



ASSESSMENT REPORT

Extensive programme assessment

COMMA

Master Choreography (joint degree)

Part-time

**Fontys University of Applied Sciences &
Codarts University of the arts**

**De kracht van
kennis.**

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**Fontys University of Applied Sciences &
Codarts University of the arts**

CROHO nr. 49502

Hobéon Certificering

Dated

March 28th 2022

Audit committee

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1. GENERAL AND QUANTITATIVE DATA

Name Institution	Fontys University of Applied Sciences & Codarts University of the arts
Status	Funded body for higher education
Outcomes of Institutional Quality Assessment	Fontys University of Applied Sciences positive, 2019 Codarts University of the arts n.a.
Name of programme in Central Register of Higher Professional Education (CROHO)	Master Choreography
ISAT-code CROHO	49502
Domain/sector croho	Taal & cultuur
Level	Master of Arts
Orientation and level	Hbo
Number of credits	90 EC
Locations	Tilburg, Rotterdam
Variant	Part-time
Joint programme	Joint degree Fontys University of Applied Sciences / Codarts University of the arts
Language	English
Date site visit	10th of November 2021

2. SUMMARY

The joint master Choreography COMMA is an international, English-taught two-year part-time programme (45 EC per year) for students who work as a choreographer, dancer, circus artist, artistic leader of a company, in a festival or theatre programme, curator or as ballet master/mistress. It is offered jointly by Codarts University of the arts and Fontys University of Applied Sciences.

The programme enables students to bring their work experience to their education. It facilitates this interaction by concentrating group and teaching activities in intensive weeks and through individual study in their professional context.

Standard 1. Intended Learning Outcomes

The intended learning outcomes clearly indicate the master level as described in the Dublin descriptors and reflected upon by the Vereniging Hogescholen (2019).

The programme has defined seven final competencies: craftsmanship, artistic research, vision & signature, innovation, leadership, co-creation and reflection.

The international orientation of the programme has been validated by the interviewing of both Dutch and international experts to describe the master level in the professional and study profile in the context of choreography. The international contextualisation of the programme can be further strengthened, both to intensify the connection to the European professional environment and to attract students looking for an interdisciplinary approach, in contrast to more traditional programmes.

The audit panel recognises the master level in the intended learning outcomes, appreciates the choreographic professional profile and deems this standard as satisfactory.

Standard 2 – 5: Curriculum

As a post experience master the programme ties in fully with the needs of the students. The joint degree programme has an international orientation and is in an open dialogue with foreign programmes and professional practices. With three interlinked but distinct if related fields (professional dance, circus and community arts) and a limited number of affiliated teachers, this is a challenge for the programme. Though the programme is a full member of the European Federation of professional Circus Schools (FEDEC) the small number of students and teachers requires disproportionate attention in the balance between the professional contexts. However, the audit panel appreciates the determination to safeguard the interprofessional co-creative character of the programme.

The curriculum reflects the intended learning outcomes clearly and supports a consistent growth of the student; from depending on traditional solutions to opening up to new perspectives, and cocreating new and innovative approaches (theory U).

Artistic research plays a central role in the programme and the Research Catalogue seems to be a useful work-tool for process, documentation and sharing. The use of the research catalogue is very helpful for students; the audit panel witnessed a substantial positive difference between students who applied the catalogue and those who did not. If academic writing is a challenge for students, the programme offers extra support for that.

This educational model is strongly supported by the input of multiple cultural backgrounds, the interdisciplinary professional contexts, the peer community exchange, and the international experience of the students. The use of English as lingua franca is key for the learning process and the professional future for these students.

Creating a community of learners can be challenging for part-time master programmes in a niche field. The COMMA programme has addressed this challenge with the Wicked Weekend, submersing students and staff alike at the very start of the programme. The structure of the

programme which concentrates teaching in intensive weeks while applying self-study in the personal professional context, supports this artistic research and application.

The audit panel considers that the structure and content of the curriculum supports the students learning process towards the intended learning outcomes. The audit panel deems that the curriculum meets the requirements of standards 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Standard 6: Teaching staff

The core teaching team of COMMA is sufficiently qualified, highly experienced, all non-Dutch and extremely committed to the learning process of their students. The team seems vulnerably small, also considering the joint character of the programme in Codarts and Fontys. Due to an extensive network of fellow teachers and professionals, however, the core team is able to fulfil the educational promise to its students.

The panel is convinced that the teaching team is up to the task, just as committed and connected as the core team. Attention is needed to ensure the robustness of the educational backbone of the programme. Students underlined that conclusion reflecting on the period when one of the four core teachers left the programme.

The requirements of the standard are met, in the eyes of the audit panel.

Standards 7 and 8: Facilities and Tutoring

The programme has access to a number of physical facilities needed for student work processes and performances for all three target areas (dance, community arts and circus) both in Rotterdam and Tilburg. During the covid-crisis the availability of the facilities is not optimal and students have complained about this. Within its possibilities the core team have tried to improve the circumstances, for instance by negotiating with the bachelor programme in the sharing of the circus space.

The digital learning environment of two institutions can be confusing for students, information and communication between programme and students should be improved, especially during covid-times.

The mentoring and artistic coaching is appreciated by students and additional sources of help are available to students in need at both institutions.

The last cohort of students have been studying during the covid-period. Of course this is especially disruptive for students who depend on the physical interaction of dancers and artists. Also online activities cannot replace the intensive courses, not without making them less interprofessional. The programme has tried a hybrid format with students physically present and online, but that was not always satisfactory. The programme is trying to support the learning community, but the detrimental effect will not be eliminated in the current climate. Students of the last cohort reflected that the study load of the theoretical and written assignments was very high, not necessarily feasible as a part time study. In addition, during the pandemic many of the students workplaces were not functioning.

The audit panel judges the programme as meeting the requirements of standard 7 and 8.

Standard 9: Quality assurance

The COMMA programme functions in a learner community of students and teachers. In this small group of post experience master students the quality of feedback is high and the programme is committed to continuous improvement. The size of the programme and the dual ownership of Codarts and Fontys can complicate the ability to change, for instance on the topic of integration of digital learning environments. But it also offers benefits in terms of its range of approaches and expertise.

The communication with the work field and other stakeholders is intensive and feedback translates into the programme swiftly.

The audit panel deems the programme meeting the requirements of this standard.

Standard 10: Student Assessments

The assessment policy of the programme stresses the importance of assessment functioning as part of the learning process of these reflective professional students. The linkage between the assessment practice and the learning outcomes is explained clearly to students and is understood by them.

The programme is changing the frequency of summative assessment and is strengthening the formative assessment process. This is educationally correct (especially at the master level) and responsive to the feedback received from the students that too many written assignments and assessments shifted the balance away from practice towards theory.

The reliability and validity of the assessment system is quite up to standard in the eyes of the audit panel. The transparency of the assessment criteria is clear as well, though the written feedback provided by the assessors is not always clear to students. The information available on the online portal is not always sufficiently transparent or accessible, students have expressed that they find assessment stressful at times.

The exam board functions well at a procedural level but is in transition due to a reshuffle in the Fontys-context and the development of integration with the Codarts-context. The audit panel thinks that the profession-oriented perspective of the exam board could be strengthened, though the auditors understand the complexity of two institutions, different professional contexts and a small niche programme.

At the end of the second-year students are asked to demonstrate the master level in a Final Integrated Assignment, combining a presentation of the artistic research, the contextualization and the outcomes (Exegesis) and a performance to show the impact of the artistic growth on personal development and signature (Exposition). These two aspects are questioned by two assessors during the Oral Defense. The audit committee considers this an appropriate and valuable mode of assessment.

The assessment system and its execution thus meet the requirements of the standard.

Standard 11: Achieved Learning Outcomes

The panel deems the level of the Final Integrated Assignment as reflecting the international master standard and fulfilling the intended learning outcomes, although the level of performance and the level of the in-depth writing varied. The balance between practice and artistic research should be better operationalized according to the audit panel.

The professional context of the programme, both employers and alumni, have argued the added value of the programme to the audit panel. Students of this master programme are no doubt enriching their artistic signature. The economical and societal circumstances are casting a shadow on the professional future, but their artistic growth ensures students of a competitive advantage. The audit panel encourages the programme to further enlarge the professional scope of the programme internationally.

The audit panel judges the requirements of this standard met satisfactory by the programme.

Overall conclusion:

The audit panel is convinced that the multidisciplinary approach of the COMMA master programme has added value in the educational landscape of choreography. The close-knit community of learners provides students with considerable artistic growth and fully reflects the international professional master level.

The panel evaluates all Standards as meeting the requirements. Hence, following NVAO regulations the overall judgement on the Joint Degree Master Programme of Choreography of Fontys University of Applied Sciences and Codarts University of the arts reads: positively meeting the requirements.

Therefore, the panel recommends the NVAO to prolong accreditation to the Joint Degree Master Programme of Choreography of Fontys University of Applied Sciences and Codarts University of the arts.

The audit panel recommends that the programme elaborates further the balance between practice and artistic research, including the international scope. For example, further promotion of the use of the research catalogue may enhance students to do their artistic research more effectively.

After consultation of the auditors and checked for factual inconsistencies by the programme the chair has finalized this assessment report on March 28th 2022.

3. INTRODUCTION

The joint degree master Choreography COMMA is an international, interdisciplinary English-taught two-year part-time programme (45 EC per year) for students who work as a choreographer, dancer, circus artist, artistic leader of a company, a festival or theatre programme, curator or ballet master/mistress. It is offered by Codarts University of the arts and Fontys University of Applied Sciences.

The programme enables students to bring their work experience to their education and facilitates this interaction by concentrating group and teaching activities in intensive weeks and individual study in their professional context. The intensive weeks are (in non-covid times) organized alternately in Rotterdam and Tilburg.

The initial accreditation panel of the NVAO recommended in 2016 the programme to underline its interdisciplinary approach towards prospect students, to safeguard the influx from all disciplines, to position the programme internationally, to make the competences leadership and research more visible in the curriculum to calibrate the assessments and to formalize the membership of Codarts in the executive chamber of the exam board. This report will address the follow up of these recommendations under the evaluation of the individual standards. Here it suffices to mention that the programme did respond to the recommendations adequately according to the audit panel.

Due to covid-restrictions the site visit of the programme had to be organized online. Parts of the oral feedback at the end of the site visit have been provided by the educational and professional experts of the audit panel.

4. FINDINGS AND JUDGEMENTS

4.1. Intended learning outcomes

Standard 1: The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements.

Explanation NVAO: The intended learning outcomes demonstrably describe the level of the programme (Associate Degree, Bachelor's, or Master's) as defined in the Dutch Qualifications Framework, as well as its orientation (professional or academic). In addition, they tie in with the regional, national or international perspective of the requirements currently set by the professional field and the discipline with regard to the contents of the programme. Insofar as is applicable, the intended learning outcomes are in accordance with relevant legislation and regulations. The points of departure for the set-up of the programme chime with the educational philosophy and the profile of the institution. The intended learning outcomes are periodically evaluated.

Findings

The ambition of the programme is to educate and guide innovative professionals with a wide insight into a variety of professional settings who contribute to practice-led evidence about choreography in dance, circus and community arts by means of artistic research. Students need to have understanding of the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary nature of the forms, languages and structures of dance, circus and community arts. Especially this interdisciplinary approach is setting the programme apart from fellow-educators in this field in The Netherlands. This approach is reflecting the transition of the Fontys School of Fine and Performance Arts and reflects the core values of adventures and craftsmanship that underline Codarts ambition.

The programme has been instrumental in describing the professional competencies for choreographic courses at master level. Dutch and international representatives of the work field (such as artistic directors, choreographers, dancers, circus artists and programmers) were interviewed in order to describe a professional profile for which the Study profile Dance (2016), functions as a subject-specific framework. This profile describes the competencies, including behavioural indicators at final levels, for both dancers and choreographers.

COMMA has formulated seven competences to be demonstrated at master level as intended learning outcomes:

1. *Craftsmanship.* The graduate can successfully apply advanced skills in design and production of dance, circus and community arts, either independently or in collaboration with experts in the field.
2. *Artistic research.* The graduate is able to conduct, whether independently or collaboratively, insightful and rigorous artistic research in the international field of contemporary choreography.
3. *Vision and signature.* The graduate can articulate the background, characteristics and goals that inform their own signature as an artist and can do so in a way that is appropriate for both the university and the work field.
4. *Innovation.* The graduate can demonstrate, through the use of an expanded vocabulary and creative strategies, knowledge of, and skills in disciplines outside his field of expertise. He can interpret and use this knowledge in his own context and instigate change.
5. *Leadership.* The graduate can demonstrate an ability to reflect upon the collaborative relationships essential to creating and presenting work and uses this awareness to influence artistic choices.

6. *Co-creation*. The graduate is able to improve, enrich and renew his vision, proposals, compositions and productions by co-creating with all parties involved including stakeholders and peers.
7. *Reflection*. The graduate is able to recognize and develop their own expert and intuitive decisions resulting in greater confidence and clarity when creating and working with others.

Dutch and international representatives of the work field (such as artistic directors, choreographers, dancers and programmers) were interviewed in order to describe the Professional profile and Study profile Dance (2016), which functions as a subject-specific framework. This profile describes the competencies, including behavioural indicators at final levels, for both dancers and choreographers.

The intended learning outcomes are reflecting the master level as described in the Dublin descriptors and reflected upon by the Vereniging Hogescholen (2019).

Considerations and Judgement

The interdisciplinary approach in the positioning of the programme is distinctive to other choreography programmes and has an added value in the eyes of the audit panel.

The international contextualisation of the programme can be strengthened, both to intensify the connection to the European professional environment and to attract students looking for the interdisciplinary approach, in contrast to more traditional programmes. Also in the intended learning outcomes this international context should be explicitly mentioned. The audit panel has no doubts the programme is internationally oriented, the community of learners is filled with international perspectives, both from students as lecturers.

Artistic research has a strong position in the intended learning outcomes.

The audit panel recognises the master level in the intended learning outcomes, appreciates the choreographic professional profile and deems this standard as satisfactory.

4.2. Curriculum

Standard 2: Curriculum; orientation

The curriculum enables the students to master appropriate (professional or academic) research and professional skills.

Explanation NVAO: The curriculum ties in with current (international) developments, requirements and expectations in the professional field and the discipline. Academic skills and/or research skills and/or professional competencies are substantiated in a manner befitting the orientation and level of the programme.

Findings

The breadth of the study reflects the international developments in all three professional fields (dance, community arts and circus). The core team is well connected to the professional context and many professionals (up to 48 assessors) bring their current personal experience into the intensive teaching periods and assessment of assignments and performances. The programme acknowledges that the professional context of circus is not yet at the desired level. This niche field of expertise needs strengthening and the connections with FEDEC are intensified, as the programme is now a full member.

As a post experience master the programme acknowledges the needs of the graduate students. The joint degree programme has an international orientation and is in an open dialogue with foreign programmes and professional practices. With three interlinked but different fields (professional dance, circus and community arts) and a limited number of affiliated teachers this poses a challenge for the programme. Though the programme is a full member of the European Federation of professional Circus Schools (FEDEC) the small number of students and teachers requires disproportionate attention in the balance between the professional contexts. The audit panel appreciates the determination to safeguard the interprofessional, interdisciplinary, co-creative character of the programme.

The curriculum reflects the intended learning outcomes clearly and supports a consistent growth of the student from a) depending on traditional solutions to b) opening up to new perspectives to c) co-creating new and innovative approaches (theory U).

Artistic research plays a central role in the programme. Academic writing is a challenge for some students, but the programme offers extra support for that. The use of the research catalogue (an online database of international artistic research) seems very helpful for students, the audit panel witnessed a substantial positive difference between students that applied the catalogue and those that did not.

This educational model is strongly supported by the input of multiple cultural backgrounds, the interdisciplinary professional context and the international experience of the students. The use of English as lingua franca is key for the learning process and the professional future for these students.

Creating a community of learners is challenging for part time master programmes in a niche field. The COMMA programme has addressed this challenge with the Wicked Weekend, submersing students and staff alike at the very start of the programme. The setup of the programme concentrating teaching in intensive weeks while applying self-study in the personal professional context supports the artistic research and application.

The audit panel considers the structure and content of the curriculum supporting the students learning process to the intended learning outcomes.

Considerations and Judgement

The programme is reasonably tied in with international developments. The level of involvement of the circus-context is growing, the audit panel appreciates the efforts the programme makes

to intensify that bond. The professional involvement with the programme is intensive, in teaching, co-creation and assessment.

The transdisciplinary approach of COMMA is beneficial for the students and the professional context, according to the audit panel. But in the eyes of the potential professional students it makes the profile less clear cut. The audit panel thinks this needs steady persistence and that the programme and its core team are well equipped for that.

Literature is up to standard, the dynamic field of artistic research is well founded and enhances a culture of research oriented, structured curiosity of students.

The audit panel judges the programme as meeting the requirements of the standard.

Standard 3: Curriculum; content**The contents of the curriculum enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.**

Explanation NVAO: The learning outcomes have been adequately translated into educational objectives of (components of) the curriculum.

Findings

The intended learning outcomes of the programme are clearly addressed in the curriculum. In three learning lines (Maker, Research, Project) the student is invited to deepen her/his craftmanship, to develop on the basis of artistic research a (more) distinctive signature and to co-create and integrate different aspects of choreography in a professional community at master level. The curriculum shows how every intended learning outcome is linked to 20 specific educational units, building up in complexity towards integration of craftmanship, research and co-creation. The learning is supported by competence checks and reflection and this in turn leads to entrepreneurship and innovation.

A high level of critical analysis and broadening of frames is stimulated. Examples are a written assignment on the development of a creative work, an exploration of the use of different devices and compositional structures and research into the facilitation of a collaborative creative process or reflection on the personal development process.

The concept of the production is inspired by the initial artistic research question of the student, iterated during the first year and represented to a combined panel of academic and professional expertise at the end of the second year.

Considerations and Judgement

The audit panel sees the content of the curriculum as fitting in order to reach the intended learning outcomes. The combination of a group who begin their studies with very different backgrounds makes the competence checks at the start of the programme very important. The study load on students with deficiencies on certain aspects (e.g. research) is quite ambitious.

Students of the last cohort reflected that the study load of the theoretical and written assignments was very high, not feasible in part-time study. However, during the pandemic many of the student's workplaces were not functioning.

The course content to incite artistic curiosity and the learning community does enhance risk taking.

The audit panel could see a correlation between students using the research catalogue and the level of academic performance.

The audit panel considers the requirements of this standard met by the programme.

Standard 4: Curriculum; learning environment**The structure of the curriculum encourages study and enables students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.**

Explanation NVAO: The curriculum is designed in a manner conducive to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. The teaching-learning environment encourages students to play an active role in the design of their own learning process (student-centred approach).

The design of the learning environment chimes with the educational philosophy of the institution. If the programme is taught in a language other than Dutch, the programme must justify its choice. This also applies if the programme bears a foreign language name.

Findings

Theory U is the leading idea of the programme, mastery at the starting level, diving into the unknown, engaging the challenges and demonstrating a new level of craftsmanship and artistic signature by the end of year two.

The 90 credits of the programme are divided over two year in 6 trimesters. The first year has an internally directed focus as students are guided by teachers, coaches and guest lecturers in developing their skills. The second year has an externally directed focus. Students test the acquired knowledge while learning about alternative working contexts and creating generative responses towards those contexts.

The role of student and professional peers helping as both supportive and critical friends is a necessary aspect of the learning process in master programmes in this artistic and co-operative context.

The transdisciplinary approach of the programme puts it into a niche category, nationally and internationally. As the artistic field of choreography necessarily crosses borders, it makes perfect sense to train students for the international professional context. Many of the students and teachers alike are international and the intercultural and international community of learners is of great added value for the programme.

Considerations and Judgement

The curriculum of the programme is structured in a sensible manner, enabling students to challenge themselves and reach the anticipated level. The intention of the programme team to make changes the assessment scheme to four summative assessment moments per year is supported by the audit panel as fitting for this level and enhancing the ownership of the study by the student.

The programme is attempts to provide a balance between theory and practice, between the requirements of the master level and student satisfaction.

The audit panel has no doubt that the international character of the programme is of added value necessary for this programme, both in benefitting of the intercultural classroom and connecting to the professional field.

The audit panel considers the requirements of this standard met by the programme.

Standard 5: Curriculum; Intake**The curriculum ties in with the qualifications of the incoming students.**

Explanation NVAO: The admission requirements in place are realistic with a view to the intended learning outcomes.

Findings

The programme aims to admit 15 students every two years, in order to offer a feasible programme without the small core team having to cater for two cohorts simultaneously. During the intake procedure the programme makes it clear to prospective students that they are expected to be practicing choreographers with the desire to extend their knowledge and expertise. The programme wants all three professional fields present in the group in order to facilitate the transdisciplinary approach.

This post-experience master programme desires students to have (a professional background that can be seen as the equivalent to) an arts college or university degree and at least five years of professional experience plus evidence of creative output (portfolio). Only EU-students (including Dutch) are admissible, provided their command of English meets the requirement of the TER.

The first selection based upon the portfolios is made by the core team, eligible students are then invited to the introductory weekend.

The final selection of students happens during an intensive weekend (the wicked weekend), based upon various assignments including a written research-oriented essay. A criterium based interview with a core team member and an alumnus follows, after which staff make decisions on which students are admitted.

The wicked weekend also functions as the start of the learner community in which the core teachers take part.

Considerations and Judgement

The audit panel judges the selection method fair and fit to purpose. Improvement of the international visibility of the program might give the selection committee a larger pool to choose from. The bandwidth between minimum number of students needed to facilitate a transdisciplinary community (12) and the maximum number of 16 students to cater for the demands of the professional field and the feasibility of running the programme is quite narrow. More certainty on the likelihood of successful students is desirable. A dropout ratio of 20% over two years is not unreasonable but nevertheless considerable and detrimental for students and the learning community.

The audit panel judges the programme meets the requirements of the standard.

4.3. Teaching Staff

Standard 6: The staff team is qualified for the realisation of the curriculum in terms of content and educational expertise. The team size is sufficient.

Explanation NVAO: The teachers have sufficient expertise in terms of both subject matter and teaching methods to teach the programme. The teachers have a sufficient command of the language in which they are teaching. The staff policy is conducive in this respect. Sufficient staff is available to teach the programme and tutor the students.

Findings

The core teaching team of the programme is highly committed and qualified for running and further developing the programme. The core team is quite small (three people) and the demands of a joint degree master programme in its starting phase are intensive. The course would benefit from the team being fully committed to this programme. The teaching, mentoring, tutoring and assessing tasks are divided between many professionals, though those staff members are predominantly working in other programmes (e.g. bachelor) or professional contexts.

The professional experience and academic qualifications of the staff are in order. Students appreciate the commitment and support of the staff, however in covid-times their needs were sometimes higher than the support the staff could muster. Students did see that sometimes the staff members were overworked. This is an important signal to the programme. Fluency in English was not a problem, neither in the eyes of the students or in the conversations with the audit panel.

Considerations and Judgement

The audit panel appreciates the commitment and expertise of the core team and the other teachers and mentors involved. It is clear they are all fully committed.

The capacity of staff does concern the audit panel, because it makes the programme vulnerable. Staff members can fall sick, the workload is high and replacement in the short term is next to impossible. Also the many roles that members need to fulfil in this small programme poses a vulnerability.

The core teaching team of COMMA is sufficiently qualified, highly experienced, all non-Dutch and supportive to the learning process of their students. The team is also vulnerably small, also considering the joint character of the programme in Codarts and Fontys. Due to an extensive network of fellow teachers and professionals the core team is able to fulfil the educational promise to its students.

The panel is convinced that the teaching team is up to the task, committed and connected as the core team is. Further attention is required by both Fontys and Codarts for the robustness of the educational backbone of the programme. Students underlined that conclusion reflecting on the period when one of the four core teachers left the programme.

The requirements of the standard are met, in the eyes of the audit panel.

4.4. Facilities

Standard 7: The accommodation and material facilities (infrastructure) are sufficient for the realisation of the curriculum.

Explanation NVAO: The accommodation of the programme and the facilities are in keeping with the intended learning outcomes and the teaching-learning environment.

Findings

The programme has access to a number of physical facilities needed for student work processes and performances for all three target areas (dance, community arts and circus) both in Rotterdam and Tilburg. During the covid-crisis the availability of the facilities was not optimal and students have complained about this. Within its possibilities the core team have tried to improve the circumstances, for instance to negotiate with the bachelor programme in the sharing of the circus space.

The digital learning environment of the programme is well equipped, information is widely available. The digital portfolio in MyLMS serves students well, especially in covid-times. A joint programme means two institutes communicating with students equally well.

Considerations and Judgement

The physical facilities for the execution of the programme enabling the students to reach the intended learning outcomes are in order. Imperfect capacity during the covid-crisis is understandable according to the audit panel. Staff are responsive to problems and 'fighting their corner' in competition with other programmes.

The digital learning environment of two institutions can be confusing for students, communication between programme and students should be improved, especially during covid-times. The combination of two institutions in the joint programme leads to some issues of clarity. The programme has not yet been able to tackle those issues to everybody's satisfaction. Especially the use of double email has annoyed some students. Though this is not a mayor point of attention, the programme should find a way to rectify this.

The audit panel judges the programme meets the requirements of this standard.

Standard 8: Tutoring. The tutoring of and provision of information to students are conducive to study progress and tie in with the needs of students.

Explanation NVAO: Students receive appropriate tutoring (including students with a functional impairment). The information provision of the programme is adequate.

Findings

An important finding is that students have indicated they appreciate the safe environment COMMA provides.

The mentoring and artistic coaching during the programme is easily accessible for students and more sources of help are available to students in need at both institutions. The audit panel appreciates the offering of academic writing support courses when students (and assessors) indicated that this was an issue.

Especially the last cohort of students have been studying during the covid-period. Of course this is highly disruptive for students that depend on physical interaction of dancers and artists. Also online activities cannot replace the intensive courses, without making them less interprofessional. The programme has tried a hybrid format with students physically present and online, but that did not work out. The programme is trying to support the learning community, but the detrimental effect will not be polished away.

The student workload of the programme (see standard 3) is of concern to the programme. Students reporting that they can only fulfil the study obligations because their professional practice is down due to the pandemic, is reason for worry.

Considerations and Judgement

The quality of tutoring, artistic and research-oriented coaching is up to standard, according to the audit panel. The response-time needs some managing of expectations and maybe the limited size of the (core) teaching team is a factor in this as well.

If study loads exceed the promises made for a part time education this need addressing, especially for a group of professional artists that is by nature prone to a work/study/private disbalance.

The audit panel judges the programme as meeting the requirements of standard 8.

4.5. Quality Assurance

Standard 9: The programme has an explicit and widely supported quality assurance system in place. It promotes the quality culture and has a focus on development.

Explanation NVAO: The programme organises effective periodic feedback that supports the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Existing programmes implement appropriate improvements based on the results of the previous assessment. They initiate appropriate evaluation and measurement activities to that end. The outcomes of this evaluation demonstrably constitute the basis for development and improvement. Within the institution, those responsible are held to account regarding the extent to which the programme contributes to the attainment of the institution's strategic goals. Quality assurance ensures the achievement of the intended learning results. The programme committee, examination board, staff, students, alumni and the relevant professional field are actively involved in the programme's internal quality assurance. The programme's design processes, its recognition, and its quality assurance are in keeping with the European Standards and Guidelines. The programme publishes accurate, reliable information regarding its quality, which is easily accessible to the target groups.

Findings

The quality assurance system of the programme is based upon the approved system of Fontys University of Applied Sciences (Institutional audit 2019).

The COMMA programme functions in a learner community of students and teachers. In this small group of post experience master students the quality of feedback is high, much more in depth than NSE-data, gathered by the programme as well. Students feel free to communicate their criticism and problems with their teachers, study facilitators and coaches. Since all meetings have to take place online during the pandemic, it has now become even harder to find students to partake in the programme committee. As this problem is shared with other master programmes at Fontys, COMMA now hopes to install a GOC (Common Programme Committee).

The programme is committed to continuous improvement. The size of the programme and the dual ownership of Codarts and Fontys can complicate the ability to change, for instance on the topic of integration of digital learning environments.

The communication with the work field and other stakeholders like alumni is intensive and feedback translates into the programme swiftly.

The co-assessing of members of the professional community gives the programme valuable input on the master level and the aspects that may need reconsidering.

Considerations and Judgement

The audit panel considers the small size of the programme and the intensive discussion with teachers and students as an appropriate source of feedback. The input gathered from external teaching professionals, co-assessors and professional platforms does provide the programme with necessary input to make adjustments if needed. A culture of responsiveness and continuous improvement is visible to the audit panel.

The audit panel deems the programme meeting the requirements of this standard.

4.6. Student assessment

Standard 10: The programme has an adequate student assessment system in place.

Explanation NVAO: The student assessments are valid, reliable and sufficiently independent. The quality of interim and final examinations is sufficiently safeguarded and meets the statutory quality standards. The examining board exerts its legal authority. The tests support the students' own learning processes.

Findings

COMMA aims to use assessment as part of the learning process of the student. Learning goals are clearly described and linked to aspects of the intended learning outcomes. A variety of assessment types are in use and the programme alternates formative and summative assessments.

The assessment system reflects the approach of the programme in being student-centred and practice led. Teachers want assessments and assignments to correspond with professional situations take all components of the competencies into consideration. The learner community facilitates the reception and appreciation of peer feedback and links to a culture of co-creation. In the near future the programme wants to develop the assessment system in a more holistic direction, creating less but broader summative assessments. Students are welcoming this development as it concentrates to four summative assessments per year.

Assessment criteria are described in line with learning goals and learning outcomes and available to students. Students sometimes indicated the operationalisation of the criteria was limited, especially concerning artistic research.

The exam board is committed in the discourse with the core team to help adaptation of the assessment practice while safeguarding the elements of validity, reliability, transparency and the international standard of the master level. The teaching team is generally adequately skilled in educational assessment and the professionals are used to an artistic context that weighs the gravitas of performance and performers.

At the end of the second-year students are to demonstrate the master level in a Final Integrated Assignment, combining a presentation of the artistic research, the contextualization and the outcomes (Exegesis) and a performance to show the impact of the artistic growth on personal development and signature (Exposition). These two aspects are questioned by two assessors during the Oral Defense.

The Codarts-member of the exam board is present during final performances and assessment. During the covid pandemic the exam board has proactively attended the core team to vulnerabilities in the summative assessments and the assessors have adapted accordingly. However undesirable, final assessments have been carried out in a reliable way, mostly online. Students that graduated during the pandemic were forced to either choose a solo-performance or use video to illustrate their performance. Of course this was restraining for the students, but it did not interfere with their final assessment.

Considerations and Judgement

The assessment policy of the programme stresses the importance of assessment functioning as part of the learning process of these reflective professional students. The linkage between the assessment practice and the learning outcomes is explained clearly to students.

The programme is changing the frequency of summative assessment and strengthens the formative assessment process. This is educationally correct (especially at master level) and responsive to the feedback of students that too many written assignments and assessments shifted the balance too much towards theory.

The reliability and validity of the assessment system is quite upto standard in the eyes of the audit panel. The transparency of the assessment criteria is clear as well, but the feedback provided by the assessors is not always clear for students. The information available on the online is not always sufficiently transparent or accessible, students have expressed that they find assessment stressful at times.

Concerning the level of detailed description of assessment criteria that students sometimes mentioned, the audit panel thinks that a certain level of uncertainty and anxiety will always play a role, especially with professional and ambitious students.

The exam board is functioning fine on a procedural level. The audit panel thinks that the profession-oriented perspective of the exam board can be strengthened, though the auditors understand the complexity of two institutions, different professional contexts and a small niche programme.

The assessment system and execution are meeting the requirements of the standard.

4.7. Achieved learning outcomes

Standard 11: The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Explanation NVAO: The achievement of the intended learning outcomes is demonstrated by the results of tests, the final projects, and the performance of graduates in actual practice or in post-graduate programmes.

Findings

The audit panel studied 15 dossiers of final project (video, artistic reflection, assessments) of the last two cohorts. In all cases the audit panel could understand the final grading of the assessors stating the intended learning outcomes had been achieved.

The professional context of the programme, both employers and alumni, have argued the added value of the programme to the audit panel because of the interdisciplinary approach and international learning community. The professionals indicated that the transdisciplinary element and approach may not be of interest for the whole field of dance, community arts and circus. But it is very relevant at the borders, where different contexts meet. For instance the Codarts strength in experimental dance and the Fontys dance environment brought the alumni new ideas and innovative approaches. The entrepreneurial skills have helped these artists, also in safeguarding a healthy balance both mentally and physically.

Alumni also stressed during the site visit that in this learner community intellectual curiosity was welcomed. This is to be expected in a master programme but by no means generally present in the professional context of dance and circus.

Considerations and Judgement

The panel deems the level of the Final Integrated Assignment as reflecting the international master standard and fulfilling the intended learning outcomes, although the level of performance and the level of the indepth writing varied.

The balance between practice and artistic research should be better operationalized according to the audit panel. In the final projects the panel witnessed a positive correlation in the use of the research catalogue and the level of artistic research.

Students of this master programme are no doubt enriching their artistic signature. The economical and societal circumstances are casting a shadow on the professional future, but the artistic growth ensures students of a competitive advantage. The audit panel encourages the programme to further enlarge the professional scope of the programme internationally.

The audit panel judges the requirements of this standard met satisfactory by the programme.

5. OVERALL CONCLUSION

The audit panel is convinced that the multidisciplinary approach of the master programme has added value in the educational landscape of choreography. The close-knit community of learners provides students with considerable artistic growth and reflects the international professional master level.

The panel evaluates all Standards as meeting the requirements. Hence, following NVAO regulations the overall judgement on the Joint Degree Master Programme of Choreography of Fontys University of Applied Sciences and Codarts University of the arts reads: positively meeting the requirements.

Therefore, the panel recommends the NVAO to prolong accreditation to the Joint Degree Master Programme of Choreography of Fontys University of Applied Sciences and Codarts University of the arts.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The audit panel would like to make some recommendations to the programme for further improvement.

The audit panel recommends the programme to elaborate further the balance between practice and artistic research, including the international scope.

The programme should find a solution to choose one platform or integrate the communication with students.

Further promotion of the use of the research catalogue may enhance students to do their artistic research more effectively or deepen the research outcomes.

The audit panel stresses the vulnerability of the core teaching team. The commitment and ownership the current team displays is laudable, but if students notice the strain it's a signal that reinforcement is needed.

Appendix I Overview of judgements

Results overview Fontys University of Applied Sciences & Codarts University of the arts Joint degree Master Choreography part time	
Standard	Judgement
Intended Learning Outcomes	
Standard 1. Intended Learning Outcomes	S
Programme	
Standard 2. Orientation programme	S
Standard 3. Content programme	S
Standard 4. Programme design	S
Standard 5. Connection to previous studies	S
Staff	
Standard 6. Staff qualifications and quantification	S
Facilities	
Standard 7. Housing and facilities	S
Standard 8. Tutoring and information provision	S
Quality Assurance	
Standard 9. Quality assurance system	S
Assessment	
Standard 10. Assessment	S
Achieved learning outcomes	
Standard 11. Achieved learning outcomes	S
Overall judgement	positive

Appendix II Site visit, working methods and rules of decision

Audit schedule Extensive Assessment of hbo-masters programme Choreography – Joint degree Fontys University of Applied Sciences & Codarts University of the arts

Programme – 10th of November 2021 site visit, online

09.00 – 09.45h	Pre-consultation panel Hobéon
09.45 – 10.15h	Interview with management <i>head of department dance, Codarts</i> <i>dean FHK</i> <i>core team</i>
<i>10.15 – 10.30h</i>	<i>Break</i>
10.30 -11.15h	Interview with core team <i>core team</i> <i>core team</i> <i>core team</i>
<i>11.15 – 11.30h</i>	<i>Break</i>
11.30 – 12.15h	Interview with students <i>Cohort 2019</i> <i>choreography - dance</i> <i>choreography - dance</i> <i>choreography - dance</i> <i>Cohort 2021</i> <i>choreography - circus</i> <i>choreography - dance</i>
<i>12.15 – 13.15h</i>	<i>Lunch</i>
13.15 – 14.00h	Interview with lecturers <i>choreographer</i> <i>research in the arts</i> <i>choreographer</i> <i>dramaturge, director</i> <i>core team</i>
<i>14.00 – 14.30h</i>	<i>Break</i>
14.30 – 15.15h	Interview with work field and alumni <i>Work field</i> <i>dancer, artistic leader Panama Pictures</i> <i>dancer, rehearsal director at de Stille</i> <i>Alumni</i> <i>dancer, choreographer</i> <i>circus artist, choreographer</i>
<i>15.15 – 15.45h</i>	<i>Break</i>
15.45 – 16.30h	Interview with Examination Board <i>member Examination Board Master Choreography</i> <i>chairman Examination Board Codarts</i> <i>chairman Examination Board (FHK)</i> <i>chairman Executive section Performance and Dance (FHK)</i>
<i>16.30 – 16.45h</i>	<i>Break</i>
16.45 – 17.00h	Pending issues
<i>17.00 – 17.45h</i>	<i>Internal consultation</i>
17.45 – 18.00h	Feedback

	<i>core team</i> <i>core team</i> <i>core team</i> <i>head of department dance, Codarts</i> <i>dean FHK</i> <i>Auditor Fontys</i> <i>e.a.</i>
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For privacy reasons, the names are not included in this report. The names of auditees are known to the secretary of the audit panel.

Working methods

Selection of the delegations / the auditees

In compliance with the NVAO regulations the audit panel prior to the audit decided on the composition of the delegations (auditees) in consultation with the course management and on the basis of the points of focus that had arisen from the panel's analysis of the course documents.

Auditing process

The following procedure was adopted. The panel studied the documents regarding the programme (see Annex Documents reviewed) and a number of theses. The panel secretary organised input from the auditors and distributed the preliminary findings among the panel members prior to the audit. A preparatory meeting of the panel was held before the online site, on 9th of November 2021. (see Annex: Programme of the site visit).

Due to illness the intended chair, mr. H. Brezet needed replacement. Mr. Klaassen stepped in. Mr. Brezet's comments, questions and documentation based evaluation have been taken into account during the site visit.

During the site-visit the audit panel members spoke to students.

The panel formulated its preliminary assessments per theme and standard immediately after the site visit. These were based on the findings of the site visit, and building on the assessment of the programme documents.

An 'open consultation session' was scheduled as part of the site-visit programme. The panel verified that the scheduled times of the consultation session had been made public to all parties involved in the school community in a correct and timely manner.

No students or staff members attended the open consultation session.

A first version of the assessment report was drafted by the secretary and circulated among the members of the panel for review and comments. The final draft was subsequently forwarded to the institute to correct factual inaccuracies.

Rules of decision

Assessment rules

Extended framework

According to assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands, September 2018

Final conclusion

In addition, the panel recommends a weighted and substantiated final conclusion regarding the programme, based on the following assessment rules:

Positive: The programme meets all the standards.

Appendix III Documents reviewed

List of documents examined

- Self-evaluation Report institutes
- Education policy plan
- Policy plan regarding research in relation to the programmes offered
- Staff (policy) overview
- Services and facilities overview
- Quality assurance plan;
- Policy plan regarding the accessibility and feasibility of the programme for students with functional disability;
- Summary and analysis of recent evaluation results and relevant management information;
- Reports on consultations in relevant committees / bodies;
- Test questions with corresponding assessment criteria and requirements (answer models) and a representative selection of actual tests administered (such as presentations, work placements, portfolio assessments) and assessments;
- representative selection of final projects, selected by the panel, of the past two years with corresponding assessment criteria and requirements;
- Reference books and other learning materials.

Following NVAO regulations the panel prior to the audit the panel has studied 15 students' final projects. For privacy reasons, the names of these graduates and their student numbers are not included in this report. The names of the graduates, their student number, as well as the titles of the final projects, are known to the secretary of the audit panel.

Appendix IV Compositon of the auditpanel

Naam visitatiegroep:	Stand alone
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Succinct resumes of participating panel members:

Name	Succinct CVs
drs. R. Klaassen MSM	Chair, former dean of school HKU University of Arts Utrecht
Prof. J. Butterworth	Retired professor dance studies, director School of Performing Arts Malta, head of dance University of Leeds
Prof. E. Lilja	Professional choreographer Sweden, professor and Vice-Chancellor at DOCH
K. Sirel	Master student choreography (Performance Practices) at ArtEZ University of Arts, Estonian background
V. Bartelds mba	Has been involved in accreditation for several years, both as lead auditor and secretary. He works as quality advisor at the Hanze UAS. Is NVAO-certified secretary.

Prior to the audit all panel members undersigned declarations of independence and confidentiality which are in possession of the NVAO. This declaration certifies, among other things, that panel members do not currently maintain or have not maintained for the last five years any (family) connections or ties of a personal nature or as a researcher/teacher, professional or consultant with the institution in question, which could affect a fully independent judgement regarding the quality of the programme in either a positive or negative sense.

On September 14th 2021 the NVAO endorsed the composition of the panel to assess the Master Choreography of the Universities of Applied Sciences Fontys and Codarts University of the arts.



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