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**Master of Science in Architecture,
Urbanism and Landscape Architecture**

**Academy of Architecture
Amsterdam University of the Arts**

*Report of the limited programme assessment
7 & 26 November 2020*

Utrecht, The Netherlands
March 2021
www.AeQui.nl
Assessment Agency for Higher Education

Colophon

Master in Architecture

Master in Urbanism

Master in Landscape Architecture

Amsterdam University of the Arts

Location: Amsterdam

Mode of study: part-time

Crohos:

44336 Master in Architecture

44337 Master in Landscape Architecture

44338 Master in Urbanism

Result of institutional assessment: positive

Panel

Raoul van Aalst, chair

Johan De Walsche, domain expert

Lilli Licka, domain expert

Daan Zandbelt, domain expert

Nathalie de Vries, domain expert

Jeroen Steegmans, student

Mark Delmartino, secretary

The panel was presented to the NVAO for approval.

The assessment was conducted under responsibility of

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This document is best printed in duplex

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Summary

On 7 and 26 November 2020, an AeQui assessment committee performed an online visit of three Master of Science programmes in Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape Architecture at the Academy of Architecture of the Amsterdam University of the Arts. The Academy of Architecture considers itself a typically Dutch organisation which operates in an international context and therefore offers its four-year programmes in two languages: Dutch and English. While each programme has its own CROHO registration, learning outcomes and professional finality, the Academy of Architecture adopts a common approach to the programmes, which are taught as inseparably connected and partly multidisciplinary curricula. For its assessment the committee has used the 2018 NVAO framework for limited programme assessment. The committee's findings, considerations and conclusions apply very similarly to all three programmes. It found the programmes to meet all NVAO standards and therefore issues a **positive** recommendation regarding the accreditation of the Master of Science programmes in Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape Architecture at the Academy of Architecture in Amsterdam.

Intended learning outcomes

The committee is impressed by the way in which the Academy has continued to develop its profile – a specific view on the disciplines, a common programme structure, strong integrated research, positioning as a Dutch organisation focusing on the international context of the disciplines - and managed to transmit this profile into the three master programmes. The concurrent education model constitutes a key feature of the master programmes in the Academy and ensures their strong professional orientation. The intended learning outcomes are formulated adequately in terms of domain, level and orientation. Upon graduation, students qualify to register as Architects, Urbanists or Landscape Architects in the Netherlands. The committee judges that the three Master programmes Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape Architecture **meet** the standard.

Teaching-learning environment

The teaching and learning environment of the three master programmes is robust, an appreciation that covers to a similar extent the programmes, the staff and the facilities. The committee thinks highly of the coherence of the internal curriculum and of the alignment between programme outcomes, course learning goals and assessment methods. The concurrent model and the multidisciplinary study programmes make the education experience at the Academy quite unique. The three programmes are tough but feasible. The Academy can rely on a sufficient number of good quality staff and lecturers, who take care of the students in a personal way and deliver strong individuals who combine profession-

alism and craftsmanship. The building of the Academy is not only used for studying but also constitutes a hangout to network with fellow students, staff and guest lectures. Students are keen to play their role in assuring the quality of education and get their voices heard on the issues that require structural improvement. The committee judges that the three Master programmes Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape Architecture **meet** the standard.

Student assessment

The Academy and its three master programmes can rely on a thorough assessment system featuring relevant assessment methods that align with the respective course learning goals. The committee thinks highly of the course assessment method with plenary presentation, discussion and feedback on the work and development of individual students. The sample of final exam evaluation forms demonstrates that the assessment system is implemented properly. Moreover, the quality of assessment is assured by an Examination Board which is on top of its tasks and whose individual members have adequate experience. The committee judges that the three Master programmes Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape Architecture **meet** the standard.

Achieved learning outcomes

The final projects demonstrate that the three programmes are of high quality. The end products concern a variety of topics both in the Netherlands and abroad and reflect the learning outcomes at master level. Several students are likely to constitute value added to the field of work; alumni show that graduates find relevant positions as Architect, Urbanist or

Landscape Architect. The committee judges that the three Master programmes Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape Architecture **meet** the standard.

Recommendations

The committee has issued a positive judgement on the quality of each individual standard and on the quality of the three programmes as a whole. Nonetheless the committee sees room for improvement in a number of areas. The committee therefore advises the Academy of Architecture and its three master programmes:

- to ensure that – in addition to excelling in the application of design skills in current themes and topics – they continue developing new methods and truly innovative approaches to train students to deal with any (new) challenge that will arise during their careers (21st century skills);
- to be more precise in what they understand as research and how it relates to design, by exploring and inscribing themselves in international networks that focus on practice-based and design-driven research;
- to describe their distinctiveness in terms of internationalisation more explicitly in the programme outcomes
- to remain vigilant that the emphasis on the individual spatial designer does not jeopardise

the communal approach (the “we-question”) that is customary in Urbanism;

- to pay more (explicit) attention in the programmes and programme outcomes to creation and reflection – to the general applicability of what a spatial designer develops and how students reflect on their work and that of others and in relation to practice;
- to include in the evaluation forms for course assessments the different elements of the course and the criteria students should reach to obtain a particular mark;
- to clearly articulate a stance towards the use of English, in relation to both their internationalisation policy and their interweaving with local practices.
- to reach a consensus about the goals and functions of the annual examination, to reach transparency in this assessment for the students and ensure that there is proper benchmarking among the different examiners;
- to diversify the final products submitted as part of the final diploma projects: instead of the current emphasis on design only, there could be attention to both design and research.

All standards of the NVAO assessment framework are assessed positively; the assessment committee therefore awards a **positive** recommendation for the accreditation of the Master programmes Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape Architecture.

On behalf of the entire assessment committee,
Utrecht, March 2021

Raoul van Aalst
Chair

Mark Delmartino
Secretary

Introduction

The Academy of Architecture offers three four-year 240 ECTS master programmes in Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape Architecture. Graduates of these Master of Science programmes hold the legally protected title of Architect, Urbanist or Landscape Architect. While each programme has its own CROHO registration, learning outcomes and professional finality, there also share many elements: the educational model, the programme structure, the staff, etc. This common approach of the Academy of Architecture was also reflected in the Self-Evaluation Report and the online visit. The committee found the documentation put at disposition by the programmes to be of good quality and a solid ground for evaluation. The committee appreciated the efforts of the Academy to organise - in spite of the limitations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic - online meetings that allowed the committee to have open and in-depth discussions with the different stakeholders. Since the previous accreditation, the Academy has developed its internationalisation endeavours; as part of its assessment visit, the committee has looked into the programmes' quality of internationalisation and reported on its assessment in a separate document.

The institute

The three master programmes under review are offered by the Amsterdam Academy of Architecture. The Academy was founded in 1908 by a group of architects who felt there was an urgent need for new design talent in the field of work. In 1987, it co-founded the Amsterdam University of the Arts (AHK) and still constitutes one of AHK's six faculties. As part of AHK, the Academy of Architecture's study programmes target the interface between applied arts and autonomous art, offering study programmes for designers by designers.

There are five other Academies of Architecture in the Netherlands, which collaborate in the National Consultation of Architecture Study programmes (LOBO). With just over 300 students, the Academy in Amsterdam is the largest institution, representing between 40% and 45% of all Academy Architecture students in the Netherlands. On average 66 new students join the master programmes in Amsterdam every year.

The Academy underscores the internationalisation objectives of AHK, which trains students for the national and international world of art, culture and heritage. The Academy considers itself a typically Dutch organisation that operates in an international context, offering Dutch and non-

Dutch students the opportunity to study at an international school along the educational principles of the International Classroom.

The programmes

The Academy of Architecture is committed to excellence in design education and research in its three master programmes Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape Architecture. The degree programmes are nationally recognised; the Master of Science diplomas entitle graduates to hold the legally protected title of Architect, Urbanist and Landscape Architect.

The four-year 240 ECTS programmes are taught as inseparably connected, partly multidisciplinary curricula. They are offered in accordance with the concurrent education model, in which the student simultaneously receives training, conducts design research and gains relevant professional experience. According to the Self-Evaluation Report, this didactic model is unique in Europe.

Since 2013-2014 the study programmes are offered in two languages: Dutch and English. In 2018, the Academy of Architecture set out its internationalisation efforts and plans in a Position Paper on Internationalisation. Ever since, it has further streamlined and intensified these efforts,

the results of which are described in the joint application of the programmes for the Certificate for Quality in Internationalisation.

The assessment

The Amsterdam University of the Arts assigned AeQui VBI to perform a quality assessment of its Master programmes in Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape Architecture. In close co-operation with the programme management and the Academy of Architecture, AeQui convened an independent and competent assessment committee. A short CV of the committee members is provided in attachment 1. A preparatory meeting with representatives of the Academy and the programmes was held to exchange information and plan the date and programme of the site visit.

Upon request of the Academy of Architecture, the assessment committee combined the accreditation visit with an assessment of the programmes' Quality of Internationalisation. The committee performed this assessment according to the guidelines issued by the European Consortium for Accreditation and has reported on its findings, considerations and conclusions in a separate report.

In the run-up to the site visit, the assessment committee has studied the Self-Evaluation Report on the programmes, looked into complementary background materials and reviewed a sample of final products accepted during the last two years. These documents are listed in attachment 3. The committee's impressions on the written materials and the end level products formed the basis for discussion during the visit.

The assessment committee attended the online Graduation Show on 7 November and carried out the online site visit on 26 November 2020 according to the programme presented in attachment 2. The committee has assessed the programme in an independent manner; at the end of the visit, the chair of the assessment committee presented the initial findings of the committee to representatives of the programme and the institution.

In the underlying document, the committee is reporting on its findings, considerations and conclusions according to the 2018 NVAO framework for limited programme assessment. A draft version of the report was sent to the programme management; its reactions have led to this final version of the report.

1. Intended learning outcomes

The committee is impressed by the way in which the Academy of Architecture has continued to develop its profile (specific view on the disciplines, common programme structure, practice-oriented research, Dutch organisation focusing on international context) and managed to transmit this profile into the three master programmes. The concurrent education model is a key feature of the three master programmes in the Academy and ensures their strong professional orientation. The intended learning outcomes are formulated adequately in terms of domain, level and orientation. Upon graduation, students qualify to register as Architects, Urbanists or Landscape Architects in the Netherlands. If anything, the committee thinks that the distinctiveness of the Academy of Architecture and its three master programmes in terms of research focus and international dimension can be described more explicitly in the programme outcomes. According to the assessment committee, the three master programmes **meet this standard**.

Findings

Profile

The Academy of Architecture is committed to excellence in design education and research in its three master programmes Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape Architecture. While each programme has its own CROHO registration, learning outcomes and professional finality, the Academy's approach to the programmes is very similar / identical. In this regard, the assessment committee agrees to the statement of the previous accreditation panel that the commonalities between the three programmes make them operate de facto as one programme with three variants.

The assessment committee gathered from the informative Self-Evaluation Report that the previous accreditation panel thought highly of the three master programmes under review, judging all programmes and each standard to be 'good'. Similarly the Academy of Architecture scored positively on the latest research accreditation assessment. The committee appreciates that after the strong results of these assessments in 2014 and 2019, the Academy has continued to reflect on its programmes and adapted these to the constantly changing domains of Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape Architecture.

The Academy wants to train its students to become professionals who by their independent

critical and inquisitive attitude are able to formulate questions and give answers to the spatial and social challenges of today and of the future. Each discipline has its own views of the profession: Architecture aims to reflect on what it is that makes a good building good; this includes social themes involving reuse and circularity. In Urbanism, the emphasis is on the interdisciplinary character of the subject and the importance of a visionary design attitude; subjects such as urbanisation and a healthy living environment are an integrated part of the study programme. Landscape architecture approaches its subject on the basis of urgent landscape and urban challenges such as space scarcity, agricultural and energy transitions, climate change and biodiversity. The committee acknowledges these views and agrees with the Academy that it is important for students to learn to take up a critical position independent of topical social challenges and thus learn how to face and provide answers to as yet unknown issues once they are (urban / landscape) architects in the future.

Intended learning outcomes

The master programmes in Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape Architecture follow the concurrent education model in which students simultaneously receive training, conduct design research and gain professional experience. Every programme comprises an internal and an external curriculum. The learning outcomes of the internal

curriculum of the Academy are in accordance with the Dutch Architects' Title Act, in particular with the Further Regulations Regarding the Structure of Study Programmes for Architects, Urban Designers, Landscape Architects and Interior Designers. The assessment criteria of the external curriculum are attuned to the professional experience learning outcomes as described in the appendix to the Professional Experience Period Regulations and the above-mentioned Further Regulations. The assessment committee gathered from the materials and the discussions that in terms of learning outcomes, the internal curriculum and the professional experience component together constitute one inseparable study programme.

Each master programme has its own set of learning outcomes: it contains about a dozen exit qualifications which are clustered around discipline, context and profession. The assessment committee noticed that the three sets of outcomes on the one hand have been formulated in a similar way and on the other hand are sufficiently specific to reflect the individuality of the respective disciplines. Since the previous accreditation visit, the Academy of Architecture updated its skills matrix, aligned its learning outcomes to the teaching practice, fine-tuned the formulation of the learning outcomes to the Dublin Descriptors, and has added references in the exit qualifications to the international and intercultural dimensions of the programmes. Moreover, the Academy developed the learning outcomes of the external curricula and formulated the learning outcomes of the internal curricula per year level in more detail. The committee acknowledges that the current sets of learning outcomes are indeed reflecting these adjustments: the learning outcomes are formulated in such a way that they reflect the profile of the respective programmes at the Academy and concur with the qualifications of the Dublin Descriptors at master level, the Further Regulations and the skills required by the European Directive on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications.

The committee gathered from the information materials that since 2015, it is compulsory in the Netherlands for graduates of the disciplines of Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape Architecture to gain two years of relevant professional experience before they can register at the Dutch Architecture Registration Board. The Academy has been granted an exemption from this obligation on the basis of the learning outcomes of the external curriculum and the examination and assessment methods of the professional experience gained in the field of work. This allows graduates to directly register at the Dutch Architects' Registration Board.

Field of work

The committee established from both the written materials and the discussions that the Academy of Architecture and its programmes are well connected in professional and academic networks. The Academy is part of the intensive deliberations and fruitful collaborations in the National Consultation of Architecture Study Programmes (LOBO), which in turn advises the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences. Through this connection, the Academy is aware of developments in other study programmes in the country and has its voice heard with fellow academies when developments in the field require new policies. Similarly, the Academy is represented in the Dutch School of Landscape Architecture and the Netherlands Association for Garden and Landscape Architecture, two representative bodies which increasingly contribute to the profiling of study programmes and to structuring the consultations with the field of work.

Furthermore, the connection to the field of work is safeguarded through employers who act as co-trainers of students in the external professional curriculum. Contacts with students about their work in practice also provide insight, and this also goes for the meetings with professional experience assessors. Moreover, the Academy organises an employers' meeting once or twice a year, as well as systematic debates on the field of work

debate during meetings of the Professional Advisory Committee.

Considerations

The assessment committee considers that the Academy has a clear and strong profile which it manages to transmit well on the three master programmes under review. The adjustments which the Academy has introduced since the previous accreditation are for the better: according to the committee, the three programmes have grown in quality and profile.

The committee considers that the structure of the programmes is particularly strong: the concurrent education model ensures a good connection with practice and allows the Academy to deliver graduates with a clear professional orientation. Given the unique character of the concurrent education model, the panel thinks that the school could be more explicit about its educational mechanisms and agency: the concurrency system entails opportunities that go well beyond merely securing a strong professional orientation.

While this outspoken professional orientation is an obvious strength of the programmes, the committee also sees a possible downside: the strong connection with practice makes the programmes, their themes and their graduates fashionable; by winning several and important prizes, the Academy may excel in the application of design skills on actual topics rather than skills to investigate and develop new research and design methods and truly innovative approaches that can be applied on other themes.

The committee agrees to the statements in the self-evaluation report in which the Academy presents itself as a typically Dutch organisation that

operates in an international context, offering students from all over the world a Dutch study programme with a global perspective. The programmes at the Academy are indeed architectural with (still) a Dutch flavour and an emphasis on the individual spatial designer.

The intended learning outcomes benefit both the profile of the Academy and the respective disciplines: according to the committee, the sets of learning outcomes are sufficiently specific to the disciplines of Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape Architecture and tie in with the level (master) and orientation (professional) of the programmes. The committee thinks highly of the fact that (the programme learning outcomes are formulated in such a way that) upon graduation, students qualify immediately to register as Architects, Urbanists, Landscape Architects in the Netherlands. Although elements of the Academy's international character and research profile are included in the programme outcomes, the committee considers that they can feature more prominently in the formulation of the programmes' intended learning outcomes. In this way, the Academy would do justice to the important place both research and internationalisation take up in the respective master programmes and in the profile of the entire Academy of Architecture and the AHK.

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the assessment committee concludes that **the three master programmes Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape Architecture meet standard 1, intended learning outcomes.**

2. Teaching-learning environment

The teaching and learning environment of the three master programmes is robust, an appreciation that covers to a similar extent the programmes, the staff and the facilities. The committee thinks highly of the coherence of the internal curriculum and of the alignment between programme outcomes, course learning goals and assessment methods. The concurrent model and the multidisciplinary study programmes make the education experience at the Academy quite unique. The three programmes are tough but feasible. The Academy can rely on a sufficient number of good quality staff and lecturers, who take care of the students in a personal way and deliver strong individuals who combine professionalism and craftsmanship. The building of the Academy is not only used for studying but also constitutes a hangout to network with fellow students, staff and guest lectures. Students are keen to play their role in assuring the quality of education and get their voices heard on the (few) issues that require structural improvement. In addition to the many positive observations, the committee thinks that the level of the research pathway can be increased as research is not very present in the (end level) deliverables. Moreover, the growing international ambitions of the Academy and the programmes call for a clear stance on the position of English as language of instruction in the curriculum. According to the assessment committee, the three master programmes **meet this standard**.

Findings

Programme

The committee gathered from the self-evaluation report that students are prepared for spatial design as a practical and critical discipline at the interface of art, science and technology. The connection with art education underlines the special importance the Academy attaches to artistic aspects and to individual positioning in the professional practice. Students at the Academy of Architecture are prepared for an integrated professional practice in a field of work in which skills in design research and understanding of each other's design methods and specific design skills are of increasing importance.

Each of the three master programmes consists of a four-year curriculum of 240 ECTS: half of the credits are spent on a so-called external curriculum in which students gather professional experience with a spatial design company and are examined on the basis of their practice records; the internal curriculum consists of projects, research, morphology classes and lectures and takes up the other 120 ECTS. The internal curriculum is built in such a way that there is coherence both horizontally (increasing complexity of the components) and vertically (logical combination of simultaneous components). The committee learned that

despite the specificity of the three disciplines, Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape Architecture are deliberately taught as inseparably connected, partly multidisciplinary study programmes. Hence many curriculum components are offered jointly to master students from all three programmes. Although all Dutch Academies of Architecture share the concurrent education model, only the Amsterdam Academy of Architecture offers a multidisciplinary approach with three disciplines including Landscape Architecture.

The design projects are the backbone of the internal curriculum: they integrate knowledge, insight and skills and are partly offered in a multidisciplinary context. The research pathway concerns skills training in areas that are essential for identifying, solving and conveying of design problems; the research components are linked to the design assignments and emphasise communication and presentation skills. In the morphology classes student develop a personal signature, as well as a critical and independent attitude. Lectures focus on the acquisition of knowledge and insight. Other curriculum components include a Winter School, a Clinic, electives and a Graduation Clinic. Each component features learning goals, which are consistent with the learning outcomes at programme level. Every programme outcome,

moreover, is addressed in several parts across each curriculum. The committee gathered from the programme materials that this alignment of learning outcomes and learning goals is also present at the level of individual course assessments, where students are assessed on their capacity to reach the learning goals and achieve the programme outcomes.

Research

In 2019, an assessment panel visited the Academy for a research accreditation. In the run-up to that visit, the Academy has put its view on research and on the research skills and capacity of students on paper in a dedicated self-evaluation report. The Academy considers research skills to be increasingly important to spatial designers because clients often turn to designers without having previously formulated a clear programme of requirements. By developing practice-oriented research, the Academy creates a distinct profile for itself in the teaching, research and field of work triangle. Its research endeavours are clustered in thematic research groups, which are connected to the study programmes: Architecture & Circular Thinking, Future Urban Regions and High-Density Energy Landscapes. In this way research helps to position and profile the programmes while preserving the desired manoeuvring space for the successive heads of the study programmes. Moreover, circles of knowledge around lecturers ensure the broadening of the impact of research groups on the pool of lecturers and study programmes as well as the valorisation of knowledge in the professional field.

The assessment committee performing the current education assessment established that the research component is very much on the minds of the Academy and its programmes and that research skills play an important part in the curriculum, notably in the research learning pathway. Moreover, the committee noticed that - speaking in terms of Bloom's taxonomy - Academy of Architecture students are trained in such a way that they are very apt in applying. The discussions revealed, however, that there is room for a more

precise and explicit story around research, defining exactly what research means for the three programmes, including a clear articulation of the different positions that research can take with regard to design (cf Frayling's distinction of research into / for / by design). In this regard, the committee thinks the Academy should not "reinvent the wheel" and develop its own form of artistic research, but rather position itself and its programmes in the existing debates.

Furthermore, the committee thinks that the programmes could pay more attention to how students look at the transmission potential (*overdraagbaarheid*) of research: what is the general applicability of what a spatial designer develops and how does the student / spatial designer reflect on (the transmission potential of) his/her work and that of others. According to the committee it should be clear to which extent students are educated as researchers and/or as designers. An understanding of research methods and the ability to interpret research results of others is a basic requirement for any designer on an academic level. However, not every designer has to be a researcher. The committee found that the programmes were not entirely clear on this distinction/requirement in their documentation or during the discussions, nor did this show clearly in the final projects.

Furthermore, the committee noticed that there was little attention in the curricula to the role of research and inquiry in defining and formulating a specific assignment / challenge in relation to the state of the art. Nor was there much reflection on the proposed interventions, solutions and results of a project or for that matter on the relevance of the project for society and the profession. According to the committee, the programmes mainly expected students to reflect on their personal development as a student-architect, not on the products they devised.

Language of instruction

Since 2013-2014, the study programme is offered in two languages: the internal curriculum is entirely in English, while the language in the external

curriculum depends on the student's work situation. The committee learned that this approach is fully in line with AHK's language code of conduct (*Gedragcode Taalbeleid*) and is based on the assumption that the study programmes have an international profile and aim at an international educational culture. About one third of the students in the master programmes is non-Dutch. Moreover, the three disciplines are strongly internationally oriented, with many Dutch design offices receiving commissions from abroad and many international consultancies collaborating with Dutch designers. Hence it is important for Dutch designers to be able to function in an international context.

The committee understands the choice of AHK and the Academy to set up bilingual programmes. The committee notes that currently some of the (final) products are still in Dutch, which hinders their transmission to all current and future students. Furthermore, the committee noticed that the minimum level of English is set at level B2, which seems fairly low for a programme that aims to be truly international and intercultural.

Feasibility

The committee gathered from the materials and the interviews that the programme is tough but feasible. The study load at individual course level is carefully distributed over the week and deadlines for product submissions are set in accordance with other tasks in the internal and external curriculum. The Summer and Winter schools are scheduled in such a way that they constitute relative resting points in the curriculum. Moreover, students are expected to weigh the efforts they need to balance the internal and external parts of the study programme themselves. The work pressure at the professional experience component depends on the requirements of the workplace and the function of the student in the company. Personal time-out periods and the failure to pass an annual examination often lead to study completion delays. In view of the relatively low success rate of students finishing the programmes in

time, the Academy has introduced a graduation clock to encourage students to get on with their studies. The committee acknowledges that this provision, as well as a stricter selection process at admission stage, have improved the progression rates in recent years.

Staff

The Academy has a permanent staff of 37 people, equalling 24 FTE. It is headed by a director and three heads of department, who are also the heads of the three master study programmes. The heads of programme are hired for a limited duration, have a direct connection with the field of work and bring along their own network of contacts and potential guest lecturers. The education activities are complemented by about 350 guest lecturers per year. The committee understands that this staffing set-up connects the curriculum with the field of work and ensures that the study programme always addresses topical themes. Moreover, the knowledge of guest lecturers is up to date because of their (principal) work at universities, public service or consultancy firms. The committee has looked at the CV's of the key staff and some of the guest lecturers and found that the programmes can rely on a sufficient number of good quality staff and lecturers.

The committee gathered from the materials and the discussions that staff and guest lecturers are expected to have a good command of English (CERF level B2), as well as proven didactic qualities. If the latter are missing, they can attend a basic training in didactics, inclusiveness and communication offered by the Academy or the AHK-wide teacher professionalisation pathway. Moreover, the Academy upholds the didactical model of master and mate: the master trains the mate to become an independent professional who in turn becomes a teacher and trains the next generation of designers. To strengthen and professionalise this helix, the Academy is offering an inter-vision programme: under the guidance of an educational expert/trainer, young and more experienced lectures exchange experiences and address didactic questions.

The Academy can rely on a sufficient number of good quality staff and lecturers, who take care of the students in a personal way and deliver strong individuals who combine professionalism and craftsmanship.

Students are generally satisfied with the level of the staff and guest lecturers, and think particularly highly of the availability and the human side of their teachers and counsellors. In terms of language proficiency, students and staff alike seem happy with the current level: one of the interviewees mentioned in this regard that English constitutes a levelling factor and is really used as a vehicular language because everybody understands English and almost nobody is a native English speaker. If anything, students complained about the sometimes limited didactic and assessment qualities of individual guest lecturers. They think the Academy could be more careful in contracting guest lecturers and in particular in renewing their contracts when course evaluations are not positive.

Facilities

Although the quality of the facilities has been addressed in the institutional accreditation, the committee wants to point to two recent developments that impact directly on the three programmes: first, the premises of the Academy, were expanded in 2019 with a Makerspace, a spacious hall with many workstations, storage spaces for models and a virtual reality lab. Second, since 2019 the Academy is utilising MyWork, a digital submission portal that also functions as portfolio and archive for student work.

The committee gathered from the discussions that the students see the Academy building as an extension of their home. Even if they only spend one or two days per week at the Academy because their external curriculum takes up most of their time, they do appreciate being at the academy. Students view the Academy as intense headquarters where they meet fellow students, staff and guest lecturers, attend courses, workshops and (extra-curricular) events, and produce and discuss their work. The Academy building also

constitutes a good place for bonding within and across study programmes, both among international students and between Dutch and non-Dutch students.

During the interview, students indicated to the committee that they feel supported by the programme teams in their study planning. The Academy's personal atmosphere and direct personal contacts are important strengths. And even if the Academy in Amsterdam is the biggest Architecture Academy in the Netherlands, it does manage to provide personal care for the individual students. While most issues are settled informally, students indicated in the Student Chapter of the Self-Evaluation Report that the formal communication by the Academy and the programmes could be improved. Furthermore, students indicated that they appreciate the work of the study advisor and the professional experience coordinator. These staff are architects with teaching experience; they constitute a direct contact for both students and teaching staff and advise on education pathways and the external curriculum. The committee understands that the three master programmes impact on the study performance of the students and on their preparation for the field of work. Students mentioned to the committee that "the programmes offer a deep immersive learning" and that "the Academy manages to get the best out of us."

While personal contacts and meetings in the Academy are temporarily put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic, students and staff indicated that they continue to work together online. This new approach involves extra work but is sometimes more efficient because students prepare much better for their online presentations. If anything, there are issues concerning the professional experience component of the curriculum and the fact that because of the pandemic not all students can spend a similar / sufficient amount of time on the job.

Finally, the committee noticed that students are increasingly eager to play a role in assuring the

quality of their programmes and courses. While the programmes do have a Programme Committee and the Academy has a Faculty Council, students have only recently taken up their seats in these bodies. The committee gathered from the interviews that students have a number of reasonable concerns and are now using the formal bodies to get their voices heard. One particular concern is the course evaluation: students would like more focussed questions, clear feedback on the survey outcomes, and visible adjustments following the evaluation results. The committee understood that the Academy and its student body have taken good steps in 2019-2020 in terms of survey relevance, completion rate and communication of survey results. If anything, the Academy could apply/enforce the survey results more strongly. In this regard, students expect that also guest lecturers agree to receive written reports of the semester evaluations and are willing to adjust their course in line with the survey results.

Considerations

The committee considers that the teaching and learning environment of the three master programmes is robust, an appreciation that covers to a similar extent the programmes, the staff and the facilities. The concurrent education model is unique and prepares students for an integrated professional practice and multidisciplinary internal study programmes. The committee thinks highly of the coherence of the internal curriculum and of the alignment between programme outcomes, course learning goals and assessment methods.

The committee thinks highly of the connection the programmes make between work and study. Hence the programmes deliver strong professionals who are also craftsmen that are educated to master level. If anything, the committee thinks that the level of the research pathway can be increased as research is not very present in the (end level) deliverables. In this regard, the committee suggests the Academy (i) to develop a more pre-

cise policy about the envisaged nature and position of research in relation to design, (ii) to reflect upon the concept of the "lectoraat" and versus the need for developing a proper biotope for the specific type of research that is aimed for, (iii) to position itself in the actual debates on artistic research internationally and (iv) to pay more (explicit) attention in the programmes and programme outcomes to creation and reflection.

According to the committee, the growing number of non-Dutch students allows the programmes to make good use of the didactical principles of the International Classroom. The committee understands the current option for bilingual education. Nonetheless, the committee thinks that in view of the Academy's internationalisation policy and the programmes' interweaving with local practices, the current stance on the language of instruction can be more clearly articulated. Moreover, it seems appropriate to aim at a higher minimum level of English language proficiency for programme staff.

The committee considers the programmes to be tough but feasible. Furthermore, each programme can rely on a sufficient number of good quality staff and lecturers, who do not only provide students with knowledge and skills but also educational and professional counselling. It is strong point according to the committee that the Academy takes personal care of its students.

The premises of the Academy are intensively used by the students as headquarters for their educational development and as social meeting place to network with fellow students, staff and guest lecturers. The committee furthermore encourages the students and staff to continue their quality assurance activities in the Faculty Council and the Programme Committee.

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the assessment committee concludes that **the three master programmes Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape Architecture meet standard 2, teaching-learning environment.**

3. Student assessment

The Academy and its three master programmes can rely on a thorough assessment system featuring relevant assessment methods that align with the respective course learning goals. The committee thinks highly of the course assessment method with plenary presentation, discussion and feedback on the work and development of individual students. The sample of final exam evaluation forms demonstrates that the assessment system is implemented properly. Moreover, the quality of assessment is assured by an Examination Board which is on top of its tasks and whose individual members have adequate experience. The committee, however, has doubts on the relevance of the annual examination in its current format and therefore suggests the Academy and programmes to turn the end-of-year exam into a formative assessment. According to the assessment committee, the three master programmes **meet this standard**.

Findings

The committee gathered from the information materials and the discussions that the system which governs student assessment in the three master programmes is properly developed and embedded in the policies and provisions of both the Academy of Architecture and the AHK. According to this system, each course consists of components that in most cases result in an individual product (Projects and Research) and sometimes in collective products (Winter School). At the end of each course, students present their work and lecturers formulate an opinion about the learning process and the result during a discussion with the student in the presence of fellow students. The assessment reflects the learning goals of the course and is recorded in an evaluation form; the assessment does not result in a score, but lecturers provide a qualitative appreciation (from insufficient to excellent) with a motivated explanation. The testing of practical components in the external curriculum is based on the practice records of students, takes place orally and is scheduled prior to the annual examination. Having looked into some evaluation forms, the committee thought that the format of these forms could be improved. While it does not question the appreciations of the lecturers, the committee thinks that the evaluation forms should contain the assessment criteria and make explicit what the difference is between an insufficient, sufficient and excellent mark. According to the committee, an evaluation form that explains the

criteria of the assessment would make the appreciation (even) more objective. Furthermore, such evaluation form (and assessment) could draw attention to the different elements of the respective courses, such as the definition of the assignment or the reflection students are expected to make on the general meaning of their project proposal and its impact on society and the profession.

The annual examination consists of a summative test in which students present all of their work from the previous period. This work is considered in conjunction with the work in practice from the external curriculum. The examiners do not belong to the Academy but are experienced professionals who have knowledge of the study programme. They provide an independent look from the outside at the integral development of the students and the level they have achieved. Because the Academy works with many different guest lecturers throughout the courses in the year, this one-off integral summative test by one group of external examiners at the end of the year ensures the validity, reliability and objectivity of the assessment. Moreover, such tests train students to explain in brief the essence of their work and the development they have gone through, to critically reflect on their work and development and to discuss this with professionals from the field. Credits for the entire year are only awarded after the annual examination has been passed.

The committee noticed not only in the information materials and the Student Chapter but

also during the meeting that students are not happy with this double assessment system – involving project/course assessments as well as an annual examination. While students consider the assessment of their individual and common course products to be fair, they emphasised with the committee that the annual examinations cause a lot of stress: students feel that an entire year of work is judged in a brief session by examiners whom they do not know and who in some cases seem to give priority in their appreciation to their own vision on the discipline rather than the terms of reference of the assessment. If a student fails to show enough integral development and does not pass the annual exam, parts of the internal curriculum have to be repeated, with a maximum of 30 ECTS. Students mentioned to the committee that notwithstanding the instructions provided by the Academy and the programme management, students still have many questions around the organisation of the annual examination, the briefing of the external examiners and the quality and internal calibration of their assessments. The committee, however, understood that students do not oppose an end-of-year assessment: students think such exam is logical and feasible in the framework of their studies and could bring value added if the consequences were less comprehensive. In fact, the external review could be organised in a formative way in order for students to learn something from it and to have this exam count for (small) part of the year credits. In the current situation, students are too concerned about the next year (or rather, anxious about a possible re-sit of the entire previous year) and will therefore tell examiners what they want to hear rather than enter into a discussion from which they can learn.

The assessment committee also met with representatives of the Examination Board, an independent body that determines in an objective and expert manner whether students meet the conditions set by the Education and Examination Regulations with regard to knowledge, insight and skills that are necessary to obtain a degree. The

Examination Board guarantees the quality of examinations and assessments as well as the final level achieved in relation to the formal learning outcomes of the programme. The committee gathered from the discussion that in addition to its legal tasks, the members of the Examination Board work together with the Academy and the programmes as coach and advisor on assessment issues. According to the Examination Board, the testing cycle that is in place at the Academy – designing an exam, implementing, correcting and evaluating the exam results – safeguards the quality of student assessment. The committee also learned that the ‘fresh eyes policy’ of bringing in external assessors has been developed extensively: external examiners at the Academy need to meet several criteria, which the Examination Board has established and which it systematically checks.

Considerations

The committee considers that the Academy and its three master programmes can rely on a thorough assessment system. The assessment methods of the respective course components are relevant and the evaluation itself is based on the learning goals of the respective courses. The committee thinks highly of the course assessments, which are often organised as a team discussion where students present their products to fellow students and lecturers. In this way, students learn from each other’s work while several lecturers discuss the work and provide extensive comments in plenary on the products and the individual development of students.

While the committee subscribes to the assessment method as well as to the appreciation of the lecturers, it does think that the format of the evaluation forms can be improved to the extent that these forms include the different elements of the respective courses and the criteria students should meet to obtain an insufficient, sufficient or excellent mark. The committee leaves it up to the programmes to decide on the exact template (rubrics, open ended methods, ...) to be used for explaining the criteria.

Based on its sample review of final exams and their evaluation forms, the committee agrees to the scores and the feedback to the final exams. When committee members saw a work which they either highly appreciated or found relatively weak, they noticed that the assessors had held similar opinions and that these appreciations were reflected properly in the evaluation feedback.

The committee considers that quality of assessment is ensured through the Examination Board which is on top of its tasks and whose individual members have adequate experience.

However, the committee has doubts on the relevance of the annual assessment as it is currently organised. The committee believes that this annual examination goes against the educational

approach (*Bildung*) adopted in the rest of the programme: after an entire year of personalised learning and individualised follow-up students are exposed to a tribunal-like judgement by experts. Hence, the committee suggests to reconsider the annual examination and turn it into a formative rather than summative assessment where students present their yearly portfolio, enter into discussion on their work and development, and get feedback from external experts.

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the assessment committee concludes that **the three master programmes Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape Architecture meet standard 3, student assessment.**

4. Achieved learning outcomes

The final projects demonstrate that the programmes are of high quality. The quality of the products reflect the learning outcomes at master level. Several students are likely to constitute value added to the field of work. Alumni moreover show that graduates find relevant positions as Architect, Urbanist or Landscape Architect. As the range of final project topics has increased over the years, the Academy may also want to diversify the signature of products with less emphasis on design and more on for instance research. According to the assessment committee, the three master programmes **meet this standard**.

Findings

In order to establish whether students achieve the intended learning outcomes, the committee has reviewed a sample of 34 final projects from the academic years 2018-2019 and 2019-2020. This sample consisted of all available projects from Landscape Architecture (9), and Urbanism (8), complemented by a selection of 17 Architecture projects. Concerning the final works, the requirements and procedures for the three programmes are the same, and they are administered by the same Examination Board. Therefore, keeping in mind that the three programmes are quite small in size, the panel considered the sample of sufficient size. The choice to select 17 Architecture works was made to somewhat better reflect the relative size of that programme in the total. Finally, when it established the quality and consistency of both the final works and their assessment, the panel did not see any reason to extend its sample to older works.

Through these final projects students demonstrate their mastery of the professional discipline in general and their control over the various steps of the design process in particular. Students formulate their own graduation plan and show their capacity to create a design, to assess the professional, social and ethical relevance of their assignment, to determine their role as designers, and to organise, develop and deliver the project. In most cases the final project is an individual endeavour, although group assignments or work in pairs are also feasible.

The committee established that all final projects meet at least the minimum level of quality one

could expect from a final product at master level, and often go well beyond that level. The quality of the individual projects differed according to the committee yet followed the variety in scores provided by the assessors. The difference in quality according to the committee was often due to the degree of methodology and rigour that had been applied in the final diploma works. The committee noticed that some students very convincingly contextualised their own work in an extensive frame of reference, while others were just building up argumentations. Further to what was pointed out by the assessors, the panel found that some students in the latter category emphasised too much the personal stance and gave convincing presentations without any referencing or sound underpinning of statements and viewpoints. All in all, however, the committee thought that none of the products was even near the minimum quality threshold, while it considered several works to be very good. Having reviewed this sample of final projects the committee was not surprised that several Academy of Architecture students receive prizes and win competitions.

Compared to the previous accreditation visit, the committee noticed that there is a greater variety in the chosen assignments and that several works have a distinctly international dimension. While there is a great variety in topics, most products have a similar signature with all students finishing with a design proposal. In this respect, the programmes may want to consider allowing / encouraging final products with a smaller or less pronounced focus on design and for instance more attention to research.

In addition to verifying the quality of the final exam, the professional performance of graduates is another way to establish whether students achieve the intended learning outcomes upon completion of the programme. The committee gathered from the materials and the discussions that students and alumni have a positive opinion on their ability to pursue an architectural career upon graduation. According to the 2019 national Fine Arts Monitor, a survey completed 18 months after graduation, 94% of recent graduates were exclusively or partially active in their own discipline and 81% held a position that was concordant with the level of the study programme. Moreover, 29% of graduates were self-employed, while nobody was unemployed. According to the committee, these figures demonstrate the success of graduates and confirm their solid and visible position in the field of work.

Moreover, the committee learned that the Academy of Architecture keeps an eye on alumni and their professional practice, their assignments and the prizes they win. The Academy follows them as their careers develop, and invites them to alumni events. Alumni are notified through a Linked in group and an address database. Every year alumni meet at the Graduation Show; at this event, an alumnus or former guest lecturer holds the Kromhout Lecture.

Considerations

The achievement of the intended learning outcomes is established by looking at the quality of the final projects and at the careers young graduates pursue after their studies. Based on the

sample it reviewed, the committee considers that the quality of the final exams definitely reflects the requirements for a master programme. It is to the credit of the programmes that students who successfully pass the final project have indeed reached the programme learning outcomes and are able to operate at master level. The latter point is furthermore confirmed by the statements that almost all graduates find relevant positions as spatial designers.

The final projects demonstrate that the programmes are of high quality: the committee has not a single doubt about the end level, on the contrary: the programme seems to deliver students who as graduates will provide value added to the field of work. If anything, the programmes may want to enlarge not only the range of topics but also diversify the signature of the products / outcomes in such a way that these align with the nature of the topic and the desired aims, impact and audience of the product rather than being dictated by a form that results from an obligate exhibition / publication as outcome. According to the committee, the emphasis is currently too much on design while more coherent attention to both design and research would be better. In this way the final projects could be shared amongst the design community because of their value for the discourse in the discipline or society at large,

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the assessment committee concludes that **the three master programmes Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape Architecture meet standard 4, achieved learning outcomes.**

Attachments

Attachment 1 Assessment committee

Raoul van Aalst, panel chair and expert in organisational philosophy

Johan De Walsche, professor in Architecture and chair of the Architecture programme at the Faculty of Design Sciences, University of Antwerp, Belgium, member

Lilli Licka, professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences in Vienna, Austria, member

Daan Zandbelt studied Architecture and Urbanism at Delft University of Technology. He is advisor to the Dutch authorities on the physical living environment, member

Nathalie de Vries, full professor in Architectural Design at Delft University of Technology; founding partner of MVRDV, architect and urbanist, member

Jeroen Steegmans, master student Bestuur en Beleid at Utrecht University, student-member

Mark Delmartino MA, NVAO-certified panel secretary and CeQulnt certified auditor.

All panel-members and the secretary signed a declaration of independence and confidentiality, which were submitted to NVAO.

Attachment 2 Programme of the assessment

Saturday 7 November 2020

- 14.00 Internal meeting
- 15.00 Participation online Graduation Show Academy of Architecture
- 15.15 Graduation show
- 16.00 Presentations by heads of departments
- 16.45 Q & A - discussion
- 17.00 End of day 1

Thursday 26 November 2020

- 09.00 Management of Academy and programmes
- 10.30 Staff and teaching staff
- 12.00 Students
- 13.15 Lunch and walk-in
- 14.15 Session on Internationalisation
- 15.15 Session on testing and attained learning outcomes
- 16.00 Internal meeting assessment committee
- 17.30 Plenary feedback
- 18.00 End of site visit

A list of the interviewees is available.

Attachment 3 Documents

Information reports

- Masters of Science in Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape Architecture, Self-Evaluation Report Accreditation Assessment 2020, Academy of Architecture – Amsterdam University of the Arts.
- Masters of Science in Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape Architecture, Self-Evaluation Report ECA Certificate for Quality in Internationalisation 2020, Academy of Architecture – Amsterdam University of the Arts.

Annexes to the information reports

- Education materials
 - Curricula Vitae Guest Lecturers
 - Study Guide 2020-2021 including Education and Examination Regulations
 - Studiegids 2020-2021 inclusief Onderwijs- en Examenregeling
 - Study Guide Pre-Master A&T 2020-2021
 - Study Guide Pre-Master U&L 2020-2021
 - Study Guide Minor Architecture 2020-2021
 - Study Guide Minor U&L 2020-2021
- List of Academy Alumni Laureates
- Policy documents Amsterdam University of the Arts
- Policy documents Academy of Architecture
- External curriculum documents
- Examination Committee annual reports
- Policy documents National Consultation Architecture Education (LOBO)
- Surveys and Evaluations
- Academy of Architecture Publications
- Legal Documents
- Project Assignments
- Internationalisation materials
 - Documented Internationalization Goals
 - Overview of the Curriculum in Diagrammatic Form
 - Reference to Intercultural and International Courses
 - International and Intercultural Student Assessments
 - Example of a Diploma Supplement
 - Table of incoming and outgoing students of the last three years
 - List of International Education Projects
 - Position Paper on Internationalization 2018
 - Internationalisation goals – what's next?
 - Notitie internationale en interculturele leerdoelen Academie voor Bouwkunst
- Notitie taalbeleid Academie voor Bouwkunst
- AHK Gedragscode taalbeleid

Graduation projects

- Selected Examples of Graduation Work (2018-2020) and their assessment: Landscape Architecture (9), Urbanism (8), plus 17 Architecture projects (a list of the student numbers whose work was reviewed is available.)

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