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# Reflective Analysis

Submitted for Quality  
Board–Led Institutional Review  
according to the Quality  
Enhancement Framework  
for Icelandic Higher Education  
June 2021



**LISTAHÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS**  
Iceland University of the Arts

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# Introduction

The aim of this reflective analysis is to illustrate the ways in which the Iceland University of the Arts adheres to standards and criteria made for HEIs in Iceland, and to reflect on areas for improvement. It is written on the occasion of an institution-wide review to be led by the Quality Board for Icelandic Higher Education in September 2021, as part of a regular quality assurance framework for higher education institutions in Iceland. Aspirations for this process are twofold: first, that it will enable the University to identify its strengths, opportunities and areas for future enhancement; and second, that it will generate further knowledge and awareness of quality enhancement by staff and students across the institution as a whole.

## **Self-Evaluation Process and Production of the Reflective Analysis**

Preparation for the review process and writing of the reflective analysis started in Autumn 2020 when the Management Council appointed a formal steering group for the task. The steering group consists of one student representative and seven staff members, who are experts in the fields of teaching, research, and management, and have extensive experience in quality management. The steering group is jointly responsible for the undertaking of the reflective analysis, including the gathering and analysis of and reflection on data assembled for the report. The steering group worked in close cooperation with staff and students throughout the process, as well as working with an external consultant.

### **Members of the steering group:**

- Eva María Árnadóttir, Dean, School of Architecture, Design and Fine Art
- Fríða Björk Ingvarsdóttir, Rector
- Hulda Stefánsdóttir, Dean, School of Academic Development
- Ingimar Waage, Chair, Teaching Committee
- Jóhannes Dagsson, Chair, Research Committee
- Sigtýr Ægir Kárasón, Chair, Student Council
- Sóley Björt Guðmundsdóttir, Quality Manager, Dir. of Human Resources and Dir. of University Office
- Þóra Einarsdóttir, Dean, School of Music and Performing Arts

The writing of the reflective analysis was the responsibility of individual staff members with expertise in various fields, with the contribution of student representatives. Key staff members were consulted during the production of the reflective analysis. The final editing and presentation of the reflective analysis was in the hands of the steering group. Furthermore, consultation meetings in the form of an open forum were held separately with staff and students, where various issues emerging through the process were put up for discussion and the University's future

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prospects were openly addressed. With the agreement of the steering group, the University quality manager organised the staff forum, while the Student Council organised the student forum.

### Supporting Document

1\_1 Timeline and Participants in the Self-Evaluation Process

### **How to Read the Reflective Analysis**

The content of this reflective analysis is based on evidence drawn from various data and institutional material, such as key statistics, survey results, regulatory frameworks and published documents. It reflects all aspects of the entire University operations. The reflective analysis is divided into ten chapters, describing the history, development and organisational structure of the University, the institutional approach to the management of standards, the student learning environment, human resources, the management of research, and future priorities for institutional enhancement. A separate chapter presents the case study (Chapter 5), focusing on assessment and the transition from numerical grading to Pass/Fail assessment. Each chapter consists of descriptions based on evidence and facts, followed by reflections based on a more analytical approach, where opportunities for enhancement are articulated.

### **List of Abbreviations**

AC	Academic Council
DA	Department of Architecture
DAE	Department of Art Education
DD	Department of Design
DDA	Department of Design and Architecture (no longer existing)
DF	Department of Film
DFA	Department of Fine Art
DM	Department of Music
DPA	Department of Performing Arts
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
IO	International Office
IUA	Iceland University of the Arts
IWR	Institution-Wide Review
MC	Management Council
MESC	Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in Iceland
QB	Quality Board for Icelandic Higher Education
QEF	Quality Enhancement Framework for Icelandic Higher Education
QEF2	Second cycle of the Quality Enhancement Framework for Icelandic Higher Education
QTR	Division of Quality, Teaching and Research
RA	Reflective Analysis
SAD	School of Academic Development
SADFA	School of Architecture, Design and Fine Art
SC	Student Council
SLR	Subject-Level Review
SMPA	School of Music and Performing Arts
UO	University Office

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# About the Institution

**This chapter gives a brief introduction to the historical development of the University and an overview of the current institutional profile. It outlines the University's role, goals and values, and how those are reflected in its strategic policy. Then it explains the institutional organisation and management structure, including recent organisational reform, as well as contextualising finances and facilities.**

## 2.1 Institutional Background and History

The Iceland University of the Arts is the only higher education institution in the field of the arts nationwide, providing higher education in the fields of fine art, performing arts, music, design, architecture and art education. As such, the University is responsible for education, research and policy-making in that sector of Icelandic society. Moreover, the University seeks to foster its relations with the wider community by offering continuing education through its Open IUA platform, organising a myriad of public events each year, and operating numerous exhibition and performance venues where student work is presented to the public. Being at the forefront of knowledge generation and innovation in its field, the University is most conscious of its responsibilities in the national context and the impact it has on culture and the arts in the country. In this capacity, it seeks to actively and responsibly communicate artistic knowledge and expertise to the wider community as well as fostering close ties with its stakeholders.

The University was founded in 1998 on the grounds of separate arts colleges with a vision to create a single umbrella for all the fields within the arts. Since then, the University has developed into a dynamic and manifold institution, running undergraduate and graduate programmes in all six departments, and preparing for the seventh, the Department of Film.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Film has up until now not been taught at the university level in Iceland. After many years of preparation and development, the MESK has finally announced that the IUA will be hosting film studies at the university level. However, a formal contract and funding still remain to be consolidated with the MESK, which, in turn, creates uncertainty for the management to plan for the launching of the new department (most likely in Autumn 2022).

<b>1999</b>	Study programme in Fine Art (BA) is established.
<b>2000</b>	Study programme in Acting (BA) is established.
<b>2001</b>	Study programmes in Arts Education (diploma, until 2009), Fashion Design (BA), Product Design (BA), Visual Communication (BA), Instrumental & Vocal Performance (B.Mus.) and Composition (BA) are established.
<b>2002</b>	Study programmes in Architecture (BA) and Music Education (BA, until 2010) are established.
<b>2005</b>	Study programmes in Theatre and Performance Making (BA), Contemporary Dance (diploma until 2008) and Creative Music Communication (BA) are established.
<b>2008</b>	Study programmes in Church Music (BA), Composition (MA) and Music Education and Communication (BA, until 2012) are established.
<b>2009</b>	Study programmes in New Audiences and Innovative Practices (joint European MA) and Arts Education (MA/M.Art.Ed.) are established.
<b>2010</b>	Study programme in Creative Music Communication (BA) is established.
<b>2012</b>	International study programmes in Fine Art (MA) and design (MA) are established.
<b>2013</b>	Study programme in Vocal & Instrumental Pedagogy (B.Mus.Ed.) is established.
<b>2016</b>	International study programme in Performing Arts (MFA) is established. Study programmes in Vocal & Instrumental Pedagogy (M.Mus.Ed.) and Arts Education Preliminary Studies (MA/M.Art.Ed.) are established. Study programme in Composition (MA) is divided into two study paths: M.Mus. and MA.
<b>2017</b>	International study programme in Contemporary Dance Practices (BA) is established.
<b>2018</b>	Study programme in Vocal & Instrumental Music Education (Rhythmic) is established.
<b>2019</b>	Study programme in Arts Based Teacher Education (M.Ed.) is established.
<b>2020</b>	International study programme in Curatorial Practice (MA) is established.
<b>2021</b>	International study programme in architecture (M.Arch.) is established.

*Table 1: Timeline of study programmes since establishment.*

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## 2.2 Institutional Profile

During the academic year 2020–2021 the University offered a total of 28 study programmes in six departments, eleven of which are at the graduate level (see supporting document below on Educational Programmes – Overview). A total of 602 students were enrolled, thereof 171 at the graduate level. All study programmes at the graduate level are international, except the ones in the DAE and the study programme in Vocal & Instrumental Pedagogy in the DM. A total of 124 permanent staff members were employed, filling 95.5 full-time positions (thereof 58 full-time academic positions). Each year, around 400 international and local part-time lecturers contribute to the learning and teaching environment at the institution.

<b>Study Programmes</b>	Students (number)	Female students %	Intl. Students %	First-year students %	Return students %	Graduating students %
<b>IUA Total</b>	<b>602</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>10,5</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>IUA Total BA</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>IUA Total MA</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>14</b>
Architecture	47	28	0	34	80	34
Design	133	87	9	36	87	30
Fine Arts	113	75	19	42	71	28
Performing Arts	68	44	15	18	84	54
Arts Education	86	69	3,5	64	97	49
Music	155	76	10	47	76	32

Table 2: Overview of student numbers, Autumn 2020.

### Supporting Document

2\_1 Educational Programmes – Overview

## 2.3 Institutional Role, Goals and Values

The role of the University is to provide higher education in the arts, encourage progressive thinking and to stimulate innovation and development in different art fields. Its goals are to:

- Be at the forefront of developing higher education in arts and to offer outstanding student-oriented education.
- Enhance research culture in the academic field of the arts and to become a larger part of Iceland's research community.
- Expand areas of contact with the community and develop a variety of ways to mediate art and research.
- Bring all activities under one roof by strengthening infrastructure for ideological benefit and a stronger community.

The core activities of all University operations are divided into four categories: learning and teaching, research, relations to society, and management.



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In learning and teaching, we seek to

- provide students with support and shelter to develop as creative artists and individuals capable of critical thinking.
- provide space for the overlap of artistic disciplines and the cross-fertilisation between creativity, skills and theory.
- develop and regularly revise educational programmes and teaching methods.

In research, we seek to

- enhance research in the field of the arts as a basis for knowledge creation and ideological renewal.
- emphasise the research value of creative practice and the artistic approach.
- provide space for a wide range of research where different materials, forms and media are used.

Through relations to society, we seek to

- be a mobilising force, to conduct active collaborations, and to reach out to the community.
- provide space for sensuous knowledge and experimentation.

In management, we seek to

- create an environment that supports a cross-disciplinary learning community.
- promote democratic participation in decision-making processes characterised by active dialogue, respect and flexibility.

All University operations are underpinned by the three core values of curiosity, understanding, and courage. Curiosity breeds questions and a need for seeking new approaches, solutions and answers. We analyse our findings and seek an understanding of the unknown. By understanding, we develop **courage** to follow our convictions and artistic vision.

## 2.4 Institutional Strategic Policy

The current Strategic Policy and Action Plan was issued in January 2019 and is valid through 2023. The policy was developed in close collaboration with staff and students. A steering group was formed at the beginning of the process, representing staff across the entire institution as well as a student representative. The role of the group was to analyse topics emerging in the process with the overall interests of the field of the arts in mind. Departments, support services, committees and councils were assigned the task to shape visions and actions in their areas of expertise, comprising a total of 17 groups. The groups reviewed the previous strategic policy and laid out new goals and actions, which they presented to the steering group as well as to an open staff meeting. In addition, external parties were consulted by invitation to an open meeting at the University, with an emphasis on interactive dialogue and the sharing of ideas with directors of public cultural institutions, alumni and the IUA Stakeholder Association. Based on topics emerging from the consultation process, main focus points and actions were formulated and presented to staff in the form of a survey, where staff had the opportunity to vote on their importance and to make comments.

Goals and actions in each chapter are underpinned by the overall institutional approach to each field of operation:

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### **Learning Culture**

The IUA is a learning community where creative thinking is at the forefront and experimentation is encouraged. The community is characterised by interactive sharing and development of ideas and knowledge. Students develop critical thinking in active conversation and are responsible participants in a multifaceted and cross-disciplinary learning community. Small groups of students create an educational environment where individuals have a strong voice and opportunity to develop their own artistic approach. Overlapping art fields and the connection between creativity, skill, and academics are characteristic of the IUA. Students think, express, and implement their ideas in different media in workshops, studios, and in the field.

### **Research Culture**

Diverse research is conducted at the IUA, using various materials, forms, and media. Methodology of art as a source of knowledge is based on integration of artistic practice, academics, and research. New research methods are developed based on artistic processes. Academic freedom and flexibility in an experimental research environment where varied artistic methods are used in addition to research methods based on tradition and history. Research is a platform for generating knowledge, for creation, and experimental mediation. There is respect for different approaches, topics, and presentations.

### **Social Ethos**

The IUA engages in an open and active dialogue with the present. As an advocate of courage and initiative, the IUA is a dynamic force in society. It displays professional and social responsibility with a constructive and critical view on prevailing values. Tactile knowledge, an experimental environment, and creative space is characteristic of all approach. Respect, tolerance, and equality are the guiding light.

### **Management Ethos**

The IUA is a community characterised by active dialogue, respect, and flexibility, creating an interesting and vibrant working environment. Democratic participation is at the basis of decision making and short communication pathways lead to efficiency.

**Reflection:** *The broad inclusion of academic and support staff in the making of the University policy has had a positive effect on their awareness of the institution as whole, leading to a heightened attention of overall aims, role and strategic vision. The implementation and follow-up of the Strategic Policy is a continuous process, with the Rector, Deans, Director of the University Office and Managing Director at the forefront. Action plans have been produced at all departmental levels (some of which were made before the development of the institutional Strategic Policy), whose implementation and follow-up are in the hands of the Deans and Heads of Department.*

### Supporting Document

2\_4 IUA Strategic Policy and Action Plan 2019–2023

## 2.5 Organisation and Governance

During the academic year 2020–2021 the University undertook major organisational changes with the foundation of three new Schools and a thorough reorganisation of central administration (see Figure 1). The new units are the School of Academic Development (SAD), the School of Architecture, Design and Fine Art (SADFA), and the School of Music and Performing Arts (SMPA). These changes were a direct response to some of the QB suggestions to the 2014 IWR, where concerns were raised that all institutional operations and tasks were related to the Rector, creating excessive workload on that single position and hindering good practice.

The aims of the organisational reform are to distribute and clarify mandates and responsibilities for managers, increase follow-up on the implementation of policies, reinforce control on management and investment, enhance interdisciplinarity and collaboration between units, create space for the artistic development of separate fields of study and, finally, to strengthen support services and overall administration. The implementation of the new organisational chart is still underway.

The organisational reform, both its preparation phase and implementation, has taken place in close collaboration with the Board, the Management Council and the University Office. In addition, status and progress reports were regularly given to the Academic Council and support services and presented at general staff meetings. The Rector followed up on developing ideas by participating in departmental meetings and support services meetings, where an interactive dialogue was ongoing. This vast consultation process enabled many constructive suggestions and ideas to enter into the decision-making process. As the implementation process is still ongoing, further consultation with staff is foreseen, as it will form the basis for successful reform (see further discussion in Chapter 9.2).

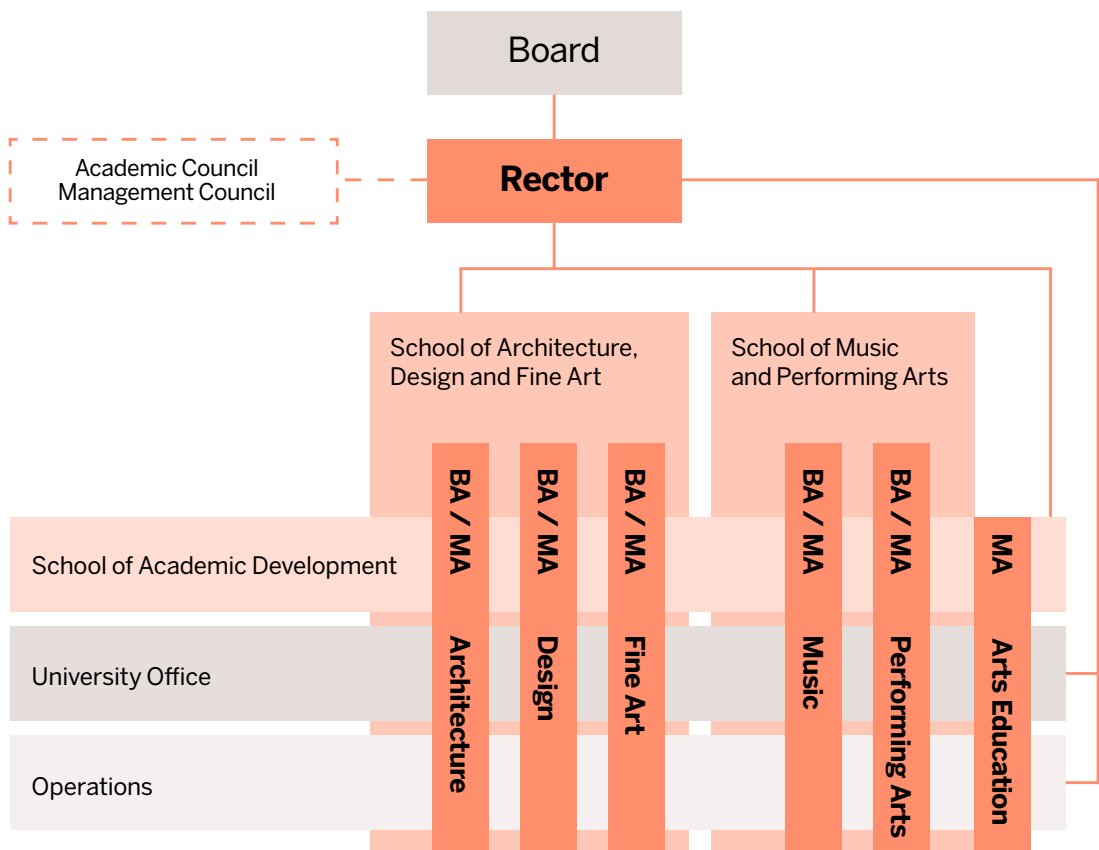


Figure 1: Organisational chart, valid from 2021.

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The reorganisation of the support services has seen the establishment of a new University Office, which merges many small units under one umbrella, and a revised unit of Managerial Operations.

**Schools and Departments.** The management of each school is in the hands of the Dean. A School Council operates as a consultation and information-sharing platform within each respective school. Each School operates as a platform for the implementation of decisions, policies and other operational matters at the institutional level. The management within each department is in the hands of the Head of Department. Among the three Schools, the SAD has additional responsibilities, working towards the development of interdisciplinary studies at the MA level and overseeing the development PhD studies.

The University Office falls under the supervision of the Rector and provides support for academic operations. Among the roles of the University Office is the creation of the necessary conditions that enable departmental and support staff to work in accordance with the University charter, regulations and procedures. The following units belong to the University Office: Student Services, Student Counselling, Human Resources, Quality Assurance, PR and Communications, Record Management, International Office, the Open IUA, and Research Services.

**Managerial Operations** falls under the supervision of the Rector and oversees the overall management of the University, finances, facilities, library and information services and IT services.

***Reflection:** As expected, the organisational reform has had a snowball effect on the role of managers across the institution. This is particularly apparent in the roles of Deans at the School level, Heads of Department, Programme Directors, and support staff as well as all academic staff. The Dean of SAD only came into office in February 2021, and it is foreseen that the development of that School in relation to other administrative bodies will extend into 2021–2022, where the main focus is on the development of academic procedures and all facilities, including the workshops and labs. Consequently, all regulatory framework and working procedures will be updated accordingly. Fine tuning of the changes is still underway, and implementation is expected to last until the end of the calendar year at least. The aim of the organisational reform is to create a coherent infrastructure for all academic development across the institution as a whole; this will increase opportunities to work across the different programmes and departments, particularly at the master’s level, as well as to create a stronger hub for research, innovation and creative practice in the workshops (video, photography, printing, textile, ceramics, 3D printing, woodwork, metalwork, recording studios and so forth).*

#### Supporting Documents

2\_2 IUA Charter

2\_3 IUA Rules 2020–2021

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## 2.6 Management Structure

**The Board** is the highest decision-making authority within the institution and supervises all issues that concern the University as a whole. The board serves as a custodian of the University's role and ensures that its operations serve set goals and objectives. The Board appoints the University's Rector. The Board is responsible for the University's operations, finances and assets; determines tuition fees; and confirms regulations concerning the University's principal working procedures, including staff appointments. The Board calls an open annual meeting to present the University's finances and principal aspects of the operational plan. The University Board consists of five members elected for a term of three years at a time. None of the members can be employed by the University at the time or be a student. The Minister of Education, Science and Culture appoints two members, while three additional members are elected at the general meeting of the IUA Stakeholder Association (Bakland Listaháskóla Íslands). The Board elects a chair and a deputy chair and determines a code of practice, which is published on the University website.

**The Rector** oversees the University management and administration as an agent of the University Board, formulating a comprehensive policy regarding the University's operations. The Rector is responsible for the implementation of policy and ensuring that the organisation of the University's activities is consistent with its role, aims and quality requirements. The Rector and the Board supervise the University administration, teaching, artistic practices, research, quality control, services and other operations, in accordance with the Higher Education Act No. 63/2006. The Rector is responsible for hiring members of faculty and principal management officers in consultation with the Board. The Rector chairs meetings of the MC and the AC. The Rector is the University's chief external spokesperson.

**Deans** work towards cross-disciplinary aims of the University alongside the Rector. They lead operations within their School and manage its budgetary resources. Deans ensure that their School carries out its academic responsibilities in relation to research and teaching, and that the University strategic policy is implemented and executed within the School. Deans chair the respective School Council, sit on the Management Council and Academic Council, and collaborate with and consult other committees and councils when needed. In addition, the Dean of the School of Academic Development is in a leading role for the development of teaching and research. The Dean leads the development of all study programmes at the master's level and works toward coordinating interdisciplinarity.

**Heads of Department** are responsible for the artistic and academic development within each subject area and their implementation into learning, teaching and research. Heads of Department manage all academic staff in each department. Heads of Department are responsible for the management of student matters and have decision-making authority within their department on issues concerning educational records and progress of students. Heads of Department sit on the respective School Council, the Academic Council and other committees as needed. They supervise departmental meetings, departmental council meetings and programme directors' meetings.

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**Programme Directors** supervise a specific subject area and lead a key role in enhancing creative and professional environment in the respective study programme. They communicate with students, participate in the development of a vision and policy of a study programme under the supervision of Heads of Department, and contribute to curriculum development, timetable organisation, admissions, examination, cross-disciplinary collaboration and international networking and cooperation. Programme Directors communicate with part-time lecturers on issues related to course descriptions, course assessment, course structure and student progression. Furthermore, Programme Directors are responsible for the promotion of study programmes, including academic content, exhibitions and events.

**The Managing Director** works alongside the Rector, supervising the University's finances and assets in consultation with the Rector and the Board. The managing director sits on the Management Council.

**The Director of the University Office** supervises all units belonging to the office. The Director is responsible for the implementation and follow-up of the institutional policy in the UO administrative units, and reports to the Rector.

## 2.7 Key Committees and Councils: Remit, Appointment and Roles

**The Management Council** is the main decision-making platform within the University. It discusses shared issues across the University, from quality management and academic organisation to managerial issues and facilities. The MC prepares outlines for policy proposals and supports the Rector in daily administration. The MC consists of the Rector, deans, the managing director, and the director of the University Office. Others may participate in the Council's meetings as needed. The Rector chairs the meetings. The MC meets twice a month.

**The Academic Council** has decision-making power on academic matters, and discusses academic aims of the University, its performance and quality enhancement. The AC has a preeminent role for leading staff in teaching, research and academic development. The Teaching Committee and the Research Committee fall under AC supervision. The AC consists of the Rector, Deans and Heads of Department, as well as the Project Manager of Teaching on behalf of the Teaching Committee, the Project Manager of Research on behalf of the Research Committee, and the Chair of the Student Council. The AC meets once a month on average.

**School Councils** support Deans in their academic operations and tasks, particularly the Deans of SADFA and SMPA. The School Council for SAD has a different role since it covers the master's programmes across the University, and it is foreseen to develop further in Autumn 2022. School Councils consist of the respective Dean, Heads of Department, a representative of academic staff, representative of part-time lecturers and a student representative. The School Council nominates representatives to the Teaching Committee and the Research Committee. Others may participate in Council meetings as needed. School Councils are chaired by Deans. Meetings are held once a month.

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**Departmental Councils** operate as a consultation and information-sharing platform within each department, supporting Heads of Department in their academic operations and tasks. In addition to Heads of Department, Departmental Councils consist of permanent academic staff, a representative of part-time lecturers and a student representative. Others may participate in meetings as needed. Heads of Department chair the Council, and meetings are held once a semester.

**Departmental Meetings.** Each department holds regular meetings where permanent academic staff discuss departmental tasks and policy-making. Heads of Department call the meetings and invite appropriate attendees as needed.

**The Student Council** is a consultative platform for all the departmental student associations within the University and serves as a liaison between them and the University management. The SC consists of the chairs of each departmental student association. The SC nominates student representatives to committees and councils at the institutional level.

**Reflection:** *Changes made to the AC since 2014 reflect its role and remit, where it has transitioned from being a platform for discussion to a platform for decision-making on academic matters. Consequently, the distinction between the AC and MC has been reinforced in that the AC decides on academic issues and the MC decides on daily operations, management and budgeting. Restrictions due to the pandemic have significantly slowed down the process of this organisational transition.*

#### Supporting Documents

2\_3 IUA Rules 2020–2021

2\_5 Student Council Statues



## 2.8 Finances and Facilities

### **Budgeting and Finances**

The University is a self-governing institution operating on a contract with the MESC. It has three revenue streams: government funding, tuition fees and various other service fees. In the last five years (2016–2020), government funding has, on average, accounted for 79.8% of the University’s total revenue. Tuition fees have accounted for 17.6% and other service fees for 2.6% (see Figure 2). There is little year-over-year change in the revenue composition, although other service fees have been on a relative decline since 2014. Tuition fees are determined by the University Board each fall for the following academic year. In recent years, the fees have increased based on Statistics Iceland’s rolling 12-month Consumer Price Index. For the academic year of 2021–2022, the annual tuition fees vary from 597,000 ISK (BA students) to 922,000 ISK (international MA students).

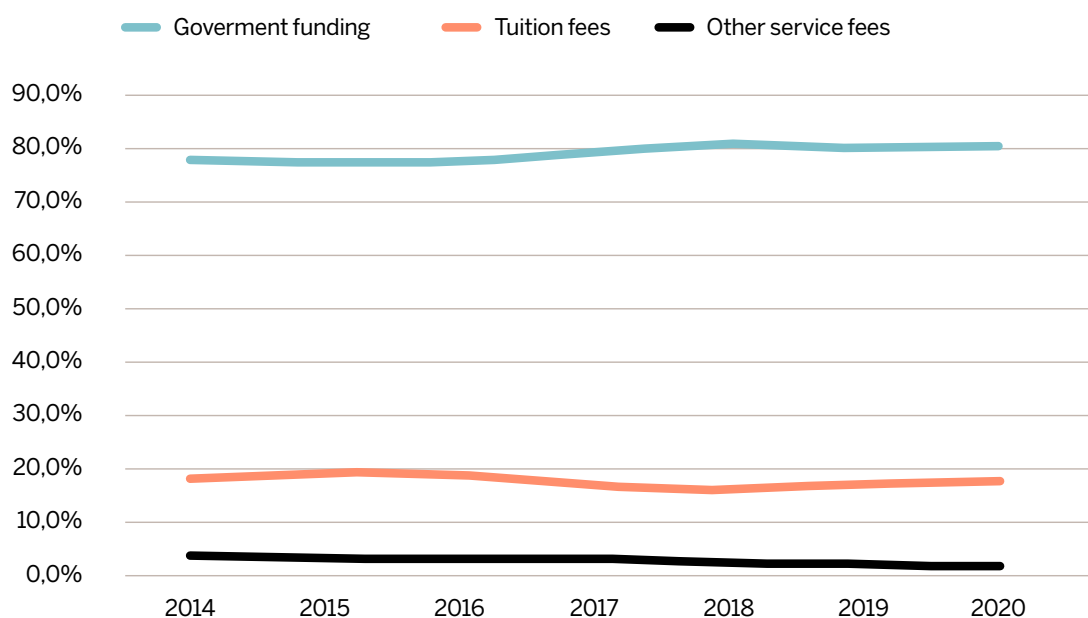


Figure 2: Revenue composition (proportional), 2014 to 2020.

Governmental funding is based on a service contract between the University and the MESC, signed in 2012. The contract expired at the end of 2016 and has been extended on a year-to-year basis. A total revision of the contract commenced in early 2021 with the aim of a new contract by June 2021. The current contract (extension) allows for 385 to 600 full-time student equivalents. As of Spring term 2021, the University has about 540 full-time student equivalents. With the new master’s programme in architecture in Autumn 2021 and a potential new film department in 2021 or 2022, the upper limit of 600 students will be reached. Therefore, extending the number of students in the service contract is currently the most important negotiation objective.

The government funding is based on formulas that are now considered to be outdated. With that in mind, the Ministry initiated a total review of the funding model. A steering committee will submit recommendations to the Ministry in the spring of 2021. The University expects this review process and subsequent changes to the funding model to strengthen the financial position of the University. The new policy



of the Science and Technology Policy Council (2020–2022) aims at enhancing the quality and efficiency of the higher education sector by increasing funding to HEIs to reach the OECD average by 2020 and the Nordic average by 2025.

Annual capital and operational budgets are approved by the University Board. The budget process is led by the Managing Director and Chief Financial Officer, in collaboration with the Rector, Heads of Department, Deans, and other lead managers. An upcoming initiative is to build a funding allocation model to be used for the internal allocation of funds, making the budgeting process more transparent and predictable. The model will take into consideration spatial requirements, type of teaching, number of graduations and other factors. The objective is to complete this process in Autumn 2022.

Payments from the government generally come in 12 monthly and equal instalments throughout the year. Tuition fees, on the other hand, are collected twice a year. This regularity means that cash flows are rather predictable and the University can deal with negative cash positions in a proactive manner, either through advance government payments or credit lines. After a healthy profit in the year 2020, cash flow has improved significantly.

Since 2014 only two of the University’s operating years yielded a profit (see Figure 3), of which one (2017) was due to an extra payment from the government that was intended to rectify a negative cash position. The negative financial results can be traced to three root causes. The first is the University’s relatively small size, which allows for a minimal economy of scale. Future growth and collaboration with other partners (i.e., sharing facilities) can partly mitigate this issue over time. The second cause is the highly individualised, expensive teaching and small group sizes that arts education calls for. The only way to mitigate this is to secure proper funding. The third cause is lack of financial monitoring and due diligence in major financial decisions. The University leadership have taken several actions intended to rectify this issue. Examples includes hiring a Chief Financial Officer, holding monthly financial reporting sessions with lead managers, and introducing a capital planning process in conjunction with the operational planning process.

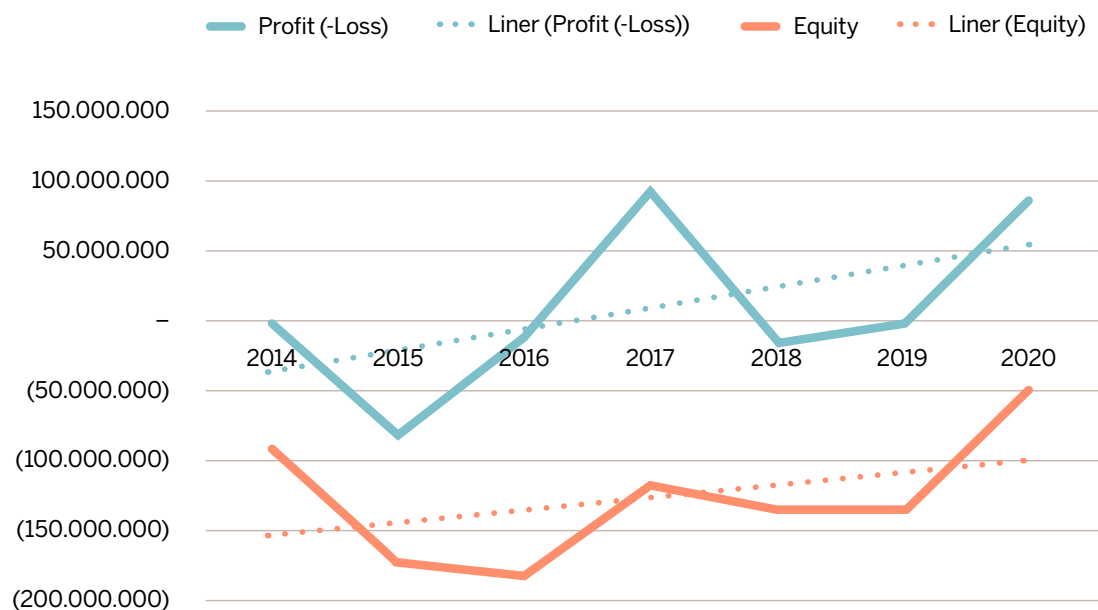


Figure 3: Financial performance (profit/loss) and equity position, 2014 to 2020.

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During this time, performance has improved and profits in 2017 and 2020 have decreased a negative equity that can be traced to financial losses in previous years. This negative equity has had negative impacts on the University's position with its lenders and the government. A high-level budget for 2021 to 2024, passed by the University Board, calls for continued financial improvements that will lead to a positive equity by the end of 2024. Positive performance in 2020 can possibly expediate this by one or two years.

### **Facilities**

University activities take place across three main buildings and two smaller spaces, all located within the boundaries of the City of Reykjavik (see Figure 4). The spread-out operations have negative effects on academic activities, support functions and finances. For instance, this can prevent interdisciplinary solutions in teaching, and several support positions are duplicated unnecessarily across buildings. On the other hand, the multiple buildings did lessen the negative effects of the ongoing pandemic, as groups could more easily be separated into zones. None of the University buildings are designed for the purposes of arts education. Examples of shortcomings are lack of sound proofing, inadequate lighting, impractical ceiling heights and room dimensions, lack of public access and poor internal planning. This has led to costly mitigation efforts and ongoing dissatisfaction among teaching staff and students. However, there has been a major leap forward since 2014, when the DM and DPA were located in the Sölvhólgata campus that did not meet basic health and safety requirements. Both departments have since been relocated. Students have emphasised the importance of accessibility when it comes to facilities, workshops and tech labs at all times.

The current University buildings are all considered to be temporary solutions until a new campus has been built. In 2017, the Minister established a steering committee to restart the process of developing plans for a permanent building for the University under the supervision of the Government Construction Contracting Agency. A needs analysis and a preliminary feasibility report were completed in 2020, concluding that a new building on a site within the Vatnsmýri university and science campus is the most feasible option. However, the Ministry of Finance has recently requested a feasibility study of the option of refurbishing one or more older buildings in or around the Reykjavík city centre to meet the University requirements. The University Board has concluded that the decision can no longer be postponed. Therefore, the Board is willing to develop the building privately or as a public-private partnership, given that necessary funding is secured (see further discussion in Chapter 9.4).

Long-term rental contracts are in place for all buildings, although there is some uncertainty regarding the contract for the Austurstræti 22a studios. The total floorspace is 13,672 m<sup>2</sup>, or 19.5 m<sup>2</sup> on average for each student and permanent employee. Table 3 summarizes the size, functions and rental status of each building.

<b>Location</b>	<b>Size (m<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Functions (uses)</b>	<b>End of lease</b>	<b>Landlord</b>
Pverholt 11	4,127	Dept. of Architecture Dept. of Design University Office Workshops, tech labs and studios	July 2024	Private
Laugarnesvegur 91	6,881	Dept. of Performing Arts Dept. of Fine Art Dept. of Arts Education Workshops, tech labs and studios	Ongoing lease, 6 months' notice	Public
Skipholt 31	1,874	Dept. of Music Studios	April 2027	Private
Austurstræti 22a	664	Studios	Unclear	Private
Völvufell	132	Studio	Ongoing lease, 1 month notice	Private
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,672</b>			

*Table 3: Sizes, functions and rental statuses of all University buildings.*

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# 3 Previous Quality Reviews and Follow-Up

The University has gone through one external institution-wide review and numerous internal subject-level reviews since the introduction of a national Quality Enhancement Framework in Iceland in 2007. Both types of reviews have had a significant impact on the institution, especially in enhancing awareness and understanding of quality management and quality enhancement among students and staff. This section illustrates institutional learning from the IWR in 2014 and SLRs during 2018–2020, with a focus on how the University has responded to those learnings and how they feed into institutional enhancement.

## 3.1 Quality Board–Led Institution-Wide Review and Follow-up

The University received a judgement of confidence in both areas of assessment in the 2014 institution-wide review: a) in its arrangements to secure the academic standards of its awards, and b) in its arrangements to secure the quality of the student learning experience.

Since the last IWR, the University has been developing its internal quality system with an emphasis on formalisation and enhancement. Main stepping stones include: i) the formalisation of working procedures and regulatory administration, resulting in heightened transparency and accountability; ii) a higher level of student engagement and participation in decision-making, committee work and policy development; and iii) the development of a formal and all-inclusive quality management system. The review process has generated numerous guiding points on how the University could further enhance its working methods, organisational structure and general operations. Among these, the most significant were the formalisation of internal working procedures, heightened transparency and accountability, and a higher level of student participation in decision-making platforms. Furthermore, the review led to the development of a formal quality management system and a formal Quality Policy which is continuously being developed and implemented (see supporting document below and further discussion in Chapter 4.2).

The University has welcomed the helpful suggestions from the QB in their Review Report following the review visit in 2014. The University articulated its follow-up strategy in the Follow-up Report in 2016 and the Mid-Term Progress Report in 2019. The QB suggested areas for improvement in 11 points, all of which have contributed to the University policy development and quality enhancement, and some of which are still in progress. The table below lists each QB suggestion, the University response in previous follow-up reports and the current status.

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**Suggestion 1**    **“The need to promote and market the institution more effectively in order to heighten the University’s profile in Iceland and abroad.”**

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**Response  
in Mid-Term  
Progress  
Report 2019**

“A new policy on communications and marketing was implemented in autumn 2016, and with that the hiring of a Director of Communication. Each department is now staffed with a project manager, responsible for internal and external communications and mediation of departmental operations. Currently this position is under revision. IUA’s new strategy emphasises ways of contact with the community and its responsibilities with regard to mediation of art practice and artistic research to the local society. Focus is placed on local as well as international collaborations, on developments in art education on all educational levels, on the Open IUA Programme of workshops and courses that pander to different groups of society, on presenting works and research of both students and staff extensively to the public and encouraging academic staff and IUA specialists to engage in public discourse on matters of art, design and architecture. Departments have increasingly sought ways of collaboration with companies and institutions, formed strategies and action plans as means of enhancement. The communication strategy and emphasis in the past two years has been to promote all the graduation events from different departments as one consecutive whole, a regular Spring Festival of the IUA. This approach has already proven effective, with an overall attendance of 30.000 people in various events and performances last spring.”

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**Current  
status**

The current Strategic Policy 2019–2023 emphasises institutional profiling in its section on relations to society, e.g., by enhancing domestic as well as international collaboration, reinforcing collaboration with educational institutions at all study levels as well as public cultural institutions, and by strengthening the Open IUA as a means to reach out to the general public.

Parallel to recent organisational changes, actions are underway to centralise the team of departmental project managers under the supervision of the Dir. of PR and Communications. The team will emphasise information flow, the production and dissemination of promotional material and public events, etc. Furthermore, this is foreseen to coordinate the level of service between departments when it comes to external visibility.

The new International Policy stresses more systematic networking with other art universities abroad with a clear vision on international collaboration and research collaboration.

Hugarflug, the University’s annual research conference, has been enhanced as a platform for dissemination and outreach.

Workshops and training in digital dissemination have been introduced to staff through video tutorials, both a) at the level of lecturing (for academic staff), and b) as technical training and assistance (for support staff). Technical equipment has been increased as a consequence of increased digitalisation.

The foundation of the new SAD is foreseen to enable a clearer definition of target groups, particularly for the promotion of international study programmes.

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**Suggestion 2** “The need to define more clearly the institution’s interdisciplinary mission.”

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**Response in Mid-Term Progress Report 2019** “Cross-disciplinary approach to teaching and learning is defined, as before, as one of the key factors in IUA’s new strategy plan for 2019–2023. The University’s housing situation continues to present a challenge, but the long history of housing crisis has also provided academic staff and directors with an experience of resourceful approach in developing shorter courses available to students between departments, as well as accommodating individual students in their independent cross-disciplinary projects. The IUA participation in local and international collaborative projects has increased considerably in recent years. Enhancement of research infrastructure and organisation provides further support for the cross-disciplinary synergy to take place. Interdisciplinary cross-fertilisation is at the forefront of several new study paths in development, such as in opera studies and in music education specialisation, in a writing programme for the stage, in curatorial studies, and possibilities brought on by plans for a new Department of Film in autumn 2020. Plans for a joint cross-disciplinary MA programme continues to be a long-term aim.”

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**Current status** The new SAD will oversee continuing development and planning of interdisciplinarity.

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**Suggestion 3** “The need to reconsider the membership of the University Board and to strengthen its capacity to support the institution’s activities.”

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**Response in Mid-Term Progress Report 2019** “This issue had already been addressed in the Year-On Report, with the revision of procedures for appointment of the University Board and the emergence of a new stakeholder association ‘Bakland Listaháskóla Íslands,’ that places public call for a board candidacy with the aim of ensuring participation from all fields of the arts and the business sector. The board consists of five members. Three [board] members are voted directly by members of the association and two are nominated by the Minister of Education.”

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**Current status** The University Board consists of individuals with diverse educational and professional backgrounds. The stakeholder association (Bakland Listaháskóla Íslands) aims at appointing Board members who are able to support the University lead management in all their main operations due to their knowledge and experience. Board members are also meant to function as independent externals who are able to engage in professional discourse on whatever issues might come to the Board’s table. Those Board members who are appointed by the MESC are not employed by the ministry but come from the industry sector with valuable experience to contribute to the University.

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**Suggestion 4** “The need to further clarify the management structure, together with the remits and decision-making powers of various key committees.”

**Response  
in Mid-Term  
Progress  
Report 2019**

“The renewed Academic Council and its subcommittees have been operated since 2014–2015. The AC acts as a consulting agent in academic matters but also develops its own agenda for each appointment period (two years) and can commission specific tasks to its subcommittees (teaching and research) reporting to the AC at least once a semester, otherwise working independently with the project manager for pedagogical practices on one hand and Dir. of QTR, research services, on the other. The AC mandate particularly regards academic issues of teaching and research, development and quality thereof, whereas the Management Council, chaired by the rector, focuses on managerial decisions, academic matters, institutional strategy and policy making, then approved by the University Board. The division between the two councils is clear, with the communication line maintained by the presence of the rector and a dean in both of them.”

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**Current status** See further information on the current status of the management structure in Chapters 2.5–2.7.

**Suggestion 5** “Ensuring that there are departmental strategies, in line with the overall institutional planning.”

**Response  
in Mid-Term  
Progress  
Report 2019**

“The process of developing the new institutional strategy plan was led by a steering group nominated by the management council, overseen by the rector. Prioritisation of actions is made by the MC and each dean is responsible for its synchronisation with departmental strategies. Departmental action plans and follow-ups of QEF1 with new strategic action plans have now been developed by two departments that underwent the process of Subject Level Review of QEF2 in 2018.”

---

**Current status** All departments have now concluded their SLRs within QEF2, each delivering a five-year action plan.

In the 2015 revision of the framework on academic positions, an emphasis was placed on the role of Heads of Department in shaping departmental strategies in accordance with the institutional strategic policy.

Among the roles of the new Deans is to ensure that departmental strategies are in line with the institutional strategic policy, and to oversee the follow-up on departmental action plans.

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**Suggestion 6** “The need for a realistic timetable and for the prioritisation of the target areas in the institutional action plan, in order to balance the workload of key staff.”

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**Response  
in Mid-Term  
Progress  
Report 2019**

“The framework implemented in 2015/16 for support staff and for academic staff focused on teamwork and systematic support for staff development and training, administrative tools for project management and a clearer definition of responsibilities. Although these procedures have been beneficial to a certain degree, they have not been entirely successful with regard to reducing the workload of key staff. Perhaps this can be traced to the fact that while the IUA has had a 39% increase in academic staff, the increase in administrative staff is only 6% [...]. Enhancement of communication and collaborative teamwork of administrative and academic staff is an ongoing process that entails a more realistic approach to goal setting, prioritisation and long-time institutional and departmental planning, as well as staffing.”

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**Current status**

New sub-policies are accompanied by timed action plans under the responsibility of the appropriate manager. This working procedure is still being implemented and needs to be further enhanced across the institution.

A new working procedure is underway in relation to the foundation of the new School Councils, which will become platforms for regular monitoring of action plans.

The aim of the recent organisational changes is to reduce workload in the long run, whereas Deans will support management at the departmental level, thereby decreasing workload on Heads of Department.

Clarifying the role of managers and key staff has been a central issue in the implementation of organisational changes.

The aim with the restructuring of key managerial units into the University Office and Managerial Operations is to enable a clear overview of tasks and their follow-up. The current pandemic has been a challenge in this regard, but these aims are intended to be met once Covid is more manageable.

A new Chief Financial Officer was recruited in 2016, taking on some of the responsibilities of the Managing Director.

These organisational changes have enabled the Rector to concentrate on external issues.

In the 2015 revision of the framework on academic positions, an emphasis was placed on the role of Heads of Department in shaping departmental strategies in accordance with the institutional strategic policy.

Among the roles of the new Dean of Academic Development is to ensure that departmental strategies are in line with the institutional strategic policy, and to oversee the follow-up on departmental action plans.



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**Suggestion 7** “The need to develop a systematic outreach and community policy, involving the whole country.”

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**Response in Mid-Term Progress Report 2019** “Referred to the new IUA strategy for 2019–2023, with a special chapter on community outreach and engagement with society. See also response to suggestion #1, above.”

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**Current status** Negotiations with the University of Akureyri (UNAK) are underway with provisions for collaboration, where UNAK would serve as a branch for collaboration with local cultural institutions in northern Iceland.

The Open IUA has made an effort to reach out to the general public, including in rural areas around the country. Study trips to the countryside are now being used strategically to create local networks and awareness on the University and its activities, with the Director of PR and Communications accompanying students and staff.

Digitalisation, streaming of public events and the increased use of social media during the pandemic have created further opportunities for outreach.

Through the work of the Equality Policy and Equality Committee, a clearer vision on inclusion and access has been developed. This includes enhanced access for the disabled and more heterogeneous promotional material.

See further discussion on relations to society in Chapter 4.13.

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**Suggestion 8** “The need to develop a systematic staff development and training regime for all staff, including support staff.”

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**Response in Mid-Term Progress Report 2019** “A new human resources policy was implemented in spring 2016. The division of Quality, Teaching and Research has set up a platform for academic staff training and development in regard to pedagogy and research training. Further enhancement of this system of support is in development.”

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**Current status** The Division of QTR was abolished in 2020, with all quality-related issues transferred to the responsibility of the University Office.

The human resources policy was revised in 2020 along with an action plan and sub-policies, covering both academic as well as support staff (further detail in Chapter 7.1).

Support for teachers on the delivery of teaching and teaching methods has been reinforced by increasing the role of Project Manager of the quality of teaching.

A “preparation day” is held annually at the beginning of each academic year with emphasis on support for teaching. All staff and part-time lecturers are invited to participate.

A course on research and research training is now offered to academic staff.

A course on pedagogy is now being developed and will be offered to academic staff in Autumn 2021.

Staff development is encouraged through international collaborations and staff mobility programmes.

Numerous internal funds have been established to enhance staff development: the IUA Research Fund, the IUA Publication Fund and the IUA Staff Development Fund for Academic Staff. Additionally, the existing IUA Staff Development Fund for Academic Staff has been revised.

Research support has been increased with the foundation of the SAD and the recruitment of a new project manager at the University Office.

Provisions for the development of a new Centre for Teaching and Research are in its beginning stages, to be developed within the SAD.

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**Suggestion 9** “The context of reviewing the staffing structure, the need to recognise the important role of the large number of part-time staff, and to ensure a framework for their integration, development, and reward.”

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**Response in Mid-Term Progress Report 2019** “Integration of part-time teachers was addressed systematically in 2016–2017 (e.g., with project managers in all departments, supplying support to part-time teachers alongside the programme directors). Practical guidance has been enhanced and the importance of part-time staff in departmental activities is more clearly recognised.”

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**Current status** During the current organisational reform, the Deans have lifted some workload off of Heads of Department and, in turn, Heads of Department have lifted some workload off of Programme Directors. This new managerial vision is foreseen to put less pressure on academic faculty, which will reduce the need for part-time lecturers and is likely to increase the quality of teaching once the pandemic is over. This will be further developed with the three new Deans.

Part-time lecturers are invited to the preparation day for teachers at the beginning of each academic year.

Part-time teachers are invited to selected departmental meetings. Information meetings for part-time teachers about teaching at the University are held in all departments at the beginning of each academic year.

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**Suggestion 10** “Enhancing career and professional preparation for all students.”

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**Response in Mid-Term Progress Report 2019** “Currently the student counselling is overseen by the Director of Student Affairs. Plans for a special programme of career counselling have been abandoned but courses dealing directly with the professional environment of artists are now run in all departments. All departments interact closely with their respective professional field in Iceland and programme directors endeavour to systematically involve their students in various projects, providing direct contact with their future field of profession. There is a clear need to further enhance and support the University’s students services by a position of a special student counsellor.”

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**Current status** The student and career counselling services have been substantially enhanced, with the recruitment of a counsellor in 20% position.

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**Suggestion 11** “The need to further review institutional policies on appeals and grievances, and to formulate policies on bullying and harassment.”

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**Response in Mid-Term Progress Report 2019** “Guidelines for procedures in matters of sexual assault, harassment, and bullying have been reviewed across the University as a whole in reaction to the #metoo movement in autumn 2017. The IUA has an Equal Rights Council that addresses, and processes cases that come up, and the new institutional strategy entails a revised code of conduct.”

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**Current status** See further discussion in Chapters 6.4–6.5.

***Reflection:** Suggestions for improvement and reform have in all cases been beneficial to the University. However, there have been challenges that have been difficult to overcome, particularly with regard to the cost of improvements, which often require additional staff or increased workload. This has been dealt with by creating teams around particular tasks, such as public relations and recruitment processes, as well as bigger developmental processes, such as internationalisation, diversity, digitalisation and equality. Nevertheless, the University continues to be underfunded, especially with regard to increased responsibilities in quality management.*

#### Supporting Documents

- 3\_6 Follow-up Report (2016)
- 3\_7 Mid-Term Progress Report (2019)
- 3\_8 QB Review Report for IWR in QEF1 (2015)
- 3\_9 Quality Management System and Quality Policy

### **3.2 University-Led Subject-Level Reviews and Follow-up**

As part of the QEF2 framework, all five departments underwent a University-led review at the subject level between 2018 and 2020. Following the main learnings from SLRs within the QEF1 framework, the University leadership was able to build on reflections and action plans emerging from that first cycle. For each SLR the Rector appoints a self-evaluation committee consisting of the relevant Head of Department, members of academic staff, student members and one external member from an international arts university. The Quality Manager works closely with the self-evaluation committee, providing institutional support and institutional guidelines on the process. Each SLR report describes the departmental profile, organisational structure, descriptions of study programmes, departmental approach to learning and teaching, the student trajectory, composition and size of academic faculty and support staff, departmental approach to research, as well as facilities and financial recourses. Each report includes an action plan for the following five years, emerging from the self-evaluation process.

The University stresses self-reflection and transparency throughout the review process. The SLRs have provided each department with a welcomed opportunity to analyse in-depth their own actions, operations and general work ethos, and to identify their strengths and enhancement needs. A strong sense of ownership through active staff and student participation has been a characteristic of SLRs that the University takes pride in. The table below shows main points of departmental learning from SLRs, the time of review and the current status check. More detailed information is found in supporting documents below.

<b>Department of Fine Art (September 2018)</b>	<b>Status</b>
Simplify the course structure to reach a healthy level of workload for students and faculty.	Ongoing
Work towards the implementation of the pass/fail assessment system.	Completed
Establish a study line in curatorial practice within the MA programme.	Completed
Develop the framework for teaching assistance on MA and BA levels.	Completed
Strengthen staff research and the relationship between research and teaching by a) establishing a fine art research centre for faculty members and b) creating an opportunity for a collective publication of staff research.	Ongoing
Establish a biannual cross-disciplinary fine art research symposium.	Abolished
Improve the flow of information of curriculum and electives in order to make students more responsible for their studies.	Ongoing
Involve staff from central administration with regard to internal quality management, student support and public relations.	Ongoing
Implement the IUA Environmental Policy with regard to reducing departmental ecological impact.	Ongoing
Improve the website to communicate and archive departmental activity.	Ongoing
Strengthen relations with alumni.	Ongoing

<b>Department of Music (December 2018)</b>	<b>Status</b>
Holistic restructuring of study programmes.	Ongoing
Improve and promote the instrumental performance study programmes.	Postponed
Strengthen collaboration between study programmes, other departments and external institutions.	Ongoing
Develop new study programmes with specialisation at the undergraduate level.	Postponed
Integrate part-time lecturers into the study environment and the departmental learning culture.	Ongoing
Emphasise the departmental research policy and create an incentive for faculty to conduct research.	Completed
Emphasise diversity and inclusion at every level.	Ongoing

<b>Department of Arts Education (October 2019)</b>	<b>Status</b>
Evaluate the demands for a one-year preliminary study programme.	Completed
Extend the time period of field studies.	Completed
Assess the need for a two-track MA study programme for teachers.	Ongoing
Develop online education and distance learning.	Ongoing
Contribute to the development of a teacher training course for academic staff.	Ongoing
Contribute to the development of continuous education at the Open IUA.	Completed
Enhance research profiles of academic staff.	Not started
Apply for external research grants.	Ongoing
Increase research time for staff.	Not started
Instigate action research on teaching methods.	Ongoing
Integrate part-time teachers into the departmental working culture.	Ongoing
Reduce quantity of small elective courses.	Ongoing

<b>Department of Performing Arts (December 2019)</b>	<b>Status</b>
Create a learning culture, including a curriculum, that fosters inclusivity, diversity and equality.	Ongoing
Address the current global and local environmental challenge.	Not started
Encourage artistic research in the field of performing arts in Iceland.	Not started
Support teaching strategies that enhance ethical working methods within the professional field of the performing arts.	Ongoing
Strengthen the community of teachers at the departmental level.	Ongoing
Strengthen relations to the professional field and the local community.	Ongoing
Strengthen international relations.	Ongoing
Strengthen cross-departmental collaborations within the University.	Ongoing

<b>Department of Design and Architecture (September 2020)</b>	<b>Status</b>
Define a vision, mission and key actions for each of the two new departments.	Ongoing
Celebrate good teaching and promote professional training, staff development and continuous education for faculty members.	Ongoing
Support interdisciplinary collaboration at the departmental level and with external partners.	Ongoing
Support continuing development of existing study programmes and develop new ones. Establish an MA programme in Architecture.	Ongoing/ Completed
Revise the departmental research policy.	Ongoing
Support research activities, such as by encouraging academic staff to use University facilities in their research (workshops, tech labs, etc.).	Ongoing
Provide research methodology workshops for academic staff.	Ongoing
Plan research time.	Ongoing
Further integrate research and teaching.	Ongoing
Disseminate research and project activity. Provide platforms to share findings.	Ongoing
Create a more stable employee environment, especially to meet challenges following employees on leave.	Ongoing
Improve induction and support for part-time lectures. Create framework agreement for part-time lecturers where roles and responsibilities are well defined.	Ongoing
Establish an archive of artistic output accessible to public.	Ongoing
Define the process of collaborative work and define thoroughly what type of collaborative projects the University participates in, and how it benefits the University and its students.	Not started

Heads of Department are responsible for the implementation of departmental action plans, while Deans oversee their follow-up by providing institutional support and regular monitoring. The coordination between Heads of Department and Deans in relation to action plans takes place in regular School Council meetings. In addition to the points of action arising from the SLRs that have fed into departmental action plans, numerous issues have also emerged for institutional learning.

**Reflection:** *The University seeks to detect these outcomes and ensure their embeddedness within overall institutional planning. Through teamwork with the Deans, the Quality Manager is responsible for detecting points of institutional learning emerging from departments and ensuring their follow-up at the institutional level. A systematic follow-up on SLRs is currently being formalised through the current organisational reform, where sharing between departments will take place on a regular basis and learning is transferred within the institution and between schools, departments, programmes and central administration.*

#### Supporting Documents

- 3\_1 DAE SER and Action Plan
- 3\_2 DDA SER and Action Plan
- 3\_3 DFA SER and Action Plan
- 3\_4 DM SER and Action Plan
- 3\_5 DPA SER and Action Plan

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# 4 Safeguarding Standards of Degrees Awarded

The first half of this chapter outlines the University's approach to quality management, including the design, approval and regular review of programmes, the monitoring of the quality of teaching, information management and external benchmarking. The latter half outlines the institutional approach to student-centred learning, the use of learning outcomes, assessment and international perspectives. The chapter ends by describing overarching elements in the University's approach to learning and teaching, such as internationalisation, digitalisation, interdisciplinarity and relations to society, including the Open IUA.

## 4.1 External Benchmarking

The University operates in a global environment and measures itself against art universities that excel in arts education in neighbouring countries. The University benchmarks itself against other art universities in Europe, especially in the Nordic region (Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland) by participating in Nordic and Nordic–Baltic networks at the subject level, as well as being a member of ELIA and the annual Nordic Rectors of Art Universities Forum. Benchmarking is made primarily against other higher arts education institutions similar in size, composition of study programmes and structure, such as Stockholm University of the Arts and UniArts in Helsinki.

## 4.2 Institutional Approach to Quality Management

Quality management is enhancement-led, open and transparent, where collaboration between schools, departments and support services is ensured through active engagement of staff and students. The University quality system encompasses all institutional practice, including learning and teaching, research, administration and relations to external stakeholders, and it is based on three main pillars: the IUA Strategic Policy 2017–2023, Quality Enhancement Framework for Higher Education in Iceland 2017–2023 (QEF2), and Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2015 (ESG). A formal Quality Policy was adopted in 2020 and is currently being implemented (see supporting document below). Since its last IWR in 2014, the University has made an effort to strengthen its quality management and organisational structure, with main stepping stones shown in Table 4.



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2014	<p>The University receives a judgement of confidence in its first QB-led IWR review (QEF1).</p> <p>Equality Policy is adopted; Equality Committee is established.</p>
2015	<p>Framework for the appointment and progression of academic staff is revised extensively.</p> <p>Publication Fund is established.</p> <p>Remit and role of the Academic Council is revised.</p>
2016	<p>Div. of Quality, Teaching and Research is established (abolished in 2020).</p> <p>Human Resources Policy is adopted.</p> <p>First sabbaticals granted to academic staff within a new framework for research.</p> <p>Rules on Leave of Absence and Flexibility at work are established.</p>
2017	<p>Contingency Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Harassment is adopted.</p> <p>Staff Development Fund for Support Staff is established (Staff Development Fund for Academic Staff has been in place from the establishment of the University).</p>
2018	<p>Contingency Plan on Bullying is adopted.</p> <p>Code of Conduct is revised.</p> <p>Ethics Committee is established.</p>
2019	<p>Equality Policy and action plan 2019–2022 is adopted and confirmed to fulfil the laws on equal rights no. 10/2008 by the Directorate of Equality.</p>
2020	<p>LOs at the institutional level are revised (BA and MA level).</p> <p>Quality Policy is adopted.</p> <p>The Student Council is reorganised by students.</p> <p>DDA is divided into two separate departments, DA and DD.</p> <p>Records and Information Policy is adopted.</p> <p>Privacy Policy is adopted.</p> <p>International Strategy 2020–2025 is adopted.</p> <p>Equal Pay is certified.</p> <p>Human Resource Policy is revised.</p> <p>Safety Committee is established.</p>
2020–21	<p>New organisational chart is implemented, with the foundation of three new Schools and a thorough reorganisation of administration and support services.</p>

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*Table 4: Milestones in quality enhancement since the IWR in 2014.*

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The development and approval of quality standards are overseen by the Academic Council (including its two sub-committees: the Teaching Committee and the Research Committee) and the Management Council. The management and implementation of standards is reinforced and supported through the work of the Quality Manager and Deans, through the platform of School Councils and the University Office. The quality system is underpinned by policies and procedures that ensure regular monitoring and follow-up on quality matters, as reflected in the IUA Quality Handbook. The management of quality is the responsibility of the Quality Manager, in close collaboration with the Rector and the Deans. The role of the Quality Manager is to oversee central administration of all quality-related matters, such as the systematic collection of data and key statistics, coordination of internal working procedures, regular review of University regulations, teaching evaluation, survey of graduating students, alumni survey, management and evaluation of research output, monitoring of institutional LOs and their relations to study programme LOs, regular monitoring of programmes and the approval of new programmes, as well as managing and maintaining the IUA Quality Handbook. The Quality Handbook is digital and published online, consisting of all institutional policies, rules and regulations, working procedures and guidelines, accessible to all staff. The content of the Quality Handbook is revised parallel to any changes made on the University regulatory framework. The Records Manager oversees the publication and secure archiving of the Quality Handbook.

**Reflection:** *The University quality system has undergone rapid development during the last year, while communication of changes has fallen behind due to lack of tools. This will be enhanced with the implementation of the new digital Quality Handbook, which was only taken into use in Spring 2021. The digitalisation of the Quality Handbook will increase staff access to overall regulatory frameworks around the entire University operations, will ensure better management of official records and procedures, and will ensure sufficient flow of information from central administration to all other University units and divisions. The implementation is foreseen to be ongoing during the next academic year (2021–2022). The new SAD will serve as an important institutional platform for the continuing development in quality management.*

#### Supporting Document

#### 3\_9 Quality Management System and Quality Policy

### 4.3 Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcomes (LOs) correspond to the National Qualification Framework (NQF), issued by the MESK. LOs are developed a) at the undergraduate and graduate study levels, b) for each study programme (see Educational Programmes – Overview), and finally, c) for each course. LOs for undergraduate degrees are aligned with European Qualifications Framework (EQF) level 6, and the LO for graduate degrees are aligned with EQF level 7. LOs for all study programmes are available on the University website, creating transparency and flow of information to prospective students, enrolled students and staff. LOs for all courses are accessible in MySchool, the University's online teaching management system, where syllabi, assessment and timetables are also available for each course. At the start of each course students are introduced to the syllabus and made aware of learning outcomes.

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The management and revision of LOs at the institutional level is overseen by the Teaching Committee, with the Project Manager of Quality and Teaching in a leading role. A recent example is thorough revision of LOs for both study cycles in 2019–2020. The revised LOs are used as a foundation for the regular revision of LOs at the programme level and have proved to be particularly useful in course assessment with the Pass/Fail system (see case study in Chapter 5). LOs at the programme level are overseen by Programme Directors. The University also issues guidelines for curriculum writing.

**Reflection:** *The importance of LOs at the course level has increased substantially, parallel to the transitioning of the assessment system from numerical grades to pass/fail assessment. The impact of the transition, along with the challenges and opportunities this major change has brought about, is discussed in more detail in the case study on assessment in Chapter 5.*

*LOs form the basis for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) at the University. The quality of the RPL is contingent upon the quality of LOs, and the development of RPL is directly connected to LOs at the programme level, especially in relation to entrance qualification at the MA level (RPL for access) and to LOs at the course level when assessing the length of studies (RPL for ECTS credits). See further discussion on RPL in Chapter 6.1 on admissions and entrance qualifications.*

#### Supporting Documents

2\_1 Educational Programmes – Overview

4\_5 Guidelines for Curriculum Writing

4\_10 Learning Outcomes – BA and MA

### **4.4 Design and Approval of New Programmes and Regular Review of Existing Programmes**

The University has developed a formal working procedure for the design and approval of new programmes in order to ensure its compliance to ESG. The procedure emphasises student and alumni participation as well as consultation with the respective professional fields before a proposition is sent to the Quality Manager for inspection. Following the initial permission from the Rector to commence the development process, the Dean appoints a working group consisting of academic staff members, a representative of external stakeholders, a student and an alumnus. The Dean presents a complete proposal for a new study programme to the MC for approval after a discussion in the School Council. If approved, the Rector presents the proposal to the University Board for final approval, after a discussion among the AC. The University has also issued a template with detailed information and a clear timeline for the proposal of new programmes, serving as effective guidelines on criteria for the working group as well for its timely review by the Quality Manager (see procedure and template in supporting documents).

Regular review of existing programmes takes place every five years, under the supervision of Heads of Department. The University has issued a formal working procedure for the review process and a template for departmental working groups, similar to the ones for approval of new programmes. The monitoring of existing programmes emphasises the participation of current students, alumni and external stakeholders (see procedure and template in supporting documents).

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**Reflection:** *The formal working procedures for the approval of new programmes and monitoring of existing programmes, along with the two templates, have proven to be an effective quality tool. Well defined LOs have furthermore facilitated the revision and design of study programmes, where course LOs are mapped onto LOs at the programme level to ensure they are met at all levels. In some cases, where study programmes are either numerous or overlap within the same department, a regular review has been challenging with regard to workload and overly frequent ongoing review processes within the same department. The recent formalisation of procedures has facilitated both the review and design process, creating an overview for the Quality Manager as well as the approval process for the MC and the Board. With the recent organisational changes, the new Deans will be an integral part of this process.*

#### Supporting Documents

- 4\_2 Design and Approval of New Programmes – Procedure
- 4\_3 Design and Approval of New Programmes – Template
- 4\_11 Periodic Review of Programmes – Procedure
- 4\_12 Periodic Review of Programmes – Template

## 4.5 Monitoring the Quality of Learning and Teaching

### **Teaching Evaluation**

At the end of each course students participate in an electronic teaching evaluation in MySchool, the University's online teaching management system. The evaluation is in three parts: course quality, teacher performance and self-evaluation of the student performance. Student participation is at the average of 35–45%. Student satisfaction with courses is generally high, and indications are that their experience with teacher performance is positive, with both results averaging 4.5 (on a scale of 1–5).

Teaching evaluation is only performed in courses with five or more students, with the exception of a special evaluation for private lessons in the DM (see supporting documents). In that case, teachers do not receive access to answers, only Heads of Department and the PM of Quality and Teaching. This is to maintain confidentiality and achieve anonymity as best as possible. At the end of each semester, when students have received all their coursework assessments, the PM of Quality and Teaching makes the results accessible to teachers. The PM reviews the results for the entire institution and shares them with Heads of Department and Programme Directors. Heads of Department take appropriate action for resolution of problems that may arise and give feedback to students on how improvements will be made. Finally, the Deans review results and take specific measures where appropriate. The review is a confidential, enhancement-led process and is linked to staff development.

**Reflection:** *Concerns have been raised about the anonymity of the teaching evaluation. Other ways to evaluate the quality of teaching have therefore been considered, such as student-led focus groups. However, the University will continue with the current teaching evaluation form, as it is considered important for students to convey their experiences in an anonymous way.*

*As a tool in higher education, the teaching evaluation has been criticised for its bias against women and minority groups. Such bias has not been systematically examined within the University but needs to be investigated.*

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### **Survey Among Graduating Students**

A survey of graduating students has been conducted on an annual basis since 2013. The survey, sent via email, inquires about programme structure, quality of teaching, facilities, and the general learning atmosphere at the departmental level. The PM of Quality and Teaching is responsible for managing and analysing the survey results as well as presenting them to all staff members each autumn. Deans and managers within the University Office are responsible for follow-up where relevant.

Findings from surveys conducted in 2017–2019 indicate a general satisfaction among students with the quality of studies, atmosphere and support from both academic and support staff, but less satisfaction with facilities and the learning environment. At the same time, the majority of graduating students, or 90%, report that they would recommend studying at the University. Furthermore, students express their dissatisfaction with student fees. Findings between years are generally stable, and considerable satisfaction can be detected with the quality of learning and teaching. Facilities remain an issue of student dissatisfaction, but considerable improvements have been made during the last few years by relocating some departments or by adding new spaces, such as a new auditorium.

***Reflection:** The facilities situation is a constant challenge for the University that will not be fully solved until it gets its own new building. The University acknowledges criticism on student fees; however, until the University is fully funded by the state, student fees cannot be avoided.*

### **Alumni Survey**

The alumni survey has been conducted among alumni graduating between 2004 and 2015. The PM of Quality and Teaching oversees the management of the survey. Alumni are asked about how their studies have benefited them in the professional field, their experience of the University as an educational and cultural institution, and about their salary and employment after graduation. Survey participation ranges from 40% to 56%. Generally, students feel they have been well prepared for further studies and their professional careers. A general characteristic of alumni in the professional field is working independently (self-employment), and many work in other or related fields, such as teaching. The survey is sent by email every three years, with the most recent one sent out in 2017 to the graduating cohorts of 2012 and 2015. Currently, a new alumni survey is being processed, among alumni graduating in 2016 and 2019.

***Reflection:** The survey reflects methodological problems due to changes in study programmes. Furthermore, a low response rate in some study programmes makes it hard to draw general conclusions.*

### Supporting Documents

- 4\_1 Alumni Survey – list of questions
- 4\_16 Survey Among Graduating Students – list of questions
- 4\_17 Teaching Evaluation – list of questions
- 4\_18 Teaching Evaluation for Private Lessons – list of questions

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## 4.6 Information Management and Internal Communications

Internal communication is characterised by short communication lines. All departments maintain a close and responsive relationship with their students, both from administrative staff as well as academic staff. Additionally, the departments seek to maintain dynamic communication with their stakeholders and external partners.

The University uses email for internal communication. MySchool manages student records, including transcripts, diploma supplements, key statistics and other data relating to the study trajectory. In Autumn 2021 a new intranet will be launched to accumulate information in one place. A needs analysis for the new intranet is underway with provisions of adopting a new student information system (Ugla), to be implemented in 2021–2022. Furthermore, Canvas, a new learning management system, will be adopted in Autumn 2021. The Data Protection Officer ensures that the University processes personal data in compliance with the applicable data protection rules and implements the Privacy Policy. Instead of filing data in Excel sheets, the University is now taking up a new system, Wired Relations, to organise, manage and automate GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and information security. Lastly, the University has made electronic authentication possible and is in a phase of applying for an e-Seal, used for certifying digital documents. e-Seal ensures that the respective institution is associated with the specific document and the document has not been altered in the meantime.

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<b>June '21</b>	Online Quality Handbook Canto
<b>August '21</b>	Work Point Canvas Wired Relations e-Seal
<b>Oct '21</b>	IUA website
<b>Sept '22</b>	Ugla

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*Table 5: Implementation timeline for new IT systems.*

### **Records and Information Policy**

The University works according to a policy on delivery of documents to the National Archives of Iceland and adheres to national law on public records and data archiving. Official records, such as rules, procedures and curricula, are retained in the records management system CoreData and in Microsoft Office OneDrive. In April 2021, a new SharePoint solution for the Quality Handbook was implemented for strategies, rules, procedures and guidelines. This solution checkpoints each document for all accountable authorisation before publishing and republishing.



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During 2020 the focus in records management was on mapping and analysing the existing records management system within the University, to assess its feasibility and come up with an action plan on improvement where needed. The assessment led to a new Records and Information Policy, which is currently in its implementation phase. The policy is meant to ensure the systematic management of and access to records and information; to educate staff on the handling of records and information; to coordinate and streamline the handling of records and information amongst staff; and to secure the archiving of all relevant records, data and information in the institution. Three key factors have been introduced: changing filing systems, adding a Digital Asset Management (DAM) solution for assets, and implementing the SharePoint solution for the Quality Handbook. In December 2020, the MC agreed to discontinue the CoreData filing system and take up 365. WorkPoint 365 is an extension for SharePoint Online and Microsoft Office 365, which makes it easier to manage documents and tasks across projects. Implementation and data transfer will take place from May 2021 onwards. The MC has also agreed to take up Canto, a DAM solution for assets such as photos, audio and video/film. Implementation kicked off in January 2021 and will finish in May.

**Reflection:** *The use of data in daily operations is foreseen to be enhanced with the implementation of the new Records and Information Policy, with new archiving methods and with the new Quality Handbook.*

#### Supporting Documents

4\_13 Privacy Policy

4\_15 Records and Information Policy

### 4.7 Student-Centred Learning

The University seeks to enable flexibility and adaptability of students by using a variety of teaching methods and modes of delivery, where students are able to present their work through various forms of physical, digital, performative, conceptual or textual work. One of the main characteristics of the learning culture is to encourage a sense of autonomy within students while also providing support and guidance from teachers. Hence, the University policy on learning and teaching emphasises the active and democratic participation of students to enable them to develop and shape their studies. This is reflected most strongly in the new assessment system, which has now transitioned from numerical grades to Pass/Fail assessment (see 4.8 below and more detail in Chapter 5). Furthermore, student feedback is encouraged and valued through institutional procedures, such as the regular review of programmes, the design of new study programmes, and through regular surveys where students are asked how they feel about opportunities to shape their own studies.

**Reflection:** *The question of students' opportunity to shape their own studies is characterised by two poles within the University: on the one hand, there is the vision to keep study programmes subject-specific with pre-defined curricula of mandatory courses, and, on the other, the vision to keep study programmes more open and flexible for students to shape their own study trajectories. This applies to both study cycles, and finding a balance between the two poles is a challenge that the University takes into consideration.*

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## 4.8 Assessment

Students disseminate their work through the presentation of single artworks, discursive presentations, critiques, tutorials, written assignments. Feedback on student work can either be instant and discursive or in written form. Apart from teacher-led assessment, assessment is sometimes led by the student him/herself or by groups of students. Increased emphasis is placed on student self-evaluation and student peer reviews. In all cases, final projects are assessed by external examiners, using departmental rubrics and criteria for evaluation.

Assessment has undergone a significant transformation during the last few years, where numerical grades have been exchanged for Pass/Fail assessment. A pilot project was launched in the DPA in 2015 followed by other departments in 2019 and onwards. The six departments and their study programmes are at different stages in the implementation of the Pass/Fail system, while the institution seeks to learn from the process as it proceeds. The Pass/Fail system is based on formative assessment, referring to a wide variety of methods teachers use to assess students' progress and to identify LOs that students are seeking to achieve. Formative assessment is integrated into the learning process, the main purpose being to adjust lessons and instructional techniques. Students play a key role in formative assessment, giving feedback to teachers on their delivery of teaching while, at the same time, students themselves develop a stronger understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses in their learning. This type of assessment stimulates students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement with the learning process. A detailed discussion in the development, format and execution of the Pass/Fail system, along with a detailed analysis of its impact on the general culture of learning and teaching, is presented in Chapter 5.

## 4.9 International Perspectives

Through international collaboration, the University focuses on enhancing intercultural competences, increasing social and global awareness of students and staff through mobility and internationalisation at home. The International Office (IO) oversees international collaboration at the institution. This entails participation in the Erasmus+ and Nordplus Higher Education programmes as well as other funding schemes. Further information on the IO is seen in Chapter 6.2 on student support.

### ***International Strategy***

Following the publication of the institutional Strategic Policy in 2019, the IO has developed a new International Strategy 2020–2025 and Action Plan, published in Autumn 2020. Through the developmental phase the IO held meetings with students and staff as well as with the National Union of Icelandic Students. The IO is currently preparing the implementation phase with main focuses on a) learning with an international dimension, b) the learning environment and support, and c) the need to further manage and prioritise partnerships and strategic collaboration.

The strategy reflects the first steps towards long-term goals of internationalisation, which is to purposefully integrate international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students. As the new International Strategy and Action Plan came into being as a sub-policy to the Institutional Strategic Policy, the University is aware of the need to coordinate the two policies, especially in relation to resources and prioritisation of actions.



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### **Student and Staff Mobility**

The University takes pride in its active participation in the Erasmus programme, reflected in its high share in the awarded national budget. With a share of 23%, the University comes second in Iceland, while at the same time being one of the smaller universities in the country.

Most study programmes receive exchange students on a regular basis. During the last five years there has been a steady flow of outgoing and incoming student exchanges, as seen in Table 6.

<b>Academic year</b>	<b>Outgoing exchange</b>	<b>Incoming exchange</b>
2015–16	39	50
2016–17	44	65
2017–18	43	55
2018–19	51	62
2019–20	40	54

Table 6: Student exchanges.

**Reflection:** Some student groups are more active than others in mobility. This might be because a) the structure of study programmes might not allow room for students to be away for a whole semester, or b) graduate students are more likely to have personal obligations (e.g., families or jobs) that limit their ability to move abroad temporarily. In reaction, the International Strategy focuses on providing more diverse opportunities for short-term mobility to students at all levels of study.

More than 50% of all student mobility is in the form of Erasmus+ traineeships (see Table 7), and over 80% of Erasmus+ trainees are recent graduates. This is an important opportunity to bridge the student journey from education into professional practice. The IO has prioritised reaching out to students to make them aware of this opportunity and providing the necessary support, for example, with in-class presentations and preparatory workshops, in collaboration with the Student Counselling Services.

<b>Allocation Year</b>	<b>Outgoing Erasmus+ Trainees</b>
2015	48
2016	69
2017	42
2018	53
2019	43

Table 7: Student traineeships.

Even though Erasmus+ staff mobility has been relatively steady during the last five years, the University aims to emphasise a more strategic approach towards staff exchanges in the future (see Table 8).

Allocation year	Teaching <sup>2</sup>	Training	Total
2015	12	35	47
2016	25	36	61
2017	23	23	46
2018	13	40	53
2019	11	13	24

Table 8: Staff mobility.

**Reflection:** The Erasmus Charter Principles state that HEIs must ensure that staff is given recognition for their teaching and training activities undertaken during the mobility period. Formal recognition of staff mobility is not yet in place, a situation of which the University is aware and recognises the need to rectify.

### **International Collaborative Projects**

Since 2014 the University has been active when it comes to international collaborative projects, focusing on educational development in higher arts education. The IO has developed expertise when it comes to applying for funding through the Erasmus+ programme and running such projects. These projects have had an impact on the institution by delivering new teaching methods, new study programmes and providing important opportunities for development of academic staff members. Further information on strategic partnership projects, results and learnings from completed projects, as well as abstracts of current and past projects, are found in supporting documents below. Information on other international collaborative research projects is found in Chapter 8.6.

**Reflection:** Two main challenges have been encountered with collaborative projects. One is the lack of departmental support to academic staff members with defined roles and responsibilities in the projects, where clearer decision-making structures might be a way forward, as well as embedding projects into staff workplans. The second is a general lack of visibility of projects at the departmental level.

### Supporting Documents

- 4\_4 Erasmus Charter Principles
- 4\_6 International Collaborative Projects
- 4\_7 International Partnerships and Networks
- 4\_8 International Strategy 2020–2025 and Action Plan

2 Includes outgoing teaching mobility and invited specialists from the professional field.

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## 4.10 Internationalisation

The international dimension of the University has grown considerably since its last IWR, particularly through the growing number of international study programmes. Since 2015, six international programmes have been launched, five of which are on the graduate level. Consequently, the number of full-time international students has increased substantially, now comprising approximately 50% of the total students enrolled in international programmes. International students count for approximately 13% of the total student population at the University. This recent increase in international student numbers has led to an ongoing initiative focusing on enhancing staff development with the aim to build increased expertise in internationalisation, enhance the learning environment, and support international students and their integration within the University culture, conducted in teamwork between the International Office, student counselling services and the PM of Quality and Teaching. The initiative intersects with issues like multiculturalism, diversity and equality, and it seeks to identify common characteristics between all international study programmes and map the need for teacher training when it comes to teaching diverse student groups. Furthermore, an awareness of the need for internationalisation of the curriculum is also growing, not least through the process of departmental SLRs.

***Reflection:** Interviews conducted with international students as part of this initiative indicate that issues concerning support, the learning environment and language are common, especially with regard to inconsistent use of English, unclear expectations about what kind of support students should seek from their teachers, and the lack of resources in student counselling services. The initiative is ongoing and is hoped to inform further enhancement of internationalisation, diversity and student support.*

### Supporting Documents

4\_9 Language Policy

## 4.11 Interdisciplinarity

For a period of two weeks during the fourth semester, all undergraduate students have the opportunity to attend cross-disciplinary courses. One of these courses is Dialogue (Samtal), which was obligatory until 2019 where student cohorts were systematically mixed across departments and worked on a predefined theme each year. Following student feedback in 2019, a decision was made to enable students to decide themselves on what electives to attend, which led to a variety of electives at their disposal, also across departments. At the graduate level, an interdisciplinary course called Intersections (Pverlínur) is open to students across all graduate study programmes.

As stated in the University Strategic Policy, collaboration will be increased across all departments. Relations between teaching, artistic practice, and research across different disciplines is furthermore to be enhanced, with emphasis on external collaboration with other fields of study. Every year, students are offered numerous courses across departments as well as through international networks. One of the roles of the newly appointed Dean of SAD will be to seek ways to further enhance cross-fertilisation and interdisciplinarity with a focus on the MA level. With increased autonomy of students at the MA level, clearer opportunities for interdisciplinarity

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exist. Another venue for cross-departmental collaboration is found in workshops and tech lab facilities that provide opportunities for thematic or topic-related interdisciplinary courses as well as research projects. Lastly, the growing interest for collaboration by local universities invites further possibilities for enhancement of interdisciplinary approaches in learning, teaching and research.

**Reflection:** *The University recognises the need to define what is intended by the term “interdisciplinarity” in the context of its field of study, especially in relation to notions of subject-related specialisation, cross-departmental collaboration and cross-disciplinary collaboration with other fields of study outside the arts domain. During the last few years, there has been a tendency to develop undergraduate study programmes towards more specialisation rather than interdisciplinarity. At the same time, many students focus more on collaboration with students and staff from other study programmes than their own. Many of these programmes focus on building highly specialised skills. Combining these needs is something to be considered carefully when designing courses, programmes and study structures. Furthermore, the University is aware of the need to coordinate study structures and timetables across departments, which will be one of the main tasks of the Dean of SAD.*

#### 4.12 Digitalisation

The Covid-19 pandemic has facilitated numerous possibilities in relation to hybrid learning and blended mobility, although these teaching tools are still underused. Opportunities for collaboration with other HEIs and public cultural and educational institutions in rural Iceland have emerged from the situation characterising the last academic year. Dialogues with colleagues abroad have been enabled parallel to digitalisation and technological tools, so that teachers reach out for international sharing, input and transfer of knowledge more than before. However, the development of digitalisation, especially in relation to teaching methods, has been more reactive rather than proactive, which remains an issue to be addressed further in the coming years. At the same time, some progress in digital teaching has been made as a result of the pandemic. Canvas, the new learning management system, will be of significant help in this regard and is seen to facilitate the process of digitalisation for both teachers and students.

**Reflection:** *The challenge of teaching online during the pandemic has accelerated the development of digital learning and teaching. While most students and staff have missed the magic of live performance and connection with audiences, some unexpected discoveries were made which are sure to be developed further as part of enriching the learning environment. The online teaching format suits different student types; some students are comfortable and willing to experiment in the security of their homes while others are struggling with lack of motivation and the feeling of disconnection. Students are concerned that the nature of studies (studio courses, theory courses, tech labs, etc.) has had a significant effect on the success of distant learning. Teachers have found ways of staying connected with students by organising informal short e-meetings and have reported how this helped develop a sense of a learning community during distancing. In the coming months, a thorough reflection on digital learning is needed to evaluate how digital learning can be used to enhance the content of studies, the student learning experience, equipment, and technical support, and how those will be funded.*

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## 4.13 Relations to Society

The University aims to increase areas of contact with society and support diverse ways of disseminating artistic practice and research. The University emphasises external collaborations and maintains active connections to the professional field. It considers itself a key reference point in the development of cultural life in Iceland. Effort is put into fostering close relations to the professional field of the arts, as well as building bridges into other professions and the wider society in Iceland. This is reflected through five main activities: a) collaborative projects through student course work and faculty projects, b) public events, c) student preparation for employment, d) actively networking with stakeholder associations in all the sub-fields of the arts, and e) the employment of a high number of part-time lecturers at the forefront of the local art scene. Additionally, the University seeks to maintain networks with the international art scene through regular invitations of international guest lectures as well as international strategic partnerships (see Chapter 4.9) and research collaborations (see Chapter 8.6).

The University seeks to involve its academic staff in public discourse by promoting their expertise and knowledge to the media and other platforms for public debate on the arts and culture in Iceland. Furthermore, students and faculty are actively engaged in public dissemination of their work in various venues like public museums, theatres, music halls and other cultural platforms. Graduation events are open to the public and free of charge. Emphasis is put on supplying students with competences, skills and insight into the professional environment of the arts through coursework and collaborations. This is reflected in mandatory courses on preparation for the professional working environment in each department, numerous study trips outside Reykjavík, and various collaborations with public institutions, industry, stakeholder associations, and policymakers within the public administration.

***Reflection:** The dynamic relations to society are one of the University's greatest strengths. The University detects an increasing demand from public institutions for collaboration and partnership, which reflects the good University reputation among the public and the importance of the creative industries in the national economy. A central database for the documentation of partners and collaborations remains to be developed.*

### **The Open IUA**

The University operates an Open IUA which serves as a gateway to the surrounding society, where knowledge and experience flows both ways. The aim is to raise public awareness of and interest in the arts, as well as to enable a broad section of society to access the expertise and facilities available at the University. The Open IUA offers courses in continuing education, staff development and networking for professional artists, designers and architects, while also opening up selected courses in regular study programmes for public attendance. The Open IUA offers courses in independent business, innovation and start-ups. A course on copyright issues is in the making.

### Supporting Documents

4\_14 Public Relations Policy

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From 2017, an average of 25–30 courses have been taught each semester in the Open IUA programme, ranging from short evening courses for the public to larger specialised courses at the MA level for professionals. Course participants have a choice of completing courses with or without ECTS credits. During summer 2020 the Open IUA offered courses with the support of the MESC with the aim of enhancing job market participation during the pandemic, which has caused major unemployment. A total of 30 courses were offered and around 500 individuals attended. The Open IUA will offer a similar number of courses during the summer of 2021.

**Reflection:** Covid-19 has created a challenge for the Open IUA. During that period digitalisation has been enhanced, opening up future possibilities for Open IUA programming. Collaboration with museums, institutions, professional associations and businesses has also enhanced during the pandemic. Through the Open IUA platform the University has worked towards mapping of minority groups such as immigrants, people with different abilities and people living outside the capital area, with a view of increasing access to art education. This work is part of the Strategic Policy on outreach and broader social engagement; however, no new courses or programmes have been activated due to the pandemic. At the same time, the Strategic Policy is partly realised through the initiative of staff and students at the DAE, as courses aiming at minority groups are now offered as part of the Open IUA.

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# 5 Case Study: Transition from Numerical Grading to Pass/Fail Assessment

This chapter outlines the institutional approach to assessment with a focus on the current transition from numerical grades to Pass/Fail assessment. The University has chosen this as its case study for the opportunity to analyse the transition process (still ongoing), identify advantages and disadvantages, and streamline procedures across all departments. On the occasion of this case study, the University has inquired about student and staff experiences with the new system, serving as a valuable evidence base to formulate future strategies on implementation and enhancement in assessment. The chapter describes the current implementation phase of the new assessment system with a status check across departments. Then it articulates the rationale for the transition, describes the use of LOs and feedback in Pass/Fail assessment, and puts forward the formal records and certification students are awarded upon graduation. Lastly, advantages and disadvantages of the Pass/Fail system are discussed with a view of opportunities for improvement. Through the chapter as whole, different student and teacher views emerging from interviews in focus groups are presented.

## 5.1 Preamble

Since 2015 the University has been developing a new approach to assessment, where numerical grades are abolished and Pass/Fail assessment is introduced in their place. The change is rooted in the critical reflection by academic staff on the nature and aim of art education. The initiative came from within the DPA, making the transition a bottom-up process instead of a centralised decision. Other departments have followed since 2019, also in a bottom-up manner.

This chapter is based on various data the University has produced on the experience of the Pass/Fail system. The first report dates to 2016 when an analysis was made of the transition in the DPA, and another analysis followed in 2018 (both were based on numerous focus group interviews with both students and staff). On the occasion



of this case study, numerous other data have been produced in order to detect trends and to conduct an in-depth analysis on the advantages and disadvantages of the transition. In March 2021, a survey was sent out to DPA alumni cohorts graduating in 2012 and 2013 (student cohorts graduating with numerical grades) and 2018 and 2019 (student cohorts graduating with Pass/Fail) with a prolonged deadline of 10 May. Unfortunately, the response rate was not high enough for results to be valid and will therefore not be used in this chapter. In addition, two focus group interviews were conducted in February and March 2021, one with teachers (five attendees) and the other with students (three attendees). Furthermore, an open forum for staff was organised where academic and support staff were able to articulate their experiences with the new system. Lastly, the Student Council discussed the matter in two separate meetings organised for students on Teams on 29 and 30 April.

### Supporting Documents

5\_1 Alumni Survey for Case Study – list of questions

5\_5 Focus Group Interviews for Case Study – topics and questions

## 5.2 Current Status

Currently, all departments have taken up Pass/Fail assessment (Table 9). However, implementation is at different stages, and in some cases, student cohorts are still graduating with the numerical system as the two systems are still in an overlapping phase. As mentioned above, the DPA has become a role model for other departments, which are now adapting their assessment according to the specific nature of learning and teaching in each study programme.

DAD <sup>3</sup>	Partially implemented since 2020. Numerical grading and P/F assessment will be overlapping during graduation in Spring 2021. All students enrolled in Autumn 2021 will experience the P/F system only.
DAE	Fully implemented since 2020.
DFA	Fully implemented since 2019.
DM	Fully implemented since 2020.
DPA	Fully implemented since 2015.

*Table 9: Implementation status of Pass/Fail assessment.*

Currently, no centralised working procedures have been developed at the institutional level. Considering the diverse needs and nature of teaching within the various study programmes, the University is intentionally allowing for a longer developmental phase at the departmental level before streamlining procedures across departments. The PM in Quality and Teaching coordinates the process and advises Heads of Department and Programme Directors on the implementation, especially regarding transfer of knowledge and sharing between departments. The process of coordination and streamlining is foreseen to be enhanced in the coming academic year.

<sup>3</sup> The Department of Design and Architecture was split into two departments in Autumn 2020: the Department of Design and the Department of Architecture.



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### 5.3 Rationale

The uneven power dynamic between teachers and students has been the main impetus for the assessment reform. By removing the teacher's "verdict" through numerical grading, the viewpoint of teaching is reversed to a focus on the content of study, where students are offered a safe space to develop their independent approach to learning. Hence, the aim of Pass/Fail assessment is to empower the student by transferring the responsibility of learning to them. The numerical system is seen as limiting and problematic, as is reflected in the focus group interviews with teachers.

The decision to undertake this reform in assessment has been contemplated carefully by the University and is based on extensive research on the effectiveness of assessment methods and student-centred learning. At this point, the University is confident that the new assessment system improves the nature of learning and teaching in the arts. The University strongly believes that numerical grading is less appropriate than Pass/Fail to assess student performance and artistic development. By adopting the new system, the University follows in the footsteps of other HEIs in the arts across Scandinavia, the Netherlands and the UK, and it has consulted numerous institutions in this regard. Through the transformation phase, the University has sought to monitor and document the process as well as possible, with the aim to identify challenges and opportunities for improvement.

#### **Student Views**

*Students report that by adopting Pass/Fail assessment, the learning process is prioritised over the end result. Focusing on the process in turn creates a better end result for the study trajectory. Students express their strong view on the benefits of the Pass/Fail assessment and by no means wish to turn back to numerical grading. Similar views emerged in the interviews conducted in the DPA in 2016 and 2018. Students articulate a general feeling of freedom in relation to the Pass/Fail system when it comes to developing their own artistic practice, since they experienced that numerical grading created a tendency to please the teacher in order to secure a high grade. Furthermore, students say they are now less hesitant to take necessary risks and experiment in their work with the new system. They also report a belief that the Pass/Fail system will improve their professional skills and preparation for the working world.*

#### **Teacher Views**

*Teachers report that they are committed to the new Pass/Fail system and support its implementation to replace numerical grading, to the extent of feeling a sense of relief. At the same time, some teachers have reported the need to award distinction to outstanding students. However, they generally feel that the transition has deepened the culture of learning within the institution, enabled an enhanced understanding of pedagogy, and created a shift from teaching to learning. Teachers also reflected a negative attitude to numerical grading since it creates a sense of unnecessary competition between students.*

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## 5.4 The Practice of Assessing Student Work with Pass/Fail

The Pass/Fail assessment system is conducted through formative assessment. Students play a key role in formative assessment, giving feedback to teachers on their delivery of teaching while at the same time developing a stronger understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses in their learning. This type of assessment stimulates students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement with the learning process. A wide variety of methods are used to assess students' progress and to identify LOs that students are struggling with achieving. Formative assessment is integrated into the learning process, where the main purpose is to adjust lessons and instructional techniques. Consequently, students are in a key position to give feedback on their teachers' performance. However, for this to work properly, students will have to accept the feedback they get, realise its importance for their study progress and carefully read written feedback. Examples on how the assessment takes place are taken from the DPA as it is the only department where implementation is fully completed, and time has allowed for reflections and experience to emerge through the process. Other departments and study programmes may use different procedures in their assessment.

**Artistic coursework** is assessed through an assessment dialogue between the student and teacher. At the end of each course or course component, an assessment dialogue will take place. For the conversation, the student writes a critical reflection or a contemplation on the course and hands it in to the teacher. In the reflection, the student reflects on their work in the course component, bearing in mind the learning outcomes and the assessment criteria. The teacher goes through the same process while preparing for the dialogue. The procedure for artistic coursework assessment is detailed in the supporting document below. **Theoretical coursework** is assessed in writing. Students receive a written report with teachers' feedback. In addition to the written report, at the end of each course a collective reflection and group discussion takes place between students and teachers. Students are also required to conduct self-assessment, based on the LOs. The procedure for theory coursework assessment is detailed in the supporting document below.

### **Student Views**

*Students stress the need for carefully contemplated and detailed feedback that clearly indicates where they stand in the learning process. They do not seem to detect any significant inconsistencies in the quality of received feedback, although they report that more experience is needed. They emphasise the importance of student–teacher dialogue, which they said would increase their ambition and ownership of their studies. The dialogue would enable an opportunity to discuss their projects more in-depth, not least in cases where their work was assessed as “fail.”*

### **Teacher Views**

*In the teachers' minds, numerical grading is parallel to a star review, as practiced in the media; it is enough for people to see the number of stars rather than read the review itself. Teachers report that students have the tendency to look at the grade they receive instead of reading the accompanying feedback, as is supported by extensive research on assessment. This has turned numerical grades into labels that shape student artistic and personal identity, indicating that assessment surely impacts the study progress regardless of the study subject or teaching methods.*

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## 5.5 The Use of Learning Outcomes in Pass/Fail Assessment

Oral and written feedback plays a pivotal role in the Pass/Fail assessment system. In all cases, the Pass/Fail system is firmly grounded in LOs in each course. Consequently, the LOs form the basis for assessment in addition to providing guidance on the organisation of teaching and information to students on what they are to achieve in each course. The two examples in the list of Supporting Documents below will further illustrate the relationship between LOs and assessment.

### **Student Views**

*The focus group interviews from 2016 and 2018 in the DPA reflected the student claim for systematic feedback and clearer use of LOs. When the wording of LOs is open and ambiguous, objectives become less useful, which in turn leads students to remain unclear on their progress and performance. The 2018 report shows that students realise they are responsible for their own studies and in fact celebrate the opportunity to take on this responsibility. However, students have requested more support in this regard, especially in the context of clear LOs on the teachers' side. The 2021 report indicates clearly that students feel LOs are being used systematically in teachers' feedback.*

### **Teacher Views**

*Teachers are aware of the importance of LOs being measurable. They have increasingly used the LOs as a compass for their feedback so that they articulate the essence and content of each course. By doing so, a common platform for dialogue and discussion between students and teachers is formed. Teachers are also aware of the importance of introducing LOs at the beginning of each course for them to work as intended. The focus group interviews indicate this is done across departments.*

### Supporting Documents

5\_2 Assessment Criteria – DPA

5\_3 Course Assessment – DFA

## 5.6 The Use of Feedback in Pass/Fail Assessment

As articulated in Chapter 4.8, assessment methods at the University are diverse and feedback to students comes in many forms. However, written feedback is the form teachers are most focused on, and they are aware of the importance of the quality of such feedback. That means careful wording and appropriate length, and feedback needs to realistically reflect student work. Some examples of feedback aim at encouraging reflective practice in students through self-evaluation, peer feedback and continuous feedback on course content and teaching methods. However, since removing numerical grading, the tendency to write overly lengthy or detailed feedback seems to have developed. Even though written feedback requires more time than numerical assessment, teachers seem to be convinced that Pass/Fail assessment is more reflective of the student performance as well as the principles of learning. Students agree with teachers on this matter, although they also think numerical grading is more appropriate in certain cases, such as theory courses. Furthermore, students emphasise the importance of timely feedback

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so that it can have the expected impact on the learning process in each course. Examples of forms and supportive templates for assessment are found the list of Supporting Documents below.

### **Student Views**

*When transferring into other fields, students worry that the opportunity for further studies could be compromised by the new assessment system, while for students in artistic practice, the portfolio is the most important criteria for admission to graduate studies. For these, Pass/Fail with formative assessment, in addition to the dialogue with teachers and supervisors, is particularly important.*

### **Teacher Views**

*The Pass/Fail assessment system has created an increased workload, especially in relation to written feedback and more frequent dialogue with students. Teachers repeatedly call for more support and guidance with feedback, such as templates, criteria or frameworks to work with. The University has yet to develop templates for all programmes, although some good practices are found within individual study programmes (see examples in Supporting Documents below).*

#### Supporting Documents

5\_3 Course Assessment – DFA

## **5.7 Recognitions and Certification**

At the end of their studies, graduates are provided with a Diploma Supplement in their transcripts. The DS is meant to facilitate applications for further studies by graduates. It has been developed and standardised in accordance with the Bologna system, ensuring transparency of the student performance and seamless translation between national and educational cultures. The DS describes the study content and assessment as well as the general structure of the Icelandic education system. The DS is published in English. Testimonies have been developed in the DPA and are being considered in other departments as tools to evaluate the entire student learning trajectory; see an example below.

#### Supporting Documents

5\_4 Diploma Supplement

5\_6 Testimony for DS – DPA

## **5.8 Challenges and Opportunities**

There seems to be a general consensus among staff and students that the Pass/Fail system promotes learning, autonomy and independence in students. Furthermore, there is a general belief that the new system accommodates diversity and individuality of students with a better opportunity to shape and influence their study than within numerical assessment. However, despite the unequivocal support among teachers and students for the Pass/Fail assessment system, and notwithstanding indications of an enhanced quality of teaching through the

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implementation process, the transition has nevertheless created some sound challenges at the institutional level. The thorough revision of institutional LOs (BA and MA levels) made in 2019–2020 has proven to be highly effective for the practice of assessment in the new Pass/Fail system. Currently, the focus has shifted to the LOs while, at the same time, teachers will need more institutional support and training in using them appropriately. Canvas, the new learning management system, will serve as an effective tool for institutional support in this regard.

The general discourse on learning outcomes has developed considerably within the University (and the Icelandic higher education sector as a whole) since the implementation of the Bologna system. At first, teachers experienced LOs as part of an external framework imposed on their work. Consequently, the use of LOs was part of an alien and distant standardisation without teachers' ownership. However, the last few years have seen an enhanced focus on LOs within the University in relation to quality enhancement and institutional awareness. This has resulted in a thorough revision of LOs in both study cycles through the work of the Teaching Committee, with the participation of representatives of academic staff from all departments, in addition to a student representative. The transition from numerical grading to Pass/Fail assessment has furthermore created a heightened awareness of LOs as an essential teaching tool.

The issue of degree transcripts in the form of a Diploma Supplement without numerical grades remains an issue to be looked into further. The University takes seriously any indications that students have experienced difficulties with entering further studies due to the recognition of studies through the Pass/Fail system. Only two such cases have been reported by alumni seeking to enter further studies in a different field (both at the University of Iceland). Therefore, it is important to analyse this issue in the context of entrance qualifications in other universities in Iceland and to explore systematically whether the lack of numerical grades is creating the obstacle, or if there are other issues regarding entrance qualifications. On the other hand, the University has not received any reports of difficulties from alumni seeking entrance to further study within the field of the arts. Additionally, the University understands its responsibility in creating an understanding of Pass/Fail assessment among other universities in Iceland.

Further steps towards formalisation and coordination of procedures across the University remain to be one of the most important tasks in the coming academic year. So far, the evidence gathered on this case study shows that there is general satisfaction with the transition among both students and staff. The implementation process has enabled a more active dialogue between teachers and students on assessment and has resulted in a heightened understanding of what characterises an effective assessment.

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# 6 The Student Learning Experience

This chapter gives an overview of the student journey from recruitment to graduation, covering applications, admissions, orientation, progression, drop-out, preparation for employment, graduation and alumni relations. It also describes what kind of support the University offers its students, in addition to articulating student equality and student engagement in institutional decision-making platforms. Lastly, the role and function of the Student Council is described.

## 6.1 From Recruitment to Graduation to Alumni Relations

### **Recruitment**

The general approach to outreach is to present the University as a desirable choice of study for prospective students, both domestic and international; to disseminate research projects and critical discourse in the field of the arts and design; and to promote public events and enable public discourse about the University and its operations to the wider public. Platforms for advertisements, promotional events and public discourse are through public events, public media, the University website, on social media and with printed and digital material. The University policy on public relations will undergo a thorough revision in the coming year. The establishment of the new SAD is foreseen to strengthen the coordination of international study programmes, including marketing, outreach and recruitment.

The University reaches out to prospective students through regular visits to conventional high schools and high schools with a specialisation in the arts. Furthermore, the University opens its doors to prospective students during two major promotional events: the IUA Open Day and the University Day, which is held annually in collaboration with all HEIs in Iceland. The IUA Open Day is held in the autumn, where students invite guests into their studios and learning spaces on their own terms. The University Day, held in spring, is the biggest single promotional event held by the University, where student work is showcased through portfolios, performances, installations, exhibitions or any other form. Students and staff participate in the event by preparing and hosting booths, and by receiving and guiding guests. The University Day brings students and staff from all the separate buildings into one, with special promotional effort directed at target groups within the high school system. During the past year, the University has increased its use of online platforms and video presentations in its promotions and marketing strategies.

The University website, which is the main channel for outreach, is foreseen to be renewed in the coming academic year with an enhanced English version. Strategies and definition of target groups for the recruitment of international students and promotion of international study programmes is underway and needs to be

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strengthened. Application deadlines are advertised on the University website, social media and the National Radio.

Supporting Document  
6\_6 Public Relations Policy

***Applications, Admissions and Entrance Qualifications***

Detailed guidelines for the application process are presented on the website for all study programmes. The application form is online and managed through the University website. In some programmes, applicants can send additional documents or portfolios by mail. For the last two years the emphasis has been on offering a complete online application process, and for the first time in Spring 2021, applicants to all programmes can complete their applications online and submit all documents electronically. Application procedures vary according to each study programme. An application is not valid until the applicant has paid the application fee (€30) and submitted the application, a certified copy of degree certificates and school transcripts as well as any other required documents, portfolios or other subject-based material.

The University has seen an increase in applications over the last two years, while the admissions ratio has been more or less the same (see Table 10). A possible explanation for the increase in applications could be the shortening of the upper secondary school study period from four years to three years, and the governmental initiative to accommodate more students in pedagogical studies nationwide.

Applications are evaluated by admission committees, appointed by each Head of Department. Admission committees typically consist of Programme Directors, an external member and academic staff. In some departments, student representatives are appointed to admission committees. Student representation is foreseen to be fully implemented in the admission process in the coming academic year. Committees review applications based on submitted information. Interviews and auditions are conducted by admission committees. Heads of Department make final decisions on admissions based on suggestions from the committees.

Entrance qualifications for the first cycle of study are a high school diploma or equivalent studies. Entrance qualifications for the second cycle of study are bachelor's degree or equivalent studies. The University may grant an exception to these entrance qualifications in cases where applicants demonstrably possess knowledge and experience that constitute sufficient preparation for studies at the University.

<b>Year</b>	2018	2019	2020 <sup>4</sup>
<b>No. of applications</b>	528	718	524
<b>No. of first-year students</b>	197	252	227
<b>Admissions ratio</b>	37%	35%	43%

Table 10: Admissions and enrolment.

4 No new BA students were admitted to the DPA in 2020.



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Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is a process that allows for learning to be measured and recognised, regardless of where it was gained. It is a systematic process where a person's comprehensive knowledge and skills are formally assessed. The assessment can be based on formal education, professional experience, internships, leisure studies, lifelong learning, social activities and life experience. The issues of transparency and consistency in the validation process are important in underlining the equal value of LOs gained through RPL or formal education. For the past two years, the University has operated a working group to develop an internal framework for RPL with the aim to formally validate prior, informal or non-formal learning for access at the master's level or for ECTS credits at undergraduate level. Separate procedures for RPL at the undergraduate level and the graduate level have been developed and are being piloted for the 2021–2022 academic year in all departments.

### ***Enrolment and Orientation***

Students who accept the invitation to study are enrolled in May/June and receive a welcome letter from the Rector. The autumn semester begins in the last week of August, starting with an orientation week for new students. On the first day of teaching, new students meet with key support staff in Student Services, International Office, Library and Information Services and IT. They are invited to orientation meetings with the respective Head of the Department, Programme Director and other faculty members, where departmental approaches to study programmes and other practical matters are discussed. During the orientation week, students are allocated studios, practice spaces or working spaces. Following orientation all students have access to online video presentations offering student support, available on the University website. The website also directs students to various guidelines concerning their studies, such as the IUA Rules, Curriculum Directory, Code of Conduct, Equal Rights Policy, Language Policy, academic calendar, and Contingency Plans for Bullying and Sexual Harassment. In recent years, there has been an enhanced emphasis on developing special support for foreign students. A consultation group consisting of Programme Directors, departmental Project Managers, Director of the International Office and the Project Manager in Quality and Teaching has met regularly to discuss issues and formulate procedures on support for international study programmes. Among actions to be taken are developing two application deadlines (one at the end of January and the other in April) to facilitate the process for foreign applicants, defining support for foreign students, and developing clear information on the University website in the form of frequently asked questions. The Student Counselling Services have offered a course, How to Adjust to the New Study Environment and Society, to all new overseas students and exchange students to facilitate their adaptation to the local environment and to enable their personal connections. Building on experience from Autumn 2020, the Autumn 2021 general orientation for new international students will be conducted on Teams before arrival, where they will be provided with information on all available support services.

### ***Progression***

Common to all study programmes is the personal approach to students encouraging individual growth, where personal tutoring takes place through frequent studio colloquia, critiques, or one-on-one instruction. Faculty, part-time lecturers and support staff are dedicated to their responsibilities and are voluntarily available to students. The culture of learning and teaching reflects the generally low student/teacher ratio of 11 students per academic position (as of Autumn 2020), ascending to 7 when part-time lecturers are included.



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Each student is responsible for their own study progress. Programme Directors oversee student progress throughout their entire study period, assisted by Departmental Coordinators. Programme Directors are responsible for organising formal meetings with each student midway through their studies, where student progress, credits and other practical issues are discussed. The IUA Rules stipulate that students are allowed flexibility of one year in addition to the regular length of study programmes. In the case of special circumstances, students can apply for exemption from this rule.

All study programmes require full-time studies, with the three exceptions of Arts Education, the master's programme in Composition and the master's programmes in Vocal and Instrumental Pedagogy, which offer the option of part-time studies. As stipulated in the IUA Rules, the average number of course credits for each semester is 30 ECTS, resulting in the suggested length of undergraduate programmes as a three-year process and two-year process for graduate programmes. Students need to complete 48 of 60 ECTS in the course of one academic year in order to proceed to the next year of study. Furthermore, if a student is absent, including when due to illness, for more than 20% of the teaching period of a course, they are considered to have failed that course. In particular cases and unforeseen circumstances, the student can appeal for an exemption from this rule. Due to the pandemic, rules on course attendance were changed temporarily. Attendance during 2020–2021 is based on full participation in projects and study programmes, whether in groups or through individual work.

### ***Drop-out and Graduation Ratio***

Although varying between departments, the low student-to-teacher ratio should be noted as one of the characteristics at the heart of all University practice. It is one of the reasons for a relatively low drop-out rate, ensuring that students finish their studies on time.

To calculate the drop-out rate, the University looks at how many students graduate within a given timeframe with a flexibility of graduation one year later than expected. Three student cohorts starting a three-year undergraduate study programme and a two-year graduate programme have been studied in relation to drop-out and graduation ratio. An average of 70–80% of undergraduate students enrolling in 2015, 2016 and 2017 graduate within the given timeframe. An average of 62%–74% of graduate students enrolling in 2016, 2017 and 2018 graduate within the given timeframe. Reasons for withdrawal or dropout from studies have not been analysed systematically, although interviews with the Student Counsellor indicate that some students feel they are in the wrong study programme, or they leave due to illness or other personal reasons. Chapter 6.2 discusses how the Student Counselling Services have been reinforced to meet increased student need for counselling during the pandemic. Among the tasks of the Services is to measure dropout and withdrawal from studies in a more systematic manner, develop formalised ways to analyse reasons for dropout and withdrawal from studies, and make an action plan on how to lower the dropout rate.

### ***Preparation for Employment and Further Study***

The University provides its students with the knowledge and skills to become artistically flexible practitioners able to adjust to a wide range of societal contexts. As seen in the LOs for all study programmes, considerable emphasis is put on supplying students with competences, skills and insight into the professional environment of the arts. Generally, unemployment among IUA alumni is low. Although many alumni

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work in other fields, they are the backbone in the rapid growth of the arts and creative industries in Iceland and a vigorous local culture scene.

For the last three years, career counselling has been a part of the student counselling services. The career counsellor assists students in preparing for further education or work after the end of their studies. Short courses, lectures and interviews on issues related to life after graduation have been held and will continue to be developed in the near future.

Since 2009 the University has conducted a regular alumni survey, with the first graduating cohort from 2003. Findings from the latest survey, sent to alumni graduating in 2012 and 2015, indicated that 83% found their studies at the University to be a good preparation for their professional life and that 67% of alumni found their studies at the University to be a good preparation for further studies. The survey also enquires about what employment circumstances best describe the alumni employment status, indicating that 13% work entirely independently, 29% work as employees, and 38% work both independently and as employees simultaneously. Only 2% of alumni had no employment at the time of the survey.

### **Graduation**

Three graduation events take place each academic year: the main graduation in June and two others in September and January. Upon graduation students receive a graduation diploma, a transcript of records in Icelandic and English, and a diploma supplement – a precise description of competences acquired by students upon completion of their study programme. Furthermore, the supplement acknowledges student participation in the administration by listing committees and councils they have served on during the time of study. The diploma supplement increases the transparency of each study programme and facilitates student mobility within the EU.

### **Alumni**

The IUA Alumni Association was established in 2015. Since then, collaboration between the University and the Alumni Association has been enhanced to strengthen the relationship between current students and alumni. All graduates automatically become a member of the association. On graduation day, graduating students are welcomed into the association by its board members, who are present at the graduation ceremony. The association's agenda is to enhance the relationship between the University and its alumni, and to support networking and discourse on education and research in the field of the arts. It participates in various University events, including orientation week, Hugarflug (the University's annual research conference) and the University Day. Furthermore, the association has organised various events, such as artists' talks, the Alumni Day and workshops.

## **6.2 Student Support**

### **Student Counselling**

Student Counselling Services assists students with improving their study methods and efficiency. The main goal of the Student Counselling Services is empowering students to reach their personal, academic and career goals in relation to their studies. Students are supported through assistance with learning challenges and learning disabilities, mental health, communication with faculty and staff, and future visions and opportunities for further studies and work. Furthermore, an agreement has been made with the Reykjavík University whereby MA students in psychology, as part of their own RU study programme, offer group lectures to IUA students on

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issues like ADHD or sleep. Upon individual assessment by the student counsellor, students are in some cases offered free professional psychological assistance. During the pandemic, interviews have been entirely conducted through Teams. This has proved to be a positive experience and students will be able to choose whether they prefer online or onsite interviews from now on. Since the University is situated in many different buildings and counsellors do not always have good facilities to receive students, Teams can offer a positive alternative.

The Strategic Policy 2019–2023 reflects visions to enhance counselling services. In 2020–2021, the Student Counselling Services and the Project Manager in Quality and Teaching developed two surveys on students' experience during the pandemic. Survey findings from October 2020 indicate that 27% of students felt almost always or always mentally stable, able to concentrate easily and driven to finish their tasks. However, 44% feel sometimes and 29% feel almost never or never mentally stable. In light of these findings, a decision has been made to systematically improve delivery of teaching and students' wellbeing by offering workshops for teachers on online teaching flexibility. Such workshops will take into account students' domestic situations, students' flexibility with deadlines, a need to enhance IT support for students and teachers, increasing social life online with a so-called "Time-off" project, and enhancing student support on issues like resilience, time management and learning techniques.

Up until now, there has only been one student counsellor for the entire University, working part time in a 30% position. In 2020–2021 a new employee was recruited for a 20% position, for a total of 50% FTE in counselling services. This increase has enabled a significantly improved service to students. Furthermore, a booking system for appointments has been developed on the University website, facilitating access to the services. Additionally, a contract with the Department of Psychology at Reykjavík University (RU) has made workshops and courses available for IUA students. RU students in clinical psychology manage the courses, also offering group counselling and various workshops. Based on assessments by a student counsellor, the University furthermore offers psychological assistance to students, consisting of a refund for two appointments with a referred psychologist. The Student Counselling Services also provide support for students with special needs such as dyslexia or other learning disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to inform the student counsellor of their disability when enrolling into the University.

### ***Library and Information Services***

The University library hosts the largest specialist book and journal collection in the field of the arts in Iceland. It is open to the public, located in Laugarnes and Þverholt. The division of the collection into the two buildings is based on the location of departments, except that the collection for the performing arts is located in both buildings. The Þverholt location has facilities for both individual and group work, whereas the Laugarnes location has limited space for on-site work. Users are mostly IUA students and staff, but also include students from other educational institutions within fine art and teacher education at the University of Iceland, as well as professionals and scholars working in the fields of the arts, design and architecture.

The IUA collection is listed in Gegnir, the Union Catalogue of Icelandic Libraries, a database of books, journals, articles, music and visual material. At the end of 2020, the collection listed a total of 68,000 items, including the Artist Books collection with around 700 items. In addition to purchased items, the library receives numerous gifts on a yearly basis, either from other libraries or individuals.

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Purchased items are obtained according to requests from departments in conjunction with course syllabi, in addition to purchases of specialised items in each field. Furthermore, the library subscribes to numerous journals and magazines, most of which are in print form. Users have access to electronic journals through the Iceland Consortium for Electronic Subscriptions, to which the library subscribes along with 200 other institutions nationally. The library does not collect any e-books, but it subscribes to several electronic databases as well as to the streaming service Spotify.

The library actively participates in enhancing the University research culture by assisting University researchers, in addition to being involved in the implementation of a national information system for researchers named IRIS (Icelandic Research Information System; see Chapter 6 on institutional management of research). Furthermore, the library oversees the dissemination of research output in Open Access and in Open Science, an electronic repository for peer-reviewed articles published in open access among all HEIs and public research institutions in Iceland.

The library website provides information on its services and guidelines for resources, as well as facilitating user access to information and the collection. Students can access various guidelines on project work on the website, where they can also book an appointment with the library writing centre. Search engines are available on the website along with information on portals and repositories for available material, both printed and electronic.

Since Autumn 2020, the library has operated a writing centre for students in accordance with the institutional policy. The centre provides guidance and assistance through individual appointments, either on site or virtual, on issues including resources, references and bibliographies, templates for degree theses and technical issues related to layout in degree theses, in addition to advice on software like Turnitin and Zotero, a reference manager. The operations of the writing centre are currently being developed, and so far, library staff working in the centre have not been able to assist with the structure of degree theses and the development of research questions, or to provide guidance on writing and language in textual work.

### ***IT Services***

The Computer and Web Services provide service and assistance to all staff and students. Main services and operations include the management and maintenance of computer infrastructure and upkeep of computer labs and software updates. Printing services are centrally controlled and supported by the University service provider. IT services also assist students and staff in everyday problem-solving such as setting up computers and printers, connecting to networks and fine-tuning apps on their computers.

The University website, [www.lhi.is](http://www.lhi.is), is supported and hosted by an outside service provider. The University provides students and staff with MS Office 365 programmes free of charge and offers discounts to other programmes such as the Adobe CC suite and many others. Each system within the IT Services has a designated staff member who is responsible for development and maintenance.

### ***International Office***

The International Office (IO) oversees international collaboration at the institution. This entails participation in the Erasmus+ and Nordplus Higher Education programmes as well as other funding schemes. The IO is responsible for partnership

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agreements, student and staff mobility, participation in international collaboration projects, and strategic planning and development in the field of internationalisation in cooperation with departments. The IO gives guidance and support to students planning their mobility abroad. This is in the form of introductory meetings, but most importantly, the University webpages offer a roadmap of these opportunities as well as clear instructions on all processes from start to finish. Students can also choose to book appointments via these webpages for further guidance on selecting destinations or the final steps in preparing their mobility. Additionally, in collaboration with the Student Counselling Services, the IO offers a workshop on traineeship for graduates annually in May. This workshop brings attention to the value of training abroad, clarifies the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved, and gives practical advice on how to best prepare for the training.

### **Research Services**

The Research Services provide support for students with grant applications and consultation on funding possibilities, mainly the Student Innovation Fund. Furthermore, the Research Services oversee contracts and management of student participation in research projects hosted by the University.

## **6.3 Monitoring the Student Experience**

When monitoring the student experience, the University has developed several tools and measurements, qualitative as well as quantitative. As explained in Chapter 4.5, regular surveys and questionnaires inquire about student and alumni satisfaction, including teaching evaluations, surveys of graduating students and the alumni survey. Student satisfaction with courses is generally high, and surveys indicate that students' experience of teacher performance is generally positive, with responses to both inquiries averaging 4.5 (on a scale of 1–5). Other platforms assessing how students perceive their studies are annual meetings between students and the management, which offer a more qualitative picture of the student experience compared to the quantitative data gathered through the surveys.

### **Annual Heads of Department Meetings with Students**

The Heads of Department meet with students from each study programme every academic year to discuss course content, development of the programme, and other issues that students wish to discuss. The aim is to ensure that each Head of Department is informed about subject-specific issues that might not come across through teaching evaluations, and these meetings give students a possibility to discuss issues related to their studies as a whole.

### **Annual Rector's Meetings with Student Cohorts**

The Rector and the Director of Student Affairs meet with students in every department once a year. At these meetings, educational issues of concern to students are discussed. These include the organisation and content of study programmes, instruction received and experiences of the courses on offer, facilities and services, social activities, and interaction between students, teachers, and administration in general. Minutes from these meetings are shared with the Heads of Department and the Rector before being sent to all faculty members and the respective students. The main purpose of the meetings is to guarantee that the teaching and services comply with students' needs, in addition to ensuring students' direct access to the central administrative team.

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## 6.4 Processes for Student Claims and Ethical Issues

The formal channel for student complaints within the University is through the Grievance Committee on Student Rights. The Committee is the highest authority within the University on disciplinary cases and cases regarding student rights, such as the processing of applications, assessment, the arrangement of exams, the appointment of examiners, publication of grades, students' progress, the right to repeat exams, and expulsion. The Committee does not reassess exam results or the conclusions of teachers or examiners. The Committee has a mandate to confirm, amend or repeal the decisions of the Rector or Heads of Department in those instances where students believe their rights have been violated. The Committee's decisions are final. The Committee consists of three members: one Head of Department and two representatives of academic staff, appointed by the MC.

In addition, students have a number of informal channels to present their concerns, such as regular meetings with supervisors and Programme Directors. The University has published a formal Code of Conduct intended for students and staff as a reference guide in all its activities (see Chapter 6.4). The Code engages with three main issues: general communication within the University, communication with the wider society, and ethical conduct in regard to artistic practice, teaching and research. The revision of the Code in 2018 saw the addition of an article on penalties for violating the Code along with the appointment of an Ethics Committee, consisting of representatives of University employees. Furthermore, the University has developed a Contingency Plan for Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Harassment in the wake of the 2017 #metoo movement, in consultation with students, staff and external experts. The plan declares that violations of any sort will not be tolerated under any circumstances within the University, in addition to explaining terms and concepts as well as outlining procedures for notifications and penalties for violations. The Contingency Plan for Bullying was rewritten in 2017, with the aim to ensure that resources are in place for those who feel they have been violated.

**Reflection:** *The #metoo initiative from 2017 has carved out an important channel for student claims and concerns, and it has confirmed its significance in the context of moral conduct and communication within the University. It is important to maintain awareness of these processes and contingency plans amongst students.*

*Since 2017, there has been a major rise in awareness related to these issues. However, it is important to continue planning and to seek diverse ways of keeping the discussion alive. According to the Action Plan the University will digitise its educational programme and disseminate it through promotional videos, including its contingency plans. In the years before the #metoo revolution, staff training workshops had included issues such as communication boundaries between teachers and students and incorporated external advice from an ethicist and a psychologist.*

### Supporting Documents

- 6\_1 Code of Conduct
- 6\_2 Contingency Plan for Bullying
- 6\_3 Contingency Plan for Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Harassment
- 6\_5 Grievance Committee on Student Rights – Rules



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## 6.5 Student Equality

The University operates an Equality Committee and appoints an Equality Officer, in accordance with its Equality Policy and Action Plan. An equality programme has been in effect from 2019 with reference to the Equality Act and the Strategic Policy 2019–2023. The programme is approved by the MC and has been confirmed by the Icelandic Directorate of Equality. The role of the Equality Committee includes monitoring the status of equality issues within the University and formulating an equality policy and an equality programme. The Equality Officer has a seat on the Equality Committee and on the equality forum among all HEIs in Iceland, where all equality officers join forces on issues relating to equal opportunities in higher education. The Equality Officer is responsible for ensuring that the equality programme is accessible to staff and students and visible on the University website. The Equality Officer collects and publishes measurable data on the status of equality within the University and represents the Equality Committee in matters referred to the MC along with the Committee chair. The Equality Officer receives complaints relating to misconduct and is responsible for their formal processing within the Equality Committee.

In 2019 a change was made to the definition of gender, allowing prospective students to identify as female, male or non-binary when applying for studies rather than only female or male. The IUA is the first university in Iceland to take this step, with approximately 1% of students identifying as non-binary.

### Supporting Documents

- 6\_2 Contingency Plan for Bullying
- 6\_3 Contingency Plan for Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Harassment
- 6\_4 Equality Policy and Action Plan
- 6\_7 Survey on Bullying, Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Harassment – list of questions 2019

## 6.6 The Student Council

The Student Council went through significant reform in 2020. The SC consists of a minimum of one representative from each department, who also serves as chair in their respective departmental student association. The SC serves as a formal communication platform between the institutional management and the student body. It is the most important body that advocates and lobbies for student rights and student claims, such as the elimination of student fees. As such, the SC is an important vehicle for student engagement with the overall institutional management, creating a platform for active student involvement by appointing representatives to all major committees and councils across the institution. The SC also actively participates in promoting the University.

### Supporting Document

- 2\_5 Student Council Statutes

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## 6.7 Student Engagement in Decision-Making Platforms

Student input is fundamental to the continuous development of the teaching and learning environment. The University actively seeks to involve students in all its major decision-making bodies within the management structure, both at the departmental and institutional level. As discussed in Chapter 2.7, students have a representative on the Academic Council, Schools Councils and Departmental Councils as well as most cross-institutional committees, such as the Teaching Committee, the Equality Committee and the Environment Committee, and they are called in for meetings with the Research Committee when needed. Furthermore, student views and student engagement are strongly emphasised in the regular review of study programmes, as well as in the design of new ones.

**Reflection:** *Students recognise the importance of the opportunity to engage in decision-making platforms. However, participation is sometimes hard to fulfil, as students are concerned with workload and their participation coming at the cost of their studies and attendance.*



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# 7 Human Resources

This chapter gives an overview of the institutional approach to human resources management. First, it discusses HR policy, equality issues, code of conduct and contingency plans, as well as recruitment, induction and staff development of all staff. Secondly, it discusses academic positions in particular, with an emphasis on appointment and promotion.

## 7.1 Composition and Size of Permanent Staff

In October 2020, the total number of staff was 118 in 94.9 full-time positions.

	<b>Head count</b>	<b>Full-time positions</b>	<b>Female/Male</b>	<b>Full time/Part time</b>
<b>Academic staff</b>	71	56	42/29	38/33
<b>Support staff</b>	37	33.2	27/10	28/9
<b>Workshop/Tech labs staff</b>	10	5.7	4/6	2/8
<b>Total</b>	118	94.9	73/45	68/50

Table 11: Staff profile, October 2020.

## 7.2 Human Resources Policy

A new Human Resources Policy and Action Plan was proposed in 2020 as a sub-policy to the Strategic Policy 2019–2023. The main focuses are employee selection, equality, professional development, health and well-being, communication and participation in the University community, as well as retirement. The policy is accompanied by an action plan, including sub-plans for education and health protection. Further discussion on the Code of Conduct, equality and contingency plans is seen in chapters 6.4–6.5 and in the supporting documents below.

In the wake of Covid-19, the University established an emergency committee which has met regularly during the pandemic. Among actions taken were the creation of temporary rules on the rights and obligations of staff in relation to the pandemic.

The University adheres to Icelandic law on gender equality. It has developed an equal pay system based on its Equal Pay Policy in order to enforce current legislation prohibiting discriminatory practices based on gender. The Rector is responsible for the equal pay system and policy and ensures that the University operates in accordance with the law, while the Human Resources Manager is responsible for the implementation and regular update of the system. The University was awarded the Equal Pay Certificate in 2020, confirming that the Equal Pay Standard has been implemented as required by law. It will undergo an annual review two years after the award.

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**Reflection:** Before the new Human Resources Policy was implemented, there were many unrelated processes and procedures in place. These ranged from the induction of new staff and workshops on teacher training, to occasional lectures depending on staff requests and applications to internal funds for professional development.

The need for support among managers has been increasing as a result of the rapid organisational changes and challenges in the top managerial level. External consultants have been approached to meet that need.

#### Supporting Documents

- 6\_1 Code of Conduct
- 6\_2 Contingency Plan for Bullying
- 6\_3 Contingency Plan for Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Harassment
- 7\_4 Equal Pay Policy
- 6\_4 Equality Policy and Action Plan
- 7\_6 Human Resources Policy and Action Plan
- 6\_7 Survey on Bullying, Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Harassment – list of questions 2019

### **7.3 Employment and Induction of Staff**

The general policy of the University is to advertise vacancies. The Human Resources Manager is responsible for the employment process in collaboration with the respective managers. Jobs are advertised on the University website and promoted on social media and in professional associations where relevant. In some cases, vacancies are also advertised in newspapers and public employment websites. Applicants are invited for an interview with the HR Manager and the respective managers. In the case of academic appointment, qualified applicants are invited for an interview chaired by academic managers. For discussion on academic appointment, see Chapter 7.5.

### **7.4 Staff Development**

Opportunities for staff development consist of support from internal funds, the annual preparation day at the beginning of each academic year, Erasmus staff mobility (see Chapter 4.9), teacher training and workshops for researchers, as well as workshops on employment and the employment environment, such as stress management, first aid, project management and meeting protocols.

Since 2018 the University has organised writing workshops and training in research practices for academic staff. Furthermore, a course on university-level pedagogy is to be offered to academic staff in the coming academic year, with an emphasis on the teacher's role, pedagogical theory, the use of assessment and feedback, course schedules, syllabi and the marking of learning outcomes. The Teachers' Café is an informal platform for staff development and has been running since 2017. It offers a space for teachers to get together and discuss the two main components of their employment at the University: teaching and research. The Teachers' Café is meant to reinforce academic work and to support teachers in their staff development and continuing education. Each session presents topics or material for discussion.

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Academic staff with research time are eligible to apply for sabbaticals as part of their staff development (see discussion on sabbaticals in Chapter 8.5), as well as for research workshops and research training.

**Reflection:** *The Teachers' Café has proven valuable for teacher training; however, more teachers need to be engaged in these discussions. A strategy for more visible teaching and learning support, such as informal platforms, short intensive courses and comprehensive courses aimed at teacher support and development of learning and teaching, is essential for supporting teachers in making the shift from a numeric system to Pass/Fail assessment. In some study programmes an emphasis has been placed on collaborative teaching. This is one way of fostering a learning community amongst teachers that entails constant sharing and staff development.*

*In addition to the writing workshops and research workshops that have been offered regularly on a cross-departmental level, more formal support to research activity has likewise been developed in the past semesters. The implementation of a new approach to research evaluation systems places emphasis on a cross-departmental, peer-supported platform of dissemination as well as external benchmarking.*

### **Internal Funds for Staff Development**

The University operates two separate staff development funds, one for academic staff and one for support staff. The fund for academic staff development has been in place since the University was founded, with annual allocation amounting to 2,000,000 ISK. All academic staff are eligible to apply for funding, as are part-time lecturers who teach more than 200 hours per semester. The fund for support staff development was established in 2016, with annual allocation amounting to 300,000 ISK. All support staff are eligible to apply for funding. Allocations from both staff development funds take place once each semester.

### **Leave of Absence and Flexibility at Work**

Rules on leave of absence and flexibility at work were approved in 2016, with the aim to ensure equal opportunities for staff and transparency of decision-making. All permanent staff are eligible to apply for an unpaid leave of absence for a period of up to one year. For academic staff who have also been granted a sabbatical, the maximum time off work can amount to up to one year, including the leave of absence. Each month an average of 3–5 staff members, mostly academic staff, are on a leave of absence, mainly due to artistic practice. In addition to formal leaves of absence, staff members can apply for temporary absence from work where flexible hours are negotiated, e.g., in relation to studies or continuing education.

**Reflection:** *The possibility of leaves of absence has created more opportunities for staff development. At the same time, the experience during the last few years has shown that granting leaves of absence has had a major impact on organisational structure and managerial responsibilities, such as for Programme Directors and Heads of Department. Leaves of absence often lead to other staff taking on extra responsibilities, which in turn creates excessive workload for colleagues or a lack of overview on tasks.*

### Supporting Documents

- 7\_7 Leave of Absence and Flexibility at Work – Rules
- 7\_9 Staff Development Fund for Academic Staff – Rules
- 7\_10 Staff Development Fund for Support Staff – Rules

## 7.5 Measuring Staff Satisfaction

An annual Staff Satisfaction Survey was conducted in the period 2013–2019, and with the onset of Covid-19 it has been temporarily modified and tailored to accommodate staff conditions in relation to the current pandemic (Covid Staff Survey). Survey findings from 2013–2019 show high satisfaction with management, morale, flexibility and independence in the workplace, as well as with information flow, staff development and equality. Less satisfaction was detected on issues like workload, facilities and salaries. Staff satisfaction with facilities has increased again as a consequence of changes made to the working environment in 2017. Furthermore, the most recent survey showed higher satisfaction with workload, although there are still signs of staff experiencing workload as too heavy, especially among academic staff. It is hoped that recent changes made in detailed divisions of professional responsibilities will lead to further reduction in workload.

More detailed information on staff satisfaction is gathered through annual staff appraisals, where outcomes are used to improve the working environment and feed into the formation of further strategies in this regard. During Annual Staff Appraisals, managers invite their employees (academic and support staff) to discuss issues such as roles and responsibilities, performance, job satisfaction, management, communication, aims, continuing educational needs and staff development. The annual appraisal is a platform for employees to influence their own jobs and development and enables the manager to collaborate with employees on feedback and reaching goals.

### Supporting Documents

7\_3 Covid Staff Survey – list of questions

7\_8 Staff Appraisals – list of questions

7\_11 Staff Satisfaction Survey – list of questions

## 7.6 Academic Staff: Appointment, Roles and Promotion

The University seeks to employ high-level artists, designers and scholars who are active in their respective fields, with the aim to create a vibrant and dynamic community with close links to the professional field of the arts. Academic faculty consists of adjunct lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors and professors (Table 12). In addition, the University recruits a high number of part-time lecturers each year. Additional positions appointed by the Rector are honorary doctor, honorary professor, research professor, guest professor and research fellow. Since 2016, the University has appointed two research professors, one honorary doctor and one honorary professor. The University aims at having at least one research professor at any given time.

	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>DA</b>	<b>DAE</b>	<b>DD</b>	<b>DFA</b>	<b>DPA</b>	<b>DM</b>
Professors	10.9	1.4	0	0	3.1	2.4	4
Associate professors	14.5	1	0	5	2	3.5	3
Assistant professors	8.6	0	3	3.6	1	1	0
Adjunct lecturers	11.6	0	0.8	1.6	1.5	1.6	6.1
Guest professors	0.9	0	0	0	0	0	0.9

Table 12: Academic staff profile, FTE, October 2020.

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Faculty members are appointed in accordance with the Rules on Academic Appointments, with the exception of adjunct lecturers, who are recruited by Heads of Department and Deans. Vacant positions are advertised (with the exception of adjunct lecturers) and applications are evaluated by an external committee based on criteria stated in the Rules. Criteria for academic appointment are education, artistic practice, teaching experience, research experience and experience of professional engagement in the respective field. The Rules also state processes for appeals. Part-time lecturers are recruited by Heads of Department in collaboration with Deans and Programme Directors. A high number of part-time lecturers teach at the University each academic year, or approximately 500 in 2020, the equivalent of 30 full-time positions. In addition to teaching, part-time lecturers also supervise final projects or theses and examine final projects.

Rules on Academic Appointments underwent significant changes in 2014–2015. As a result of this reform, qualification criteria were defined for each academic position (assistant professor, associate professor, professor) and appointment periods were extended from 8 years to 10 years (4+4+2). At the intersection of each appointment period (4+4+2), academic staff can apply for promotion, primarily based on their artistic activity and research output. Applications for promotion are assessed by an external committee. In 2015, along with changes on Rules on Academic Appointments, a revision was made on other core documents describing the division of responsibilities and working procedures among academic staff (see supporting document below on Academic Positions), and formal procedures for sabbaticals were introduced. Furthermore, the revised rules in 2015 embedded flexibility for adjunct lecturers with extensive work experience at the University to be eligible for promotion, and in 2019 most of these individuals had been granted such promotion. Consequently, the rules were changed again so that external evaluation of qualification only takes place when positions are advertised and at the intersection of appointment periods for assistant professors and associate professors. The aim is to ensure the recruitment of the best possible candidate for each position.

In 2018–2019, an internal review of work schedules revealed an inconsistency in the division of responsibilities. The review indicated that time for administration was allocated differently both between and within departments, and that Programme Directors were in most cases allocated time for administration irrespective of student numbers. Consequently, 2020 saw some further revisions to the framework on Academic Positions: criteria for the definition of professional responsibilities were redefined, criteria were set on increased time for administration relative to student numbers, and the new position of Deans was included in the framework.

**Reflection:** *With the experience of the last few years, concerns have been raised on the criteria of teaching experience when evaluating applications for promotions. This is foreseen to be one of the topics in the revision of the Rules on Academic Appointment in the coming academic year.*

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**Reflection:** *The system on categorisation and validation of teaching has been practiced within the University since its establishment. Minor changes have been made throughout the years to increase clarity and transparency. However, academic staff have called for a revision of the system, raising particular concerns over the categorisation and validation of teaching. This will be addressed in the coming academic year parallel to the revision of the Rules on Academic Appointment and the framework on Academic Positions.*

Supporting Documents

7\_1 Academic Appointments – Rules

7\_2 Academic Positions

7\_5 Honorary Titles and Academic Guest Positions – Rules

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# 8 Management of Research

This chapter provides an overview of the institutional approach to the management of research. It discusses the University's strategic policy on research and benchmarking for research, it and describes the general research culture and recent stepping stones within institutional development of research, with an emphasis on internal evaluation of research output and impact. Furthermore, it discusses institutional investment and support for research, platforms for dissemination and linkages between teaching and research. Lastly, it articulates future visions for a doctoral programme in the arts.

## 8.1 Benchmark for Research

As the only HEI in the field of the arts in Iceland, the University is the sole entity responsible for research and research development in the arts in this country. Being at the forefront of knowledge enhancement and innovation in the arts in Iceland, the University benchmarks itself against renowned arts universities in the Nordic region, Europe and the US. The University is part of various networks of arts, design, architecture and arts education universities in Scandinavia and Europe (for example, ELIA, the European League of Institutes of the Arts, an organization of about 320 educational institutes in the arts in 47 European countries). The University has placed a higher priority on international collaborative research projects in recent years as a means to enhanced research activity and stronger relationships between teaching/learning and research of both staff and students.

The University has a representative on the QB advisory committee for research in higher education (REAC), which has proven invaluable as a platform of dialogue across local universities and as a source of information and support for development of research. Further discipline-specific support is provided by international collaborators and networks in the arts, e.g., the UniArts in Stockholm; the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme (NARP); the Arctic Sustainable Arts and Design (ASAD) of the UArctic Network; EDDA Norden, a network for Nordic and Baltic Higher Art Education; CUMULUS, an international association of universities and colleges of art, design and media; AEC, a European association of music conservatories; KUNO, a Nordplus network comprising 18 Nordic–Baltic fine art academies; and NORTEAS, the Nordplus Network for Nordic and Baltic Theatre and Dance Institutions of Higher Education.

## 8.2 Institutional Policy on Research

As stated in the University Strategic Policy 2019–2023 on research, the University aims to enhance relations between teaching and research as well as to develop a programme of doctoral studies in the arts. Emphasis is placed on obtaining more external funding for research projects and on enhancing research support services.



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The policy further calls for the establishment of a centralised Research Centre, an enhancement of internal cross-departmental collaboration, and deliberate instigation of research collaboration across local and international universities and the professional field.

The University values and understands the importance of research, as well as the variety of forms output can take both within and between diverse specialisations, disciplines and methods. Five departments have developed policies on research (see supporting document below), while the sixth department is currently developing one (the DA, established in Autumn 2020). Departmental policies speak directly to the institutional policy on research. Heads of Department are responsible for research policies and their implementation in collaboration with the Deans, who are responsible for their consistency and alignment with the institutional policy. The Research Committee presents 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 PM in research management.

#### Supporting Documents

2\_4 IUA Strategic Policy and Action Plan 2019–2023

8\_3 Departmental Research Policies

### **8.3 General Research Culture and Recent Stepping Stones**

The research culture within the University has taken some time to develop. However, some important goals and milestones have been met. There has been a considerable increase in investment in infrastructure, with numerous possibilities for internal funding for research, and a better-defined consensus about research as an academic activity within the institution.

The research environment is developing towards a more confident emphasis on the core research fields of the University. Evidence of this are the recent attempts to diminish any difference between academic staff who have theory as a main component of their teaching, and academic staff whose main responsibility is to work within the practice component of the studies.

Emphasis is placed on developing the teaching and research environment where staff specialisation is clearly grounded within their designated field, while also aimed at a more interdisciplinary approach, given that the different fields of study share certain core questions and methods. This can be seen as a development towards a more innovative, sustainable and up-to-date approach to teaching and research within the given fields. This can also be seen as an attempt to develop an academic environment where academic staff can establish a shared place for their teaching and research across the university.

Recent stepping stones in infrastructural development for research include:

- Further revisions of a formal internal evaluation system for research output, to be implemented in Autumn 2021 (see Chapter 8.4 below).
- A new position of Dean of SAD was implemented in early 2021. The Dean's role is to oversee and streamline institutional development in research and its management.
- Research project support from external funding bodies has grown considerably in recent years. 2021 will be a record year in this regard, with the first ERC Consolidators Grant hosted by the University.



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- Development of data definitions for registration of research output in connection with the implementation of ÍRIS, a national database for research activity at Icelandic universities and university institutions, under the auspices of MESCS. Roll-out set for Autumn 2021.
  - The IUA Research Fund was launched in Spring 2019.
  - Rules on sabbatical were implemented in 2015.
  - Writing workshops and research workshops have been organised wherein academic staff can discuss, train and exercise their skills on a cross-departmental level.
  - Research policies at the departmental level have emerged from within all departments.
  - The IUA Publication Fund was established in 2015.
  - A formal internal evaluation system for research output was first presented in 2014.

**Reflection:** *From the onset a strong emphasis has been placed on teaching within the University, and this has been limiting for the development of the research component of the academic environment. The infrastructure dedicated to research has thus been developing rapidly in recent years, causing a certain lack of stability and grounding. These shortcomings can at least in part be seen as growing pains that will hopefully be stabilised with the new organizational structure, which better defines roles and responsibilities.*

*The current institutional strategy calls for further integration of workshops, tech labs and studios as facilities for research activity. A new organisational structure for such facilities is currently under development. The aim is to establish a cross-departmental entity, independent of individual departments while accessible to all.*

## 8.4 Institutional Management of Research Output

The definition of formal parameters for research within the context of the University, first presented in 2014, has had significant impact on the University's research culture and institutional approach (see supporting document below on the Quality Framework for Research and Innovation in the Arts 2014). All faculty members with a research component in their employment contract account for their artistic and scholarly activities within a defined framework of assessment (see Chapter 7.5). In accordance with the institutional definition of research in the arts, a research output should always be presented with a written abstract alongside the work itself. The disseminated deliverables of the work can apply to any form, method and medium (artwork or writing). The parameters were formally activated in 2018 and have been revised continuously.

As of Autumn 2021, the University will be implementing a new evaluation system for research. This new approach has been developed by the Research Committee and the Dean of SAD as a response to shortcomings in the former system. Internationally recognised bibliometrics for research output in the arts are either non-existent or hard to come by. Given the need to develop an approach that would not only make it possible to assess the research output of staff, but also be a platform for enhancing the University's research environment, the new system makes use of peer review, self-evaluation and critical dissemination as main components in the evaluation. Thus, the aims of the new system are to:

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- Establish formal evaluation criteria that through and with critical peer discussion supports enhancement of research activity and general research culture within the University.
  - Enable the development of new research methodologies in the field of the arts.
  - Develop formal evaluation criteria where the quality of research is measured against the specific premises within each field, and where defined parameters of each project are seen as a point of departure in the evaluation process.
  - Develop a system of evaluation where critical peer review and benchmarking in the form of evaluation by external specialists and self-evaluation by the academic researcher are the key elements.

The new approach to research evaluation is a two-step system:

1) Annual internal dissemination: a department-level peer review and self-reflection in the autumn and annual interdisciplinary dissemination in the spring that provides a platform for further cross-disciplinary dialogue within the institution. In this manner the disciplinary-specific context of the research output of academic staff can be examined while also viewed in relation to interdisciplinary criteria and brought forward to a wider and more diverse critical audience.

2) A formal external evaluation process undertaken every three years for each academic researcher. This step consists of a written report by the researcher and a critical discussion with the respective Head of Department, Dean and an external expert. The aim of this step is to offer an opportunity for a critical peer-review: a self-evaluation by the researcher, and an external evaluation of the research output in accordance with a predetermined matrix. This new matrix is currently under development.

The aim of this revised evaluation system is to enhance research quality within the University and support further development of research culture within the institution. It makes the evaluation of research output more accessible and relevant to the fields of research in the arts, while enhancing engagement with other fields of research and society. The registration of research output forms a basis for evaluation of applications to internal funds (IUA Research Fund, IUA Publishing Fund), evaluation of applications for sabbaticals and evaluation of applications for academic promotion (for evaluation of applications for academic promotion, see Chapter 7.5).

**Reflection:** *The arrangement of limited tenure of academic staff (4+4+2) continues to be debated within the institution. Where some see it as a way of positively renewing the composition of academic staff and ensuring effective relations with the professional field, others see it as a major hindrance in further development of research, research culture and long-term research projects in the arts.*

*The former arrangement of internal evaluation of research output proved to be a shortcoming in such a small institution, especially given the close relationships of colleagues. The new evaluation procedure aims at making the best of the situation by establishing a platform for peer discussions on a regular basis, while also providing essential external benchmarking for research in the field. The aim of the new arrangement is furthermore to bridge a gap between the evaluation procedure for academic appointments and the defected system for evaluation of research output in the past few years, establishing a more open and transparent, enhancement-led system.*

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**Reflection:** *The international university community has increasingly questioned current systems of research evaluation and their relevance to society in recent years. The debate on how to best enhance research across academic disciplines and how to ensure its relevance and balance between quantitative and qualitative criteria (e.g., the Leiden Manifesto and DORA) emphasises the importance of developing a system that is fully based on the premises of the arts.*

*External support for research is based on quantitative measures. It is therefore inevitable that the University implements a system of evaluation for research output that identifies those elements.*

#### Supporting Documents

8\_1 Annual Registration of Research Output

8\_2 Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)

8\_7 Quality Framework for Research and Innovation in the Arts 2014

8\_13 The Leiden Manifesto

### **8.5 Institutional Investment in Research and Support for Research Activity**

Generally, assistant professors have 20% of their total working hours devoted to research, associate professors have 25% and professors 30%. Research professors have their full working hours devoted to research. The total amount of institutional investment in staff research time has been rising over the last few years, from an equivalent of 6.6 full-time positions in 2015 to 8 full-time position equivalents in the current academic year.

#### **Research Services**

The Research Services provide support to academic staff and students for grant application writing and consultation on funding possibilities. The PM in research management provides services to research projects hosted at the University, alongside the financial office (such as budget reports). The PM supervises the two internal funds for publication and research and manages the registration of research output of academic staff. The PM manages annual applications for sabbaticals and works with the Research Committee in its evaluations. The PM furthermore promotes online announcements for new projects, grant deadlines, research-related conferences and journals, and calls for contributions, as well as the setup of writing workshops offered to academic staff on a regular basis.

**Reflection:** *Rapidly increasing demands for research support services has posed challenges regarding workload of staff at the University Office in past semesters.*

#### **Internal Funds**

The University operates two internal competitive funds for research activity: the Research Fund and the Publication Fund. All academic staff with a defined research component in their employment contract are eligible to apply for a grant from the funds. Grants are awarded annually based on quality evaluations of the respective fund boards, which are composed of two members of academic staff and one

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external expert, all appointed for two years. The role of the IUA Research Fund and IUA Publication Fund is to promote the generation and development of knowledge in the fields of the arts and to support the dissemination of research output of academic staff (see supporting documents below). At the end of the project period, applicants shall account for their research output in the ÍRIS database. If the applicant has previously received a grant from the Fund for another project, a new application will only be considered upon a final project report and a budget closing.

### **Sabbaticals**

Sabbaticals are applied for on a competitive basis, with two sabbaticals awarded each year for the following autumn and spring semesters (starting in 2016). Applications are reviewed by the Research Committee and recommendations made to the Rector. The sabbatical lasts 85 business days, and staff members must have been active researchers at least three years before applying for the leave. Applications for sabbaticals have been growing in numbers during the last few years, which is an indicator of an enhanced focus on research within the University. The quality of applications has furthermore increased, with more staff applying than receiving sabbaticals. Upon the granting of a sabbatical, the faculty member and their immediate supervisor agree on its timing and discuss the setup for public dissemination of results and the delivery of a research report at the conclusion of the sabbatical. The faculty member submits a report on the context, methods and benefits of the project to their immediate supervisor and the PM in research management at the University Office no later than a month after the sabbatical is concluded. The University organises a public forum for discussion on the relevant faculty member's sabbatical project.

**Reflection:** *With the recent reform in the University management structure, Heads of Department will belong to the group of academic staff eligible to apply for sabbaticals, while previously they had enjoyed a contracted sabbatical leave for each of their two five-year contract periods. This will increase the competition even further. There are concerns that to be able to continue to enhance research, the number of annual sabbatical placements will need to be increased from the current number available to the 50 eligible members of academic staff.*

*There has been a very positive increase in institutional investment in research, both regarding working hours by academic staff and regarding the research environment. There is still some imbalance in the external support offered to academic staff, internal funding by the University, and funding for research that the University receives from the funding partner (the state). This can in part be explained by the novelty of the field and the relatively rapid growth rate. It is highly important that the research environment continues to grow in terms of financial support, and that the University continues to grow as a research institution.*

*The rapid increase in research activity in recent years brings out the challenges of insufficient research time available to academic staff compared to other universities in Iceland. This is a particularly challenging situation when it comes to research collaboration between the local universities.*

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**Reflection:** *The further development of support and enhancement of the research environment will not solely hinge upon additional funding, but also on the enhancement of infrastructures that are already in place, such as the workshops, tech labs and Student Services, in such a way that it contributes to the development of a stronger research culture.*

*The increase in research activities of staff and students and hosting of large-scale research projects calls for further internal and external support and expertise in research management. Enhanced collaboration and bolstering of research services, library and information services and the International Office would provide further support to research activities of staff and students.*

#### Supporting Documents

8\_11 Sabbaticals – Rules

8\_5 Publication Fund – Rules

8\_6 Publications Funded by the IUA Publication Fund

8\_8 Research Fund – Rules

8\_9 Research Projects Funded by the IUA Research Fund

## **8.6 Research Impact**

Researchers working within the field of the arts most commonly make use of some of the methods, approaches and rationale developed within relevant fields. Therefore, the research output is most often disseminated and made available in ways that are more accessible to the public than research within other academic disciplines. It is especially noteworthy that the societal impact is demonstrably higher than in most other academic fields of research. However, this does not reflect funding for research in the arts, as the MESC funding model for research in Higher Education does not weigh the factor of social impact. The University definition of research impact considers public recognition, such as awards, reviews in professional publications, citations in a professional context, commissions and invitations to present or perform work in a recognised venue. It furthermore considers the scope of the research and its relations to the community, and whether the context further enhances its relevance and exposure.

Some progress has been made regarding acknowledgement of research in the arts by competitive public funding bodies in Iceland in recent years, and the impact of artistic research within the academic field in Iceland is increasingly being acknowledged as well. The arts have entered the category of humanities in the Iceland Research Fund (now referred to as the External Panel for Humanities and the Arts), with the first two grants being allocated to research projects hosted by the University in 2018 and in 2019. The first EU ERC consolidators grant will be hosted by the University in 2021–2026. In 2019, the Rector became a member of the Icelandic Science and Technology Policy Council, chaired by the Prime Minister of Iceland. The University has increasingly sought external funding for research projects and collaboration with other universities, as well as funding through the Nordic and European grant systems. In the past few years there has been a steady increase in research and collaborative projects hosted by the University or otherwise engaged by academic staff. A pivotal milestone for research in the arts was reached in late 2020 when the European Research Council awarded Dr Thor Magnusson (Research Professor in the DM) an ERC Consolidators grant for his project *Intelligent Instruments: Understanding 21<sup>st</sup> Century AI through Creative Music Technologies (INTENT)*.

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Given the relatively few research projects with external funding hosted at the University, the annual fluctuations in funding amounts are considerable. In 2018–2019 the annual funding was 19,899,000 ISK; the following academic year it rose to 42,286,500 ISK, while coming down to 7,388,200 ISK in 2020–2021. This coming year of 2021–2022 will be a record year for external funding with the commencement of the five-year ERC-funded research project.

**Reflection:** *The relationship between research and the arts as a field of study is more variable than in most other disciplines. The impact of research is therefore best understood in terms of individual projects, rather than in sweeping overviews of the respective field of study.*

#### Supporting Documents

8\_4 Examples of collaborative research projects with IUA staff participation

8\_10 Research Projects Hosted by the IUA with External Funding

### 8.7 Relationship to Teaching

With few exceptions, all academic staff are actively engaged in research, ensuring a direct connection between current development in the respective fields and the learning environment. One of the topics addressed in the annual registration of research output pertains to the relationship between research and teaching. All students are exposed to research and its methods in the arts from the very beginning of their studies, culminating in the graduate study programmes that have been firmly established by now within the institution. The logical next step is to look towards developing a programme of doctoral studies in the arts, as well as instigating and hosting more local and international research projects where students can gain first-hand experience with various topics of research and latest developments in their field. All research projects hosted by the University have included participation of several MA students and recent graduates.

In the past years, students at both undergraduate and graduate levels have had high success rates in grant support for summer research and innovation projects from the Icelandic Student Innovation Fund. The projects are evaluated based on novelty in relation to knowledge in their respective field. Emphasis is placed on independent and professional work by the student under the supervision of a specialist, most commonly a member of academic staff, alongside institutions and companies. Selected projects are nominated for the Presidential Innovation Awards each year. Students have received such nomination 11 times in the past 15 years, and four times they have received the awards: in 2011, 2015, 2016 and 2018.

**Reflection:** *There is a growing awareness amongst both academic staff and students in regard to the important relationship between teaching and research. One of the factors academic staff have to account for in their dissemination of research output is the link between those two aspects of their academic work.*

*The setup of the pedagogical workshop for teaching staff will offer them the possibility of conducting action research on teaching methods within their respective field of expertise.*



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## 8.8 Institutional Platforms for Dissemination of Research

The annual University conference on research in the arts, Hugarflug (e. *Imagination*), has proven to be a fruitful ground for open dialogue that enhances the relationship between teaching, learning and research across the University. The conference furthermore invites contributions from experts in other fields of research and studies, and provides public engagement with open and free access. This year MA students entered a joint cross-departmental course, Þverlínur (e. *Intersections*), a seminar during the week following the conference where students and teachers discuss and critically reflect on selected events and themes presented.

Several departments have already established an online journal for research in their respective field. A cross-departmental web journal on research in the arts would be an important tool to enhance the research profile of academic staff and promote the University as a research institution.

**Reflection:** *A priority for the new SAD is to establish a common platform for presentations and dissemination of research projects conducted by academic staff and MA students, as well as to seek ways to further enhance the impact of current research on teaching and learning.*

## 8.9 Future Visions for a PhD Study Programme in the Arts

International advancement of research in the arts as well as the developing culture of research at the University in recent years confirm the need to develop doctoral studies in the arts. The vision is to develop a small joint study programme running across all study subjects, possibly in collaboration with international HEIs in the arts, other universities in Iceland as well as local cultural institutions. Emphasis will be placed on developing a programme that unites international benchmarking with locally specific circumstances and characteristics. The vision is supported by “The Florence Principles on the Doctorate in the Arts,” published by ELIA in 2016.

**Reflection:** *Development towards awarding a doctoral degree in the arts is contingent on further cross-departmental enhancement of the MA-level studies. Successful development of a third cycle degree in the arts is highly dependent on the quality of MA-level studies, which will remain a backbone for developing research and advanced practices in the fields of arts, architecture and design, and a more common exit degree.*

*Currently PhD positions can only be conducted in collaboration with other universities as hosting institutions. This has posed limitations to arts students’ engagement with research projects hosted at the University and reduced the impact of research in the arts, architecture and design in higher education in Iceland. On the other hand, this is a strong incentive for the University to start the process of preparing an application to award third-cycle degrees in the arts.*



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# 9 Managing Enhancement

This chapter illustrates an overview of tasks the University has identified as enhancement priorities in the coming years. The tasks have emerged out of the self-evaluation process and the combined effort of staff and students in compiling the reflective analysis. In addition, the MC undertook a SWOT-analysis on the Strategic Policy as part of the process, identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges in each section on learning and teaching, research, relations to society and organisation. The following tasks have been prioritised considering their essential relations to the current Strategic Policy as well as their overarching impact on all University operations:

- a. Quality enhancement.
- b. Implementation of the School of Academic Development.
- c. Revision of regulatory framework for academic employment and the academic working environment.
- d. Future visions for facilities.

## 9.1 Quality Management

The priorities in the next two years within quality management will be to further enable the implementation and follow-up of the Quality Policy; to enhance general awareness and knowledge of quality issues among staff and students; and to continue supporting students, staff and the management in their participation in quality work. These goals will be reached by:

- Completing the implementation of the Quality Handbook and promoting the use of formalised and streamlined procedures in daily tasks.
- Expanding the follow-up on policies and actions plans, including the alignment of departmental strategies with institutional strategy.
- Systematically develop key performance indicators and establish a dashboard for assessing and disseminating University performance.
- Reinforcing the collection and use of key statistics and support managers in using KPIs in decision-making processes.
- Working towards increasing student engagement in committees and councils, in collaboration with the Student Council.
- Coordinate the collection of data with key statistics defined by the Quality Board.

The Quality Manager is responsible for quality enhancement across the institution. The tasks above are foreseen to be completed in Spring 2023. Subsequently, they will be maintained systematically with the continuing development of systems and infrastructure and the self-sustainable training of staff.

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## 9.2 Implementation of the School of Academic Development

The University's strengths lie in the proximity of and cross-fertilisation between artistic subfields, the capable expertise of academic staff, the small size of the institution, the intimate learning community and students' access to teachers. There has been a tendency to prioritise obligatory courses at the cost of electives, which, in turn, has diminished student-centred learning and students' flexibility to shape their own study trajectories. With the establishment of the three new Schools, a vision to coordinate study structures and timetables across departments and study programmes and to increase electives will be realised, enabling all students to engage in interdisciplinary studies and to further facilitate cross-collaboration between subfields.

Due to the small size of the University and its numerous study programmes, many academic staff members are employed part-time, and the number of part-time lecturers is high. Part-time lecturers are essential in creating close ties with the professional field of the arts, although some have little teaching experience or pedagogical training. The same applies to many employed academic staff members, who are recruited because of their expertise in artistic practice. Consequently, the University has emphasised teacher training and pedagogical courses during the last few years, but a further systematic enhancement is foreseen. In addition, the rapid growth and development in research has created a discrepancy in funding, infrastructure and support for research activity. Time devoted to research is generally low in employment contracts and only a few sabbaticals can be granted each year. Research services and support have been low in human resources, and the shortage of necessary funding to build research infrastructure has limited the development of research, including facilities, IT systems and equipment. The University recognises the urgency to systematically coordinate departmental research strategies with institutional strategy, as well as the need to develop tech labs and workshops as a platform for research. Furthermore, provisions to enhance the integration of research and teaching is underway.

With the establishment of a Centre for Teaching and Research, foreseen in 2021–2022 under the auspices of the SAD, future challenges in the development of teaching and research are foreseen to be met. The Centre is meant to enhance support for academic staff in their teaching and research activities. Ways to enhance and coordinate tech labs and workshops across departments will be explored, as well as possible synergies between the International Office, the Library and Information Services and the new SAD. The main goal of the Centre in relation to teaching will be to further enhance teacher support and teacher training as well as to provide continued support to the current transition from numerical grades to Pass/Fail assessment. Furthermore, the Centre is seen as a platform for coordinating the implementation of the University policy on teaching and Teaching Handbook. The Centre will improve the institutional platform for formal evaluation of research output, foster internal discourse on research and opportunities for external funding, and form a policy on local and international collaborative projects with the aim to create flexibility in work schedules for staff to engage in such projects. Lastly, the Centre will collaborate with the Library and Information Services on the implementation of the national ÍRIS database for research output, ensuring the appropriate preservation of research projects and dissemination of results of staff and students.

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The appointment of the Dean of SAD only recently took place, in early 2021. Implementation of the School into the institutional organisational structure is currently in progress. The Dean has a leading role in the development of teaching, research and academic processes in consultation with other leading managers, such as the Rector, Deans, Heads of Department, Programme Directors and Directors at the University Office, as well as representatives of the student body. Priorities for the next five years are:

- Continue the enhancement and development of graduate study programmes. Further develop and build on good practice with regular revision of study programmes in accordance with the University Quality management system. Responsibility: Quality Manager, Deans, Heads of Department.
- Work towards interdisciplinary goals. Implementation: From Autumn 2021 onwards. Responsibility: Dean of SAD and Rector.
- Establish a Centre for Teaching and Research. Implementation: Academic year 2021–2022. Responsibility: Dean of SAD and Rector.
- Preliminary development towards the establishment of a doctoral study programme (a PhD in the Arts). Initiation and appointment of a steering group in Autumn 2021. Responsibility: Dean of SAD, Rector.

### 9.3 Revision of Academic Employment, Positions and Roles

The recent years have seen rapid institutional growth, particularly in relation to teaching and research, parallel to increased external demands on quality management and administration. Furthermore, ongoing collaborative projects have never been as numerous, and University activities and projects create attention in the local as well as the international context. The University is a knowledge institution and its rapid growth is the fruit of its rich student and staff body, although it has experienced some obstacles and challenges due to this fast development. From its establishment, the University has been underfunded. This has created limitations in relation to staffing and human resources, which, in turn, creates excessive workload and less staff satisfaction. The University recognises the need to continue the ongoing revision process on academic employment with a thorough approach to support the progressive work already taking place. To meet these needs, the University has identified the following tasks for the next academic year:

- Undertake a holistic revision of academic positions with the active participation of staff on the institutional regulatory framework, e.g., external evaluation of academic qualifications, evaluation of research output and a revision of the categorisation and validation of teaching.
- Complete the implementation of recent organisational changes where a clearer distinction between administration and artistic direction is made for the roles of Deans and Heads of Department.

The Director of Human Resources in collaboration with the Rector and the Deans are responsible for this task, which is foreseen to be completed in February 2022.

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## 9.4 Future Visions for a New University Building

The University is a small and young institution with the same legal and professional obligations as any other university in Iceland. However, basic funding for the development of an appropriate building has never been part of fiscal contributions from the MESK. Instead, the University has been run with costly preliminary and temporary solutions since its establishment, partly financed by the MESK fiscal contribution on teaching and research. Additionally, long distances between departmental buildings and the lack of adequate facilities and infrastructure continue to be a threat to quality and only diminish effectiveness, productivity and the social impact the University could have at an even greater scale. Consequently, the University has already begun its initiative on adapting to a new future building, where all departments are housed under one roof. This initiative involves:

- Combining tech labs and workshops belonging to separate departments into one single administration. Implementation: Autumn 2020 and Spring 2021. Responsibility: Managing Director and Dean of SAD.
- Mapping of student needs from all departments in relation to accessibility to tech labs and workshops across study subjects. Implementation: Autumn 2021. Responsibility: Director of tech labs and workshops.
- Creating a team of departmental project managers working as a combined unit across all departments, providing services and support at a cross-institutional level instead of concentrating on separate departments only. Implementation: Autumn 2020 and Spring 2021. Responsibility: Team leader for the PM team.
- Enhancing synergies between the tasks of departmental PMs and departmental service coordinators in order to create a stronger unit and a more effective production team. Implementation: Autumn 2021. Responsibility: Team leader for the PM team, Managing Director.
- Developing a feasibility study on the merging of separate departmental coordinators into one single unit for all departments. This work will be revised in Autumn 2021. Responsibility: Director of Academic Services, Director of the University Office.
- The digitalisation of procedures is underway as an action towards the coordination of internal operations and processes. This will be further enhanced in the years to come.

During the last few years, the University management has made an effort to bring a new building into being. A thorough needs analysis has been made twice, in 2007 and 2019; the latter is now going through revision. In addition, an active dialogue with the MESK and city authorities has been maintained during this government's electoral period. The entire University operations and activities have been reorganised with the aim of adapting to cohabitation under one roof. The recent organisational changes are an example of this, with the establishment of the three new Schools as a fundamental action in reinforcing the learning environment and support for staff.

One of the main strengths of the University is the remarkable interest among the community in its operations and activities. The public has access to all events through the Graduation Festival, one of the biggest art festivals in the county, as well as through the Open IUA and numerous other public events taking place throughout each academic year. There is increasing interest in collaboration with the University from various social groups, public institutions, businesses and municipalities, with the newest request being an IUA branch in Akureyri (the

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“capital” of north Iceland). Furthermore, international interest in collaboration is also increasing, with many international collaborative projects already ongoing. International relations and participation in subject-specific networks is one of the University’s strongest activities, and the University recognises the need to further maintain these in accordance to good internal practice and international standards. Lastly, current students and alumni have a good reputation and receive well-deserved attention for their excellent work.

In order to further enhance its good practice, the University has developed in numerous ways since its establishment some twenty years ago. To continue to support and contribute to the national cultural scene, the University finds it urgent to create one building for all departments where a permanent environment for students and staff can be accommodated. With a new building, the student learning environment would radically change in that all artistic subdisciplines would meet under one roof, creating opportunities for interdisciplinarity through learning, teaching and research, as well as a hub for the creative industries in Iceland. Further steps towards a new building are:

- The appointment of a Building Committee, Spring 2020. Responsibility: Rector and IUA Board.
- Developing a designated non-profit organisation for the financing plan of the new building. Implementation: Autumn 2021. Responsibility: Rector and Managing Director.
- Financing the development and execution of a new building. Implementation: Autumn 2021 and Spring 2022. Responsibility: IUA Board, Rector and Managing Director.

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## 10 Concluding Remarks

**The Iceland University of the Arts is still a young university where an effort is made to develop learning and teaching parallel to the needs of the professional field of the arts at any given time. The University is considered a national institution, and therefore it is important to be able to meet the strong demands made on the University as a leading institution in the artistic cultural life of the nation, whether in relation to study programmes, research in the arts and cultural heritage or global social challenges.**

In this way, the University has had a leading role in introducing the value of the arts and the creative industries in societal discourse in Iceland, in addition to sustaining and promoting the value of the arts and the creative industries in the overall educational system in Iceland.

The creative industries have now become a fundamental feature of the Icelandic economy, just like in most other benchmarking countries. The growing financial impact the creative industries have had on our culture and economy cannot be overlooked, whether through artistic practice itself or innovation in other industries built on the grounds of the arts and design. Consequently, the University is an active agent in the development of the arts and education in society, as well as playing an important role in public policy-making at the governmental and the municipal level. University staff are prominent in public discourse, including in the media and on committees and councils, which shows the University's driving force within the national context. In addition, the University's growing body of alumni put their mark on the cultural scene every year.

In the recent years, the University has conducted its enhancement plan according to findings and suggestions emerging from the previous Quality Board-led external review within QEF1. This has resulted in a reinforced working environment for students and staff, has strengthened collaborations with other institutions both nationally and internationally, and has created a solid base for research activity which is already influencing the University.

The work described in this reflective analysis has already had a significant impact on the University due to the vast consultation process, involving academic staff, support staff and students. Furthermore, the process of self-evaluation has sharpened the University's approach to its strategic policy, aims and action plans at all levels. The production of this reflective analysis has been undertaken parallel to some major organisational changes with the simultaneous implementation of the three new Schools, in addition to the organisational reform at the University Office. This work is still in progress, and with more experience through the implementation phase the transition will serve its aims. Here, the main focus will be on internal communication and the establishment of the new School of Academic Development, to be developed within the platforms of the Management Council and the Academic Council.

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After just over twenty years of operations, the University has now created a fully developed organisational structure, earned an excellent reputation and has become an extensive societal driving force. It has recruited an excellent body of staff and attracted talented students, who upon graduation have a significant impact on their fields, both in Iceland and abroad.

This achievement for Icelandic education and culture has been accomplished despite the lack of adequate facilities, equipment and other necessary working conditions for the University to adhere to the standards and criteria expected of it, compared to, for instance, the benchmarking universities in the Nordic countries. The University now stands at a turning point where an appropriate building, with adequate and professional facilities, has become an absolute necessity if it is to live up to its expectations to the fullest.



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# 11 Supporting Documents

Below is an overview of the supporting documents necessary for the reading of this reflective analysis. They are listed in the corresponding sequence of how they appear in each chapter.

## **1 Introduction**

1\_1 Timeline and Participants in the Self-Evaluation Process

## **2 About the Institution**

2\_1 Educational Programmes – Overview

2\_2 IUA Charter

2\_3 IUA Rules 2020–2021

2\_4 IUA Strategic Policy and Action Plan 2019–2023

2\_5 Student Council Statues

## **3 Learning From Previous Reviews**

3\_1 DAE SER and Action Plan

3\_2 DDA SER and Action Plan

3\_3 DFA SER and Action Plan

3\_4 DM SER and Action Plan

3\_5 DPA SER and Action Plan

3\_6 Follow-up Report (2016)

3\_7 Mid-Term Progress Report (2019)

3\_8 QB Review Report for IWR in QEF1 (2015)

3\_9 Quality Management System and Quality Policy

## **4 Safeguarding Standards**

4\_1 Alumni Survey – list of questions

4\_2 Design and Approval of New Programmes – Procedure

4\_3 Design and Approval of New Programmes – Template

2\_1 Educational Programmes – Overview

4\_4 Erasmus Charter Principles

4\_5 Guidelines for Curriculum Writing

4\_6 International Collaborative Projects

4\_7 International Partnerships and Networks

4\_8 International Strategy 2020–2025 and Action Plan

4\_9 Language Policy

4\_10 Learning Outcomes – BA and MA

4\_11 Periodic Review of Programmes – Procedure

4\_12 Periodic Review of Programmes – Template

4\_13 Privacy Policy

4\_14 Public Relations Policy

3\_9 Quality Management System and Quality Policy

4\_15 Records and Information Policy

4\_16 Survey Among Graduating Students – list of questions

4\_17 Teaching Evaluation – list of questions

4\_18 Teaching Evaluation for Private Lessons – list of questions

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- 5 Case Study: Pass/Fail Assessment System**
- 5\_1 Alumni Survey for Case Study – list of questions
  - 5\_2 Assessment Criteria – DPA
  - 5\_3 Course Assessment – DFA
  - 5\_4 Diploma Supplement
  - 5\_5 Focus Group Interviews for Case Study – topics and questions
  - 5\_6 Testimony for DS – DPA
- 6 The Student Learning Experience**
- 6\_1 Code of Conduct
  - 6\_2 Contingency Plan for Bullying
  - 6\_3 Contingency Plan for Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Harassment
  - 6\_4 Equality Policy and Action Plan
  - 6\_5 Grievance Committee on Student Rights – Rules
  - 6\_6 Public Relations Policy
  - 2\_5 Student Council Statutes
  - 6\_7 Survey on Bullying, Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Harassment – list of questions 2019
- 7 Human Resources**
- 7\_1 Academic Appointments – Rules
  - 7\_2 Academic Positions
  - 6\_1 Code of Conduct
  - 6\_2 Contingency Plan for Bullying
  - 6\_3 Contingency Plan for Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Harassment
  - 7\_3 Covid Staff Survey – list of questions
  - 7\_4 Equal Pay Policy
  - 6\_4 Equality Policy and Action Plan
  - 7\_5 Honorary Titles and Academic Guest Positions – Rules
  - 7\_6 Human Resources Policy and Action Plan
  - 7\_7 Leave of Absence and Flexibility at Work – Rules
  - 7\_8 Staff Appraisals – list of questions
  - 7\_9 Staff Development Fund for Academic Staff – Rules
  - 7\_10 Staff Development Fund for Support Staff – Rules
  - 7\_11 Staff Satisfaction Survey – list of questions
  - 6\_7 Survey on Bullying, Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Harassment – list of questions 2019
- 8 Research**
- 8\_1 Annual Registration of Research Output
  - 8\_2 Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)
  - 8\_3 Departmental Research Policies
  - 8\_4 Examples of collaborative research projects with IUA staff participation
  - 2\_4 IUA Strategic Policy and Action Plan 2019–2023
  - 8\_5 Publication Fund – Rules
  - 8\_6 Publications Funded by the IUA Publication Fund
  - 8\_7 Quality Framework for Research and Innovation in the Arts 2014
  - 8\_8 Research Fund – Rules
  - 8\_9 Research Projects Funded by the IUA Research Fund
  - 8\_10 Research Projects Hosted by the IUA with External Funding
  - 8\_11 Sabbaticals – Rules
  - 8\_12 The Florence Principles
  - 8\_13 The Leiden Manifesto