starting an *International Summer Academy* for the arts in Iceland as planned by the Academy for the year 2011.



There should be a debate in the school about what we would like to call the '*future idea*' of the school.

- Is the school based mainly on the 'workshop', is it 'project based' or is it built on the 'master – scholar' principle? And will the school follow a conservatoire concept or a liberal arts concept?
- How can we imagine the impact of the impressive and unique Nordic and volcanic landscape of Iceland? Is there a possibility of bridging European and American Culture at the island of Iceland, a kind of transatlantic concept? What role does the art history of Iceland play in the actual programme of work?

If interdisciplinarity is an objective of the Academy (see the plan to have an Interdisciplinary Masters Program in 2009) why not conceive the new Masters Programmes *totally* and with *first priority* as interdisciplinary ones: for example a programme in 'Scenography' or a programme in 'Public Art'. Programmes of that kind would be able to integrate the different fields of the Academy as architecture, art, design, music, theatre, dance etc.

What, if any, are the institution's plans to provide continuing professional development (CPD) for professional – and perhaps amateur – artists?

#### Conclusion:

1. The Academy *meets the requirements* of the HEI Act with respect to the Bachelor Degree programme level in all departments (Article 2 of HEI law)
2. The first seven-year period of the Academy, before the separate schools came together has now come to an end and it is necessary to conceive 'the next seven years'.
3. For the day-to-day integration of the different parts of the Academy it is crucial to construct a *new building* combining all parts of the Academy

4. The panel agrees with the plan of the Academy to develop a group of *new Masters Programs*: but in principle as *interdisciplinary* programmes and as *international* programmes and with respect to the future profile and concept of the Academy, carefully considering the resources.
5. Because for modern art the integration of art theory in art production (and vice versa) is crucial, the panel confirms the plan of the Academy to build up a *Research Service Centre* which certainly needs cooperation with other relevant research units in Iceland (see the proposed ‘Agreement for the Advancement of Knowledge and Research in the Arts and the Creation of Art’).
6. To strengthen the internationalism of the Academy the institution has to form a unique Iceland profile and in the same time to establish a strong international network. To achieve that objective a new *International Summer Academy* (as planned by the Academy) could be very helpful.

### **3. Administration and organisation**

The Academy is *very small* in comparison with other HEIs, and it is a *very young* institution as well. Its administration is similarly small in scale, obviously having grown directly in keeping with the needs of the various departments, as they were established. Administrative staff, who clearly all have several roles, know staff and students personally and are very familiar with institutional needs. The chart of the administrative structure is quite simple; roles and responsibilities are clearly set out. Meetings involving the various areas of activity happen regularly, and there is a great deal of informal communication. The Rector plays an absolutely key role in running the Academy. To date this fairly light organisational framework seems to have served the Academy very well.

Such informality, however, is less likely to work successfully as the Academy grows and matures as an institution. At this key stage in its development the Academy should consider setting up a *formal committee structure*. As with other aspects of formalisation suggested in this report, this structure should be appropriate to the scale of the institution, and need not be over-elaborate. This committee structure could then grow with the institution. The introduction of Masters Programmes will, in any case, make informal decision-making less appropriate.

Two basic premises should be considered in this process of structuring: the separation of *institutional oversight* (currently by the Academy Board) from *academic decision-making*; and the separation of institutional policy-making from *day-to-day management*.

The current Academy Board is small: five members, of whom two are from the Ministry of Education and three from the Society for the support of the Iceland Academy of the Arts. Consideration might be given to extending the Board's number, to include more professional artists and perhaps more members of the business world, to open up the oversight of the Academy and provide complementary expertise – which will be vital as the institution expands.

In order to support the Rector and to act as the key academic executive body, the panel suggests that the Academy sets up a central *Academic Council* (with the role of a Senate). The relationship between this Academic Council and the Academy Board will need to be carefully formulated, with clear remits and responsibilities for each.

The Academic Council would not replace the current departmental councils, which would still administer the departments on day-to-day issues and the chairs of which would form the core membership of the Academic Council. It would, however, facilitate and formalise discussion on cross-departmental and institutional issues.

The Academic Council would be responsible for developing academic policy for the institution, for the standards of the Academy's awards, and for student progress. It would

be the central reporting-point for all other academic committees, such as the Admissions Committee (see Section 6 below), the Research Committee, and the Examinations Boards. It would also oversee the development and the validation of new courses.

The Academic Council would be chaired by the Rector – as the academic leader of the Academy. Its membership might include, as well as Deans, elected faculty members and representatives of the specialist/sessional staff. It should have student representation. The inclusion of external members from other educational institutions (who already offer Masters degrees and doctorates), and from other levels of education (for example, the school sector) should be seriously considered.

Working parties of the Academic Council could be formed to progress specific tasks and formulate detailed elements of policy.

In accordance with article 16 of the HEI act the Academy regularly has an assembly of the whole institution, the Academy Forum. In the process of structuring, the role and remit of the Academy Forum might be clarified. At the moment its status and reporting lines are not fully defined.

Some line management issues might also be reviewed: the line management of the Art Education Programme, for example, currently under the authority of the Deans and the Rector; and the support divisions, which might operate more effectively if centralised, in a new building. Consideration might be given to joining the various parts of the Library with Computer and Web Services into an extended Information Department, and to centralising all workshops and related equipment. A new Registry department will also be needed as the Academy grows, to deal with all the processes of admissions and student records, and the extensive paperwork involved in developing international relationships.

Conclusion:

1. The administration and organisation of the Academy of the Arts, taking into account that it is a very new art school, is according to article 15 & 16 of the HEI Act.
2. Observing the organizational principles of the Academy one can easily detect that the school is fairly new and very small and – not to forget – it is an Art School. Therefore the interaction between professors, students and staff is very personal, informal, sometimes spontaneous - possibly part of a milieu of creativity.
3. But in a growing institution like the Academy a much more formalised and differentiated set of structures and procedures is needed – not to diminish creativity and openness but to enhance it. The panel suggests considering two premises: the separation of *institutional* oversight (done now by the Academy Board) from the *academic* sphere, and the separation of institutional policy-making from *day-to-day* management.
4. The panel mainly suggests the establishment of a *new Academic Council* (‘Senate’) within the Academy which becomes a unit for integrating academic policy-making and conceptual and strategic planning of all academic affairs within the Academy (see article 15 of the HEI Act).
5. To coordinate Technical Services it might be helpful to join the Library with the Computer- and Web-Services into an *Information Department* and to centralize the workshops, both spatially and from the managerial point of view.

## 4. Organisation of teaching and learning

### 4.1 Teaching

The organizational principles of education, especially the Bachelor degree programmes within the Academy are in accordance with the law.

In the same time some of the curricula do not seem to be well defined. Generally course development processes need formalisation and quality assurance.

Learning modules are defined and from the Web Site it is possible to see which are mandatory and which are optional. The proportion of mandatory modules may be too low and the programme definition therefore seems too weak. It is difficult to find out what the content and the structure is of each individual programme.

It is not easy to understand if there is a learning progression within the curriculum and it is quite unclear what is specific for a discipline and what is not. Looking for example at the relation between Design and Architecture the breadth and depth of the curriculum has to be defined, especially with respect to the disciplinary and the interdisciplinary aspects.

The organisation of the semester/the programme needs careful observation to get a balance between block teaching units and modules which span a semester, a year or even the whole length of the course.

Interdisciplinary activities are very important to the whole ethos of the institution; some formalisation of these might be necessary to maintain and nurture this aspect, as the institution grows.

Evidently there is a need for more precise curriculum definition within the Academy. There are two main problems to solve: the *structure* of academic decision-making, and: the academic *staff*.

For the Academy it seems necessary to clarify the academic responsibilities. The panel would like to suggest defining the person of a '*Program Director*' and to clarify the relation between the Program Director, the Dean as Head of Department and the above mentioned '*Academic Council*', which would be responsible for the whole of the Academy.

The difficulties seem to emerge from the fact that the number of full time professors in the Academy is very small: too small compared to the international standard. Is it really possible to have an education of architects with only three full time professors, while the usual number is 15-20? The Academy itself realizes 'that there is a limited pool of qualified academics available that can express themselves in Icelandic.'

But for a better curriculum it would be necessary to hire more full time professors to fulfil the educational needs of the various disciplines – if not from Iceland then from abroad. Additionally the accreditation panel suggests strengthening the cooperation of the Academy with the *sessional teachers* from 'outside' the Academy and integrating them into curriculum development.

The Academy of the Arts has very good connections with *artistic practice in Iceland* which we think is a very important advantage of the school in general. One of the professors told the accreditation panel that the Academy is *the 'flagship of Icelandic culture'*. There is a very good cooperation with the theatres, the design and architecture practice, the art and musical world of Iceland, giving the teaching in the Academy a powerful background and in practice the chance for trainee programmes for students.

At present the Academy has a remarkable number of international contacts and exchanges (with about 60 HEI institutions all over the world). The Academy told the panel that proportionally the number of international exchange students and incoming

foreign teachers is probably highest in IAA of all HEIs in Iceland. Especially noticeable is the cooperation of IAA with the Nordic Countries.

It will be very important for the Academy to further strengthen the *international exchange* of students and professors. One possibility is to build up the planned and suggested International Summer School. If the Academy is planning to establish new Masters Programmes, these programmes from the beginning should be conceived as internationally-orientated programmes shared with overseas art schools involved in the exchange of students and teaching staff.

## **4.2 Research**

One of the objectives of the Academy is to found a 'Research Service Centre'. But until now there is no concept for such a centre – except a very rough sketch of an 'Agreement for the Advancement of Knowledge and Research in the Arts and the Creation of Art'. How can it start in 2007?

As mentioned above the accreditation panel in principle would like to support that approach because for a modern art school high level theoretical reflection is a must. Art today needs reflection and has to live in a milieu of theory too.

But to build a relevant 'Research Centre' needs careful observation of the preconditions. At present the Academy has no study programme in Theory and History of Art. There is no plan to build up a Bachelor and Masters Programme in that field of art history and theory. And there is no plan and perhaps no chance to have a PhD Programme. Who then will work in the research centre, what kind of financing is planned and what kind of assessment of academic standards could be done? Such questions should be clarified before a research centre is started. The Academy also has to clarify how the necessary cooperation with other universities will be realized.



Conclusion:

1. The structures and procedures of teaching in the Academy are in accordance with the regulations of the HEI Act (article 6 & 7). Otherwise the curricula, the definition of modules, learning outcomes, particularly the strict definition of the core elements of a programme, need further attention.
2. To meet the requirements of teaching in an expanding school and with new programmes clearly needs more full time professorship to stabilize teaching.
3. The accreditation panel strongly supports the plan to start a Research Service Centre within the Academy meeting the standards set by the scientific community. Running the Centre would certainly require the cooperation of other universities.

## **5. Personnel qualifications requirements**

The institution's document, 'Rules on Appointments at the Iceland Academy of the Arts' clearly specifies the advertisements, application process, committee evaluation procedures, and final decision protocols for all long-term teaching and administrative positions at the Academy.

The Academy emphasizes an equal opportunity process in their hiring.

The full-time faculty are qualified by degrees and/or record of artistic practice to deliver baccalaureate degrees.

As the Academy prepares to develop Masters level and possibly Ph. D. degrees, the faculty qualifications will need to be reviewed and will likely require an even more rigorous expectation for their competence which will include advanced degrees and/or a

relevant performance, exhibition or publication record that is internationally competitive with those from peer institutions.

The Academy's commitment to a global presence and influence is currently practiced in two ways: 1) through the hiring of visiting instructors and guest artists from abroad, and 2) the fact that many of the core faculty have degrees from abroad. However, to achieve greater relevance and authority in the global arena, all the faculty need to refresh their credentials in these areas and to explore opportunities for international creative research and publication.

The current faculty ratios favour a few core faculty and part-time specialists in each area. As mentioned above, in order to deliver a curriculum with a deep coherence and attention to students' progress toward a degree, it is necessary to strengthen and increase the number of core faculty. The Academy is to be commended for its commitment to a variety of artistic influences and techniques, but that commitment is out of balance with a need for curricular structure and faculty sustainability.

The sessionals/specialist faculty are vital contributors to the academic enterprise of the Academy. However, a mechanism needs to be developed wherein they can be briefed on the Academy's mission and goals, apprised of new developments, and offered an opportunity to comment on and contribute to the development of curriculum and research.

Sessionals who have been hired regularly by the Academy need earlier notification of their assignments in order to plan their own teaching and professional work outside of the Academy. Perhaps a special title and hiring calendar can be developed for those sessionals/specialists who have demonstrated ongoing commitment to the Academy and who are likely to be hired regularly in specific capacities.

Faculty development strategies for both core faculty and sessionals/specialists should be implemented to prepare all faculty for the advancing mission of the IAA: developing a

research agenda, expanding research opportunities, planning the architectural programme for the new building, and further internationalizing the curriculum and faculty.

Conclusion:

1. The Academy has set its own rules on appointments in accordance with the HEI Act (article 17 & 18).
2. The proportion of full-time professors at present is too small. To start new Masters Programs and to promote research work within the Academy would require developing a strategy for staff development and a better balance between full-time and sessional teachers.

## **6. Admission requirements and student rights and obligations**

Selection auditions/interviews are held for all applicants to the Academy, and the criteria for acceptance are clear (see article 19 of the HEI Act and ‘National Qualification Framework for Iceland’). Substantial information on the entrance requirements of each specialist department is published. *Admissions Committees* are appointed for each department, and the decisions of these Committees on the selection of students for Academy courses is final. The panel questions the wisdom of this. The Academy might consider the possibility of final decisions on selection being ratified at an Academy Council (see Section 3), where the overall intake profile might be discussed and any anomalies reviewed.

A special *Grievance Committee*, chaired by the Rector and with appropriate staff and student representation, deals with issues of student discipline and students’ rights.

There are clear regulations on attendance, student progress, evaluation processes and requirements for graduation. It is noted in these regulations that ‘Academy instructors are

in charge of, and responsible for, assessment'. The panel felt that such responsibility might properly reside with the Dean of the department, with the implementation of the process being delegated as appropriate.

The academic appeal process outlined is extremely brief and perhaps somewhat light on natural justice. No acceptable grounds for appeal are given, and students have no right to an objective institutional hearing. There is also no higher court of appeal than the Dean of the department. The Academy might consider both grounds for appeal and if another stage in the internal process might be desirable.

The disciplinary code is equally brief, though in this case the appeal process is clear. Further consideration might, however, be given to defining 'indecent' and 'improper'.

The Academy's Policy on Special Resources for Studies and Equal Rights Policy are clear and well thought-out. The former deals mainly with the special needs of disabled students, and the latter entirely with issues of gender. The institution might consider extending the admirable statement at the beginning of the Special Resources Policy into the Equal Rights arena, to cover possible discrimination on the grounds of race, religion or sexual orientation.

Student handbooks are issued, covering a whole range of practical issues; a special version of this handbook is produced for international staff and students. As the institution grows and more overseas and exchange students are involved in its courses, the Academy might consider appointing an *international officer*, to implement its international plans and also to provide particular support for overseas students, so that they are truly integrated into the institution. The Academy told the panel that there has been an international coordinator since the foundation of the Academy. Whilst the Rector's annual meeting with overseas students and an opinion survey for these students are mentioned in documentation, this post is not and its function needs strengthening.

In general the Academy should also consider giving its students more of a formal voice in all of its processes – policy development, decision-making and quality assurance.

Conclusion:

1. Selection auditions/interviews are held for all applicants, and the criteria for acceptance are clear.
2. In general the Academy should pay some more attention to the real involvement of students in many processes of academic decision making along with the constitution of the proposed Academic Council.
3. The Academy's Policy on Special Resources for Studies and Equal Rights Policy are clear and well thought-out.
4. There is a need to make the position of an international officer more important and to pay greater attention to the international student support.
5. With respect to the admission requirements and students rights and obligations the panel suggests accrediting the Academy according to the Iceland HEI law regulations.

## **7. Teacher and student facilities and services**

One of the main obstacles for the Academy's development today is the spatial separation of the three different sites of the Academy in the city of Reykjavik.

Therefore the accreditation panel strongly supports the plan to build a *New Art School Building* where the different parts of the school could be concentrated. This new and integrating place seems to be crucial for the next phase of development of the Academy.

Furthermore the new school building at an attractive site in Reykjavik has the potential to become a symbol of the corporate identity of the Academy of the Arts representing the school worldwide.

Together with the new building all the facilities of the Academy should be modernized and become an integrated part of the school. The new library together with the IT networks and the media technologies should be planned as the new Information Department of the Academy in a central position within the new building.

The workshops should become centralized there – and modernized. It is quite important to have enough atelier and laboratory space at the new site of the Academy. Exhibition and theatre space is needed, open to the public. The rector told the panel that the new building should have about 30% public space, 30% common space and 40% specialised department space.

The panel suggests that possibly housing for guest professors and students should be part of the new site of the Academy to produce a small ‘campus’.

As with other aspects of the institution’s activities, there is now a need to formalise human resource issues and student support. A student counsellor is also needed, especially as institution grows.

The institution needs to set up special support systems for *overseas and exchange students*, especially as numbers increase: perhaps international support and student counselling could be combined in the first instance.

Conclusion:

1. The implementation of the interdisciplinary approach of the Academy requires *a new building* to bring together the now separated three sites. This is a core question of concept and quality, but of efficiency too. With the new building at

one site the information facilities (IT network, Library) and the workshops could be centralized. All equipment is in need of modernisation.

2. The Academy should implement a special support system for overseas and exchange students.

## **8. Internal quality system**

Whilst there is little doubt that the Iceland Academy of the Arts, despite its youth, is already an institution of considerable quality, its processes for managing and enhancing quality are as yet relatively undeveloped. The institution is well aware that the realisation of its aspirations depends upon its supporting learning and teaching of a quality comparable with that of the best of similar institutions abroad. The informal and rather personal processes it employs at the moment to monitor quality will, in that context, need considerable formalisation, to become evaluative rather than descriptive, and to encompass greater objectivity and external input.

In such a small and specialist institution, where staff and students are well known to one another, there is no need for an over-elaborate or onerous system of quality control. Even as the institution expands, personal knowledge and judgement should remain as a key feature of quality assurance. An element of formality – of system and of measurement – is, however, crucial in order to deal with future adverse incidents or trends, to guard against complacency and, most importantly, to enable future improvement. The institution will need to take ownership of the concept of quality enhancement.

At the moment the Academy does not carry out systematic internal quality control; nor does there seem to be formal evaluation from personnel external to the institution, such as External Examiners (except for very few elements of evaluation and control, such as the external supervision of finances of the Academy). This is an issue which should be

addressed as a matter of priority. The institution has yet to undergo *external evaluation* of its quality.

The only report relating to quality assurance available to the panel was a review of the administration and operation of the Academy carried out in 2004 by IMG Deloitte in connection with the institution's operating agreement with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. In that report it was commented that 'quality control has not been of a formal nature as was stipulated in the operating agreement'. The Academy noted this in its accreditation application, and has responded by issuing a new Quality Manual (see below).

The Deloitte report, however, mentioned several other quality issues which the Academy appears not to have followed up: these include the eventual need to define standards, the tendency towards individualism in the four schools, the need to improve the process of student evaluation of instruction and to formalise employee development, and to clarify some areas of administrative responsibility.

The *Quality Manual*, of which only the content list was available in English, appears to be a significant step towards codifying the Academy's practices and processes. So far, however, there are few systems of measurement or evaluation – in the way of Performance Indicators – included in the Manual.

The following comments on quality assurance issues which seem, at this stage in the institution's development, to need further development might form a constructive basis upon which the Academy might build:

- The institution might consider what policy on quality might best suit its particular needs, how this might be devised and how the entire staff and student body can take ownership of it.



- A method of defining standards – and of benchmarking – should be adopted, so that the Academy can measure itself more objectively against other institutions, so that there is cross-discipline calibration, and also so that faculty, as well as sessional instructors, can agree on, for example, where the pass/fail line is drawn.
- Related to this, assessment processes should be formalised and assessment criteria devised; the various aspects and kinds of assessment should be co-ordinated and calibrated so that this whole area is transparent in its operation.
- Formal mechanisms for course/programme validation should be introduced; external specialists – in this case, from overseas – need to be involved if standards are to be comparable with best practice elsewhere.
- Responsibility for the content, delivery and assessment of all aspects of the curriculum should lie with the Dean or course leader, and not delegated in part to specialists and/or sessional instructors – though these latter may implement them.
- Processes for evaluating the quality of courses and the effectiveness of teaching should be made as objective as possible: this is always difficult in a small institution, but for that reason objectivity is even more desirable. Discussions with the Rector and with Deans are unlikely to be totally objective. On-line surveys – if completed – will give better feedback, but this should be supplemented by a regular system of *MER* (Monitoring, Evaluation and Review), where the analysis of issues is combined with action on addressing problems. A system which is seen to effect change will bring buy-in from the student body. There are a number of models for such a system; the institution should devise one best suited to its needs, and should consider involving external professional artists in the process.
- Recruitment, induction and staff development (including research training) processes – especially as they apply to part-time specialists and sessional instructors – possibly need to be reviewed and formalised to more closely match

procedures for full-time staff. These part-time staff, who are in the very front line of specialist teaching, need to be nurtured and kept informed if consistent quality in teaching and learning is to be achieved.

- *Performance Indicators* – a track-record of institutional achievement – should be devised in keeping with the Academy’s need to account, to itself as well as to others, for how it is doing in key areas. PIs might include yearly degree results and classifications, year and course completion rates, drop-out rates, post-course student success rates and External Examiners’ reports. The Academy is already making a statistics report of that kind three times a year for the State Statistics Bureau.

There is also a need to formalise, through signed agreements which include detailed mutual recognition of course credits, overseas exchange relationships – for the purposes of quality assurance. This would be a formalisation of existing practice in the organisation of international exchange programmes.

Conclusion:

1. At present the Academy does not carry out systematic quality control and quality assessment. There are only very few internal elements of teaching evaluation and finance control.
2. A method of defining standards – and of benchmarking – should be adopted, so that the Academy can measure itself more objectively against other institutions mainly in an international context.
3. The Academy should implement course/programme validation, the evaluation of academic personnel and the analysis of Performance Indicators.

4. The panel knows that the habit of an Art School differs from the methods of other types of universities. And the panel has to take into account the very newness and the quick growth of the IAA. Summarizing these special conditions the panel suggests accrediting the Academy with respect to the internal quality management.

## **9. Description of study according to learning outcomes**

To increase specificity and to fulfil the goals of the degree programmes, the IAA should develop their own document in relation to the HEI stipulations which relates specific content to outcomes and to practice and assessment.

The degree requirements and any relevant documents on learning outcomes should relate to the specific needs of the artistic disciplines and to student abilities and skill acquisition required to achieve professional goals and expectations.

Course descriptions should be redeveloped which clearly state aims, skills and assessment processes with expectations related to benchmark criteria.

Current documents fulfil the HEI requirements above but are mechanically stated resulting in a repetitive and barely functional document for guiding both faculty and student work. A specific and dynamic articulation of outcomes related to the specific arts disciplines would inspire faculty and student commitment to both short-term and long-term goals of the educational vision for IAA.

### Conclusion:

1. Current documents fulfil the HEI requirements but are mechanically stated resulting in a repetitive and barely functional document for guiding both faculty and student work.

2. It would be necessary to describe the specificity and the unique goals of the degree programmes much more in detail to get a clear picture of the outcomes of study.

## **10. Finances**

The Iceland Academy of the Arts is a non-profit organization based on a charter which was confirmed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. There are the financial statements of the Academy for the years 2005 and 2006 which form the basis of the general accreditation panel's statements.

Evidently the Academy mainly lives from the revenues from State Treasury. The other financial sources (tuition, other revenue) contribute to the income of the Academy only to a proportion of about 1/6. The state financing is based on a contract the Academy made with the ministry in 2005 and which is valid until 2009. According to the contract payments for teaching will be decided in the national budget every year and is based on student numbers and fee contribution.

Of course the main part of costs is the staff – academic and technical staff. The full-time equivalents altogether are about 110-120, which in principle seems to be adequate to the overall number of students.

But the accreditation panel is of the opinion that the amount of funding for the Academy in general seems to be too small. This is with respect to the quality of equipment, (especially the situation in workshops and the library) but mainly with respect to the number of professors and especially full time professors. There are only 8 full professors (plus 4 deans and only 2 associate professors) for four departments. There are for example in the architecture and design department only 2-3 full professors, which is absolutely not sufficient; it is far below international levels and this must have a negative impact on quality. A focused increase in finance for the Academy is urgent and

unavoidable, not to mention the necessity of having a new building to bring together the separated parts of the Academy. Equally necessary is the appointment of a certain number of foreign guest professors to open up the spirit of the Academy. But this again would need additional financing.

Special financing will be needed by the envisioned ‘Research Service Centre’ too.

Conclusion:

1. There is a direct mutual interdependence between the *amount of funding* for the Academy (personnel resources, equipment and investment) and the *quality* of teaching, artistic and research work.
2. The funding at present is not sufficient to meet the international quality benchmarks necessary for a really competitive Academy of the Arts.
3. The main investment has to be done in full-time professorships, guest professor, other key functions and above all a new building (with new equipment).

## 11. Summary of findings and recommendations

1. Founding the IAA in 1999 by the institutional fusion of the previously separate art schools without doubt was a unique achievement for the arts and art education in Iceland. The panel felt that the initial idea of integrating the different fields of art in *one* school is a very strong and vital approach making the Academy a really successful institution. At the same time the quick growth of the institution, the lasting separation of the earlier schools within the new institution, a certain weakness of the academic and managerial structures and the limited resources of the Academy have led to a series of evident developmental problems. The conclusion is that after its '*founding era*' the Academy is at a next threshold and has to face the next step which will be the '*era of consolidation*' with full implementation of all elements of the envisioned concept. For these reasons a new strategy is needed to clarify the future path of the Academy. The panel suggests focussing upon *interdisciplinarity* in teaching and research as a predominant quality.
2. The Academy plans to complete the existing Bachelors degree programmes and implement additional Masters degree programmes. In principle the panel supports that plan but to establish four disciplinary Masters degree Programs, one interdisciplinary Masters degree Program and possibly some other programs as well seems to be far too ambitious and cannot be done successfully because of a lack of professors, mainly full time professors and other staff. The panel suggests that the Academy thinks about a very small number of new Master Programs. These very carefully planned Master Programs should be explicitly conceived as *interdisciplinary* and *internationally* orientated ones, possibly in the field of scenography, public art or focused perhaps on new media art. Upon this depends the profile the Academy will achieve in the future. The point is to bridge the different Bachelors programmes at Masters degree level. It is suggested that Master programmes are introduced more gradually, and build upon existing

- strengths: musical composition, for example – perhaps together with creative writing and choreography, to maintain the interdisciplinary strategy; or perhaps Masters Courses in sound and visual activities.
3. The plan of the IAA to establish a *Research Service Centre* again is supported by the accreditation panel because modern art needs to live in a milieu of theoretical reflection and art education needs the basis of theory, especially within the imagined Masters degree programmes. On the other hand presently there are almost no preconditions for having a relevant research work in the Academy. There is no Art Theory and History Programme at any level of education. There are probably only a few who would start relevant research work within the Academy and there is no concept about what to do within that research centre, except what is set out in a very short and formal agreement paper. Who will set the standards for work and how could the essential cooperation with other Icelandic and overseas universities be organized? So the Academy has to discuss an evolving research strategy for the centre, in keeping with the institution's central vision. It is suggested that the initial focus of this research strategy should be Icelandic culture. The imminent establishment of a Research Service Centre is important; then consider employing contract research staff in priority areas; offer current staff appropriate staff development; again, concentrate upon current strengths. Take time to evaluate upon which, of the many current directions, the institution's research strategy should be based: decide what is the ideal way forward for this distinctive institution
  4. If interdisciplinarity within the Academy is to work the spatially separated parts of the Academy have to be integrated by *a new building at a new site*. This possibly is one of the most essential elements of the future development of the Academy. A lot of managerial, structural and organizational problems could be solved by such spatial integration not to mention the mentality and the chance to overcome the artificial gaps between the separated disciplinary cultures. The debate about type, atmosphere and structure of the building should be used as a

- debate about idea and concept of the future Academy. There is a chance not only to form a spatial concept but a corporate identity and an architectural and artistic experiment, a *symbol* with an international impact.
5. The Academy in general has to develop, to formalize and to differentiate *the inner quality management system* and the *international evaluation and benchmarking procedures*. Two basic premises should be considered in this process of structuring: the separation of *institutional oversight* (currently by the Academy Board) from *academic decision-making*; and the separation of institutional policy-making from *day-to-day management*. In order to support the Rector and to act as the key academic executive body, the panel suggests that the Academy sets up a central *Academic Council* (with the role of a Senate). The relationship between this Academic Council and the Academy Board will need to be carefully formulated, with clear remits and responsibilities for each. It is suggested by the panel that, in order to facilitate the review process – the upgrading of the curriculum along with the accommodation – the institution might appoint an *International Advisory Board*. This Board, appointed for a year, would support the forward development of the curriculum, the introduction of Masters Programmes, and the development of a research strategy - along with the structural, organisational and staffing changes that would accompany these changes. It would also allow the institution to make informed comparisons between itself and the best of similar institutions abroad, and keep abreast of (changing) best practice.
  6. Now is the time for the institution to move towards STRATEGIC thinking: the first phase of establishing itself is now over; ad hoc ideas – however good – should be replaced by structured development. The institution should ensure that its development strategy focuses upon the key aspects of this vision: that it carefully builds and consolidates its international relationships, and in the process builds up its own range of expertise; that it reviews its national, pan-Icelandic role, both through its developing rural strategy and in conjunction with its



research plans; that it nurtures interdisciplinarity – which could be its unique selling point - and gets involved in projects which promote this quality; that the various individual specialisms within the institution are taken to their own highest level, in the context of cross-disciplinary collaboration; that diversity in provision is developed within a coherent curricular framework; and that innovation – the development of new artistic work and fresh ideas – is always a priority in the institution’s thinking.

7. The accreditation panel, in acknowledging that the achievements of the IAA are in accordance with the HEIs regulations, recommends the accreditation of the Iceland Academy of the Arts as an Higher Education Institution of Iceland.

**Signatures of Accreditation Committee**

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Dr.-Ing. Gerd Zimmermann  
*Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, Germany.*

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Dr. Kathleen F. Conlin

*University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA.*

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Dr. Rita McAllister

*Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, Scotland.*

## **Appendix I: Visit to the Iceland Academy of the Arts**

### Wednesday April 25th, Office of the Rector, Skipholti 1

*Meeting with directors, 15:00 – 16:30*

Hjálmar H. Ragnarsson, rector  
Jóna Finnsdóttir, managing director  
Anna Kristín Ólafsdóttir, director of academic affairs

*Meeting with deans of departments and director of arts education, 16:30 – 18:00*

Mist Þorkeldsdóttir, Dean of Department of Music  
Ragnheiður Skúladóttir, Dean of Department of Theatre  
Kristján Steingrímur Jónsson, Dean of Department of Fine Arts  
Jóhannes Þórðarson, Dean of Department of Design and Architecture  
Arnþrúður Ösp Karlsdóttir, Director of Arts Education

### Thursday April 26th, Laugarnes, 2nd floor, Arts Education

*Meeting with members of academic staff, 13:00 – 14:00*

Árni Heimir Ingólfsson, Associate Professor of Musicology  
Kjartan Ólafsson, Professor of Music Composition

Magnús Þór Þorbergsson, Program Director of Contemporary Theatre Practice  
Karen María Jónsdóttir, Program Director of Contemporary Dance

Einar Garibaldi Eiríksson, Professor of Fine Arts  
Anna Líndal, Professor of Fine Arts

Guðmundur Oddur Magnússon, Professor of Graphic Design  
Sigríður Sigurjónsdóttir, Professor of Product Design

Svanborg Matthíasdóttir, Instructor of Arts Education

*Meeting with sessional instructors, 14:00 – 14:30*

Hildigunnur Rúnarsdóttir, composer  
Stefán Jónsson, theatre director  
Ólöf Nordal, fine arts  
Steinþór Kári Kárason, architect  
Vigdís Jakobsdóttir, theatre director / arts education

*Meeting with students, 14:30 15:30*

Hrafnkell Pálmarsson, music composition, 3rd year  
Gréta Salóme Stefánsdóttir, violinist, 2nd year

Árni Kristjánsson, contemporary theatre practice, 2nd year  
Vigdís Másdóttir, acting, 2nd year

Þórdís Jóhannesdóttir, fine arts, 3rd year  
Árni Þór Árnason, fine arts, 3rd year

Vala Ingólfssdóttir, architecture, 3rd year  
Steinar Júlíusson, graphic design, 3rd year

Anna Brynja Baldursdóttir, arts education (theatre)  
Hallgerður Hallgrímsdóttir, fashion design, 3rd year

*Meeting with foreign students, 15:30 – 16:00*

Anni Poikonen, piano, exchange student from Finland  
Anne Marte Overaa, fine arts, 1st year, from Norway  
Steve van der Kaaij, exchange student in graphic design, from Netherlands  
Sabrina Stiegler, exchange student in product design, from Germany  
Maila Oen Hellesøy, fine arts, 1st year from Norway

*Meeting with directors of library services, computer services, and workshops, 16:15 – 16:45*

Lísa Valdimarsdóttir, Director of Library Services  
Ágúst Loftsson, Director of Computer Services  
Jóhann Torfason, Director of Workshops (Laugarnes)

*Final meeting with rector, managing director and director of academic affairs 16:45 – 17:30*

## Appendix II: Documents Received

### Documents received only in Icelandic not listed

1. Higher Education Act 63/2006 (draft translation).
2. Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions according to Article 3 of Higher Education Act, No. 63/2006 (draft translation).
3. National Qualification Framework Iceland (draft translation).
4. Application for Accreditation of Arts, Iceland Academy of the Arts.

### Reference Documents received with Application:

5. The Academy's Policy 2007 – 11.
6. Iceland Academy of the Arts – Rules 2006 – 2007 academic year.
7. Rules for the Iceland Academy of the Arts' Annual Meeting.
8. On the Board of the Iceland Academy of the Arts – The Appointment of the Board.
9. Curriculum Vitae of Administrators and Long-term Instructors of the Iceland Academy of the Arts.
10. IMG Deloitte, Appraisal report for the Ministry of Culture, Science and Education, dated 28 November 2004. *The Icelandic Academy of the Arts: An Appraisal of its Operations and Administration (Main Conclusions)*.
11. Rules for the Education Fund for Long-Term Academy Instructors.
12. The Equal Rights Policy of the Iceland Academy of the Arts.
13. Student Rights: Cf. Article 7 of the Iceland Academy of the Arts Regulations 2004-2005.
14. Iceland Academy of the Arts Human Resources Policy.
15. Charter for the Iceland Academy of the Arts.
16. Rules on Appointments at the Iceland Academy of the Arts.
17. The Iceland Academy of the Arts Policy on Special Resources for Students.
18. The Department of Music. Information for Applicants 2007.



19. The Department of Fine Arts. Information for Applicants for the BA Program Academic Year 2007-2008.
20. The Department of Design and Architecture. Information for Applicants for the BA Program Academic year 2007-2008.
21. Iceland Academy of the Arts Financial Statements 2005/2006.
22. Exchange Student Poll – English Question List.
23. Degree Descriptors: Iceland Academy of the Arts.

Documents received from IAA while in Iceland:

24. Curriculum Guide. Department of Fine Arts 06-07.
25. Presentation from the Department of Music on Musical Composition.
26. Curriculum Guide for Musicology, Department of Music.
27. Teaching Certificate Program. Instruction Plan School Year 2006-2007 (Excel sheet).
28. Four Sheets for the Structure of the BA Program in Acting.
29. Three Sheets for the Structure of the BA Program in Theory and Practice.
30. Three Sheets for the Structure of the BA Program in Dance.
31. Iceland Academy of the Arts – dept. of Architecture and Design: Course Structure.
32. Answers to Questions sent to the Academy prior to the Visit of the Accreditation Committee.
33. Agreement for the Advancement of Knowledge and Research in the Arts and the Creation Arts on the Basis of Art. 2 of the Agreement for Instruction between the Ministry of Education and the Iceland Academy of the Arts, dated November 28, 2005.
34. Appointment of Examiners and Representatives on Admissions Committees.
35. Meetings and Consultation – Rector and Board of Directors.
36. Rectors Meetings with Students.
37. Course Evaluation Surveys.
38. Composition of Course Descriptions and Course Catalogue.
39. Master's Program for Artists and Academics.