1

INSTITUTION-WIDE REVIEW

Iceland University of the Arts

March 2022

Quality Board
for Icelandic Higher Education

Preface

This is the report of an Institution-Wide Review of the Iceland University of the Arts undertaken at the behest of the Quality Board for Icelandic Higher Education under the authority of the Icelandic Government.

The review was carried out by an independent Team of senior international higher education experts together with a student from the higher education sector in Iceland. The Team was appointed by the Quality Board for Icelandic Higher Education.

Institution-Wide Review is one component of the second cycle of the Icelandic Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF2) established by the Icelandic Government in 2017. The main elements of the QEF are:

- Quality Board-led Institution-Wide Reviews (IWRs);

- University-led Subject-Level Reviews (SLRs);

- University-led Year-on and Mid-Term Progress reports;

- Annual meetings between universities and Quality Board members to discuss institutional developments, including quality assurance;

- Quality Council-led enhancement workshops and conferences;

- Quality Board-led Special Reviews.

Further information on the QEF is available on the website of the Icelandic Quality Enhancement Framework (www.qef.is).

Dr Andrée Sursock   Dr Sigurður Óli Sigurðsson

Chair   Manager

Contents

Glossary and List of Abbreviations

CFO. Chief Finance Officer

ELIA. The European League of Institutes of the Arts

ESG. Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015 edition. Also known as European Standards and Guidelines.

IWR. Institution-Wide Review. Board-led review of institution, based on QEF.

QEF. Quality Enhancement Framework for Icelandic Higher Education.

QEF1. First cycle of the Quality Enhancement Framework for Icelandic Higher Education, 2011-2015.

QEF2. Second cycle of the Quality Enhancement Framework for Icelandic Higher Education, scheduled for 2017-2022.

RA. Reflective Analysis produced by the Iceland University of the Arts in preparation for the IWR**.**

SAD. The School of Academic Development.

SADF. The School of Architecture, Design and Fine Art.

SMPA. The School of Music and Performing Arts.

SLR. Subject-Level Review. Institution-led review of an individual faculty, based on QEF.

Team

The following experts comprised the Team:

Lois Fitch, Chair. Deputy Principal, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

Michèle Graf. Head of Accreditation and Quality Development, Zurich University of the Arts.

Helka-Liisa Hentilä. Professor of Planning and Urban Design and former Vice-Rector (Education), University of Oulu.

Nhung Hong Thi Ngo. Postgraduate Student, University of Iceland.

Kurt T. Steinberg. President, Montserrat College of Art.

1 Introduction: the review in context

1.1. Overview of review process

Institutional Review is one of the main elements of the Quality Enhancement Framework for Icelandic Higher Education (QEF), now in its second cycle (QEF2). The process and its objectives are described in full in the 2nd edition of the Quality Enhancement Handbook for Icelandic Higher Education[1].

All universities in Iceland are reviewed subject to this protocol. This is the report of the fifth review in the second cycle, that of the Iceland University of the Arts (the University).

In preparation for the main visit by the Review Team (Team), the Team was issued with the completed Reflective Analysis (RA) document (completed June 2021, issued July 2021). The final RA, together with comprehensive annexes, was sent to the Team, after which each Team member provided commentary to the Chair. The Chair worked with the Manager of the Quality Board to set up a visit schedule, in consultation with University staff. Scheduling was complicated by the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic, which meant that both the institution and the Team needed to be ready to conduct the review process remotely if required. However, ultimately, the Team elected to conduct the visit in-person by unanimous consent, and the visit schedule was proposed across three days between 21st and 23rd September 2021, inclusive.

---

[1] https://en.rannis.is/media/gaedarad/Final-for-publication-14-3-2017.pdf

The preparation of the RA was overseen by the Rector, Fríða Björk Ingvarsdóttir, and the Quality Manager & Director of Human Resources/Director of the University Office, Sóley Björt Guðmundsdóttir.

The total review visit took place between 20th and 24th September 2021 (inclusive). The Team was based at the National Library of Iceland and at two University sites (Laugarnes and Þverholt).

The onsite visit began with a presentation from the Rector, a tour of facilities at three sites conducted by the Managing Director and informal greetings with several staff and students working onsite at the time. A large number of meetings were held over three days with staff, students, stakeholders and Board members (for details of the schedule, see Annex 1).

The Quality Board and the Team are very grateful to the University for its patient cooperation in organising the proceedings, especially given the need for COVID-safe protocols in all spaces, and to all those who took part in meetings during the Team's visit.

1.2. The Iceland University of the Arts

The University is a self-governing, but government-funded, higher education institution offering specialist education in the visual-, performing-arts and design, as well as arts education. As such, it is the only institution of its kind in Iceland, and thus de facto the 'national' institution for the delivery of under- and postgraduate learning and teaching in its specialist disciplines. There are currently six departments, with a seventh (Department of Film) to be added imminently. The established six departments comprise Architecture, Design, Fine Arts, Performing Arts, Music, and Arts Education. In the Academic Year 2020-21 the University offered a total of 28 study programmes, eleven of which were postgraduate

taught programmes. Although the University does not offer doctoral degrees, this is an aspiration to be developed during the next QEF cycle.

The Iceland University of the Arts is a small university, with its pedagogical model focused on the intensive learning experience for students, with most learning taking place in small groups, or 1:1 settings. The University has grown in size and scope since the Institution-Wide Review (IWR) in the first cycle of the QEF (QEF1) in 2014, and student enrolments have increased to 602 overall, with 171 graduate students. There are 124 permanent staff members (95.5 Full-Time Equivalent, FTE) including 58 FTE academic positions. Up to 400 sessional staff contribute to the teaching and learning mission as well, and these are part-time tutors, lecturers, international and local artists. This reliance on sessional staff is typical of small specialist arts institutions internationally, and both contributes to the rich diversity of experience accessible to students, as well as to challenges in cohering staff around a shared institutional purpose and vision. At the same time, the diversity and number of staff presents challenges with the quality assurance of their teaching.

The University currently receives an annual contract from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (see Section 1.6, below). Securing a permanent 'home' for the University is paramount to its ongoing sustainability and impact. The current Strategy (2019-2023) places significant emphasis on its role in society, and the University collaborates with municipalities nationwide. This is surely all the more important as society adjusts to the ongoing 'harms' of the global pandemic.

1.3. Mission, values and strategic objectives

The University foregrounds qualities of curiosity, understanding and courage – all essential to developing artists. These were also the underpinning values stated in the 2013-2017 strategy. This underscores the Icelandic focus on the modern, unburdened by long-established historical traditions, enabling the institutional values to focus on innovative practice and embracing the unknown. The University foregrounds core values in both its strategy document and the RA with a focus on student-centred learning; developing research culture and capacity; and developing the institution's relationship to society. The desire for a resolution to the housing situation is also given prominence in the strategy and RA.

The stated goals of the University would benefit from being more clearly defined and measurable in the view of the Team. To be able to call on a series of strategic key performance indicators, arising directly from stated objectives in the strategy, would provide context and evidence for stakeholders involved in determining the University's future course. Likewise, the list of actions outlined after each objective (for example in learning and teaching) would similarly benefit from being prioritised, with measurable outcomes. This would help questions such as, for example, what does evidence of success look like in the collection of action items with the heading 'cross-disciplinary studies'?

Core areas that need to be balanced carefully include the aspiration to develop new programme offers (including doctoral studies) whilst ensuring that – irrespective of the housing situation – current programmes and students' learning needs, including fundamental provision such as seating and desks, are adequate to enable an effective learning environment. More detail on these recommendations is provided in Section 6.

1.4. Relationship to society

It was very clear from the Team's meeting with the stakeholder association, comprising membership from local and national cultural institutions including orchestras, educators, museums etc., that there is significant esteem for the University and the standards of graduates it produces. The requests to collaborate with the University outstrip its capacity to service all requests, and the potential for growth in this area is evident.

Like many similar institutions in European countries, the University is covered by a Higher Education legal framework [Higher Education Act 63/2006]. It is also a cultural institution in its own right. The creative sector in Iceland, in common with many countries, is thriving (albeit that the pandemic has impacted the opportunities for employment). There are many employment opportunities, including freelance/portfolio work.

Public participation is considerable, as demonstrated by 10% of the population engaging with the graduation festival. This underlines the unique opportunity the University has to reach into all corners of society. The Team – all from countries with considerable populations, in the millions, albeit some topographically similar in terms of the challenges of remote rural infrastructure, dense concentration of population in relatively small areas and the challenge of articulating the tension between local (civic) presence and national impact – took time to understand the dynamics of as small a population as Iceland's. Demands on funding and investment that may seem obvious, and certainly in the national interest, such as sustained investment in and growth of the arts, can be in direct competition with essential investment in basic infrastructure connecting remote rural communities with a wider community.

Owing to the size of the Icelandic population, it is unsurprising that most visible Icelandic artists are known to the University community, either as graduates of the institution, or as practitioners who engage as sessional staff. It can prove challenging to recruit new staff to take up vacant academic roles once a fixed-term of a post has finished and an incumbent leaves the institution and returns to professional practice.

1.5. Housing

The University was founded following the amalgamation of separate arts colleges to create a single institution for all the arts. In the QEF1 cycle, the RA case study focused on the housing situation and the urgent need for a solution to be found in physical estate to enable the University to come together as one institution on one site. It was clearly anticipated that this situation would have been resolved by the time the QEF2 cycle commenced. Finding a workable solution is considered imperative in order to realise the University's strategic ambitions of integrating the arts, collaborative learning experiences and reducing the duplication of effort and services (and therefore resource) that is necessitated by preserving three distinct campus locations and two smaller locations within Reykjavik. This will be further compounded when a new location for the Film Department is added from Autumn 2022.

The Team found that, whilst there have been unconfirmed indications that a campus facility will be made available, there continues to be no firm settled accommodation to enable the University to consolidate its operations into a fit-for-purpose site. As a consequence, the Team were shown buildings that – in the view of the Team – do not offer a sustainable model for further learning and teaching developments, not least because some specialist spaces needed for the particular art forms offered are inadequate or absent altogether.

Reykjavík city authorities have no direct responsibilities for the housing. The institution is having to spend resource on building interim solutions at these sites (such as the new concert room at the Skipholt location) but the ultimate futility of spending resource on estate that should be superseded by a permanent solution is contributing to an overall institutional sense of perpetual crisis management. This was expressed in numerous interviews the Team undertook with staff and students at all levels of the organisation. A considerable amount of senior management time is spent managing the deficiencies of the current housing situation and seeking a sustainable solution for a future one.

It is the view of the Team that the University is a national ambassador for Icelandic culture, arts and society, but it is severely hamstrung by its unresolved housing situation, the short-term leases on current buildings and a short-term (annual) renewal of its contract, which collectively undermine the capacity for longer-term planning. As a consequence, there is a great deal of anxiety amongst staff and students about what they can expect in the short- to medium-term.

1.6. Funding and resourcing

The University is self-governing and has year-on-year service contracts on operations and finances with the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (Ministry) based on a service contract signed in 2012. The current contract is therefore in many ways the same contract that was in place before the completion of the QEF1 IWR review in 2014. Three revenue streams identified in the RA include government funding (79.8% of revenue), tuition fees (17.6%) and other service fees (2.6%). In 2014, the QEF1 Review Team noted the University (then Iceland Academy of the Arts, IAA) relied 'too heavily' on government funding and urged consideration as to whether other financial sources might be activated (for example,

research and innovation income). The percentage of revenue from government funding has not changed since the QEF1 review, although there has been progress in research development, with institutional investment in the development of research increasing during the QEF2 cycle and the award in late 2020 of a significant five-year grant from the European Research Council to a Research Professor in Music. Nevertheless, the institution is once again encouraged to explore ways to reduce dependency on Ministry funding, not least because the University's contract with the Ministry expired in 2016 and is currently renewed on an annual basis, inhibiting forward-planning and long-term financial forecasting.

Whilst the University would value greater contribution, fuller funding and sustained commitment from the government, it also recognises the potential vulnerabilities in that reliance whilst the longer-term commitment is not assured and is advised seek to secure distinct income streams. The limits to this possibility are evident to the team, however, in that there exists no North American style philanthropic culture in the Nordic region, nor a large enough society in Iceland to secure substantial enough, lasting commitment comparable to that within the purview of the State. The current contract (the year-on-year extension of the contract that expired in 2016) is under review, and a new fit-for-purpose contract awaited. The Ministry has initiated a review of the formula funding model and the University has had the opportunity to submit recommendations to the Ministry as part of the process. The anticipated changes to the funding model will – the University believes – strengthen the institution's financial position. Bringing the funds in line with actual costs (facilities maintenance is not part of the settlement, for example) would enable the enhancement of learning activity to better keep pace with the quality of the teaching in the

University. However, the Team was struck by the fact that the University is currently in possession of a newly signed five-year contract for a new film department, whilst still only contracted for one-year as an institution. This precarious position also highlights the urgency of resolving the housing situation, since new disciplines that require highly specialised resources, spaces and technologies are being taken on whilst students already studying at the University wonder when their own specialist – and even some basic – estate needs will be met within the existing portfolio of disciplines.

At the same time, clearer articulation for internal purposes of how funds are disbursed, using a funding allocation model, is encouraged by the Team, as is the implementation of regular and transparent financial monitoring and due diligence in major financial decisions. Allocation of monies to address basic resource needs (e.g., adequate desk/chair provision in lecture/seminar spaces) should be transparent and made a priority.

The intensive, small group and 1:1 staples of study in the performing, production, design and visual arts require specialist, premium funding in order to nurture the highly-specialised skills in graduates needed by national and international creative industries companies. A recognition of the unique input required in these disciplines, in any future higher education funding model, will enable this University to compete internationally for the best students in their subjects. Furthermore, this specialist funding for intensive tuition needs to be matched with similar premium investment in fit-for-purpose spaces for students to learn and experience their practice in. The current Music Department site does not meet the needs of learners or staff aspiring to produce the highest quality performers and researchers that Iceland can nurture.

Once again, the Team heard repeated references to the University's 'crisis management mode' – this self-characterisation of the operating environment predates the global pandemic and, by all accounts, the University's response to measures imposed by the pandemic has been robust, carefully planned and as little detrimental to planned learning experiences as possible. Nevertheless, the pandemic has demonstrated the importance of institutional management, effective communication and transparent financial monitoring, all of which are made challenging by the financial and housing uncertainty already described.

1.7. Board, organisation and management; key committee and managerial structures

As a self-governing institution the Iceland University of the Arts operates under the Higher Education Institution Act 63/2006. The University is governed by a Board of five members, two of whom are appointed by the Ministry, and three of whom are appointed by the University's stakeholder association. The institutional rules deem that the Board consists only of external members. Whilst this arrangement upholds the probity of the Board and in theory ensures objective, external expertise and public accountability, in practice the Board is heavily reliant on the Rector as a conduit to institutional mechanisms, challenges and enhancements. The Rector and Managing Director attend Board meetings, but there is no student interaction with the Board (for example the Student Council representatives do not engage with the Board). The Team urges the University and its Board to consider enabling greater exchange of information and knowledge between the students, staff and Board so that the latter becomes more directly aware of the operating environment, the student learning experience (the core business of the University), and the staff experience.

The Board oversees matters including the setting of fee levels, institutional strategy and the approval of rules and regulations. In this context, the Team again strongly recommends that the University and Board consider ways in which communication and information lines between the Board and internal consultative bodies can be established, including ensuring Student Council representatives meet the Board members at least once, annually.

The Board's open and constructive relationship with the present Rector is to be commended. However, the Team was concerned that a succession plan is not yet in place to ensure a smooth and effective transition in two years' time to a new Rector. The Team recommends that this be prioritised, and shared transparently with the senior leadership of the University, in order that they are able to support the Board's work effectively (see Section 6.8 for further discussion of this point). The Board should also consider whether a five-person constitution is sufficient, or whether an additional two members, for example, would enable greater coverage of the specialisms and professional diversity that the University represents through its departments, academic disciplines and aspiration to become a research leader.

The Rector, appointed by the Board, reports to the Board and is supported by the Managing Director. The Rector is responsible for institutional strategy, academic standards and quality management of learning, teaching, research and innovation. The Rector is responsible for appointing staff, in consultation with the Managing Director and Board, albeit that the Senior Leadership Team is involved in the process for appointment in practice.

The Management Council (composed of the senior leadership team and chaired by the Rector) is responsible for the operational day-to-day management of the University and

supports the Rector in this role. The Managing Director is also responsible for all professional services (academic support), alongside the Director of the University Office, both reporting to the Rector. Some academic support functions will also report to the Dean of the School of Academic Development (SAD). Ultimately, the Rector is accountable for both Academic and Academic Support functions.

The Academic Council is the highest academic decision-making committee in the University and is therefore responsible for all matters pertaining to the quality of the student learning experience, research and innovation development and academic development. Academic committees (Teaching and Research) report into the Academic Council. Membership once again includes the Rector and Deans, as well as Heads of Departments, representatives from the Teaching and Research Committees, and the Student Council President.

The recent re-structuring of the University's leadership and management is clearly articulated in the RA, and persuasive in its detail. However, it is so new an enterprise, complicated by the pandemic and the uncertainties outlined earlier in both finance and housing circumstances, that, while the Team can commend the promise it conveys, it will draw attention throughout this report to the practical implications of its implementation, including positives, challenges and areas for further consideration.

Three newly appointed Deans lead the academic portfolio in the School of Architecture, Design and Fine Art (SADFA); the School of Music and Performing Arts (SMPA); and the School of Academic Development (SAD), respectively. The roles are very new, and at the time of the IWR, the roles were still establishing themselves with each School adjusting to

the new infrastructure, nomenclature and operating principles. The Deans took up these posts during the pandemic.

The SAD in particular is a new initiative, intended to 'cut across' the two other Schools, enabling the development of Postgraduate Taught Programmes (and ultimately, doctoral degrees), research and innovation development and interdisciplinarity. The establishment of SAD is also intended to increase the use of an appropriate range of evidence to support quality enhancement processes. The emergence of the quality and enhancement culture from this as yet very young organisational structure is discussed further in later sections of this report (especially Sections 5 and 6). Reporting into the Academic Council are new School Councils (supporting the work of the Deans, who chair the respective councils), and in turn Departmental Councils, which provide a platform for information sharing and consultation on departmental and programme developments. A representative of sessional staff is a member of School Councils, which meet up to six times annually. Otherwise, departmental meetings are held regularly and operate less formally insofar as they are convened as needed, requiring the presence of those staff members whose activity and input is relevant to the issue(s) at hand.

The Student Council is the umbrella student body into which departmental student associations report and nominates student representatives for all committees and councils at institutional level. The Quality Management System ensures that students work together with the University to understand their role in quality management and to enable full participation in the committee structure, in line with ESG 1.3.

The Team welcomed the transition of the Academic Council from an 'information-sharing' group to a more formal Academic 'Board' responsible for academic and quality decision-making. Again, more discussion of its effectiveness will follow later in this report.

The Team noted that during the QEF1 IWR process, the outcome report reflected that the University was in a time of transition involving 'major organisational transformations', a review of the Academic Council, and reorganisation of teaching and learning. During this current review, once again, much organisational change is being implemented, against the backdrop of the pandemic, although the structure as presented in the RA – as long as it fulfils its objectives and promise – should be given appropriate time to become well-established. This will support the University to experience a period of structural stability, in order to hone further its processes and enhancements prior to future review cycles.

1.8. Staff

Academic staff contracts range from full-time, to part-time and fixed-term engagements, intended to offer students the best aggregation of professional experience and teaching quality, as well as up-to-date pedagogies and professional insights. The planned development of staff, and anticipated benefits of the new structure, will enable research development and opportunities for staff to acquire and enhance skills and experience whilst associated with the University.

In October 2020 there were 71 'permanent' Academic Staff (56 FTE), 42 of whom were female and 29 male, and of those 38 were full-time and 33 part-time. There were 37 support staff (33.2 FTE), of whom 27 were female and ten male. Twenty-eight were full-time and nine were part-time. There were ten workshop and technical staff (5.7 FTE). Four were

female and six are male. Only two were full-time. The RA states that around 400 international and local part-time (sessional) lecturers contribute to learning and teaching annually.

The fixed-term nature of academic contracts is, in many respects, contrary to the stated institutional aspiration to develop and embed a thriving research and innovation culture. These take time and resource to develop effectively, and to maintain, and many staff are appointed for fixed terms with no guarantee of re-appointment as a term draws to a close. A typical pattern is 4+4+2 years. Whilst this certainly ensures that the staff expertise and relevance is regularly refreshed while bringing innovative industry perspectives into the classroom, it also causes issues with continuity of provision and leadership in so small an organisation. The Team heard in meetings with staff that some become so frustrated with the failure to resolve the housing problem, and more generally, provision of equipment within inadequate spaces for artistic production, that they leave to return to professional practice. In a small population like Iceland, that has a significant impact on its flagship arts practice institution, and is potentially to the detriment of the student experience. On the other hand, staff and students have created companies and entrepreneurial ventures that should be recognised as making a vital and sustainable contribution to the Icelandic creative economy as well as to societal wellbeing.

1.9 Students and Student Support

There are a total of 602 students at the University, 63% of whom are female. These are split into undergraduate cohorts (total 431, 60% female) and postgraduate cohorts (total 171, 70% female).

The Team met domestic and international students, at all levels of study, and across a range of disciplines, both in formal meetings and during the initial tour of facilities. They gave commendable accounts of their motivations for studying in the arts, and in this University. The Student Council membership in particular was articulate, and many students shared with the Team their experience, hopes for their personal artistic development, and their sense of community within the University. The Student Council is a powerful advocacy engine for the student voice, due at least in part to the energies of the incumbent Student Council President.

Student support that complements academic delivery is led by the University Office, or Managerial Operations, and covers Library, Informational Technology Services, International Office, and Research Services. The responsibilities and remit of each service are clearly articulated in the RA. Institutional policy supports the Library's operation of a writing centre for students, providing individual appointments and advice on resources, templates for theses and software information (Turnitin™, Zotero™). The services are centralised (albeit that the library is physically across multiple campus locations) and operate cross-institutionally with clear designation of responsibilities for development and maintenance.

The University provides for student counselling and career advice and provision has been increased according to demand in line with ESG 1.6, as reported in the RA. This increase in provision is also a direct consequence of an outcome of the previous IWR process.

1.10 The Reflective Analysis

The RA was prepared over a nine-month period, beginning in Autumn 2020, and was led by a steering group appointed by the Management Council. The group's membership included,

predominantly, membership of the Academic Council and the Director of the University Office, as well as the Student Council Chair. Open consultations and other meetings were held with staff and students separately. A timeline was provided to the Team as a supporting document, outlining the process in detailed stages as well as the participants.

The RA is a substantial document, and its production was made all the harder by the ongoing pandemic and the challenges faced in relation to that by Autumn 2020. The University is therefore to be commended on the production of a highly detailed document, with many supporting annexes. Its utility for internal enhancement is evident, as is the University's capacity for self-reflection that comes across as open, and generally well-balanced between description and analysis. At times, the analysis is somewhat brief, and could have probed the issue in question more deeply. Examples include section 4 of the RA, which discusses safeguarding standards of awards, and includes much detailed description of the institutional approach, but relatively brief reflection on each section, yet the structural changes and changes to the responsibilities of the Academic Council for example, since the QEF1 IWR, have been substantial and warranted more detailed self-appraisal. Consequently, at times, Team members were left to draw together information from across a diverse range of documentation supplied in the annexes.

The RA balances the University's view of its strengths and aspirations as an institution with constructive appraisal of its challenges and deficiencies. Plans to address these are put forward, but it is recognised that some of the remedy is entirely dependent on securing fit-for-purpose housing as soon as possible. That said, the Team encourages the University to continue to develop contingency plans and to ensure a balance of focus on the situation as they find it now as well as the positives that new housing could bring. The student lifecycle

is short and many students who have been consulted in the development of this RA, and/or during the Team's visit, and who will have the opportunity to read this report will not themselves experience the benefits of new housing, even if a resolution is proffered within coming months.

1.11 Summary evaluation

The University has expanded size and scope since QEF1 IWR, and has formalised, streamlined and begun to embed new academic and management structures (including the centralisation of a number of professional and quality services). The range of disciplines covered has expanded to offer a comprehensive coverage of arts-based practical education at tertiary level. Further plans to expand are in process and include a programme in film studies and possible doctoral degrees.

The QEF1 IWR report from 2014 notes the 'urgent and pressing challenge' of the housing needs which 'still needs to be resolved'. It points to the poignancy of the 2014 RA: 'The current situation inflicts obstacles on the development and maintenance of academic standards, as well as creating a burden of complicated management in three different locations'. Some seven years later, the 2021 RA is all the more poignant for its reflection of an institution looking forward, but held back by the still unresolved housing needs. The previous QEF1 report, however, does acknowledge that a solution other than 'one – and only one – location' might be more realistic. It remains to be seen whether the plan for the most recently indicated premises (one location) comes to timely fruition, but again the University is urged to develop a resilient strategy that can accommodate solution(s) involving a multi-campus estate. However, it has to be emphasised that even a multi-campus estate must offer relevant, accessible, safe and fit-for-purpose specialist learning

and working facilities for students and staff. The current housing does not meet the developmental needs of this University.

On account of its unique national status, the University should be as bold as possible in positioning itself, drawing on the evident support from the stakeholder group, and joining resources where possible to act as a strong advocating body for the arts in Icelandic life, national and international relations, and economy.

As noted before, this report will focus at times on intra-institutional communication. This is projected to be enhanced within the new infrastructure; however, the Team heard numerous times of challenges around communication – focused on language issues, chains of communication and some voices reportedly feeling 'unheard' in certain circumstances. Good and effective communication does not depend upon housing. As the pandemic has demonstrated globally, communication can be effectively marshalled through a number of means/channels, and as the University transitions towards new leadership in the role of Rector , and towards increased cross-flow of information between institution and Board, the Team formed the impression that the University recognises the fundamental importance of enhancing performance in this area.

The Team's visit included several meetings in which participants were open, reflective and energised by their contributions. Even where difficulties in experience were conveyed, there was evidently a supportive community around individuals and groups who articulated a desire for the enhancement of their learning or employment experience. The Team re-interviewed a number of senior figures, having first met with them in the early part of the week of the review, in order to seek clarification and assurances around some issues that

came to its attention in the course of the week. In all cases, the Team formed the opinion that the management of the University is shared amongst a team of committed and talented, strategic and sociable individuals, unafraid to learn from constructive criticism and challenge.

2. Learning from prior reviews

2.1 Learning from previous IWR

Chapter 3 of the RA covers previous quality reviews and follow-up. The national Quality Enhancement Framework, introduced in 2011, outlines the stages and expectations of institutional review, and there is a regular cycle of Subject-Level Review (SLR) conducted internally approximately every five years, again in line with the QEF. The RA reports that since the 2014 IWR, greater formalisation of processes and accountabilities has been introduced, alongside enhanced student participation in decision-making. Quality management has been a particular focus of such 'formalisation', including the development of formal procedures for the design and approval of new programmes, cross-referenced to ESG 1.2. The Team viewed the structural changes to roles and the centralisation of quality management and support, as well as the formal quality policy, as steps towards supporting what it found to be a strong emerging quality culture. In other words, there was a widespread understanding of the importance of quality and benchmarking, student voice and self-reflection but there remain some key issues to prioritise as the new senior management infrastructure becomes properly embedded. These will be discussed in the next chapter of this report. As mentioned earlier, the full implementation and embedding of the new structure promises to support the further development of efficient quality processes in line with ESG 1.1, transparent reporting and accountability in both academic

and non-academic areas and provides a clear organogram helpful for orienting students and early career staff towards clearer understanding of roles, responsibilities and reporting lines.

The RA provides an update on original recommendations made in the IWR 2014, the interim response (mid-term progress report, 2019), and the current status of each action. Some actions are accompanied by detailed updates. One example is 'the need for a realistic timetable and for the prioritisation of the target areas'. The University reports concrete progress on this action, and is realistic about the challenge that COVID-19 has added in respect of the timescale for implementation. Others are more vague, especially suggestion #3, 'the need to reconsider the membership of the University Board and to strengthen its capacity to support the institution's activities', which remains a strong recommendation emerging from the present review. Both the mid-term report and current status update in the RA describe the constitution of the Board and the process by which members are appointed but give no indication as to how the institution intends to address the Board's engagement with University activities and personnel/management committees.

Similarly, suggestion #10, 'enhancing career and professional preparation for all students', is addressed in the RA by a note detailing that student and career counselling services have been 'substantially enhanced', with the recruitment of a counsellor in a 20% position. Whilst recognising that the University is extremely financially challenged regarding the resource for initiatives that might address this recommendation, there might have been an opportunity to explore here how student learning (for example the emphasis on developing interdisciplinary skills) enhances career and professional preparation. Recognising that curriculum development can support some of the recommended outcomes, the Team

advises that the University consider how SLR further aligns with institutional objectives arising from institutional review and strategy.

2.2 Learning from SLRs

Since the 2014 IWR, there has been consistent SLR activity, with five departments reviewed in the period. Again, there is now a formal working procedure to follow throughout this process, with a template provided to departments to support consistency of approach. SLR involves input from students, alumni and external stakeholders, in accordance with ESG 1.9. Undoubtedly these procedures enable greater formalisation of quality culture and provide opportunities for peer support amongst programme Teams/departments, who are able to draw on previous reviews' approaches and findings.

Teaching evaluations that feed into the monitoring of learning and teaching quality and activity stimulate some concern amongst teachers because the students can complete the survey anonymously. However, this is entirely in line with custom and practice in many like institutions internationally, even though the risk of teachers being denigrated by dissatisfied students, or receiving inappropriate language or personal appraisals, clearly impacts teachers' confidence and even the likelihood of their engaging with the feedback received. The Student Council should work with the Quality Manager and student representatives to emphasise the value in students providing constructive feedback that enables action to be taken towards enhancement of the learning experience. As a proto-professional environment, students can use the opportunity to provide teacher evaluations as practice for constructive dialogue with professionals.

The RA describes the process for SLR, noting that there is an action plan covering the next five years upon completion of the review process. The capacity for SLR to enhance self-evaluation activity is acknowledged by the Team, which had the opportunity to view departmental action plans that distil a number of concrete actions to take forward. The Team was less convinced by the status updates for many of these actions, with many labelled simply 'ongoing', and some 'not started' (albeit in some cases due to the pandemic, no doubt). The Team observed that the five-year span of action plans might lend itself to vague interim status updates, and risks actions 'dropping off' or becoming superseded by more rapidly developing initiatives. Recommendations relating to enhancement of SLR are included in Section 3 of this report, below.

The housing situation continues to be highlighted in SLR documents as unsatisfactory. Clearly the graduate survey, presumably undertaken by those who have begun to experience professional life since graduation, and therefore able to compare facilities provided at the University with those encountered in the profession, focuses heavily on poor housing. The University also notes that students criticise the level of fees charged (although these compare favourably with international institutions), stating that '[the University] acknowledges criticism on student fees: however until the university is fully funded by the state, student fees cannot be avoided'. This is a challenging issue. Becoming entirely reliant on state funding is not advised whilst the precariousness of the year-on-year contract with the MESC endures, and nor was it in the 2014 IWR review, as described earlier. It is accepted, however, that there is not the culture of philanthropy in Iceland (especially so in such a small society) that one might expect to find in European and especially North American institutions' funding arrangements.

It is clear in the restructuring of the organisation that many of the SLR outcomes would map readily onto institution-wide aspirations. The University should consider ways of further aligning these shared ambitions in order to support the intended lessening of the burden on heads of department and programme directors administratively. This will be further explored in Section 3, below.

Managing Standards

3.1 Institutional approach to the management of Standards

The University participates in external benchmarking with art universities in other countries, particularly those in the Nordic region. It is a member of the European League of Institutes of the Arts and the Nordic Rectors of Art Universities Forum. At subject level, the University's departments participate in Nordic-Baltic networks, and these links are borne out in the SLR documentation that the Team reviewed.

The Team was impressed by the professional standing of the Board members, and their evident expertise and commitment to supporting the University, and especially its goal of securing permanent suitable accommodation. Echoing the 2014 IWR report, the present Team also recommends expanding the Board membership if possible, as well as the members' interface with key staff, committee work and the student voice to provide more information, which enables Board members to lobby and represent the institution in appropriate forums (see also Section 6.2). The Board hosts an annual open meeting to present the University's finances and other strategic matters of public interest.

The Rector is responsible for managing and safeguarding standards on an institutional level. The Team was confident that the Rector has a productive and open relationship with the

Board, its Chair and external stakeholders. The Rector is supported to deliver and maintain the appropriate standards by the Management and Academic Councils respectively. The governance of information, and that which is available to the public, such as reporting on student outcomes and qualifications provided, is the responsibility of the Rector, supported by the Management Council.

The committee structure maps effectively to the personnel structure that is newly in place, such that the Deans (Academic) support the Rector to fulfil academic standards whilst the Managing Director, Chief Finance Officer (CFO) and Director of the University Office support the strategic and operational functioning of the University. All (apart from the CFO) are members of the Management Council, the primary decision-making forum – according to the University rules – for all administrative and academic organisation. The University should consider bringing the CFO onto the Management Council to support transparent and robust, and detailed, financial decision-making at the highest committee level of the institution. This would be commensurate with the role of Chief Financial Officers in many similar organisations, who are members of the most senior decision-making committees and present annual financial reports, and forward plans, for example. The Academic Council has decision-making power on academic matters. The Deans are in turn supported by School Councils. The infrastructure is in place in the new organisational chart to ensure strong lines of communication in both directions, from staff and students, in the day-to-day learning environment up to the Board, Management and Academic Councils, and back again.

Informally, the Team saw evidence of strong interpersonal communication within the leadership Team and across departments, as well as at staff levels. It is more difficult to quantify such informal communication and information-sharing activity, as well as peer

support and informal mentoring, but that is a feature in many small, specialist institutions internationally. The Team viewed this strong, if sometimes informal, quality culture at the University, around practice and learning, as a positive feature of the environment, founded on regular communications between staff, and between staff and students. Section 6 outlines recommended enhancements that should be made to secure an effective transition from the informal to formal, and to better capture 'follow-up' of actions, as well as responses to feedback.

The Management Council calls non-members into meetings when appropriate to discuss particular matters and meets twice monthly (according to the RA) but now weekly (according to senior managers the Team met). The Team heard how a significant proportion of time is spent 'crisis managing' the housing situation and reactive – rather than proactive – planning, given the late autumn confirmation of the funding settlement for the next calendar year. The Team noted the dissonance between the recognition on the part of the Management Council that housing and facilities do require strategic and systematic improvement and the necessarily 'human' solutions brokered by the Management Council and teams across the University, to mitigate the impact of sub-standard housing and under-funding.

The creation of the Dean of SAD role, and the concept of the SAD itself, is intended to recognise in human, artistic and academic terms the aspiration to become 'one university', prioritising research, Masters-level developments (including a more generalist MA) and interdisciplinary development. The Senior Leadership Team hopes that this will be matched ultimately with a 'one university' housing solution. The Team was assured, through meetings with the Deans, of their collective vision and capacity for collaborative working

amongst themselves, and with their respective school teams. As formerly with the Academic Council, the University is now encouraged to formalise appropriate processes, and structure, to manage the anticipated growth of research culture effectively. In practice, this means ensuring that the intended freeing up of capacity in the roles of Heads of Department and Programme Directors, cited as one benefit of the institutional re-structure, is carried through into the experience of individuals in these roles.

Since the QEF1 IWR, the Academic Council has acquired defined decision-making powers, and holds the strategic remit for academic and quality standards. The newly formalised Council has only met a handful of times to date and is early in its established life in the University's deliberative structure. In addition to academic members of the Management Committee, its membership includes a Project Manager on behalf of the Teaching Committee and a Project Manager on behalf of the Research Committee, as well as the Chair of the Student Council. The University should enable the membership of a representative member of sessional staff on the Academic Council, since this contingent of staff is considerable in size, and typical of a small, specialist institution. The work of the Academic Council is supported by the Handbook for Quality Assurance and Enhancement, and the University is similarly encouraged to consider adding a representative of the Quality Assurance Team to its membership. At present, Quality Management is overseen by the University Office, but integrating it with Academic Council strategy would offer the opportunity to recognise the currently more pervasive informal quality culture as 'alive' in the academic context, and mitigate against it being seen just as an administrative, procedural matter. It would, in effect, cement ownership of quality enhancement across the academic portfolio.

It was reported to the Team that the Management Council in practice 'feels more operational' and the Academic Council 'more strategic'. The Team reflected that this is in line with the description of 'crisis management' conveyed by members of the Management Council, whereas the Academic Council has a longer-range view given the seven-year institution-led review cycle in Icelandic higher education. Furthermore, if the balance tends towards the Academic Council leading strategically, it is for the University to consider whether the Academic Council reporting directly to the Board, as does the Management Council, would be advantageous. This might support Board membership with a rich perspective on the institutional priorities and – in the broadest sense – assist in their ability to represent the University as effectively as possible in external forums. It might also reduce reliance on the Rector's role as the Board's principal link to institutional operations and plans, as a Rectorial succession plan is formulated .

The Student Council has regular opportunities to represent the student voice to senior leadership and the Rector holds an open 'town hall' meeting annually for student feedback and ideas to be shared. The Student Council also meets the Academic Council twice or three times per academic year. This assists in informing staff of student projects and can lead to support for student development. The Team was assured by some students that they knew whom to contact with their ideas for improvements to their experience, whilst in other meetings with student groups there were reports of students frustrated by having to go from person to person to try to resolve issues (particularly in relation to housing and maintenance issues).

The documentation provided to the Team on Quality Assurance, and processes for review, including templates and guidelines, represents the fulfilment of the requirement to

formalise processes and monitoring of standards. Whilst the formalisation of institutional practices and processes has been enhanced and streamlined, particularly through the new infrastructure design based around the function of the three academic schools, the University office and operations leadership, the backdrop of uncertainty hampers further development. Many of the issues to be identified in this report as in need of further development or review are acknowledged by the Senior Leadership Team and reinforced by perspectives shared in several meetings the Team conducted with various representative groups of staff, students and stakeholders.

The restructure of organisational management has been well planned and presents an opportunity to make considerable progress in key areas identified by the institution and previous reviews as priorities, not least efficiency of workloads, research and innovation development and interdisciplinary working. It is the view of the Team that, given the extent of organisational structural flux since before the 2014 review, the University should place confidence in its new structure and ensure that it is properly embedded. It should be reviewed regularly, and it is essential that staff and student voices are heard and responded to transparently. This will require a highly effective and strategic approach to communications, especially those deemed to be 'institutional communications' to students and staff about matters that affect their experience of the organisation and its plans.

Contracts for academic staff are fixed-term, up to ten years, and reported to be renewable by the University. At the end of a 10-year term, the position will be openly advertised as part of a formal recruitment process, meaning that the incumbent has to go through a possibly competitive process of formal re-appointment. From an institutional point of view, the fixed-term nature of appointments is logical because it enables a refresh of innovative

ideas as new staff – many of whom will have been professionally active in wider society – replace those who have been in the University for a period. In turn, those who have been employed under the fixed-term protocol have the opportunity to re-enter professional life outside the University with the experience of having worked there in their portfolio.

A helpful context that enabled the Team to understand the issues at hand centred on a reminder of the small size of Icelandic society, such that because of the cross-fertilisation into artistic and professional fields, there are numerous Icelanders who are alumni, former employees or who will be employees. The rotation of talent through the roles is deemed to enhance the student experience and professional network. The Team also heard from staff and students who reflected that the approaching end of a fixed-term and high staff turnover rates could disrupt continuity of planning. It was observed that excellent staff sometimes have to leave when their fixed term has concluded and that it can undermine progress made in a particular department or programme. The University is encouraged to review its fixed-term approach to staff appointments, especially to evaluate whether the aspiration to refresh the artistic perspectives and practices through turnover could be undermining leadership and forward-planning continuity. The Team was also mindful of the impacts that an impending conclusion of contract can impose on staff wellbeing. It is also recommended that the University reappraise the approach to fixed-term contracts in light of its aspiration to develop and sustain a coherent research culture and community. Ultimately it is for the University to decide the approach that it should take strategically in relation to fixed-term appointments, but the team encourages regular review nonetheless, in the context of so much infrastructural re-organisation of the institution, the prioritisation of research development and the student experience.

In line with good practice, the University refers applications for promotion to an externally-constituted committee comprising representation from the professional arts community, and an expert in the same field as the applicant. Whilst some staff members were unsure about the composition of these committees, the Team formed the opinion that the Senior Leadership Team took the issue of promotion and recognition seriously, including recognising the need to take more account of teaching development and pedagogical excellence in the promotions process. The Senior Leadership gave indications of significant numbers of individuals who have been through the promotions process and is confident in the rigour of the rules in terms of both published process and practice. The team heard from staff in meetings (the specific numbers of which are not provided here due to the risk of identifying individuals), that there was not a clear understanding of the processes and outcomes around promotion. This inevitably leads to speculation amongst staff. The University should ensure transparency for staff members going through the promotions process to accord more fully with ESG 1.5, including the provision of necessary assurance that an appropriate expert in the relevant field has evaluated the application in every case.

3.2 Relevance of Case Study to managing standards

The case study presented in the RA focussed on the transition from numerical grading to pass/fail assessment. The process, which at the time of writing the RA and the review visit was still ongoing, provides a useful insight into the management of a quality issue that has significant implications for learners, tutors and professional stakeholders, as well as administrative and procedural challenges and benefits. The RA frames the case study as a reflection on the potential for the enhancement of feedback and assessment experience.

The process is described in organic terms, in that it originated in the Department for the

Performing Arts and grew to be adopted cross-institutionally since 2015. At time of review,

all departments were engaged with using pass/fail outcomes, but at different stages of the

process. In some cases, the last cohorts of graduates to graduate with numerical grades are

being 'seen out' of the system, whilst newer cohorts in the same department are working to

the new system of pass/fail. The RA states that 'currently, no centralised working

procedures have been developed at the institutional level', but the rationale provided for

this is that the University recognises that diverse methods pertaining to different art forms

warrant reflection before streamlining processes across departments. This approach is

sound in the view of the Team. At an appropriate moment, and before the next IWR, an

institutional assessment and feedback plan should be created by staff and students to

achieve consistency of purpose across programmes. This does not mean that all assessment

or feedback needs to be 'standardised', since both assessment and feedback approaches

must allow for the particularities of disciplines. However, a unity of purpose to the provision

of effective feedback (both written and oral) should ultimately be devised, as well as

principles to ensure that significantly uneven volumes of feedback are not given by staff,

resulting in uneven workloads. Clear guidance on feedback, to assist with effective workload

management, should be developed as part of the feedback strategy, mentioned above.

The prioritisation of the learning process over the graded outcome is welcomed by students

as it enables greater creative risk taking, which is an effective tool for the enhancement of

the learning experience. The process also encourages inclusive practice because the

pass/fail and feedback approach is tailored to the individual learner very effectively, in line

with ESG 1.3. Teachers support the system but express a desire to award 'distinction' to

exceptional students. The Team reflected that this could lead to unintended consequences of re-establishing differentiated outcomes and thereby perpetuating some of the issues that have been overcome by the introduction of pass/fail. If the University pursues this further, the criteria should be very clearly articulated and a convincing rationale developed, in collaboration with students.

Support for staff to enable the fullest engagement with the benefits of the pass/fail approach and associated feedback protocols is available. Using learning outcomes as a means to calibrate feedback is one approach that is cited in the RA, although this could limit feedback because learning outcomes are either met or not by students (determining whether they pass or fail), whereas it is the individual student's particular way of meeting the learning outcomes that should be reflected in their personalised feedback. This guards against any 'standardisation' of feedback that can occur, meaning that several students receive the same feedback, and question its value to their personal learning experience.

3.3 Admissions criteria

Students apply for programmes on a competitive basis and, on average, 25% of applicants are accepted. The admissions criteria are clearly set out on the website and further development is proposed via the Public Relations Policy. The competition for places enables admissions teams to agree a standard threshold for entrance to programmes. Programmes review their admissions criteria and thresholds as part of periodic programme review. The University collects and analyses admissions data and the public relations policy indicates that this is, and will be, used to inform targeted 'campaigns' of recruitment. In addition, the University visits upper secondary schools, holds open days and is in the process of

enhancing its English language website. These proposed developments would further assure that admissions processes are in line with ESG 1.4.

Applicants submit a portfolio of relevant materials to admissions committees that are appointed by the relevant Head of Department. The committee interviews applicants, and its conclusion is final. For MA admission, applicants must have completed a BA degree or an equivalent of a 180 ECTS university course. Applicants to BA programmes must have completed the relevant upper secondary qualifications or their equivalent. The University has some discretion to offer a place to an applicant who lacks formal certification of qualifications but who can demonstrate successfully the relevant skillset at the appropriate level to meet the entry standard for the BA programme(s). There are clear mechanisms for the recognition of prior learning and informal prior learning and experience that are in line with ESG 1.4.

There is considerable variation year-on-year in the application rates to individual departments and consequently in the year-on-year acceptance rates per department. The balance of ecology between departments, and between BA and MA level admissions is complicated, and reflected in the significant difference (for example in Performing Arts degree applications and admissions 2019-2020) in adjacent years in some departments. This is also all dependent on the housing and its capacity to host the student intake. The market research conducted to determine the viability of a new programme (film) appears to have been thorough and consultative.

The University Language Policy does not refer to admission criteria but does state that MA programmes in DAD, DFA and DoM are international and delivered in English. The Team

heard accounts of inconsistency in delivery such that some elements of the programmes were actually delivered in Icelandic. Whilst this will be addressed later in this report, and is also cited in the recommendations to the institution in Section 7, the University is here advised specifically to make it clear in its admissions materials what expectations there are for matriculating students relative to their Icelandic language skills at point of admission. Similarly, staff should be advised of the delivery language requirements and quality monitoring should ensure that these are being adhered to in every case.

3.4 External reference points and benchmarks

The Team was struck by the positive meeting held with a sizeable group of external stakeholders, representing numerous companies and diverse disciplines in the arts in Iceland. The group noted that the standard of graduates leaving the University with a degree satisfied their expectations when recruiting employees, although in some design and architecture disciplines there was debate about the employment-readiness and range of practical and technical experience of graduates, for example when compared with those from another Icelandic university offering similar degrees.

The University seeks to benchmark itself against its Nordic counterparts, whilst at the same time acknowledging that its resources do not compare to, for example, Uniarts Helsinki, or Stockholm University of the Arts. As members of the European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA), the Association Européenne des Conservatoires and the Nordic Rectors of Arts Forum, there are regular formal and informal opportunities to share good practice and learn from peer institutions. Numerous Erasmus+ collaborative projects where the University is either lead or partner are cited in documentation detailing international project work and partners.

The external stakeholders cited the 'wonderful' opportunities for collaboration through courses and competitions; working with tutors in some departments on professional projects that in turn provide some infrastructure to support student professional development; the use of public spaces in Iceland (principally Reykjavík) to showcase University work in events that are well-attended; and co-production of Masters showcases, which further support students' transition from student to professional. Stakeholders themselves have driven the development and implementation of new programmes, most notably the recently agreed film department initiative, as well as a Masters programme in Architecture. The Team recognised that the University – despite its resource limitations explored extensively elsewhere in this report – is a 'go to' partner for many external bodies, and that internal developments can be stimulated by external need, which is very much in alignment with ESGs 1.2 and 1.9.

The Team observed that the University would benefit in some disciplines from greater collaboration with other Icelandic universities. This especially applies in disciplines where there is potential to join resources or to make use of institutional resources in larger universities that have, for example, digital infrastructure that is industry-relevant, which could benefit the University's students and skills development. Inter-university co-operation, whilst a goal, is not yet formalised in policy, or supported financially.

The stakeholders did not participate in the development of the RA. This seemed a missed opportunity to the Team, particularly since the stakeholders' collective voice is a powerful one, representing the national cultural economy in Iceland, numerous significant employers of arts graduates, and a principal agent for the development of relationships between wider society and the arts, which is a stated strategic objective of the University. In fact, members

of the stakeholder group – who had been able to review the RA prior to the meeting – felt that the University should extend its ambition in some fields to look to other models of higher education arts practice, for example in film, where the Nordic model is perhaps too narrow.

The Team heard that in arts education in particular, graduates are highly sought-after, with a high percentage of students securing employment prior to graduation. In arts education, international students enrich the culture, enabling benchmarking and sharing of experience and methodologies to the benefit of all approaches.

The Team felt that the stakeholder group – particularly given its support and positivity regarding the quality of standards and learning – should be more pivotal to the University's ambition to make a greater impact on society. Stakeholders are not involved in the conversation in a systematic way and although, as the Team has found in other areas, there is a strong informal dialogue, this can be hampered by the small size of departments and frequency of turnover of key staff. At the same time, the small size of the University lends it agility, in the view of stakeholders, to 'break down silos'. The Team recognised that the ambition of the new management structure complements this view of external professionals and the success of its embedding in the University in coming months and years can usefully be benchmarked by continuing this particular conversation with its stakeholder group.

When benchmarked against other Icelandic, mostly Reykjavík-based universities, the group emphasised the University's artistic focus, sometimes to the detriment of technical skill development that could provide a more competitive edge for its graduates when compared

with graduates from elsewhere. Better funding, appropriate housing and sustained investment would enable the University to claim the territory more conspicuously as a leader in practical arts disciplines and offer persuasive reasons for other institutions to collaborate on shared provision, as well as to forge partnerships with businesses in relevant fields.

A significant network of European contacts is indicated in the RA, a result of NordPlus and Erasmus+ participation. A sizeable number of bi-lateral arrangements are in place between comparable educational institutions and mutually-recognised programmes. Student exchange numbers (in and out) are healthy. Exchange students are subject to the same regulations as any other student of the University, and fulfil the same academic requirements. Most exchanges are for one semester, requiring departmental authorisation. Protocols for awarding credit appropriately to exchange students are given in headline form in the University Rules and are in line with ESG 1.4.

In the context of benchmarking standards, the statistical data provided on student numbers by department suggests that in the Department of Music there is a proportionately small cohort of instrumental performers when compared with a relatively large pool of composers. The Team viewed a large ensemble space nearing building completion onsite, which would comfortably house a chamber orchestra or large ensemble, but in order to compete more readily with similar international institutions training to an orchestral model, the University requires sufficient resource to accommodate still larger ensembles. This should include larger symphony orchestra space, both to provide a 'real-life' training experience for musicians, and to expose composers to a range of ensemble sizes to work with.

This theme of space inadequacies relates very obviously to the unresolved housing situation and extends to other areas of the University's operation. Accommodation, equipment and infrastructure, not to mention amenities (such as canteen, breakout space or quiet space/social spaces), were frankly inadequate in many areas in the view of the Team. International comparators – both those that the University identifies within the Nordic region and those further afield – are at a significant advantage in terms of the standard of facilities in which to train students to international professional standards. These are barriers to more significant progress. The University covers many disciplines, but all are specialised. Whilst the artistic vision and creativity is evident to see, the financial constraints on technical support for the development of appropriate profession-ready skillsets needs to be addressed.

The University could strengthen its visibility in Iceland and internationally by collecting, reviewing, systematising and publishing data on the institution's social impact and engagement, partnership working, international projects and alumni successes. Joining together with the stakeholder group as one united voice of advocacy for the arts, supported by evidence, would perhaps help in forming a case for financial support and development.

3.5 Resources for safeguarding standards

The strong, informal quality culture already noted earlier in this report is typical of small, specialist institutions. Between the last IWR and this one, the University has formalised its processes for assuring standards significantly, as evidenced in the annexes to the RA, the RA commentary and the general awareness of appropriate procedures and documentation demonstrated by staff and students in the Team's meetings with them. Appropriate external

perspectives are sought and responded to during programme design and review, and there are common templates in use for SLR in accordance with ESGs 1.2 and 1.9.

The Academic Council needs more time to establish itself in its new guise, with its more formal 'academic arbiter' brief. In principle, this is a welcome development towards an authoritative, informed decision-making body. It was not clear to the Team that the Academic Council had yet had sufficient time for reflection and scrutiny to have full oversight of programme monitoring and review, as well as progress on action plans. Demonstrating evidence of enhancement at subject level on a regular basis will ensure that, in a regular process such as IWR on a seven-year cycle, more detail on progress on actions emerging from SLRs will be available to review teams. Capturing key performance indicators, by appropriately systematising and reviewing key data sets at programme, subject and School levels will also give early notice of any developing trends that require intervention, for example, a significant fall in applications, graduations or a significant rise in interruption of studies due to mental health issues.

The similarity in membership between the Management Council and the Academic Council should be monitored to ensure no duplication of work between the two groups. It is the Team's view that the recommendation noted earlier, namely that a representative member of sessional staff should be included on the Academic Council, should be prioritised.

The Quality Management System, with its handbook and associated paperwork for programme and subject review, is clear and ensures a consistency of approach is taken across different disciplines. Once the new structure has fully settled, the anticipated freeing up of capacity in key roles like heads of department should ensure that staff are enabled to

participate more effectively in development opportunities, including more time for sharing good practice amongst one another. Again, this happens informally and often, but creating space for this activity to be a focus event is recommended.

Staff are provided with guidance on the processes of periodic programme review, writing learning outcomes and curriculum (course descriptions) and design and approval procedures for new programmes that align well with ESG 1.9. The learning outcomes guidance includes protocols for outcomes recognising transferable skills, in line with ESG 1.3. It is a recognised challenge in small specialist institutions internationally that a significant proportion of teaching staff are part-time (sessional) and perhaps themselves managing a portfolio of several contracts with different organisations, or are self-employed. This can limit the commitment that they can give to an institution, as well as create a challenge for institutions to engage the staff in community projects designed to enhance the learning experience or assure standards are upheld. It is essential that the University addresses the need for supporting the induction, development and review of staff consistently across all departments.

The Team heard that there were two areas of particular concern to sessional staff in several of its meetings with different groups, including student groups. Aside from there being little evidence of a fully consistent institution-wide approach to induction and development of sessional staff, many staff echoed a desire for more effective communications from the Senior Leadership Team. Last-minute timetable adjustments, for example, or the information on a timetable sitting across two different digital platforms, leaving students and staff to assimilate the information into one coherent timetable for themselves, should be rectified urgently. Staff felt that teaching evaluations could be problematic if anonymous

and reported some inappropriate language (for example gendered language) being written in the reports under the cover of anonymity. Staff had felt particularly vulnerable after 'MeToo' discussions that had been institution- and industry-wide, in that they could be 'accused' anonymously and have no way to redress the situation fairly, in their view.

The ongoing development and implementation of the equality policy will enable the University to address numerous issues that the Team encountered, including those above, but also the sense of isolation experienced by some international students and students belonging to groups with protected characteristics. The strategy could also articulate expectations on professional standards and behaviours in this area, including detailing how staff seek support if they lack confidence in managing the learning environment to their own, and students', satisfaction.

3.6 Design, approval, monitoring and review of Programmes

The processes for design, approval, monitoring and review of programmes are clearly laid out in the relevant documentation, supplied for this review as annexes to the main RA. Over its six departments, the University offers 28 study programmes, 11 of which are graduate programmes. There is a large and wide-ranging menu of courses, some of which are elective. The specialist nature of teaching in different departments, over three campus locations, makes for a complex timetabling challenge. The University aspires to create more opportunities for students to participate in interdisciplinary learning and the creation of a common timetable, albeit challenged by the disparate housing locations , is essential if more cross-fertilisation of learning is to be enabled. The heads of department and programme directors have considerable responsibility for securing appropriate staff and visiting staff to

deliver the curriculum, and to seek out opportunities for shared provision or interaction between cohorts and programmes.

The process undertaken for developing a new programme is clearly set out and accords well with ESG 1.2. The first step is in the hands of the Rector, who notifies the Ministry and discusses the intention with the appropriate Dean and Managing Director. At this stage, a preliminary budget and needs analysis are undertaken to determine the viability, or not, of the stated intent. If approved in principle, the Dean proceeds to appoint a working group, including external expertise (as has most recently been the case in the development of the proposal for a film department). Consultation with external stakeholders such as employers, professionals and business communities takes place, and the proposal developed to a stage where it is presented to the Departmental Council for approval, and to the Quality Manager for feedback in relation to the National Framework for Qualifications in Higher Education. Finally, the proposal is submitted to the Management Council for formal approval and then discussed by the Academic Council. The University is encouraged to consider strengthening the role of the Academic Council in the approval process as the designated academic decision-making committee. The Ministry must approve the proposal once it has completed its internal approval process. This can take some time, as it has with the recently approved film department.

The Team was satisfied that this process is a robust response to recommendations in the QEF1 IWR process, that urged formalisation of design and approval processes in a Quality Handbook. The Team was also mindful that the stated timeline for internal approval, from the beginning of Spring Semester in the academic year prior to implementation of a new programme, until June 1st that same (calendar) year is a tight timeline for development and

approval of a new programme. The guidance document also suggests that if deadlines cannot be met, then the implementation of the new programme is postponed for a year. Now that the University is operating in a new structure, it is advised to review the implications for workload management of the timeline for approval of new programmes and consider extending the timeline, allowing for a longer developmental phase if needed.

SLR includes the development of a departmental action plan, with actions assigned to appropriate staff members. A template is in place to support the process. The Team reviewed several SLR reports supplied alongside the RA and undertaken since the last IWR process. These documents were rich in information and reflection, and demonstrated engagement with a wide-range of relevant voices internally, and externally, as well as the student voice.

Periodic review of programmes takes place every five years (according to the guidance document) or every three years (according to the University's Quality Management System documentation). Ensuring consistency in information across different documents will be useful for future review teams. Comprehensively reviewing programmes at shorter intervals than five years is not recommended, given the workload and potential for confusion of provision for outgoing and incoming student cohorts this presents. Inevitably, there is some overlap, particularly with regards to the contributions from external advisors and participants in both the SLR and other periodic review processes. The Team understands that the intention is to review at subject-level every five years, as is appropriate, in future.

The Team was content that the departments participated fully in these processes, and engaged with each other in doing so, sharing approaches and lessons learned. Due to the

sometimes vague formulation of actions, cited in the RA, and their similarly non-specific follow-up status ('ongoing'), it is difficult to ascertain concrete progress in action plans across so wide a window of time as five to seven years. The University should develop and formalise annual monitoring of programmes in line with ESG 1.9, which includes reflection on key data sets and an update on the actions from SLR action plans relevant to the programme in question. More regular monitoring and reflection on progress, annually, will assist departmental Teams with the workload in academic years when the fuller, SLR process is due. Programme Committees can support the development of annual monitoring plans and provide an important opportunity for student representatives, who may otherwise not coincide with an SLR process, to contribute to enhancement activity. It is likely, from the discussions that the Team had with members of departments and programmes, that this activity goes on informally. The University is advised to create a formal yet straightforward annual process that enables succinct reflection on data and performance and supports the identification of trends emerging (positive or negative) between SLR 'touchpoints' every five years.

The desire to introduce doctoral programmes from 2024 was expressed on a number of occasions and in the RA. Whilst there is reportedly a market for this, and enthusiasm from staff, efforts should be made to ensure that the burden of supervision and development does not fall on a small proportion of research-active staff, many of whom are already very busy. Rather, the design and implementation of doctoral study should be planned as part of the overall strategising of building an institutional research culture.

Each curriculum offered at the University is documented carefully. Learning outcomes for each level of study reflect the appropriate engagement with the National Qualification

Framework, as well as reflecting the specialised profile of the University and its creative graduate attributes.

There are now cross-departmental electives on offer to students, as a first step towards more collaborative working across disciplines. The challenge of offering sufficient diversity of choice, whilst honing specialist discipline-specific skills, is a balancing act that is perceived to be hampered by the housing situation. However, it should be noted that several multi-campus institutions manage to deliver cross-curricular activities effectively. Timetable complexity driven by specific discipline requirements is typical of a small specialist institution but the University has even more disciplines on offer than most, and consequently, organising the curriculum is a significant and time-consuming task.

Students seen by the Team ranged from very happy with the provision and their experience, to heavily preoccupied by poor facilities and concerns around communication, particularly last minute changes to planned activities, or receptivity to their own messages regarding materials requirements, faults or information. International students, in particular, reported a divergence between the stated language policy and the reality in practice, whereby emails would be received in Icelandic only, leaving them feeling under-informed in some important matters (especially pertinent during the COVID-19 communications, when anxiety was likely to have been higher than usual amongst student populations). Students did recognise the challenges facing the University and were positive about the quality of teaching and opportunities to work with professionals, as well as the Student Council's advocacy on their behalf.

The COVID crisis has, in many ways, not impacted the University as much as it might have done other institutions, because it sees the housing situation as a greater existential challenge or barrier to achieving its aims. The University adapted well and speedily to the adjustments needed to facilitate onsite access in the pandemic. The Team heard about lessons learned by the institution during the pandemic but also suggests that leadership now take proactive measures to improve communication, especially in 'closing the feedback loop' informing students of steps taken to address their concerns. This could be as simple as a poster campaign of 'you said, we did' responses that demonstrate engagement with student requests for enhancement to their learning experience.

3.7 Assessment policies and regulations

The assessment criteria are clearly set out, including detailed guidance on the process of assessment (per department or course) and the process for engaging in feedback that is, in many cases, 'mutually constructed' between tutor and student in an iterative dialogue. This approach is clearly in the spirit of student-centred learning (ESG 1.3). The case study is addressed more fully above but the University's move towards pass/fail assessment in all disciplines demonstrates a clear engagement with the philosophy of assessment-for-learning (formative assessment, for example), as the methodology encourages student engagement with feedback and develops professional skills in the dialogue between the professional and the student, including a greater capacity for self-reflection. The approach to assessment encourages creative risk taking and a focus on self-development, as well as clear engagement with learning outcomes, as per ESG 1.3.

Students recognise that they often receive oral feedback, informally, as part of day-to-day learning. They appreciate the speed by which they often have a reaction and feedback to

work 'on the spot'; by the same token, some staff did acknowledge concerns over the time invested in the formative feedback process under the new pass/fail approach. The University should develop a strategy to support staff to be as efficient as possible at delivering relevant and concise feedback to students.

External Examiners are involved in the assessment of final projects and an expert panel is convened to assess artistic practice. No formal documentation, such as a template for the work of External Examiners, is contained in the annexes to the RA and it is unclear whether the Academic Council reviews the feedback or commissions a report from the Quality Manager on feedback 'themes' arising from the work of External Examiners, for example, in order to assist enhancement activity. Once again, some of the knowledge and review from External Examiners is undoubtedly shared informally amongst departmental Teams, but as an important benchmarking opportunity, the University is advised to consider formalising reports and submitting a distilled summary report to the Academic Council for review and recommendations back to programme Teams.

For staff who have not assessed in Higher Education before their appointment, the documentation provided is clear and comprehensive, including exemplars seen by the Team in the annex to the RA. The 'Grades' section in the University Rules will soon become superseded, as the last cohorts receiving numerical grades graduate. Students are advised of their right to appeal a fail outcome to their department head, in accordance with ESG 1.4. The University Office (Academic Services) is responsible for providing students with final grades and certification.

3.8 Consistency in grading and assigning ECTS

Consistency in grading as such is a moot point since the wholesale move to pass/fail outcomes. The issue is more one of consistency of approach to feedback with a view to maximising the enhancement potential in feedback across departments by sharing best practice and monitoring the impact on assessor workloads.

Students are expected to complete 60 ECTS across the academic year, or 30 per semester. There appears to be a well-developed understanding in the institution about the 'value' of an ECTS in terms of time (25-30 hours per credit), and that this is factored into course planning, design and approval processes appropriately.

According to the University rules, students who feel they have been treated unjustly can initiate a process whereby they inform a member of academic staff (lecturer through to Dean level) or student counsellor, who can consider the case and try to find a solution. If the solution is deemed unsatisfactory by the student, a further appeal can be made to the Rector. If the student still remains dissatisfied, the Grievance Committee on Students' Rights is the final step in the process, although the committee will not engage in discussion on academic judgements (grades or outcomes, for example). The grievance committee is chaired by a Dean and includes two other staff members of the respective School. No student is part of the committee, but the Team did observe that the order of the grievance process, from (potentially) Dean level, to Rector, and back to Dean level committee seems unusual in the Higher Education context. It is strongly recommended that the University revise this process, leaving the Rector as the final point of appeal, to avoid the potential for the Rector's decision (already an appeal outcome) being overturned by the Grievance Committee.

3.9 Staff induction, appraisal and development

The Team met numerous staff groups in the course of the review, as well as holding an open meeting for any staff member who wished to participate. The staff the Team encountered were professional, dedicated and deeply committed to students and their learning experience. Sessional staff contribute their professional expertise to students and are excited to do so, alongside a portfolio of other employments and other commitments in many cases.

Sessional staff described induction/orientation processes that varied by department and the Team encourages the University to develop a more formal induction process, especially for those who are new to the Higher Education environment. Some staff remarked that they 'see themselves as guests', which suggested to the Team that there is work to be done to develop a sense of belonging to the institution. Sessional staff are recruited by programme directors and approved by Heads of Departments. The Team noted that a section of the RA 'Employment and induction of Staff' did not in fact mention induction and there is therefore scope to discuss and reflect with some recent appointees on their experience, in order to enhance the process.

Staff appraisal documentation is clear and the process is undertaken, according to the documentation, never less than once per year. This forms part of a suite of policies that have been implemented since the last IWR review and in line with ESG 1.5. Previously unconsolidated funds for development projects have been brought together into a staff development fund, which staff have the opportunity to apply to, and Erasmus staff mobility opportunities are also available. Workshops and training sessions are scheduled regularly and a 'Teachers' Café' – an informal platform for support and exchange of ideas – was

established in 2017. Staff are also able to apply for sabbaticals as part of their development. Administrative and support staff are also offered development opportunities and support, and are able to apply to a designated support staff development fund, the rules for which are clearly articulated.

The Team heard from some staff that they felt development opportunities were not available to them, or that a sabbatical was in reality rarely a prospect due to timing, funds or commitments. The same impressions were given when staff discussed opportunities for promotion, retention or research development. Whether these reported experiences/perceptions reflect the broader reality for staff across the whole of the University is impossible to determine. All the same, they reflect a need for clearer communication to staff about the opportunities available and the mechanisms to be followed, and for reporting on success to the community, demonstrating that promotion occurs, as well as demonstrating that sabbaticals, re-appointment and funded development projects are strongly encouraged. The documentation describing the promotion policy is clear. Likewise, there are clear formal policies for staff appraisal, appointment, award of title, and equal pay. It is clear from the latter, as well as the Equality Policy and staff development policy, that the institutional approach to appointment of staff reflects best practice in relation to candidates' race, physical or mental health status, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, religion and so on. These mechanisms therefore accord well with ESG 1.5

The recency of the new managerial structure, and the step up in responsibility for some role holders, is supported by mutual understanding amongst the Senior Leadership Team and a sense of shared purpose, informal peer mentoring and support, and regular conversation.

Nevertheless, the University and its Board is encouraged to ensure developmental support for these roles, including wellbeing support to enable staff to manage workloads healthily and to draw on the mentorship of peers outside the University for coaching or other forms of support. At the same time, senior staff – who enjoy considerable institutional responsibility – should recognise their own developmental needs and be unafraid to seek input from colleagues throughout all levels of the University to strategise solutions to issues.

As mentioned earlier, the fixed-term tenure of academic staff posts (which has increased from eight to ten years) should be reviewed, taking into account both the positives and negatives of the current approach, in the context of the most recent organisational review and research aspirations. Supporting staff development to enable those with the potential to undertake research activity is another element to consider, as is recognising the professional achievements of sessional staff on whose practical specialist expertise much of the student experience depends.

The University has – in common with international arts universities – a uniquely high proportion of sessional staff. The institutional policy on staff appointments recognises the particular requirements of a specialist, intensive, arts training environment, and the Team was impressed by the richness and diversity of the staff providing learning opportunities for the students.

3.10 Using SLRs to safeguard standards

Each SLR, of which there have been five since 2018 under the QEF2 framework, produces a five-year action plan. The RA emphasises the importance of self-evaluation; active staff and student participation; and the collaboration between the institutional Team and the Quality

Manager. The SLR actions focus on staff development, environmental challenge and enhancing student experience, and they range from relatively short-term definable actions (for example, work towards the implementation of the pass/fail assessment system) to sizeable, arguably institutional-level major aspirations (e.g., address the current global and local environmental challenge; encourage artistic research in the field of performing arts in Iceland; and emphasise diversity and inclusion at every level).

The similarity between some actions in one department, when compared with another, suggests that mutually devised strategies to achieve the shared objectives could be helpful. When the University develops its interdisciplinary opportunities further, an audit of the elements of overlap in departmental actions plans would be one useful exercise to reveal some interconnections there for the making. The ambition of some of the actions in the departments – and the ongoing nature of some of them, even after an amount of work has been completed ('emphasise diversity and inclusion at every level') – indicates that the full five-year interval before the next SLR would likely be required. In the detailed action plans appended to each SLR report, the actions are broken down into several more focussed ones that together help to realise the overarching aim. Care needs to be taken to ensure that the potential for continuity of actions carried over several years is not jeapordised, for example through personnel change. Additionally, there are numerous actions in each SLR plan, some of which are presumably addressed through the periodic review of particular programmes. The University should consider consolidating the lists so that they are shorter, and more realistically achievable.

There is clear synergy between the SLR self-evaluation and arising actions and overall institutional enhancement – notably in terms of research development of staff and

departmental culture – supporting the embedding of the new SAD in particular. According to the RA, the Quality Manager detects points of institutional learning from SLRs but it is less clear how SLRs are conducted with institutional strategies in mind, although perhaps this will emerge more clearly in future SLR processes as the new institutional structure settles. According to the RA, systematic follow-up to SLR is being formalised: the coordination between Heads of Department and Deans on the monitoring of action plans takes place in regular School Council meetings. The University should ensure that time is given in Academic Council to assimilate the institutional learning from this process.

The new structure offers a clear possibility for IWR to be supported by SLR findings and actions, and in turn the SLR process to be informed by programme review and annual monitoring. These links would also increase alignment of quality processes with ESG 1.1 The constructive alignment of these processes also offers opportunities to enfranchise staff at all levels towards the institutional goals. Effective completion of actions and collaboration between staff and students require effective communication, both through the new formalisation of committees including the Academic Council, but also in general communications to students and staff about the purpose and resourcing of new initiatives.

The formalisation and coming together of the University Office, the Quality Function and Human Resources as part of the recent restructure has enabled an effective central administrative academic support service to emerge. The inclusion of 'staff from central administration with regard to internal quality management, student support and public relations' in the Department of Fine Arts SLR action plan indicates an opportunity to work effectively together in order to enhance staff and student experience. In other SLRs (Department of Design and Architecture, for example), the focus is more clearly on

developing the academic (learning, teaching and research) experience. The more that the academic support services and the academic programmes/departments can work effectively together, the more the student experience can be enhanced as a holistic enterprise, where wellbeing support and career counselling, international opportunities and reliable internal communications enable student participation in, and maximisation of, the in-room or online learning experience in the artistic discipline.

The RA details the goals for quality management and enhancement in the next two years. Many of the indicators are data-driven (a set of University performance indicators, for example) and operational in nature. However, when explored in further detail, it is clear that the planned activity will add richness to the already well-developed sense of self-evaluation that the Team observed. In the abstract, using systematised data to enhance student experience seems at odds with the strong informal discussions that happen at every level of the University, across departments and schools, and which themselves often lead to new ideas and practices. However, the University should develop rich datasets as part of its approach to greater formalisation of its quality culture, in order to supply strong evidence for development and change. There is no impediment to detailed performance indicators and an ongoing strong and less formal quality culture co-existing in support of institutional enhancement.

3.11 Summary evaluation of security of standards

The University's procedures for safeguarding its academic standards have become more systematic and rigorous since the last IWR review in QEF1. The institution has achieved this against the frustrations of a still-unresolved housing situation and a lack of resources to implement the full scale of its vision. Day-to-day there are clearly still challenges and at

times, to the students and staff, near unacceptable conditions, including lack of appropriate furniture for learning spaces, insufficient amenities in the campus buildings, or seemingly minor maintenance requests that reportedly take a circuitous communications trail to resolve. On balance, however, the Team recognised the progress made since the QEF1 IWR, in particular in relation to the formalisation of key bodies such as the Academic Council, and the strength of the new structure, the persuasiveness of the role of the SAD within that structure, and the focusing of academic support for the Rector through the roles of Deans. The emphasis in the last IWR report on generating evidence for enhancement has been taken to the centre of the current review process, permeating the RA, and emerging in various meetings that the Team conducted. The centralisation of the academic support function in the University Office has also served to create an effective team dynamic in the office, a positive 'can do' attitude, and an eagerness to enhance the service.

As with any organisation experiencing considerable structural change, not least during a lengthy global pandemic, there are some elements of the ongoing embedding of the new structure that need further attention, including an evaluation of how senior leadership communicates most effectively with staff and students at all levels. In particular, where a policy states, for example, that all communications will be bilingual, this must be a reality. Whilst housing space and location is undoubtedly an issue, both in terms of scope and quality, there are some relatively straightforward approaches to ensuring that staff feel valued and again this involves, as a first step, highly effective communication of the rationale for making decisions. Transparency – during times of change leadership – and a willingness to open up about decision-making, especially when the decisions have presented

dilemmas or difficulties, can ensure an academic community comes together in common purpose to find solutions.

The Team met several groups – notably of teachers and external stakeholders – who were positive about the quality of students and graduates and who actively sought them out to work with. These conversations brought to life the RA's description of the numerous international collaborations the University undertakes and the high volume of approaches the institution receives from external organisations who want to partner in initiatives. The students the Team spoke to, whether they were positive about their experience or expressed frustration at some unmet expectations, were highly articulate self-advocates, whose sense of purpose and creative ambition matched the enthusiasm and evident professional credentials of the many staff who teach them.

The Team formed the impression of a competent and committed Management Council, including Deans who demonstrate the capacity for working together and with the Director of the University Office, in order to enhance opportunities for students and colleagues. As much as the barriers were discussed (housing, resources, etc.), the Senior Leadership Team complemented each other's ideas and competencies, and were receptive to ideas and genuinely open to engaging with constructive criticism. Staff development and support at all levels of the organisation – promised by the new structure – must be an operational priority and not lost in amongst the intense focus on resolving the housing situation. This means releasing capacity in roles, including programme directors and Heads of Department, to enable research engagement and other relevant professional development opportunities. As importantly, the integration of and consultation with sessional staff throughout the levels

of the University's deliberative structure will support a better-informed workforce whose

consistency of discourse with students can build greater trust in an organisation.

Overall, the Team concluded that confidence can be placed in the soundness of the Iceland

University of the Arts' present and likely future arrangements to secure the academic

standards of its degrees and awards.

The text box below relates the linkages between ESG and the evidence of secure

management of standards of degrees and awards, which underpins the confidence

judgment.

As part of the review, the Team undertook a systematic evaluation of evidence of the University's procedures with reference to the ESG, and the commentary on ESG provided in Annex 11 of the Quality Enhancement Handbook for Icelandic Higher Education. The Team concluded that the University's procedures relating to standards of degrees and awards are aligned to the ESG.

- The University has a new structure, organised into three Schools led by Deans. A university-wide process for managing standards is specified in the quality management system, overseen by the University Office that works throughout the institution's organisational levels. The recency of the structure, and the ongoing pandemic, mean that the system has yet to be fully formalised and embedded in terms of identified milestones, target dates, performance indicators, resources allocated to priority actions, and being fully understood by all stakeholders. There is evidence of a strong informal quality culture throughout the organisation, and the infrastructure present to support and realise its formalisation as new leadership roles settle into position. The Team recommends that transparent internal communications channels are established in order to unify understanding of change management and the quality system across the staff and student populations to fully accord with ESG 1.1: *Policy for Quality Assurance*.

- The quality processes fulfil the standards expressed in ESG 1.2: *Design and Approval of Programmes*. There is external consultation and contribution to programme design and approval, as well as student consultation. Programmes are constructively aligned in design, as learning aims align with learning outcomes and the assessments that measure them. Professional stakeholders (external to the university) regard the standard of awards and graduates as competitive, leading to a high employability potential in graduates. The team recommends the implementation of programme annual monitoring in order to maintain consistent oversight at programme, department and school level of standards, enhancements and performance indicators in the programmes of study.

- ESG 1.3: *Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment*, places importance on active learning focused on learning outcomes. Students understand the learning outcomes they are seeking to achieve from the outset of courses, and students are able and encouraged to provide feedback to staff on teaching quality in each course. The team encourages the University to continue its work in equalities action in order to ensure a safe and confident space for students and staff to be able to receive and give constructive critique. In addition, it is encouraged to design an institution-wide assessment strategy in partnership with its students, in order to better ensure that the purpose, design and feedback on assessment is consistent in the new pass/fail context of coursework and awards.

- In alignment with ESG 1.4: *Student admission, progression, recognition and certification*, protocols for student admission, progression, recognition and certification are stipulated comprehensively in the University Rules documentation. Evidence that these are followed in practice was reviewed by the team and included data on student admission, progression and completion of awards. There is also clear information on student exchange, and on paper, clear expectations of international students, and provision made for them (for example, language requirements, support and orientation). In practice, the situation for international students requires enhancement, particularly in respect of the University's provision of learning in English, as advertised on the website, when in reality there are few courses available to non-Icelandic speakers. Students did not feel that the current Icelandic language tuition for international students was sufficient to support learning in Icelandic modules. All applicants submit materials for review by expert panels, and the ratio of applicants to places in all programmes indicates a strong quality level of admitted students. The Team urges further investment in counselling resource to support students to remain on track in studies and complete in a timely manner.

- The University has clear documentation of processes for hiring, evaluating and promoting faculty, both permanent and sessional, in accordance with ESG 1.5: *Teaching Staff*. The team identified room for improvement in the orientation and development of sessional staff in particular, the transparency of promotion processes and reasons for unsuccessful applications and the inclusion of the sessional staff 'voice' in the university deliberative (committee) structure via a nominated representative. The team was assured by statements of commitment in this area by the Senior Leadership Team. Processes facing teaching staff should be consistently implemented so as to provide staff with assurance that the university recognises and develops their contribution. The Team heard how anonymity of student feedback provided, particularly in an environment of high proportion of 1:1 and small group tuition, can leave staff feeling unsupported. The Team identified a potential for divergence between the institutional commitment to deepening research culture and standing, and current processes of fixed-term contracts for faculty. There is room for improvement in how staff with research contributions are developed in the context of fixed-term appointments.

- ESG 1.6: *Learning Resources and Student Support* ensures provision of adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support to prepare for entry to both employment and further study. The visit showed examples of how the University works with support resources in a strategic manner (including Canvas™). The connections to business and industry are particularly strong and professional stakeholder examples provided a wider view confirming that learning support prepares students for employment in the majority of disciplines. There are mechanisms, including planning documents, that strategise resource allocation, although there are real barriers beyond the University's control to ensuring that facilities and buildings are fit-for-purpose. In many ways, institutional goals for student-centred learning are achieved in spite of the housing, and certainly not on account of it.

- The University collects and monitors data as per ESG 1.7: *Information Management*, as demonstrated in the RA, meetings and documentation provided. As the new committee structure and functions become better established in practice, the team encourages the University to ensure that lessons from data are systematically communicated throughout the committee structure. The Academic Council should acquire a clear grasp of thematic issues arising from annual monitoring for quality purposes across programmes, as well as a more effective and explicit use of data to monitor progress on actions at regular points between SLRs and IWR.

- The University is able to demonstrate engagement with a significant proportion of Icelandic society, and as such, it can be confident that it is relatively well understood as an institution by the public, potential students and potential employees. International students, though, asked for more information in English which would improve alignment with ESG 1.8: *Public Information*. The University could increase monitoring of engagements with its website and develop its international-facing presence considerably.

- Students, graduates and alumni are involved in periodic programme reviews in alignment with ESG 1.9: *On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes*. Programme reviews include students, as well as professional stakeholders, ensuring programmes are up-to-date and industry-benchmarked, which aligns closely with the ESG. The team notes that the introduction of annual monitoring and review of programmes will better support the alignment with ESG1.9 insofar as action reports derived from programme monitoring will be distilled, institutional themes identified, and senior leadership will engage with this information via the committee structure including the highest Academic Council. The need for formalisation of action plans and recording progress and completion of actions in SLR, periodic review and institution-wide review will also support better alignment with the ESG. Standards are upheld on account of the attention given to aligning intended learning outcomes with module activities, assessment tasks and teaching methods, as evidenced in the documentation provided to the team

4. Student Learning Experience

4.1. Overview: Institution's management of quality of student learning experience

The University's policies, regulations and strategies set up a framework for management of the quality of student learning experience. Since the IWR in 2014, the University has been developing its internal quality system with a focus on formalisation and enhancement, for example, by promoting a higher level of student engagement and participation in decision-making, committee work and policy development. The University also refers to the judgments and suggestions from the last IWR as a contributing factor to its policy and quality enhancement.

In addition, the University Board, the Rector and the Management Team, as well as various councils such as the Equal Rights Council, Academic Council and Management Council, play a crucial role in forming strategy and policy to secure the quality of the student learning experience. For action plans, significant responsibilities reside within individual departments, Student Counselling, Library and Information Services, IT services, International Office, and Research Services.

The RA was written during an unprecedented time (COVID-19) when teachers and students could hardly engage in face-to-face interactions and staff had to rapidly adapt to the new ways of working, such as using online meetings for teaching, assessment and support. In addition, the University is facing some challenges related to funding and housing, as noted above. However, the Team noted the effort from staff to meet each individual student's needs and tackle the problems with "human" solutions wherever possible.

4.2. Relevance of Case Study to enhancing student learning experience

In their RA, a Case Study is presented about the University's "Transition from Numerical Grading to Pass/Fail Assessment". The University uses the IWR to analyse the ongoing transition process, to inquire about student and staff experience with the new system, and to provide evidence for future strategies on implementation. This includes the plan to streamline procedures across all departments.

Pass/Fail-Assessment is a bottom-up initiative, which exemplifies in the Team's view the University's culture of continuous evolution and a high capacity of self-reflection around practice and learning. The system is grounded in clear learning outcomes and their systematic use in teachers' feedback. For this reason, the process has led to a thorough revision of the University's learning objectives, which in turn should form the basis for assessment.

In their meetings with the Team, faculty and students proved familiar with the rationale for the change, the new model and its implementation. Students emphasised the need for feedback that indicates where they stand in the learning process, as well as the importance of student-teacher dialogue. Teachers have noted that delivering carefully written feedback in a timely fashion is challenging, and there appears still to be a need for training, support and guidance and the sharing of good practice across departments.

The Pass/Fail-Assessment is in line with the student-centred approach with a strong focus on the individual learning process and in-depth dialogue between students and teachers, and exemplifies good alignment with ESG 1.3. The RA stated that all departments have taken up Pass/Fail assessment, however, implementation is at different stages across the

departments. Therefore, the Team recommends that an institutional assessment and feedback plan should be created by staff and students to achieve consistency of purpose across programmes in approaches to feedback in the pass/fail context.

4.3. Resources for enhancing student learning experience

The University is currently operating in five locations (Þverholt, Laugarnes, Skipholt, Austurstræti, and Völvufell). The quality of the locations varies, with Þverholt perhaps providing the best fit. The University offers studios, workshops, labs, and other specialist facilities for education in art and design. The University's strategy is to further integrate workshops, technology labs and studios as cross-departmental entities, which will enhance accessibility for all. The pandemic demanded and promoted hybrid learning and blended mobility. It was reported to the Team that online-courses were established, that events were streamed online, and that online-counselling and one-on-one online service were added to the on-site services.

As far as learning resources and infrastructure are concerned, the Team considered the facilities in Fine Art and Design generally fit for purpose. Other areas were not up to comparable standards with other art universities, especially in Music or Performing Arts. For instance, air exchange is poor in some spaces and the space dedicated for training in music is not fit for purpose. Students were very clear about near-unacceptable deficiencies in essential amenities (e.g., lack of chairs and desks). They listed basic needs that are not met, as well as complaints that had not been answered or acted upon. Students and staff also regretted that cross-disciplinarity and collaboration, but also accessibility of student support services, are hindered by the need to move from location to location.

The site visit and several meetings with students and staff underlined the urgent need for a better campus situation, a view that echoed what was vigorously stated in the RA. The Team notes that the current situation adversely impacts the student learning experience. It therefore recommends that the University should urgently develop transparent and responsive mechanisms for resolving the deficiencies, and for ensuring effective communication to staff and students of timelines and progress in remedying such deficiencies. The Team also supports the University's intention to provide more resources to Student Counselling Services.

Despite all the difficulties, the Team met competent and resilient staff strongly committed to sustaining and enhancing the learning environment in the face of multiple challenges. Support staff conveyed energy and positivity, and articulated their vision, commitment and plans for improving the student experience. Further, staff and leaders in support roles work well together across departments, enabling effective student support.

4.4. Student recruitment and induction

The University reaches out to prospective students through regular visits to high schools, open days, online platforms and video presentations. The website provides comprehensive information about the programmes and the application process, admission requirements and language requirements. Applications are submitted online and then evaluated by admission committees. The University collects data on applications. They are evaluated by the Director of Academic Affairs and the Student Counsellor. It was reported to the Team that online applications, application videos and online interviews have led to a higher number of international applications at the baccalaureate level.

The semester starts with an orientation week for new students and several orientation meetings, where study programmes and practical matters are discussed and studio spaces are allocated. Various guidelines are available online, and personal support is offered by the Student Counselling Services. Overall, ESG 1.4. on student admission is fulfilled.

In their feedback to the Team, students noted that the pandemic and the housing situation had made settling in difficult for many students. They also brought up that English was not used in the classroom and in general communications to the extent that they expected based on the University's marketing materials and public stance. This will be further discussed in Section 4.9.

4.5. The student voice and engagement of students in QA

According to the RA, student participation is crucial in the University's internal quality assurance. Students have representatives, with the right to speak as well as to propose motions, on the Academic Council, School Councils and Departmental Councils, the Teaching Committee, the Equality Committee, the Environment Committee and the Research Committee. In addition, students are actively involved in giving feedback on their courses in various ways, for example, in meeting with the Rector, in direct conversation with teachers in classrooms or through teaching evaluation surveys at the end of their courses.

Some students the Team met noted that it was not clear whom they should turn to with specific concerns, and how their concerns were handled. The Team therefore recommends that programmes, Schools and Support Services should develop simple mechanisms for demonstrating to students that their feedback has been acted upon (for example 'you said, we did' posters), thereby 'closing the feedback loop'.

The University collects survey data from graduating students and alumni, in addition to teaching evaluations. Results indicate that even though the University is facing some challenges in terms of facilities and funding, students are generally satisfied with the quality of teaching (averaging 4.5 on a scale of 1-5). Moreover, 90% of participants in a survey conducted in 2017-2019 among graduating students agreed that they would recommend the University to prospective students. The teaching evaluation is only collected in courses that have more than four students. The Team does not consider it an issue that courses that have fewer than five do not utilise teaching evaluations because students have other chances to reflect on teaching quality via a discussion with their teachers at the end of the courses. However, participation in teaching evaluation is not high, ranging from 35% to 45% across individual courses. As some of the teaching surveys are only administered in Icelandic, some students expressed concerns about anonymity of students who are not fluent in Icelandic.

Both students and staff members the Team met described the Student Union as a crucial resource for the University to improve the student learning experience because the Union helps students feel a part of the community. The students mentioned that student representatives support students connecting with each other across departments, which is especially important for a university operating in multiple locations. All students are encouraged to participate in the Union and the Team has not found any evidence of any barrier to minority student groups joining. The Team suggests that a meeting room for the Student Union or a committee schedule that does not conflict with the student representatives' study time could further enhance student engagement.

4.6. Student support services

Student support includes Student Counselling, Library and Information Services, Informational Technology services, International Office, and Research Services. Since 2020, the library has operated a writing centre for students. Student Counselling Services provide support to students with learning disabilities, mental health issues, communication with staff and opportunities for further study and work. During the pandemic, Student Counselling Services conducted counselling sessions online, resulting in wider access. In addition, the University collaborated with Reykjavík University in offering lectures on issues like ADHD and sleep by Masters students in psychology.

At the moment, there are only two people working part-time, together providing half-time capacity for student counselling in the entire University. The Team was informed by both students and staff that the capacity of Student Counselling needs to be enhanced to meet the growing needs of the community. The Team therefore strongly supports the University's plan to expand student counselling and thereby also strengthen counselling services for careers after graduation.

The International Office has responsibility for overseeing international collaboration at the University, including partnership agreements; student and staff mobility; participation in international collaboration projects; and strategic planning and development in the field of internationalisation in cooperation with individual departments. Several groups of students the Team met agreed that they were well informed about their opportunities to go on exchange programmes. Although they received adequate information about their options, some of them noted challenges with communication with support staff due to understaffing.

4.7. Student-centred learning, teaching, and assessment

The University gives students a great responsibility in shaping their studies, in line with ESG 1.3. Numerous student groups the Team met with were articulate self-advocates in relation to their studies, and capably described their own vision for their studies. The University follows a vision to keep study programmes flexible for students to shape their own study trajectories. At the same time, interviewees described the challenge to find the balance between open study paths, cross-disciplinary study options, and subject-specific programmes with pre-defined curricula.

The core of learning and teaching quality at the University is the personal approach to students, personal tutoring, and individual feedback. Icelandic students the Team met with cited the importance of the teacher-student working relationship and appreciated the teaching and learning in general. There was evidence of community within departments, between students and staff, understanding themselves as collaborative partners in the learning environment. Student progress is discussed in formal meetings between student and Programme Directors midway through the studies. Progression, drop-out and graduation ratio are monitored. Upon graduation, students receive their documentation according to ESG 1.4.

The Team found many examples of direct connections with the professional fields helping students to prepare for their career. Students engage in realistic projects, work together with professionals and meet with guests brought into their classrooms. There are various venues and forms of graduation events in cooperation with major Icelandic institutions that allow students to present their work to the public and the professional fields.

Flexibility and cross-disciplinarity face a few practical challenges, and some promises for flexible study options cannot be kept as a result. The housing situation, the lack of a common academic timetable, and schedule changes on short notice were mentioned to the Team as examples. The Team therefore recommends that the University should formulate a common academic timetable to support its interdisciplinary ambition, prevent further frustration of student opportunity and ensure that unavoidable changes are communicated in a timely manner.

4.8 Use of sessional/adjunct teachers

The University recruits a high number of sessional staff each year who are active in their respective professional fields (approximately 500 in 2020, for example). In addition to teaching, they also supervise or examine final projects and theses. The involvement of practitioners goes hand in hand with the University's vision of creating a multifaceted learning environment that opens up diversity and range in artistic practice and is characterised by close links to the dynamic professional fields.

For the Programme Directors or the Heads of Departments the Team met, it is an ongoing task to integrate sessional staff into the departments' operations and ensure good communication with them. Accordingly, the SLRs conducted by the departments in QEF2 note the need for action to improve induction and support for these members of staff, and to integrate them better into the study environment and the departmental learning culture. The Team therefore emphasises the need to create a transparent and effective internal communication plan that supports sessional staff to understand the institution better and to contextualise the expectations placed on their teaching engagement.

4.9. The language experience

The University carries the mission of preserving the Icelandic language; hence, by law, the main teaching language should be Icelandic. Icelandic is the main teaching language for baccalaureate programmes. The University offers Icelandic courses for international students who want to enhance their language skills. The increasing demand for international collaboration in research projects, the strategic approach towards student mobility, as well as the rising number of international students, have highlighted the need to offer more classes in English. At graduate level, English is used as most of the programmes are international.

The University has actively collected feedback and acknowledges issues with student language experience. For the Team, improvement and future work is needed. There is inconsistency in the use of English in the University's requirements, communications, and classroom practice. For example, it was reported to the Team that the University's website is not informative enough for those looking for more information in English about courses. It was mentioned that Icelandic was used exclusively in several classes that were promised to be in English, or that information on orientation days, academic material, or e-mail-communication were not sufficient for English speaking students. Due to this language barrier, international students also had fewer choices of courses as there are more courses taught in Icelandic than in English.

The Team therefore recommends that the University should address as a priority its language policy so that its stated commitment to bi-lingual institutional communication is effective and non-discriminatory in practice. For the Team, clarifying the language policy is crucial for students so they can know what to expect both in general communication and in

the classroom. It is also important for support staff and teachers to have clear guidelines on how and when to use English and Icelandic. In addition to that, the Team suggests that the University considers offering more courses in English to create equal opportunities in access to knowledge for Icelandic speaking students and English speaking students alike.

4.10. Internationalisation

The University's international strategy was published in Autumn 2020 in collaboration with the National Union of Icelandic Students. This strategy focuses on learning with an international dimension; learning environment and support; partnership and strategic collaborations. The number of international students has been rising substantially. The University participates in the Eramus+ Nordplus higher education programmes and other funding schemes. The International Office informs students about available programmes, for example via in-class presentations and preparatory workshops, and supports them in applying for mobility programmes. Nearly all programmes receive exchange students from other countries. Student Counselling Services have enforced special assistance for new (and existing) international students, for example with online-orientation meetings. Being aware that personal obligations or the specific structure of study programmes could be a barrier for students to move abroad temporarily, the University has been focusing on offering more diverse short-term mobility to students.

During meetings with diverse student groups, the Team experienced a strong and committed support culture among the student population, in particular the support for international students by domestic students. International students are also engaged in the work of the Student Council and other student organisations. As mentioned in Section 4.9,

there are language issues the University has to solve in order to reach its goal to attract and retain more international students and guarantee a positive learning experience.

4.11. Links between research and teaching

According to the RA, all students are exposed to research and its methods in the arts from the very beginning of their studies. Research projects involve both Masters students and recent graduates. There is interest from external partners to engage students in their projects and students have been successful in obtaining grant support from the Icelandic Student Innovation Fund. The *Hugarflug* conference is an example of the University's research culture, which also involves students and graduates of the University.

The University sees research activity of faculty members as the foundation for creating new knowledge and artistic approaches that are mediated to students through teaching. At the same time, research and reflective skills are developed in close connection with artistic practice.

The Team found several examples of fruitful initiatives at the programme level to strengthen the links between research and teaching, especially in the Masters programmes. During the visit, the Team perceived a growing awareness amongst both academic staff and students of the relationship between learning, teaching and research, and numerous examples were presented. Students reported active involvement in research projects. The Team therefore supports in particular the implementation of the measures proposed in the SLRs to enhance the learning experience related to research.

4.12. Collaborative Provision

Since 2009, the international Music Master for New Audiences and Innovative Practice programme (NAIP) is offered by the Iceland University of the Arts together with the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague and Prince Claus Conservatoire in Groningen. In 2017, the University received the Erasmus+ Quality Award in Iceland for the Strategic Partnership NAIP - Innovation in Higher Music Education and was selected as a 'good-practice example' by the EU Commission's Erasmus+ Project Results Platform.

With the future vision of having a joint doctoral programme in the Arts, it is necessary for the Iceland University of the Arts to collaborate with other universities, including international higher education institutions in the arts or other local universities.

4.14. Serving needs of different student populations

As described in the Equity Strategy and Action Plan, the University has developed a policy and plan in alignment with ESG 1.3 with the purpose of guaranteeing safe working conditions as well as well-being of its students. The University has put effort into addressing the needs of diverse student groups, especially for those with long-term illness, disability or mental health issues. Even though these student groups account for a small portion of the total student population, they have received proper support within the institution's resources.

Students with disabilities are invited to contact Counselling Services, and personalised services are provided as resources allow. However, the University has been facing some difficulties in accommodating students with disabilities, for example access to the school buildings or more accessible toilets. The Team therefore recommends that the University

should develop an action plan for a more inclusive practice to enable students with additional support needs of all types to flourish in the institution.

In common with most art universities, the University has been part of the #MeToo movement. For the University community, it has been a major concern how to create a safe and confident space for students and staff in a post #MeToo learning environment, and how to reflect both students' and teachers' experience. The Team therefore is very supportive of the fact that the University has also called in external expertise. Based on this, the Team recommends that the University should develop an equalities action plan detailing the proposed approach and timeline and communicate clearly the channels for report and support of violations.

4.15. Management of information

The University collects, analyses and uses relevant information for the management of their programmes and other activities in accordance with ESG 1.7. According to the RA, MySchool is employed to manage student records, including transcripts, diploma supplements, key statistics and other data relating to the study trajectory. Data on student numbers, applications, admissions, progression, drop-outs, mobility, and graduation are collected. The data are analysed to see where problems are and how they could be solved. To monitor the student experience, the University conducts surveys on student satisfaction and other relevant issues. Results are presented, and follow-up processes are initiated. The Quality Manager is responsible for overseeing central administration of the systematic collection of data and key statistics.

Several offices shared with the Team that they use numerical data for monitoring, developing and decision-making. The Team found several instances of good use of data. As a next step, the University is urged to work towards a more systematic overview of its performance data. The Team therefore supports the University's priority of developing Key Performance Indicators systematically, to establish a dashboard for assessing and disseminating information on the University's performance and to support managers in using these in decision-making. In addition, the Team recommends that the University establish annual monitoring of programmes and include monitoring and review of performance indicators and student feedback on the quality of learning provision. The Team also strongly endorses the University's plan to measure dropout and withdrawal from studies in a more systematic manner to inform possible remedial actions.

4.16 Public information

In its Strategy, the University emphasises its engagement with society and community outreach. The Team found a variety of good practice examples to underline the good relations with the local and national public, cultural and industry stakeholders. Digitalisation, streaming of public events and the increased use of social media during the pandemic have created further opportunities.

The University organises a large number of public events every year. They offer students and faculty ample opportunity to actively engage in cultural life in Iceland. At the same time, they allow the public a direct insight into the work of the University. The Team learned that more than 30 000 visitors or almost 10% of the Icelandic population attended the various events and performances of the graduation festival. This is evidence for the institution's sustained engagement with significant proportions of society.

The University maintains an attractive website as the main channel for outreach and promotion of the study programmes, including the presentation of all student final work. The website is easily navigable. Prospective students can obtain information via the website, video presentations or open days. The University and its students are also active on Social Media, especially Instagram.

4.17 Using SLRs to enhance student learning

All departments have gone through SLRs in QEF2 between 2018 and 2020. Deans oversee their follow-up by providing institutional support and regular monitoring. The Reviews have identified several lessons for departments relevant to enhancing the student experience. For example, the Department of Fine Arts is going to simplify the course structure to reach a healthy level of workload for students and faculty. They also work on improving the flow of information on curriculum and electives in order to make students more responsible for their studies. The Department of Music is working on a holistic restructuring of study programmes, and the Department of Arts Education is developing online education and distance learning. The Department of Performing Arts is creating a learning culture, including a curriculum that fosters inclusivity, diversity and equality. That Department is also supporting teaching strategies that enhance ethical working methods within the professional field of the performing arts. Finally, three departments are focused on better integration of sessional staff.

While a few of the activities mentioned in the SLRs have been completed - for example the implementation of the pass/fail assessment in Fine Arts - many are still ongoing. The Team is fully aware that the pandemic has shifted priorities. Nevertheless, it strongly encourages the departments to continue to work on the implementation of the measures aimed at

enhancing the student experience and to share their experience. The Team also supports the University's plan to formalise a systematic follow-up as stated in the RA.

4.18 Summary evaluation of the student learning experience

The University is strongly committed to providing students with a high-quality learning experience both in strategies and in practice. This has been evident in the RA and throughout the visit. Individual students have the opportunity to develop their own approach in arts, design, or architecture while being part of a vivid learning environment (especially in non-pandemic times) in close interaction with the respective professional fields. Students the Team met were generally very satisfied with the teaching and the programme quality, although the difficulties due to the pandemic and the facilities situation put the enthusiasm into perspective.

The Team identified many approaches to a cross-disciplinary learning culture, although there are still borders between disciplines, aggravated by the different locations where they operate and a lack of a common academic timetable. The difficult housing situation and the fact that the University is underfunded in comparison to its benchmark institutions set limits to an effective learning environment and are also reflected in students' statements about some aspects of their learning experience, as discussed especially in section 4.3. The Team applauds the high reflective capacity of staff and students in relation to learning, teaching, and working together as a community under given circumstances.

Finally, the Team commends the University for its remarkable network, which includes national cultural and educational institutions, that holds the University in very high esteem and is considered a big attraction for students. The institution and its graduates are very

well regarded and well-anchored in the associated professional fields. The confidence of stakeholders the Team met in the quality and employability of graduates and staff indicates an institution 'punching above its weight' in terms of its sustained engagement with significant portions of society.

The box below relates the linkages between ESG and the evidence of secure management of quality of student learning experience.

Overall, the Team concluded that confidence can be placed in the soundness of the Iceland University of the Arts' present and likely future arrangements to secure the quality of the student learning experience.

As part of the review, the Team undertook a systematic evaluation of evidence of the University's procedures with reference to the ESG, and the commentary on ESG provided in Annex 11 of the Quality Enhancement Handbook for Icelandic Higher Education. The Team concluded that the University's procedures relating to student learning experience are aligned to the ESG.

- The University's policies, regulations and strategies ensure a sufficient framework for quality assurance of the learning experience, characterised by a strong student-centred view of learning and teaching in line with ESG 1.1: *Policy for quality assurance*. Students, staff, and external stakeholders participate formally in committees and informally in ongoing dialogue. The student union is a crucial resource for the University for improving the learning experience. The Team notes that more support for the union by the University would be of benefit for both students and the University.

- Regulations for the approval of new programmes involve students, staff, and stakeholders, in line with ESG 1.2: *Design and approval of programmes*. The programmes connect learning outcomes and assessment. Learning activities and the level of qualifications are in line with the relevant frameworks and with professional standards. The stakeholders' confidence in the quality and employability of the graduates is high. The case-study about pass/fail-assessment serves as a good example of the University's culture of continuous institutional learning and evolution together with evaluation and research on learning and teaching.

- The University's strong focus on the individual learning process and a good student-teacher working relationship are highly appreciated, especially by Icelandic students. For international students, the inconsistency in the use of English affects their learning experience. The University therefore should prioritise its language policy. Students take an active role in co-creating their learning process. Learning outcomes are used for effective qualitative assessment. As a next step, the Team recommends an institution-wide assessment- and feedback plan to achieve consistency of purpose across programmes in approaches to feedback to achieve further alignment with ESG 1.3: *Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment*.

- New students receive information and orientation in meetings at both institutional and programme levels, which lines up well with ESG 1.4: *Student admission, progression, recognition and certification*. Website information, various guidelines as well as personal support by counselling services are available. The Team strongly encourages the planned increase in resources for counselling. Student admission, progression and graduation are actively monitored.

- Teaching experience is assessed in academic appointments and in applications for promotion. Students evaluate teacher performance at the end of each course with generally positive results. Special effort should be made in creating a safe and confident learning environment. For the implementation of the pass/fail assessment, a need for training and guidance and the sharing of good practice across departments is identified. The integration of sessional staff into the study environment could be further improved in line with ESG 1.5: *Teaching staff*.

- While several forms of learning resources and offers for student support are considered adequate and accessible, the University's housing situation leads to near unacceptable deficiencies in essential amenities. They have to be resolved urgently to prevent further negative impact on the student learning experience. The Team also wants to note that the University does not provide adequate facilities serving the needs of students with disabilities in some locations. On the other hand, the Team noted the big effort from the University's staff to meet each

individual student's needs to accord with ESG 1.6: *Learning resources and student support*. The Team also commends the multitude of good examples of systematic and close co-operations with cultural institutions and the creative industries which allow students to engage with their professional fields and prepare for their careers.

- The University collects, analyses and uses relevant information for the management of its programmes and other activities, aligning well with ESG 1.7: *Information management*. This includes surveys on student satisfaction and other relevant issues. There are several good instances of good use of data, for example on applications and drop-outs. The Team supports the University's intention to work towards a more systematic overview of its performance data and to introduce key performance indicators as a source for development on the institutional level. As there are only few national benchmarking indicators and data, it is difficult for the University to compare its performance with other higher education institutions in Iceland.

- The University has a policy for public dissemination of information about their programmes and activities. There is an easily navigable website. International students asked for more consistency in providing information in English. A large number of public events every year allow the public direct insight into the work of the University.

- Students, graduates and alumni are involved in surveys, evaluations, or in periodic programme reviews, and according to several sources their voice is heard. This is well in line with ESG 1.9: *On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes*.

5 Management of Research

5.1 Research policy and strategy

One of the strategic policy goals of the University is to enhance research culture in the academic field of the arts and to become a larger part of Iceland's research community. The University aims to enhance relations between teaching and research as well as to develop a PhD Study Programme in the Arts. Further, a strategic policy goal of the University is to increase areas of contact with society and advance diverse ways of mediating artistic creation and research. The University has already taken many concrete actions in alignment with these policy goals, such as the formation of SAD. The Team noted evidence that suggested that the institutional policy indeed serves as a backbone for departmental policies on research but gives room for academic freedom, organic development and artistic diversity.

The Team is convinced that the University strategy allows for deep engagement of the University with Icelandic society and has the potential to form a unique research profile. The Team is also assured that the University values and understands the importance of research and its public dissemination, as well as the diversity embedded in the forms of methods and output of research activities. There is an ambitious research agenda aspiring to inculcate a thriving research culture and academic tradition within the institution. There is ample evidence of a shared understanding of the importance of research among stakeholders, staff, and students. SAD and its Dean have a key role in enhancing and ensuring the international quality of research. The students are introduced and encouraged to conduct and participate in research during their BA and MA studies.

Despite these developments, the Team identifies a need for the University to develop a Research Strategy that establishes an inclusive concept of artistic research and is respectful of academic freedoms. The concept formation and shared understanding would help the University to participate in discussions on international and national research policy formation and thus make its voice better heard, for example, in the context of national innovation and research policies. It is the Team's recommendation that the research strategy be aligned to the institutional strategy; have realistic aims; link research to teaching; include supporting policies to lever it at institutional and departmental levels; include plans to monitor the implementation; and take into account issues of equality, including gender.

In the context of building a sustainable research culture, the University is urged to review its approach to fixed-term (e.g., 10 year 4+4+2) academic appointment contracts in consultation with staff and evaluate its efficacy and the impact of the process of (re-)

appointment on staff wellbeing. Further, the Team was not fully convinced of the capacity

of the University to start a doctoral programme in the near future if there is not a

considerable improvement in the funding situation. At present, unstable funding challenges

the development of the research environment, research infrastructure and critical mass of

supervisors needed to ensure quality of doctoral education at the level of the Florence

Principles[2]. The Team therefore identifies a need – as part of the institutional research

strategy – to draft a roadmap with concrete milestones to ensure feasible establishment of

a doctoral programme in coming years. Greater transparency as to any Ministerial

intentions regarding the apportioning of the ministry funding to the University between

research and teaching would be welcome insofar as the institution would gain greater

clarity. Moreover, the University would then be in a stronger position to quantify deficits in

relation to teaching funding and represent a stronger case still for greater investment in that

area.

5.2 Monitoring of artistic and scientific quality of outputs

The University reorganised its structure in the academic year 2020-2021 and now the

Academic Council follows up the quality enhancement of the research, among its other

responsibilities. The Research Committee falls under the Academic Council's supervision.

This committee is a common platform for enhancement of research and developing policies

across the University. The committee consists of representatives of the three Schools, the

Dean of SAD, and the Project Manager of Research. The new Dean is also to have a role in

the enhancement of quality of research and the SAD should act as a platform of inter-

disciplinary research projects and practices. The University introduced formal parameters

---

[2] https://elia-artschools.org/page/Florence-Principles-On-the-Doctorate-of-the-Arts

for research in 2014 and recently implemented a new system for evaluating research. The University is aware of international discussions related to artistic and scientific research output. Thus, the Team noticed that the University has begun to develop a system for monitoring quality of artistic research outputs, for which it has very serious ambitions This system has the potential to help the University manage the quality of its research outputs even better. The Team suggests, however, that the University clarify the roles and responsibilities of various staff in its research quality management and enhancement to avoid unnecessary overlaps.

5.3 External support

The University has made a steady increase in the number of research projects and in its share of additional research funding. The European Research Council awarded an ERC Consolidator Grant to a researcher in the University in late 2020. The University obtained its first two research grants from the Icelandic Research Fund in 2018 and 2019, and a third one in 2021. The Team considers success in getting additional research funding is a necessity for the University to gain foothold as a player in the national and international research scene.

The students at both undergraduate and graduate level of the University have been successful in getting grant support from the Icelandic Student Innovation Fund. The Team wishes to point this out as a proof of living links between research and education.

5.4 Impact

The University is very well-respected in its associated professional fields, by national cultural institutions, and among the public. It has demonstrated its ability to attract a large number

of members of the public to its events, like *Hugarflug*, where artistic research outputs are also presented. The University has developed a definition of research impact for the purpose of artistic research. The Team encourages the University to create a plan for systematic follow-up based on this definition. This would also help the University monitor progress and make its societal impact even more visible to policy makers in higher education and innovation.

The Team has further identified that the University has considerable potential in so-called engaged research, sometimes referred as community-based participatory research (CBPR) or participatory action research (PAR). This is an umbrella term for an overarching research approach and can cover both artistic research and more traditional research. The engaged research approach is very much aligned with, and could support, the vision of the University to increase societal relations and impact, as outlined in the RA.

5.5 Institutional enhancement of research management

The University has in recent years enacted a number of institutional actions to enhance its research management. The development and evaluation of research is guided by relevant international frameworks, such as the Florence Principles, DORA and the Leiden Manifesto. The reorganisation in academic year 2020-2021 has strong links to enhancement of research management, with the newly established SAD Dean having a role in the quality enhancement of research. The University does not have an established system to follow up on the success of these organisational changes and there were no explicit plans to establish such a system. The Team finds it important that the University systematically follow-up and assess the impacts of the organisational changes, with revisions if needed.

The University's five departments have gone through SLRs between 2018-2020. The SLRs include a departmental approach to research. Each of the five departments have identified departmental specific development needs. The roles and responsibilities for implementation (Heads of Department), follow-up (Deans) and coordination (School Council) have been defined. The Quality Manager has also a coordinating role by detecting points of improvement emerging from the departmental level and ensuring the follow-up at the institutional level. A systematic follow-up of SLRs is hence planned. The Team observed that lessons from SLRs have been applied in management of research at the institutional level. The Team noted that development needs identified in the SLRs provide a good opportunity for mutual learning and discussion of shared development needs across the University, identifying which of these are most effectively supported centrally and which are more specific development areas for a single department. The Team further sees this systematic follow-up as means of continuous institutional development and encourages the University to continue as planned.

The University also has also employed research sabbaticals since 2016, which are applied for on a competitive basis. The Team noted that there is greater demand for sabbatical placements than the University can provide. The Team encourages the University to further develop the sabbatical system as an institutional support for research, to the extent possible with current resources.

The University has launched two internal funding mechanisms for research: the Publication Fund in 2015 and the Research Fund in 2019. The Team finds these to be valuable assets in boosting the opportunity for staff to do research and strengthening the research culture in the University.

In one meeting, reference was made to a possible residency programme for visiting artists where workshops would play a central role. The aim of this initiative would be to link the workshops with externally funded research projects, which would help the University to make the necessary investments to update its research infrastructure. The Team encourages the University to look further into this plan and sees it as a potential tool for promotion of blues-skies artistic research.

5.6 Benchmarks

The Iceland University of the Arts is the only arts university in Iceland. The University thus benchmarks with various international arts universities in the Nordic countries, elsewhere in Europe and the US. The Team observed that the University has already studied the structure of Reykjavik University's research assessment system as an example of an approach that is disaggregated from directly indexing research outputs against salaries, progression and so on. However, the RA did not provide other data or information to evidence benchmarking or benchlearning activities (such as that described above with Reykjavík University) that could be used in its enhancement of research management. As the University is committed to developing its research, the Team advises it to benchmark, or benchlearn, how research management is organised in other arts universities. It could also be useful to benchlearn about research management in small top-level research-intensive non-arts universities. The University should also consider organising regular self-assessments of research management activities.

5.7 Collaboration

The University participates in many and varied university networks within the arts, such as design, architecture, and arts education. These collaborations are mostly oriented towards

discipline-specific educational and institutional issues. It is a member of ELIA, an organisation of about 320 educational institutes in the arts in 47 European countries. In recent years, the University has actively searched for partners in international collaboration in various research (and educational) projects to strengthen its research culture and the link between research and education. The University has also actively aimed to enhance research in the academic field of the arts. This enhancement, together with the strategic aims of increasing areas of contact with the society and advancing diverse ways of mediating art creation and research, is to be praised. However, the University has limited capacity for such collaboration and in some cases has hence been unable to participate in collaborative projects with potential for adding value.

The Team gathered evidence that suggested that the University could cooperate more with other Icelandic universities to establish interdisciplinary research collaboration, and to jointly impact national higher education, research and innovation policies. The Team further noted that there is room for improvement in connecting with companies in the field of creative industries. This would also help the University get a foothold in formation of national innovation and creative industries policies. The Rector of the University has in the past two years had a seat on the Icelandic Science and Technology Policy Council. However, the Team observed that the University does not yet systematically plan, check, and evaluate research and other collaborative activities in its strategy framework. The Team hence recommends the University to deploy a more strategic and focused approach to research (and other) collaboration.

5.8 Teaching-research balance

The University has defined the research hours per full-time equivalencies (FTE) for different academic ranks (for example, assistant professor, associate professor, and professor). The University has work plans for each member of staff that show how time is allocated, including to research and teaching. All academic staff members are actively involved in artistic research. The total amount of institutional investment in staff research time has been rising from an equivalent of 6.6 full-time equivalent positions in 2015 to 8 in 2020-21. However, the Team observed that the current teaching workloads (caused partly by COVID-19) challenge the research time allocation of the work plans. The Team also noted that staff have yet not observed the promised benefits of the new structure on teaching-research balance. The Team urges the University to develop mechanisms to ensure that the work plans are realistic and that there actually is time to do research. The planned internal funding model might be a useful tool in this connection

5.9 Support for grant-getting activities and grant management

The University has provided centrally administered Research Services to academic staff and students since 2007. The service provides support for academic staff and students for writing grant applications and consultation on funding possibilities. Research Services consists of one project manager. The University tries to manage the workload of the project manager by asking people to plan well in advance. The University has an emerging practice of following up on the success, or learning from the shortcomings, of previous grant applications.

The University uses the ethics guidelines of the Icelandic Centre for Research. The University is also aware and has experience with the EU open science standards through its ERC grant.

The University plans to establish a Research Centre to enhance the mediation of research results, as well as bolstering library and information services. The University also has a strategic goal to further develop cross-departmental research infrastructure (workshops, tech labs, studios) and supporting services.

The Team suggests the University draft a prioritised roadmap of the next steps to be taken to balance the actions and resources in a feasible way, and to manage the resource needs of both artistic and more traditional scientific research. The Team encourages the University to offer systematic support and training to its researchers so that they become familiar with the concept and practices of open science.

5.10 General comments on the management of research

The University policy and strategy allow deep engagement of the University with Icelandic society and the University has the potential to form a unique research profile. The University values and understands the importance of research and its public dissemination. There is an ambitious research agenda aspiring to inculcate a thriving research culture and academic tradition within the University. Despite the progress made, the Team identifies a need for the University to develop a Research Strategy that establishes an inclusive concept of artistic research that is at the same time respectful of academic freedom. The concept formation and shared understanding would help the University to participate in discussions on research policy formation at both the international and national level and thus make its voice better heard, for example, in the context of national innovation and research policies.

The University has begun to develop, and has a very serious ambition for, a means of monitoring of quality of artistic research outputs. The University has increased the number of research projects it is involved in, as well as its share of additional research funding. The

securing of a major international research grant has contributed to the credentials of the Iceland University of the Arts in seeking both national and international research grants, research impact and engagement.

The University is very well respected in the associated professional fields, by national cultural institutions, and among the public. The University has compiled a definition of research impact for the purpose of artistic research, but at the same time should find ways to create a systematic follow-up based on the definition. The University has actively searched for international collaboration in various research and educational projects, to strengthen the research culture and the link between research and education. The University could cooperate more with other Icelandic universities to search for interdisciplinary research collaboration. There is also room for improvement in connecting with companies within the field of creative industries.

The University has in recent years initiated many institutional actions to enhance research management. The University should systematically follow-up and assess the impacts of these organisational changes and carry out revisions if needed. The current teaching workloads (caused partly by COVID-19) challenge the research time allocation of the work plans. The University should develop mechanisms to ensure that the work plans are realistic and there is time to do research. The University should consider systematic benchmarking and regular self-assessment of research management activities to get a shared understanding of where it stands now in comparison with other arts and small non-arts universities. The University has recently established Research Services that provide support for academic staff and students for grant application writing and consultation on funding possibilities. The University should continue to develop the university level research support

services and infrastructure to match the needs caused by the growing number of research activities and externally funded research projects. Finally, the University should draft a realistic roadmap of the next steps to be taken.

6. Managing Enhancement

6.1 General Enhancement Context

The University holds a special position within Icelandic higher education as the only institution dedicated to providing higher education in the disciplines of fine arts, performing arts, music, design, architecture and arts education in Iceland. This unique position within Icelandic society places a great responsibility on the University to support teaching and research from within the arts fields.

The University has embarked on a number of strategic initiatives that encompass teaching, learning, programme offerings and facilities. Currently, the University is working to establish programmes in film and doctoral studies, while at the same time establishing a more consistent approach to managing quality and enhancement. The need for increased resources to fund these initiatives, as well as increased resources for facilities improvements to support these initiatives, has been recognised by the University leadership. Increased support from the government and industry will be needed to reach the University's goals in these areas. There is commendable commitment to the strategic plan and the new initiatives that will increase societal impact.

The quality culture at the University is strong and relies on an informal process of conversations between staff and students. These conversations mainly focus around practice and learning. This strong informal quality culture is driven by self-reflection at all levels of the organisation. There is very good focus on outward reflection of student work

and conversation about the personal artistic practice of staff. The quality culture of the University was also evident in the culture of continuous improvement. The University has shown evidence, especially during the pandemic, of the agility to respond to changing events as well as the agility and willingness to change and develop based on student and staff feedback.

The University has responded on a number of occasions to facilities and resource issues in a way that reflects the culture of care established by The Senior Leadership Team. They have reorganised facility, programmes and organisational structures with student and staff needs at the forefront.

There is a strong quality culture in evidence among the Senior Leadership Team. They communicate and receive feedback which involves them in two specific initiatives. The first is the planning and promotion of the move to a single building to house the University. This effort to move the University programmes under one roof is primarily based on the continuous need for strengthening their strategic objective of promoting interdisciplinary programmes and work, as well as strengthening research. It is also recognised that support for students and staff would be strengthened. The second area of focus by the Senior Leadership Team is the establishment of SAD. This is to assist the University in its research and interdisciplinary strategic objectives. The creation of SAD has also been linked in the RA to the movement from an informal quality culture to a more formal quality culture.

In the Team's discussions with the University Board, it was very apparent that the members have a strong dedication to the mission, students and staff at the University. They are connected strongly to the University leadership, which updates the Board on a regular basis regarding financial and operational successes and concerns. The University Board has been

focused on the acquisition of a facility to house all of the programmes of the University. They have been working in partnership with the Rector regarding this very strategically important initiative. The need to locate the academic programmes in one facility was voiced in a positive way in all meetings and it is highlighted in the RA. The current separation of programmes across three locations in the city was seen as an impediment to the growth of the University as well as a barrier to effective communication and community building.

The University has a quality culture that is strong among the students. They are committed to supporting each other and advocating for themselves and each other. This was specifically evident in their advocacy for the international students. Also, numerous student groups were very articulate advocates for their studies and were able to envision and articulate the wider issues facing the University. Within departments, the Team found evidence of strong collaboration between students and staff as they worked together to improve the quality of the learning environment.

The quality culture of the University was further evident in the confidence of stakeholders in the abilities of graduates as well as their willingness to partner with the institution in very meaningful ways. This was articulated clearly in meetings with stakeholders.

The Senior Leadership Team should collect and review more data on societal impact and engagement, alumni successes, and partnership possibilities. Stakeholders are a resource from which the University should more formally seek advice, feedback and partnership as it looks to further formalise its already strong quality culture.

The University should support and cultivate the strong commitment from staff, support staff and students by being more transparent in explaining the decision-making in hiring and promotion processes; by improving communication with sessional staff and students; and

by improving internal communications regarding orientation and professional opportunities for staff. The University should address discrepancies in the implementation of its language policy and create an action plan detailing its approach and timeline for preventing racial, and other, stereotyping and for creating safe and confident spaces for students and staff.

All levels of the organisation show a dedication to the teaching and learning experiences. Permanent and sessional staff are committed to the students and the specialty subjects. Support staff have a strong commitment and energy for the strategic plan and initiatives outlined by the Senior Leadership Team. Students are enthusiastically supportive of the University, which is evident from their self-advocacy and clear understanding of the challenges and strengths of the Iceland University of the Arts.

6.2 Strategic Planning and Action Planning

The University's stakeholders share a common understanding and enthusiasm for its mission, values and strategic objectives. This was recognised in the Team's many interactions in meetings with teaching staff, support staff and students. Stakeholders also understood the value of the University within their own communities of influence. The Board had a shared understanding of the value of the University. The Strategic Plan for the term 2019-2023 is ambitious but has strong support inside and outside the University. Its success is contingent on the University securing more consistent and elevated levels of financial support, as well as a new building.

It was observed by the Team, articulated by the Senior Leadership Team, Management, Board members and stakeholders, and discussed in meetings with staff and students, that there is a need for consolidation of programmes within one building, as well as securing more consistent financial resources. This is also documented well in the Strategic Plan 2019-

2023 and in the RA. The Team recognises the past and present work being done by all involved. However, the Team urges the University to create action plans focused on the current situation in order to preserve the hard work done by everyone to build a University that is a leader in the cultural life of Iceland.

It was cited in meetings with the Team and observed by Team members that facility conditions were not optimal, both generally and in classrooms. The University is addressing some of the issues observed, for example by renovating performance spaces in the music programme building. However, there are additional pressing issues with general classrooms and studio spaces being in need of adequate furniture, technology (specialty equipment across locations), accessibility at some locations, and the need for more communal/shared spaces for staff and students (articulated in meetings with the Team). Action plans to document physical deficiencies and programme needs across the three locations and programmes respectively, and to address these issues in a timely manner, should continue to be maintained and fulfilled. This will allow for the preservation of quality while planning for the future of the University with the continued advocacy for a new building and increased financial resources.

As previously noted, the University has a strong informal quality culture. Many of the Team's observations and discussions were based on the uniform understanding by staff and students of its accomplishments and challenges. In order to fully implement the current Strategic Plan and the enhancements discussed in the RA, the University will need to adopt more transparent and formal methods for collecting data and for internal communication to track progress and diagnose corrective action. This should include developing data-driven annual monitoring of programmes (reviewing course completion, progression, and

recruitment rates for example) with action plans per programme to address, in collaboration with students and colleagues, identified needs in the year ahead. Actions might arise, for example, from student or stakeholder feedback on learning, teaching and assessment, reflection on recruitment datasets, or the identified need for the development of new areas of curriculum in response to industry progress and expectations. The establishment of SAD and the quality enhancement groups should continue to develop the formal mechanisms needed to improve an organisation that has grown and become more complicated since its founding in 1998. The Dean of SAD has been given this portfolio in partnership with the other members of the Senior Leadership Team. This is a promising step in the process of formalising the quality culture of the University.

Effective internal communication is vital for the success of the initiatives outlined in the Strategic Plan and RA. At the same time, the Board will need to become better connected with the planning, and reviewing of progress, of major initiatives in order to create support from the top and to give the Rector and Senior Leadership Team the support they need to implement strategic initiatives and action plans. More formal scheduled communication (University meetings, Senior Leadership Team briefings, email newsletters, etc.) would create a University community and Governance oversight that is better informed, and which creates more supportive and energised staff and students. The quality of the conversations around needed change and the acceptance of necessary organisational changes currently implemented and planned will be greatly improved with better formal and consistent internal communication and information management.

6.3 Committee Structure

The Quality Manager is responsible for quality enhancement and control across the University according to the RA but various committees have quality work as part of their remit. The RA acknowledges the need to improve follow-up on policies and action plans, as well as strategic plan alignment, and to incorporate the student voice in University committees at all levels. Further, the need for more systematic collection of data to support a formal quality culture is acknowledged by the University in its documents and its discussions with the Team. The implementation timeline for these action steps is approximately two years based on the RA. The forming of SAD and the hiring of a Dean are important first steps in meeting this timeline and there is a recent deliberative structure with Academic and Management Councils supporting the Rector at the top, and School, Departmental and Student Councils supporting Deans and individual departments.

The University acknowledges that a more formalised and streamlined set of procedures for quality enhancement is needed. Despite the increased clarity that the new structure of schools and Deans brings, it is not always clear where responsibilities sit for enhancement activity. One mechanism for increasing clarity would involve programme councils adopting an annual monitoring process with the purpose of enhancing provision. The progress and outcomes of this monitoring would need to be reported effectively up the 'tree' so that the Academic Council received and prioritised a few key items each year, which would enable enhancement to be evidenced and good practice to be shared across departments and schools.

The Team also urges the University to continue to create support structures for the Quality Manager and the Dean of SAD. The creation of committees with defined roles and

University-wide memberships will be essential for formalising and supporting quality culture. The objectives outlined in the RA are appropriate but will need structural support in order to be completed within the somewhat ambitious timeline of two years.

6.4 Evidence Base

The University has acknowledged the need to increase the use of an appropriate range of evidence to support its quality enhancement processes. The establishment of SAD and the beginnings of a more inclusive quality enhancement process are good initial steps. The Quality Manager will need more support and the University does understand that the increase in support will be key to meeting stated timelines for the increase in the range of evidence used to measure progress on quality enhancement.

The informal quality culture needs to transform into a formal quality culture in order to better track the progress of the University from the institution level down to the programme level (see Sections 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.9, 3.10 and 4.15). The University needs to continue to increase systematic data collection and analysis. The University also needs to increase formal mechanisms internally that can be part of the collection and analysis of data. These would include staff and students at all levels of the institution. The University would benefit from the introduction of more formal and regular student surveys, programme reviews and strategic and action planning assessments. The University should consider more formal and structured reporting of outcomes and data analysis in order to support Senior Leadership Team efforts and goals while fostering a more transparent and formal internal communication plan. The structured reports and participation of staff and students can also be useful in gaining support for institutional strategic goals at the Board level. The Board needs to be more integrated in the planning and assessment of these

processes in order for its members to fully realise and maximise their role as advocates for the University.

The University is being asked internally and externally to measure its social impact. The Team recommends that the University reach out to recognised peer organisations and institutions to establish a philosophy and policies for measuring social impact in order to decrease anecdotal evidence and strengthen the tracking of Key Performance Indicators.

6.5 Benchmarks and Internal Sharing of Best Practices

The University has strong relationships with Nordic university associations in the arts and an active presence in European Higher Education networks, but it could benefit even more from forging benchmarking relationships with similarly ambitious, internationally-regarded and multi-disciplinary arts universities and organisations. This would allow the University to be a part of an active network of arts-specific organisations. The Team's interactions with the Senior Leadership Team reflected an awareness of, and some use of, benchmarks and best practices. The use of this information can be seen in the RA and Strategic Plan, as well as in the ongoing organisational changes. Improvement in internal communication regarding best practices and benchmarks could assist in creating more acceptance of these changes. Staff and students need to be supplied with more context in order to have a better understanding of organisational changes if they are to support them.

The Team recommends increasing benchmarking and interaction with associations and partners beyond the Nordic-Baltic region in order to increase awareness of global trends in art, design and performance education. This will build on the already robust relationships that inform quality enhancement at the University. This can be important as the University

seeks to increase research quality and expand its international student enrolments in graduate programmes.

As noted earlier, the University needs to improve the quality culture around its international programmes in order to increase satisfaction through the quality enhancement of teaching and learning (see also Section 4.10). Both Icelandic and international students believe that this is an area in need of improvement. Deepening benchmarking relationships with international institutions, including for example the use of international external examiners, would provide appropriate benchmarks to be met in the provision of internationally-competitive, and attractive postgraduate provision. It is clear that the University seeks international expertise and enables professionals to interact in departmental learning environments with staff and students, providing formal and informal opportunities to benchmark with international standards. The Team's meeting with international students created the impression that the benefits of such interactions have yet to manifest directly in the student experience, or in the approaches to the learning environment taken by some (though by no means all) tutors, especially with regards to provision in English. At the same time, the University should continue to focus on its academic and practice strengths when designing and enhancing postgraduate provision so as to put forward a distinctive offer and student experience within an increasingly competitive international HE context. Finding a way to promote Icelandic culture, living and opportunities to international students, whilst accommodating diverse language and cultural needs and identities, is a challenge, but achieving the appropriate balance will support the growth of a thriving postgraduate community, which then has the potential to develop into a 'pipeline' for the recruitment of research students.

The establishment of SAD, which works 'across' both other Schools in the structure, is a significant step towards improving, embedding and achieving consistency in the quality culture at the University. The University should continue to develop SAD as a way to increase use and identification of Key Performance Indicators, expand benchmarking, and formalise internal sharing of best practices.

6.6 Drawing on International Experiences and Domestic Cooperation

The University is the national university dedicated to the arts in all its forms. It offers significant leadership domestically as well as being a highly sought-after partner for cultural organisations in Iceland. Stakeholders highly value the University's graduates and the thought leadership of the staff.

The University has a strong presence in Nordic and Nordic-Baltic networks at the subject level and at the institution level through the ELIA and the annual Nordic Rectors of Art Universities Forum. The use of these associations as drivers for quality enhancement is evident and the University should be commended for its highly effective use of these opportunities. It is recommended that the University continue to use these opportunities for quality enhancement, while also creating more formal mechanisms internally to expand the use of this information to all levels of the institution.

The University has excellent relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders. They support and highly value the programmes and graduates of the institution. Public trust and interest in the University are very high, as evident from the level of public participation in the University's annual graduation showcase. There is an opportunity for the University to formalise the strong support of stakeholders by forming an advisory board comprised of community stakeholders involved in various visual and performing arts organisations. In our

meetings with community stakeholders, it became evident that they have a strong connection to the success of the University and could be engaged further to support and advocate for the University. This would be a very good supplement to the support already given by the University Board. This could be a great source of information and for the assessment of the social impact of the University and add a component of quality enhancement that is responsive to the needs of Icelandic society.

6.7 Evaluation

The University has a strong informal dedication to quality enhancement based on discussions in meetings and upon review of Sections 4 and 9 of the RA. The Senior Leadership Team, staff and students are aware and aligned with the strategic objectives of the University as defined in the Strategic Plan. SLRs and RA are reflective and illustrate an awareness by all levels of the institution of the strengths and weaknesses of the University. These processes have allowed for a common understanding and a sense of teamwork regarding quality enhancement. This cohesion and teamwork are most strongly evident in the Senior Leadership Team based on the Team's meetings with them. The University has made strong progress in formalising quality enhancement through the creation of SAD as well as making the enhancement of student experience a more significant part of the current committee and council structures. The Team recommends developing clearer terms of reference to support the formal committee structure, so that it is more readily evident what the remit and special focus of each committee is, and how it reports effectively to those committees 'above' it, and alongside it, as appropriate. It was not always clear whether, for example, there were fully effective or well-understood mechanisms to elevate important issues that might be raised in a Departmental Council to, say, Management

Council or Academic Council. More obvious lines of information passing between committees create a robust governance structure to support quality enhancement that is reflective of staff, students and stakeholder voices. In meetings with the Senior Leadership Team and staff, the roles and who was involved in formal quality enhancement seemed unclear.

If annual monitoring of programmes and enhancement-led action plans are introduced, for example, they would be scrutinised at programme and departmental levels, but it would be expected that the School and Academic Councils would receive information arising from them that is appropriate to institutional-level enhancement work. For example, monitoring student feedback on online learning support over time in a programme would yield information that may be corroborated by other programmes, and may lead a School or Academic Council to make decisions about the development and enhancement of online learning resources across the institution as a result. The creation of SAD and the appointment of a quality enhancement lead is a good step forward but how multiple levels of the organisation are integrated into this process did not seem as clear from the Team's meetings. Greater clarity would help support initiatives already underway at the University as it works to implement stronger practices in its self-identified two-year timeline. Some of the desired clarity of purpose and interrelationships of committees will emerge as the new organisational structure becomes fully embedded

There is strong evidence that staff and students have a perception of the implementation of quality enhancement initiatives (structural changes; facility improvements; language and equality policy revisions; revision of regulatory framework for academic employment and

environment; and support of research culture) that is incomplete and uneven across departments and programmes.

The Team recommends the further development of SAD as an ideal unit to support integration across schools and faculties in the analysis and gathering of systematic data to support quality enhancement. The University should consider the establishment of a quality committee that consists of both staff and students to coordinate quality enhancement efforts. This change would create a very specific body that is charged with quality enhancement coordination and accountability.

The University is encouraged to continue the revision of its regulatory framework for academic employment and the academic working environment. The professional development and support of the academic staff is important to the formalising of mechanisms of quality enhancement. The intentional exposure of academic staff to best practices in quality enhancement by the University will help support the creation of a more formal structure. Some staff development resource could be used to support or seed small enhancement projects for those involved in learning and teaching, or learning support roles, that could help to create examples for staff across the institution and promote a more disseminated understanding of enhancement activity and staff agency to deliver and shape it. There should also be a focus on professionalisation and improvement of the academic working environment for programme coordinators, chairs and Deans in order to better coordinate their work and communication with each other. Improved coordination at these levels will lead to better informed staff and students. This approach will also improve inputs and data into the quality enhancement process by gaining access to what is happening at the ground level of the institution.

The financial and resource allocation model for the University needs to continue to develop and better align with the Strategic Plan. The RA illustrates a large dependency on Government funding compared to tuition fees and other service fees. As stated in the RA and in meetings with the Senior Leadership Team, it was verified that the Icelandic government is currently only making a year-to-year commitment to institutional funding. This funding has been consistent but the year-to-year rollover of almost 80% of the University funding may create long term planning issues for the University. This point is underlined by the RA, which illustrates uneven financial performance between 2014 and 2020. The University should continue to seek longer-term resource commitments and to grow (within the scope of so small a society) independent income streams to enable further enhancement activity. The Team encourages the University leadership to continue its discussions and advocacy in this area, especially considering the institutional ability to engage up to 10% of the nation in key outward-facing activities (the graduation festival) and the esteem in which the stakeholder group holds the University.

The University should continue to formalise its quality enhancement structures and mechanisms and find ways to 'measure' and communicate enhancements (by demonstrating progress made, for example, in key strategic areas over time), and use these data to inform further developments and targeting of resource in future strategic and academic planning. The foundation for success is present and the informal quality culture that already exists at the University should assist in the success of quality enhancement. The University should determine its risk appetite for enhancement activity, ensuring that whilst threshold quality standards must always be met, some enhancement activity can offer an opportunity to trial innovations in learning and teaching, or research culture. The more formal a structure for supporting the effective management of quality, the greater the

capacity for documenting, deliberating and reflecting on the potential for, and success of, enhancement initiatives at all levels of the organisation.

6.8 Summary on Managing Enhancement

The overall awareness of strengths and weaknesses, as well as the strong informal quality culture at the University, are commendable. The RA and Strategic Plan show a strong understanding of the level of quality enhancement needed to continue to improve the University. The progress that the University has made since its founding in 1998 is also commendable and impressive. The University is a clear leader in the cultural life of Iceland. It is fulfilling its mission and supporting the creative industries and organisations in a way that is recognised and appreciated by stakeholders and partners. The University is moving to further formalise its approach to quality enhancement and the Team endorses and supports these efforts. The Team makes recommendations to consolidate formal structures and increase the systematic collection and use of data for improved support, and evidence of, quality enhancement activity. A general recommendation is to improve internal communication and increase active support for – and engagement of – staff and students in the quality enhancement process, in order to improve understanding and positive reception of the multiple efforts underway at the senior management level of the institution to bring about effective change and progress. A collective and collaborative approach will improve quality enhancement efforts and assist the University in attaining its goals as outlined in the RA and Strategic Plan.

The University does, however, need to develop more transparent and formal processes and mechanisms for feedback to its internal community regarding the work being undertaken to resolve shortcomings in facilities, programmes and amenities impacting students. The

institution is urged to create a more transparent and effective internal communications process that ensures the linking of student concerns to staff actions, thereby closing the 'feedback loop'. The University needs to develop internal communications methods that are able to better articulate to students the links between quality and strategic improvements (SAD, facility improvements and programme additions) with their concerns and learning environment expectations.

Based on meetings with the University Board and other members of the University community, the following final recommendations are shared for consideration. The University Board should consider being more connected to the institution through interactions with multiple stakeholders and members of the University, including student officers. For example, this can be accomplished through the Senior Leadership Team effectively communicating core purpose and operations to the University Board as well as connecting with students through a bi-annual meeting with Student Council representatives. It is further recommended that the University Board be more directly involved and connected to timely succession planning for the Rectorial position. These steps will effectively add weight to an already strong quality culture at the University.

7. Conclusion

7.1. General summary, including overview of management of research

The Team is very grateful to the Rector, University Board, staff and students for the warm welcome to the University. The Team acknowledges how constructive, candid and welcoming all who met with the Team were. The Team had the chance to meet in person a sizable contingent of the University community and all were genuinely concerned to give

their views of the University's approach to standards, quality and research in a constructive manner. These included very helpful examples and instances from their own practice and experience.

The RA presented a picture of a university that is dynamic, outward-looking and self-reflective. At the same time, it is committed to having a positive impact on its students and on society through its research and practice. In several areas there has been considerable progress in development since the IWR in QEF1 and SLRs in QEF2. The Team found sufficient evidence to confirm the RA and to enable the Team to make the confidence judgements noted in Sections 7.4 and 7.5 below.

The University values and understands the importance of research and its public dissemination. There is an ambitious research agenda aspiring to inculcate a thriving research culture and academic tradition within the University and the University has the potential to form a unique research profile. The University has recently established Research Services that provide support for academic staff and students for grant application writing and consultation on funding possibilities. The University has increased the number of research projects it is involved in, as well as its share of additional research funding. The securing of a major international research grant has contributed to the credentials of the Iceland University of the Arts in seeking both national and international research grants, research impact and engagement.

The University has initiated many institutional actions to enhance research management. The University should systematically follow-up and assess the impacts of these organisational changes and carry out revisions if needed. The Team identified a need for the University to develop a Research Strategy that establishes an inclusive concept of artistic

research that is at the same time respectful of academic freedom. The University has compiled a definition of research impact for the purpose of artistic research, but at the same time should find ways to create a systematic follow-up based on the definition and to assess the impact of this work. The University should seek opportunities with other Icelandic universities to search for interdisciplinary research collaboration and there is room for connecting better with companies within the field of creative industries.

7.2. Summary of strengths

- The quality and general depth of the Institutional Reflective Analysis and case study presentation.

- There is a strong informal quality culture at the Iceland University of the Arts, sustained by regular conversations between staff, and between staff and students, around practice and learning. This is driven by evident self-reflection at all levels of the organisation on the outward-looking relevance of student work, and the personal artistic practice of staff.

- There is evidence of a culture of continuous evolution, and an ability and willingness to change and develop the University, particularly demonstrated during the pandemic through the institution's agile response to the developing situation.

- A strong sense amongst senior management of how the new structure will benefit the community, as well as a shared vision in the Senior Leadership Team for the further development of the organisation.

- Numerous student groups were articulate self-advocates in relation to their studies, and capably described their own vision for their studies and the Iceland University of the Arts more broadly.

- A strong and committed support culture was evident among the student population, in particular the support for International students by domestic students.

- There was evidence of community within departments, between students and staff, understanding themselves as collaborative partners in the learning environment.

- The institution and its graduates are very well-regarded and well-anchored in the associated professional fields. The Iceland University of the Arts' network includes national cultural and educational institutions and holds the organisation in the highest esteem.

- There is an institutional resilience in the face of challenges and a commitment to sustaining and enhancing the learning environment and staff and student opportunity.

- There is an ambitious research agenda aspiring to inculcate a thriving research culture and academic tradition within the institution. The securing of a major international research grant has contributed to the credentials of the Iceland University of the Arts in seeking both national and international research impact and engagement.

- The confidence of stakeholders in the quality and employability of graduates and staff indicates an institution 'punching above its weight', in terms of its sustained engagement with significant proportions of society (including 10% of the Icelandic population attending graduation shows).

- Icelandic students appreciate the teaching in general, citing the importance of the teacher-student working relationship. Permanent and Sessional Staff alike are clearly committed to their specialist subjects, and delivering - in many cases against the

odds - high quality learning experiences. Sustaining this will require that some of the recommendations below are addressed as a priority.

- Support staff conveyed energy and positivity, articulating their vision, commitment and plan for improving student experience. Staff and leaders in support roles work well together across departments, enabling effective student support.

- The Iceland University of the Arts demonstrated its ability to attract and mobilise a broad base of contributors to its educational mission (professionals, other education partners, arts companies) and the enrichment to core purpose that such perspectives bring.

7.3. Summary of areas for improvement

- The Iceland University of the Arts should urgently develop transparent and responsive mechanisms for resolving near unacceptable deficiencies in essential amenities, presently adversely impacting student experience (e.g., lack of chairs/desks), and for ensuring effective communication to staff and students of timelines and progress/remedy of such deficiencies.

- The institution should create a transparent and effective internal communications plan to achieve a unified understanding of institutional purpose and change management, including enabling regular communication between senior management and students. This will help contextualise new areas of activity and ensure the effective embedding and explanation of the new structure, new roles (especially Deans), workloads and responsibilities for staff.

- Ensure that the University Board is more connected to the Institution, its core purpose and operations, including at least bi-annual meetings with student council

representatives. At the same time, the Board should devise and implement a strong succession plan for the Rector position as soon as possible.

- The leadership of the Iceland University of the Arts should collect, review and systematise data on the institution's societal impact and engagement, and alumni successes, in partnership with stakeholder group members in order to form a collective voice of advocacy that is supported by evidence.

- The leadership should establish annual monitoring of programmes to include monitoring and review of performance indicators and student feedback on the quality of learning provision. This will provide the Academic Council with clearer 'touchpoints' to monitor enhancement in between Subject-Level Reviews.

- An institutional assessment and feedback plan should be created by staff and students which achieves consistency of purpose across programmes in approaches to feedback in the pass/fail context.

- Programmes, Schools and Support Services should develop simple mechanisms for demonstrating to students that their feedback has been acted upon (for example 'you said, we did' posters), thereby 'closing the feedback loop'.

- The Iceland University of the Arts should formulate a common academic timetable to support its interdisciplinary ambition and prevent further frustration of student opportunity, and ensure that unavoidable changes are communicated in a timely manner.

- Develop a Research Strategy that establishes an inclusive concept of artistic research, respectful of academic freedoms, and setting out how staff and possibly future doctoral students will be supported with appropriate time for research activity, and where appropriate, grant applications.

- In the context of building a sustainable research culture, the Iceland University of the Arts should review its approach to fixed-term (e.g., 10 year 4+4+2) academic appointment contracts in consultation with staff, and evaluate the efficacy and wellbeing impacts of the process of (re-)appointment as a staff term approaches its contractual end date.

- The process for promotion should be transparent and, where external panels are used to evaluate applications, the panel should possess expertise in the relevant discipline and convey their reasoning for their outcome decisions clearly and constructively to staff.

- The Iceland University of the Arts should enable a sessional member of staff to become a representative of all sessional staff, to act as 'point person' for ensuring more effective communication to sessional staff, and their access to orientation and professional development opportunities.

- The Iceland University of the Arts should address as a priority its language policy so that its stated commitment to bi-lingual institutional communication is effective and non-discriminatory in practice, and so that International Students' expectations are met both in general communications and in the classroom.

- The Iceland University of the Arts should develop an equalities action plan detailing the proposed approach and timeline for prevention of racial stereotyping; creation of safe and confident space for students and staff in a post 'MeToo' learning environment; inclusive practice to enable students with additional support needs of all types to flourish in the institution; and communicate clearly the channels for report and support of violations.

7.4. Judgment on managing standards of degrees and awards

Overall, the Team concluded that confidence can be placed in the soundness of the Iceland University of the Arts' present and likely future arrangements to secure the academic standards of its degrees and awards.

7.5. Judgment on managing quality of student learning experience

Overall, the Team concluded that confidence can be placed in the soundness of the Iceland University of the Arts' present and likely future arrangements to secure the quality of the student learning experience.

Annex 1: Visit Schedule

Tuesday September 21

Time	Meeting	Attendees
8:30 - 9:00	**Rector**	Fríða Björk Ingvarsdóttir, Rector
9:00 - 11:30	**Institutional Showcase**	Fríða Björk Ingvarsdóttir, Rector Haukur Björnsson, Managing Director
12:30 - 13:30	**Management Council & CFO**	Fríða Björk Ingvarsdóttir, Rector Haukur Björnsson, Managing Director Sóley Björt Guðmundsdóttir, University Office Director, HR and Quality Manager Eva María Árnadóttir, Dean of School of Architecture, Design and Fine Art Þóra Einarsdóttir, Dean of School of Cinematic Arts, Music and Performing Arts Hulda Stefánsdóttir, Dean of Academic Development Þorsteinn Þorsteinsson, Chief Financial Officer
13:30 - 14:15	**Academic Council**	Fríða Björk Ingvarsdóttir, Rector Hulda Stefánsdóttir, Dean of Academic Development Þóra Einarsdóttir, Dean of School of Cinematic Arts, Music and Performing Arts Eva María Árnadóttir, Dean of School of Architecture, Design and Fine Art Hildigunnur Sverrisdóttir, Head of Architecture Department Katrín Ólína Pétursdóttir, Head of Design Department Tryggvi M. Baldvinsson, Head of Music Department Kristín Valsdóttir, Head of Arts Education Department Steinunn Ketilsdóttir, Head of Performing Arts Department Bjarki Bragason, Head of Fine Art Department Sigtýr Ægir Kárason, Chair of Student Union
14:30 - 15:00	**Deans**	Eva María Árnadóttir, Dean of School of Architecture, Design and Fine Art Þóra Einarsdóttir, Dean of School of Cinematic Arts, Music and Performing Arts Hulda Stefánsdóttir, Dean of Academic Development
15:30 - 16:00	**RA editorial team**	Fríða Björk Ingvarsdóttir, Rector Sóley Björt Guðmundsdóttir, University Office Director, HR and Quality Manager Hulda Stefánsdóttir, Dean of Academic Development Eva María Árnadóttir, Dean of School of Architecture, Design and Fine Art Þóra Einarsdóttir, Dean of School of Cinematic Arts, Music and Performing Arts Jóhannes Dagsson, Associate Professor in Fine Art and former Chair of Research Committee Ingimar Waage, Assistant Professor in Arts Education and Chair of Teaching Committee Sigtýr Ægir Kárason, Chair of Student Union Ólöf Gerður Sigfúsdóttir, advisor and editor
16:15 - 17:00	**Quality Management Team**	Sóley Björt Guðmundsdóttir, University Office Director, HR and Quality Manager Hulda Stefánsdóttir, Dean of Academic Development Sigríður Geirsdóttir, Project Manager for Quality and Teaching Elín Þórhallsdóttir, Project Manager for Quality and Research Gerður Jóhanna Jóhannsdóttir, Record Manager

Wednesday September 22

Time	Meeting	Attendees
8:30 - 9:15	**Programme Directors**	Magnea Einarsdóttir, Associate Professor in Fashion Design and Programme Director of Fashion Design Massimo Santanicchio, Associate Professor in Architecture and Programme Director of Architecture Atli Ingólfsson, Professor in Composition and Programme Director of MA in Composition Karl Ágúst Þorbergsson, Assistant Professor and Programme Director of Theatre and Performance Making Gunndís Ýr Finnbogadóttir, Assistant Professor and Programme Director in Arts Education Hekla Dögg Jónsdóttir, Professor and Programme Director in Fine Art
9:15 - 10:00	**Managers with responsibility for student support services**	Sigurður Atli Sigurðsson, Workshops/labs Director Rósa Bjarnadóttir, Library Director Björg Jóna Birgisdóttir, Director of Academic Affairs and Student Counsellor Vigdís Másdóttir, Director of PR and Communication Björg Stefánsdóttir, Project Manager at International Office Björgvin Þorgrímsson, System Manager
10:30 - 11:15	**Staff delivering student support services**	Katrín Helena Jónsdóttir, Team Coordinator for events and PR Dagmar Atladóttir, Department Coordinator at student services Linda Björg Guðmundsdóttir, Service Coordinator and Technical Support Sigurþór Albert Heimisson (Sóri), IT Services Riina Pauliina Finnsdóttir, Library and Information Service
11:15 - 12:00	**Teaching staff**	Birna Geirfinnsdóttir, Associate Professor in Graphic Design Birta Fróðadóttir, Adjunct in Architecture Úlfar Ingi Haraldsson, Adjunct in Composition and Music Theory Hannes Óli Ágústsson, Adjunct in Acting Guðbjörg R. Jóhannesdóttir, Assistant Professor in Arts Education Hildur Bjarnadóttir, Professor in Fine Art
13:00 - 14:00	**Department Heads**	Hildigunnur Sverrisdóttir, Head of Architecture Department Katrín Ólína Pétursdóttir, Head of Design Department Tryggvi M. Baldvinsson, Head of Music Department Kristín Valsdóttir, Head of Arts Education Department Steinunn Ketilsdóttir, Head of Performing Arts Department Bjarki Bragason, Head of Fine Art Department
14:00 - 14:40	**Elected Student representatives**	Sigtýr Ægir Kárason, BA student in Architecture and Chair of Student Union Þórður Hallgrímsson, Music Department, to be confirmed Ragnheiður Íris Ólafsdóttir, BA student in Fine Art Olga Maggý Erlendsdóttir, BA student in Contemporary Dance Guðrún Kara Ingudóttir, BA student in Acting
14:00 - 14:40	**International students**	Not disclosed. N = 6
15:00 - 15:45	**Undergraduate students**	Not disclosed. N = 5
15:00 - 15:45	**Postgraduate students**	Not disclosed. N = 6
15:45 - 16:45	**University Board**	Magnús Ragnarsson, Chair of University Board Guðrún Björk Bjarnadóttir, Vise Chair of University Board Áslaug Friðriksdóttir Ólafur Gíslason Karen María Jónsdóttir

Thursday September 23

Time	Meeting	Attendees
8:30 - 9:15	**Sessional staff with recent appointments**	Ellen Gunnarsdóttir, Arts Education Anna Jóhannsdóttir, Fine Art Atli Hilmarsson, Design Karitas Möller, Architecture Rebekka Ingimundardóttir, Performing Arts Pétur Þór Benediktsson, Music
8:30 - 9:15	**Sessional staff with some history of working with IUA**	Brynhildur Sigurðardóttir, Arts Education Corto Arcadio Jabali, Design Eva Rún Snorradóttir, Performing Arts Matthías Már Davíðsson, Music Fritz Hendrik Berndsen, Fine Art Aðalheiður Atladóttir, Architecture
9:15 - 10:00	**Open Meeting: staff**	Not disclosed. N = 14
10:00 - 10:45	**Alumni**	Gunnar Karel Másson, Music Níel Thibaud Girerd, Performing Arts Klara Sól Ágústsdóttir, Architecture Hrafnkell Pálsson, Music Berglind Ósk Hlynsdóttir, Fine Art
10:45 - 11:45	**External stakeholders**	Sigríður Magnúsdóttir, Owner and Managing Director of Trod Architects Ólöf Kristín Sigurðardóttir, Director of Reykjavík Art Museum Magnús Geir Þórðarson, Artistic Director / CEO of the National Theatre of Iceland Halla Helgadóttir, Managing Director of the Iceland Design Centre Dr. Rósa Gunnarsdóttir, PhD in Pedagogy Sigurjón Sighvatsson, producer and chair of the Film Board for the Icelandic Film Centre Arna Kristín Einarsdóttir, Managing Director for the National Arts Center Orchestra in Canada
12:15 - 13:00	**Open meeting: students**	Not disclosed. N = 17
13:00 - 13:45	**Staff with responsibility for management of research**	Hulda Stefánsdóttir, Dean of Academic Development Jóhannes Dagsson, Associate Professor in Fine Art and former Chair of the Research Committee Elín Þórhallsdóttir, Project Manager for Quality and Research
14:00 - 14:45	**Follow-up with Deans**	Hulda Stefánsdóttir, Dean of Academic Development Eva María Árnadóttir, Dean of School of Architecture, Design and Fine Art Þóra Einarsdóttir, Dean of School of Cinematic Arts, Music and Performing Arts
14:45-15:30	**Follow-up with Managing Director**	Haukur Björnsson, Managing Director
16:30 - 17:00	**Goodbye to Rector**	Fríða Björk Ingvarsdóttir