PXL University of Applied Sciences and Arts

QUALITY ASSESSMENT REPORT

English translation of the original Dutch report

Bachelor of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten

Master of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten

Master of Arts in Visual Arts

1, 2 & 3 December 2025

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Introduction

This report presents the reflections, evaluations, and recommendations resulting from the quality assessment of the *Bachelor of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten* (Dutch programme | 180 ECTS | FQF 6), the *Master of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten* (Dutch programme | 60 ECTS | FQF 7), and the *Master of Arts in Visual Arts* (English programme | 60 ECTS | FQF 7) at PXL University of Applied Sciences and Arts. This quality assessment aims to support the programmes in their quality assurance and improvement and forms part of the institutional quality assurance system of PXL University of Applied Sciences and Arts.

The *Bachelor of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten*, the *Master of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten* and the *Master of Arts in Visual Arts* are part of the PXL-MAD department and were evaluated on 1, 2 and 3 December 2025 by a team of independent experts. The committee was composed as follows:

- Wim Hoste, Director of the International Training Centre, Ghent University
  Audit and education expert – chair
- Koenraad Jonckheere, Professor of Northern Renaissance and Baroque Art, Ghent University
  Subject-matter expert – member
- Denise Castermans, Designer of puppetry, costumes and props, Cirq Friq, and Project manager for contextual programming, Bonnefantenmuseum
  Professional field expert – member
- Wouter Polaris, Fine Arts student, Sint Lucas Antwerp
  Student – member

Andreas Smets, policy advisor quality assurance at VLUHR KZ, served as the secretary of the panel.

The committee focused on the following quality characteristics:

Bachelor of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten (Dutch)	Master of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten (Dutch)	Master of Arts in Visual Arts (English)
QC4 Curriculum (selected by the programme team)	QC4 Curriculum (selected by the programme team)	QC4 Curriculum (selected by the programme team)
QC8 Achieved Learning outcomes (determined by the institution)	QC8 Achieved Learning outcomes (determined by the institution)	QC8 Achieved Learning outcomes (determined by the institution)
QC10 Integration of Education in Research (determined by the institution)	QC10 Integration of Education in Research (determined by the institution)	QC10 Integration of Education in Research (determined by the institution)
QC2 Educational Concept (selected by the panel)	QC2 Educational Concept (selected by the panel)	QC2 Educational Concept (selected by the panel)
QC6 Admission, Progression and Completion Policy (selected by the panel)	QC6 Admission, Progression and Completion Policy (selected by the panel)	QC6 Admission, Progression and Completion Policy (selected by the panel)

** QC: Quality characteristic*

Findings

General considerations

« *Déjà vu, pas encore vu et du jamais vu.* »

The previous quality assessment report of the Bachelor and Master of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten and the Master of Arts in Visual Arts dates from 2020. It formulated several challenges and recommendations that the programmes needed to address in order to achieve visible and necessary quality improvements. Due to the lack of structural follow-up, the committee experiences a strong sense of déjà vu. This should not be taken to imply that the programmes have stood still in recent years, but the committee highlights largely the same areas of concern as six years ago. This undeniably has a negative impact on certain aspects of quality, which is particularly regrettable.

Nevertheless, the programmes demonstrate a clear ambition for the future, although this is still in the process of being developed. The programmes offer a varied and subject-specific curriculum of solid quality. The vast majority of the team are competent staff members with diverse areas of expertise. There is also a strong empathetic commitment towards the students, with attention to both their artistic and personal development. There is strong direct communication between students and lecturers. This benefits the guidance and monitoring of study progress, yet it also entails disadvantages, including the absence of structurally embedded communication and guidance that relies on personal interactions. In panel interviews, students and alumni repeatedly mention the accessibility of the lecturers and the small scale of the programmes as strengths. The learning environment is described as warm, safe, close-knit, and welcoming. This, too, is an important asset in the arts sector.

The committee is aware that the programmes are (or have been) in transition and that changes are currently being implemented through the programme revision, as well as through adjustments in the governance of the programmes. However, transition should not be used as an argument to ignore feedback from internal and external stakeholders. The committee notes that the programme teams strive to operate according to a democratic decision-making process, in which shared ownership and professionalism are central. This offers lecturers significant artistic and academic freedom, but at the same time creates risks when general policies are not embedded in day-to-day practice. Remarkably, during the panel interviews, little self-critical reflection was expressed, and regarding certain topics raised by the wider student community (such as exams, juries, project weeks…), the committee observed a rather defensive attitude.

The committee observes a gap between the programme's ambitious objectives and its current achievements, particularly as experienced by students, alumni, and the professional field. The absence of purposeful steering based on a shared vision of teaching practices leads to variation in educational quality across specialisations and studios. The programme relies heavily on the individual initiative and commitment of lecturers, without sufficient structural follow-up or monitoring. As a result, effective methods are not always sustainably embedded, leading to inconsistencies across different components of the programme.

Students are aware of these variations and often perceive them as unfair. In addition, they report organisational issues, for example in the form of insufficient internal communication. Delays and inconsistencies frequently occur in communication about practical matters such as timetables, exam schedules, and workshops. Within the programme, this limited predictability is sometimes justified as inherent to an art school context. However, students indicate that responsibilities for coordination are

unclear, while lecturers similarly lack clear guidance on internal communication rules and expectations.

In this regard, the committee makes the same observations as during the first quality assessment in 2020, which is a cause for concern.

Du jamais vu.

In contrast, there is a new and state-of-the-art infrastructure. The equipment available to the programmes is of high quality and offers significant opportunities for teaching and research. The fact that all studios and workspaces are housed under one roof is perceived as highly positive. The existing infrastructure, expertise, and dedication of the team provide the programmes with exceptionally strong (*pas encore vu*) opportunities to realise their ambitions and to grow into top-tier arts programmes.

The committee wishes to emphasise that it is the responsibility of those in charge of the programmes to systematically and structurally safeguard the quality of education within the infrastructural framework of the new building. There is a clear need for guidance from management (both the institution and the department) to provide the programme team with tools and support, as well as to create clarity regarding tasks, duties, and responsibilities of lecturers, and to intervene where necessary. The programmes would greatly benefit from creating a safe environment in which it is possible to hold one another accountable for good teaching, for task distribution, and for responsibilities.

QC2 'Educational Concept'

The committee concludes that the Bachelor of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten does <u>not</u> meet quality characteristic 2, 'Educational Concept'. The committee also concludes that the Master of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten and the Master of Arts in Visual Arts do <u>not</u> meet quality characteristic 2, 'Educational Concept'.

The *Bachelor of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten*, the *Master of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten* and the *Master of Arts in Visual Arts* are guided by a single, shared educational concept. The committee finds that this educational concept, as presented in the digital information dossier and during the presentation session, is constructed from too many and overly eleborate perspectives. As a result, when reviewing the digital information dossier, the committee experienced the educational concept as unnecessarily complex and lacking coherence, which obscured the core message — namely, providing a framework that guides how lecturers shape their teaching. The presentation session further complicated the committee's ability to discern the essence, as various tools, frameworks, guidelines, transversal themes, and pathways were presented. Although these elements are valuable in themselves, they were not offered as a coherent whole, making the overall concept needlessly complex.

The committee then examined to what extent the educational concept is recognisable and supported during the panel interview with the programme coordinators. This discussion did not provide sufficient clarity, as elements from the programme profile and the educational concept were conflated. Based on the panel interviews with students and lecturers from both the bachelor's and the two master's programmes, the committee gradually gained insight into how the education is shaped in practice. Certain concepts from the vision appeared to be used as tools by individual lecturers, but a sense of a shared, overarching vision was lacking.

In addition, the committee notes that the programmes struggle to translate institution-wide frameworks — such as the MiXed Learning model and the three institution-wide learning pathways — into the programme-specific context and towards the teaching staff. During the panel interviews, it was repeatedly mentioned that these frameworks are perceived as rigid and as providing insufficient space for the particular nature of arts education. The committee acknowledges that within arts programmes it is indeed a challenge to find a balance between minimal yet necessary agreements on the one hand, and room for creative freedom on the other. Although this tension is understandable and to some extent even desirable, the committee stresses that clear frameworks and autonomy are not mutually exclusive. Certain guidelines are simply essential to provide both students and lecturers with sufficient clarity and direction.

The committee also observes a discrepancy between the ambitions formulated in the educational concept (and, by extension, in other policy documents such as the profile text) and the current educational practice. When students and alumni were asked about their experiences, and stakeholders in the professional field about their perceptions, the committee members noted substantial variation and a lecturer-specific approach. This results in a rich but highly divergent educational practice across the different specialisations and studios. Students notice these differences and sometimes perceive them as unfair, as they lead to unequal opportunities and assessments. The committee believes that the specialisations and studios operate too much as separate islands. It also struck the committee that lecturers from different studios asked one another questions about their educational practices during the facilities visit, suggesting that this was the first occasion for such an exchange. The committee found this rather remarkable.

Based on these observations, the committee concludes that the educational concept is insufficiently concrete and does not provide lecturers with clear guidance to shape their teaching in a consistent manner. The committee therefore urges the refinement of the educational concept and the making of clear choices, based on straightforward educational principles (such as constructive alignment) and on what students and lecturers consider important. Students and lecturers emphasised, among other things, the importance of a critical and inquiry-based attitude, intercultural competence, and an entrepreneurial mindset towards the professional field and society. This aligns with the institution-wide learning pathways, which lecturers and students would like to see translated more explicitly into classroom practice.

The committee believes that the programme would benefit from a simple and clear educational concept, preferably condensed onto a single A4 page and embraced by every lecturer in every studio. Such a concept could provide shared terminology and clear guiding principles that all lecturers can apply. It could also help reduce the existing fragmentation between the specialisations. The committee sees a clear responsibility here for the management of the institution and the department: to support the programme team through direction, guidance, and accessible professional development. It is recommended to give lecturers more insight into each other's teaching approaches, for instance by facilitating collegial consultation. The steering groups and the programme council can take a leading role in this, although this requires more frequent meetings and transparent documentation of the discussions.

The committee issues the following recommendation to the *Bachelor and Master of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten* and the *Master of Arts in Visual Arts*:

- Ensure a refined and concise educational concept that is embraced and implemented at every level and that provides lecturers with a framework to shape their teaching — from learning objectives to assessment.

QC4 'Curriculum'

The committee concludes that the Bachelor of Arts in in de Beeldende kunsten meets quality characteristic 4, 'Curriculum'.

The *Bachelor of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten* is currently undergoing a process of curriculum revision. The outlines of the new three-year programme have been developed, and the programme has opted for a phased implementation. At the time of this quality assessment, years 1 and 2 have already been renewed, and the rollout of year 3 is planned for the 2026–2027 academic year. The committee understands this phased approach and supports the curriculum revision, which reflects ambition: the programme aims to be a frontrunner in arts education and to generate societal impact. Moreover, the curriculum revision addresses several key issues identified in the 2020 quality assessment. In the renewed curriculum, the programme aims to offer bachelor students more opportunities for engagement with the professional field, to generate impactful research, to enable international exchange, and to focus on interdisciplinary projects.

The committee is highly positive about the principles underpinning the curriculum revision. However, it again observes a discrepancy between the programme's ambitions and the structural framework intended to realise them, on the one hand, and the actual experiences of first- and second-year students on the other. The programme sets high goals and makes strong promises, but in practice bachelor students do not always experience them as such.

For example, the committee refers to the institution-wide learning pathways (inquiry-based practice, entrepreneurial practice, and international and intercultural practice). These are embedded in the programme and have become more explicit through the curriculum revision. The committee recognises multiple examples of good practice within these pathways across the bachelor's programme. However, it again observes a lecturer-dependent approach, resulting in significant differences between specialisations and studios. The absence of a clearly defined and broadly supported educational concept contributes to this (see quality characteristic 2).

The committee therefore urges the programme to conduct a thorough evaluation of the revised curriculum in years 1 and 2 within the current academic year. This evaluation should pay close attention to the needs of students, the professional field, and alumni. It is essential that their input be fully integrated into the further development of the curriculum.

The committee believes that the programme possesses all the assets needed to successfully develop the new curriculum. The programme offers a diverse and high-quality range of craftsmanship courses and has extensive expertise within the teaching team. The team also demonstrates strong empathy and commitment to supporting the well-being and (artistic) development of students. Students, including those in the first year, repeatedly state that the warm, safe, and welcoming learning environment was an important reason for choosing PXL University of Applied Sciences and Arts, and they see this confirmed throughout the programme. The committee considers this a major strength. In addition, the curriculum is supported by state-of-the-art infrastructure. The equipment available to the programme is of high quality. The institution's efforts and investments to bring all studios and workspaces together in a single building for PXL-MAD are experienced as highly positive. The committee is convinced that the combination of expertise, team commitment, and infrastructure provides the programme with every opportunity to realise its ambitions and grow into a top-tier art programme.

The committee concludes that the revised bachelor's curriculum is coherently structured. The competence matrix demonstrates clear vertical and horizontal coherence. Students primarily recognise and experience this coherence horizontally between theory and artistic development. This is made possible by the proximity of lecturers, the weekly feedback moments, and the tailored guidance provided to students. However, the vertical structure of the practical courses is less clear to students, particularly regarding the development and assessment of technical components within certain practical courses. Although the programme uses rubrics, students appear to be unfamiliar with them. They report having little insight into the criteria required to pass a practical course. Students experience that assignments are often assessed holistically with general feedback provided at the end. As a result, they lack sufficient visibility into their learning process and the final assessment sometimes results in a surprise. The committee recommends strengthening the coherence between practical courses by establishing clear agreements among lecturers on learning objectives, content, and assessment.

A promising element of the bachelor's curriculum is the individual PDP trajectory (Personal Development Plan), in which students work on self-reflection, learning goals and artistic profiling under the guidance of a mentor. This trajectory is reinforced by structured feedback moments in the studio and the development of a reflection portfolio. The committee considers it valuable that the programme intends unite students from different specialisations and studios within the PDP trajectory, but in practice — based on feedback from students and alumni — this is not yet functioning optimally. According to the committee, facilitating crossovers between studios could be made more prominent within the programme. Students report encoutering few barriers in this regard, as long as they take the initiative themselves. The committee considers it advisable for the programme to establish clear policies so that crossovers are structurally possible for all trajectories and studios.

Bachelor students engage with the artistic professional field primarily through collaborations based on lecturers' networks. This is considered a clear strength, as it creates a dynamic and broadly supported network. Students value these professional connections, which expose them to a wide range of fields and contexts. They indicate that such connections tend to strengthen from the third year onwards and cite the client-based projects in Graphic Design as a good practice.

However, based on panel interviews with students, the committee finds that collaborations with the professional field are often fragmented and largely dependent on incidental opportunities. As a result, their full potential is not realised, and some students have access to more opportunities than others. The committee therefore recommends a more structural and strategic integration of professional field engagement within the curriculum, ensuring that all students are introduced to the professional field from the first year onwards.

In its vision documents, the programme places strong emphasis on the themes of internationalisation, interculturality, inclusion, sustainability, and superdiversity. The committee supports the articulated vision and ambitions and notes that students encounter these themes in various course units. The personal networks of lecturers appear to be an important driving force in this regard. However, the committee also sees room to offer more (diverse) international perspectives and to provide students with additional opportunities to internationalise within a broader network than the current partners.

The committee issues the following recommendations to the *Bachelor of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten*:

- Conduct a thorough evaluation of the renewed curriculum in years 1 and 2 during the 2025–2026 academic year. Listen to the needs of students, the professional field and alumni and integrate their input into the revised bachelor's curriculum.
- Strengthen the vertical coherence between the practical courses.

- Embed crossovers between disciplines structurally within the specialisations and studios.
- Ensure that students come into contact with the professional field from the first year onwards, and with sufficient frequency.

The committee concludes that the Master of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten and the Master of Arts in Visual Arts meet quality characteristic 4, 'Curriculum'.

The *Master of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten* and the M*aster of Arts in Visual Arts* are preparing for a planned curriculum revision scheduled for the 2027–2028 academic year. The outlines of the new curricula have already been developed, but because of the phased implementation of the revised bachelor's curriculum, the renewed master's curriculum will only start in two years. The committee supports this curriculum revision which reflects ambition: the programmes aim to be frontrunners in arts education and to create societal impact. Moreover, the curriculum revision addresses several key issues already identified in the 2020 quality assessment, such as more clearly distinguishing the three-year bachelor's programme from the one-year master's programmes. The committee is therefore positive about the principles underpinning the curriculum revision and considers the course content highly promising. The committee believes that, like the bachelor's programme, the master's programmes possess all the assets needed to successfully develop the revised master's curriculum.

The committee notes that, at the time of the quality assessment, the current master's programmes do not yet reflect the articulated ambitions and the proposed outlines of the curriculum revision. Here too, a lecturer-dependent approach is observed, resulting in significant differences between specialisations and studios. This is understandable, given that the rollout of the revised master's curricula still has to take place. Nevertheless, the committee suspects that the absence of a refined and widely supported educational concept is also a contributing factor to this variation (see quality characteristic 2). The committee therefore recommends developing, already at this stage, an implementation plan for the rollout of the revised master's curricula, including clear timelines, agreements among lecturers and transparent procedures. It is essential that this process be informed by the input of students, the professional field and alumni regarding the changes already implemented in years 1 and 2 of the bachelor's programme. The committee also considers it valuable for the master's programmes to gain structural inspiration from national and international programmes, and to incorporate these insights into the development of the profiling components of the curricula.

In the current master's curricula, students are required to complete a compulsory internship of 210 hours. As part of the curriculum revision, the programme is reconsidering whether to retain this requirement. Students are highly positive about the content of the internship, viewing it as a valuable stepping stone into the arts field, a view the committee fully endorses.

However, students express concerns about the organisation of the internship, which they often have to complete during the summer months due to the demands of the academic year. Some students undertake the internship between the bachelor's and master's programmes, while others complete it at the end of their studies, sometimes during an additional academic year. While the committee values the content of the internship, it notes that, in its current form, it functions more as an extension of the bachelor's programme and is insufficiently aligned with the learning outcomes of the master's programme.

The committee therefore urges a thorough reconsideration of how the internship is embedded within the curricula and the academic year, ensuring that it can be completed within the intended timeframe.

In addition, the committee stresses the need to urgently remove administrative and organisational barriers to international internships.

The committee finds that students in the master's programmes are offered various opportunities to work in a multidisciplinary manner. This is facilitated by elective courses and by the opportunity for students to look beyond the boundaries of their own studio. For students in the specialisations *Vrije kunsten* and *Visual Arts*, this is already an established practice; they are actively encouraged to make crossovers in terms of medium. Students in other specialisations do this to a lesser extent, and the committee suggests that the programmes strengthen their policy efforts in this area.

Furthermore, the committee considers it essential to create stronger connections between students of the *Master of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten* and the *Master of Arts in Visual Arts*. This contributes to inclusion and a richer learning environment.

The committee issues the following recommendations to the *Master of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten* and the *Master of Arts in Visual Arts*:

- Develop an implementation plan for the rollout of the revised master's curriculum, with attention to clear timelines, agreements among lecturers and transparent procedures.
- Seek inspiration from national and international programmes in order to integrate potential profiling components into the curriculum.
- Embed crossovers between disciplines structurally across all specialisations and studios.
- Strengthen the connection between students of the master's programmes.

QC6 'Admission, Progression and Completion Policy'

The committee concludes that the Bachelor of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten meets quality characteristic 6, 'Admission, progression and completion policy'.

The bachelor programme's admission policy is aimed at attracting a heterogeneous and diverse student population. The initiatives taken by the teaching team in relation to the curriculum – through learning content and assignments – support this ambition. In addition, the committee notes that targeted efforts are being made to communicate with diverse prospective student groups. Despite these efforts, student intake is not yet very diverse. The committee recommends examining which additional measures might be needed to achieve a more diverse intake. It sees opportunities here to emphasise, in communication, the strengths of the Euregion, the ambassadorship of alumni and the presence of strong lecturers.

Before students start the bachelor programme, they must pass an admission test consisting, among other components, of a studio test with an integrated drawing assignment, a portfolio review and a language test. This language test is new and underlines the importance placed on language proficiency, a theme that runs throughout the curriculum. The committee considers the admission test to be adequately organised and has learned that students appreciate the direct feedback. The committee also considers the language test meaningful. At the same time, it sees opportunities to further objectify the admission test by involving stakeholders (alumni, the professional field and lecturers from peer programmes) in the examination panels. In addition, it suggests that the programme take the lead in collaborating with other visual arts programmes in Flanders to develop a more uniform approach to the admission test, including the assessment of generic competencies (e.g., visual literacy).

The progression of bachelor students is supported by an extensive and specialised system of guidance and support offered by the institution and the department, including the effective work of the study

counsellor and the route counsellor. The low-threshold and direct guidance provided by lecturers also has strong potential, and the informal initiatives they take appear to be effective. However, the proximity of lecturers and the direct feedback they provide give some students the perception of subjective guidance and assessment, a perception that seems most pronounced in the specialisation *Vrije kunsten*. Students across all specialisations also report that the granting of exemptions is handled in a relatively flexible and non-transparent way. The committee recommends establishing a clear framework of agreements to ensure that all students have access to high-quality guidance and to eliminate the perception of subjectivity. It specifically suggests systematically monitoring the pass rates of course units using a Gaussian curve.

The committee notes that the average time-to-degree across the bachelor specialisations varies between 3.3 and 3.9 years. While the committee considers an average extension of 0.3 years acceptable, an extension of three-quarters of a year is not. When inquiring about the underlying reasons, the committee learned that the majority of students follow an individualised study route. The committee understands this, but also observes that the programme seems to take the implications somewhat lightly. It emphasises that any form of study delay entails costs for students, for the institution—and therefore also for the programme and society—and contributes to an increased workload for lecturers. The committee therefore requests that the programme actively monitors time-to-degree, implements measures to prevent further extension, and strives to reduce the average duration of studies.

The committee makes the following recommendations to the Bachelor in de Beeldende kunsten:

- Take targeted initiatives to attract a diverse and heterogeneous student population.
- Objectify the admission test.
- Establish a framework of agreements with objective criteria regarding the minimum level of student guidance.
- Monitor the time-to-degree and take measures both to prevent further extension and to reduce the average duration of studies.

The committee concludes that the Master of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten and the Master of Arts in Visual Arts meet quality characteristic 6, 'Admission, progression and completion policy'

Almost all students who complete the bachelor's programme progress to the master's programmes. The programme does not undertake specific actions to increase enrolment in the Dutch-language master, but it does for the English-language master. These efforts are paying off, albeit to a limited extent. Student numbers in the English-language programme are growing, but the committee believes this growth can be further strengthened, for instance by engaging alumni as ambassadors and by increasing the programme's visibility through both online and offline recruitment. The committee also learned that, from the 2027 academic year onwards, the department plans to launch a new two-year Erasmus Mundus programme with its own specific focus. The committee welcomes this initiative but calls for vigilance to ensure that this new programme does not cannibalise the intake of the existing master's programme.

The committee considers the average completion time of 1.8 years for a one-year master's programme problematic. This means that a majority of students take twice the planned duration to complete the programme. This is mainly caused by the current structure of the curriculum. The committee stresses the urgent need to address this issue in the rollout of the revised master's curricula.

The committee also identifies an important opportunity to strengthen the master's programme's graduation policy by placing greater emphasis on the business side of artistic practice. An initial

foundation already exists within the learning pathway on entrepreneurial practice, in which students gain insight—through workshops, lectures and client cases, often delivered by external experts—into, among other things, the legal status of artists and the contractual relationships between artists and galleries. However, master's students and alumni perceive this offer as (too) limited, and the committee shares this view. Even within an academic programme, a strong practice-oriented learning pathway can be developed alongside a robust research line. Students have diverse needs: some require an academically inspired individual workspace within the school, while others need intensive professional connections and opportunities for collaboration across institutional boundaries. Providing such tailored offerings aligns closely with the programme's vision. The committee therefore recommends developing a solid and in-depth learning pathway that prepares students for the visual arts job market and offers insight into the broad aspects of professional artistic entrepreneurship (insurance, contracts, the organisation of exhibition openings, grant applications, entrepreneurship, taxation, etc.). Collaboration with other programmes within PXL University of Applied Sciences and Arts may be considered, as the necessary expertise is available in-house. Furthermore, the committee suggests that the programme should focus on building stronger connections with alumni in the region and abroad, in order to broaden the network and activate alumni as ambassadors. According to the committee, this connection can be facilitated by monitoring graduates more closely during the early stages of their careers and keeping them engaged—for example, by giving them access to the infrastructure, possibly for a small fee. The success of alumni can reflect positively on the programme, thereby fostering a solid sense of ambassadorship.

The committee makes the following recommendations to the *Master of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten* en de *Master of Arts in Visual Arts*:

- Take measures to reduce the average time-to-degree of the Dutch-language master's programme.
- Develop a robust and in-depth learning pathway that prepares students for the visual arts job market.
- Strengthen the alumni policy.

QC8 'Achieved Learning outcomes'

The committee concludes that the Bachelor of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten, specialisation Graphic Design, and the Bachelor of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten, specialisation Jewellery Design, Gold- and Silversmithing, meet quality characteristic 8 'Achieved Learning outcomes'. The committee concludes that the Bachelor of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten, specialisation Fine Arts, does <u>not</u> meet quality characteristic 8 'Achieved Learning outcomes'.

The bachelor's programme demonstrates the achieved learning outcomes of students through a bachelor's thesis, consisting of the course components Bachelor Project (16 ECTS) and Bachelor Paper (5 ECTS). The committee reviewed a representative sample of bachelor theses and spoke with alumni and representatives from the professional field to gain a more complete picture of the achieved learning outcomes of the bachelor's programme. Based on this, the committee identifies a fluctuating level of quality.

First of all, the committee regrets that the programme has not adequately followed up on the recommendations from the 2020 quality assessment regarding the strengthening of the achieved learning outcomes. These recommendations were essential to accomplish a visible improvement in quality within the programme. Due to the lack of structural follow-up, the bachelor theses show a

highly variable quality, which is also influenced by the chosen specialisation and by the choices students make during the process of their bachelor's thesis.

The committee concludes that graduates of the Jewellery Design, Gold- and Silversmithing specialisation achieve a solid final level. The reviewed final projects include conceptual research that corresponds to level 6 of the Flemish Qualification Framework. Based on the materials examined, the committee believes that these graduates possess sufficient theoretical grounding, have acquired adequate technical skills, and have mastered the fundamentals of artistic research to progress successfully to the master's programme.

For the Graphic Design specialisation as well, the committee finds that the expected level is achieved. In general, the graduates possess sufficient technical skills and are familiar with the basic principles of artistic research. However, the committee notes that the achieved level strongly depends on the choices students make and on the extent to which they actively seek and receive guidance, feedback, and feedforward. Although the learning environment offers a wide range of techniques, it is up to the students to decide to what extent they make use of them. The committee recommends ensuring that this range is communicated to students in a structured manner so that every student has equal access to the same material-technical knowledge and quality.

For the Fine Arts specialisation, the committee finds that the expected level is not achieved. The committee observes that students lack sufficient material-technical proficiency and that the quality of the bachelor's theses therefore varies greatly. In some cases, the final works do not correspond to the expected level of the Flemish Qualifications Framework (FQF 6). Moreover, the committee considers the scores awarded to be often too high. The committee notes substantial differences between the studios. For example, according to the committee, the Ceramics studio achieves a much higher level than the Painting studio.

Additionally, the committee finds that expectations regarding artistic research within the entire bachelor's programme have not yet been sufficiently aligned within the teaching team. A shared terminology is lacking, and no concrete agreements have been defined, resulting in students and lecturers giving their own interpretation of the concept. This leads to vague notions and a strongly varying quality in the implementation of artistic research in the final works. The Fine Arts specialisation is most affected by this, as the other two specialisations focus on a more applied art form. Defining the concept of 'artistic research' at bachelor level is considered by the committee to be a necessary condition for strengthening the final level.

The bachelor's theses are assessed using a matrix with evaluation criteria, which contributes to a valid and reliable evaluation. However, panel interviews with students and lecturers show that the use of this matrix causes problems. Although the supervisors of the bachelor's theses make efforts to explain its use, students indicate that they do not have sufficient insight into the evaluation criteria. Therefore, the committee recommends using clear objective and subjective criteria and communicating these transparently.

The committee makes the following recommendations to the *Bachelor of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten*:

- Define the concept of *artistic research* so that lecturers and students have a clear understanding of expectations, in order to raise the achieved learning outcomes.
- Use clear objective and subjective criteria in assessing the bachelor's theses, and communicate these criteria transparently.

The committee concludes that the Master of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten, specialisation Graphic Design, and the Master of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten, specialisation Jewellery Design, Gold- and Silversmithing meet quality characteristic 8 'Achieved Learning outcomes'. The committee concludes that the Master of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten, specialisation Fine Arts does <u>not</u> meet quality characteristic 8 'Achieved Learning outcomes'.

The committee concludes that the Master of Arts in Visual Arts, specialisation Graphic Design, and the Master of Arts in Visual Arts, specialisation Jewellery Design, Gold- and Silversmithing meet quality characteristic 8 'Achieved Learning outcomes'. The committee concludes that the Master of Arts in Visual Arts, specialisation Fine Arts does <u>not</u> meet quality characteristic 8 'Achieved Learning outcomes'.

The master's programme demonstrates the achieved learning outcomes of its students through the master's thesis, which consists of the course units Master Project (21 ECTS) and Master Dissertation (9 ECTS). The committee notes that the scope of the master's thesis complies with the statutory requirements. The committee has reviewed several projects and dissertations and held discussions with alumni and the professional field, giving it a comprehensive view of the achieved final level.

The committee concludes that graduates of the specialisation Jewellery Design & Gold and Silversmithing, attain a solid final level. The reviewed dissertations and projects show that students possess knowledge of conceptual and artistic research at a level that may be expected of a master's degree in the arts. The committee believes that these graduates have a sound theoretical foundation, sufficient technical skills, and a good command of the principles of artistic research. The achieved level corresponds to level 7 of the Flemish Qualifications Framework.

For the specialisation Graphic Design, the committee also finds that the expected level is achieved and corresponds to FQF level 7. Overall, graduates possess sufficient technical skills and are familiar with the basic principles of artistic research. As in the bachelor's programme, the committee notes that the achieved level varies and depends greatly on the choices students make and the extent to which they seek and receive guidance, feedback, and feedforward. There is a wide range of techniques available in the learning environment, but their use depends on the individual student. The committee believes that the renewed and ambitious curriculum offers an opportunity for the future and grants the benefit of the doubt to the specialisation Graphic Design. The committee recommends ensuring that the full range of offerings reaches all students in a structured way, so that equal quality can be guaranteed.

For the specialisation Fine Arts, the committee finds that the expected level is not achieved. Students do not possess the required technical foundation. The quality of the master's theses varies greatly and does not always align with FQF level 7. In addition, the committee finds that the awarded grades are often overly generous. It observes clear differences in level between the studios. For instance, according to the committee, the Ceramics studio achieves a noticeably higher level than the Painting studio.

In line with the findings at the bachelor level, the committee observes that expectations regarding artistic research within the master's programmes are not sufficiently aligned among the teaching staff. As a result, vague research concepts persist within the master's programmes, and the quality of the research work in dissertations and projects varies greatly. A consistent element in the projects and dissertations is the focus on self-reflection. While this indicates a critical attitude among students, the committee considers this focus too narrow. It expects the master's theses to demonstrate greater attention to the full research cycle: from research question, methodology, and hypothesis to conclusion, including consideration of the implications for artistic practice. According to the committee, this is an important point of attention, particularly in the Fine Arts programmes.

In addition, the committee notes that the team is still searching for a clear positioning of the master's programme in relation to the bachelor. Although the distinction is now stronger than five years ago, both students and lecturers continue to perceive the master as a fourth year of the bachelor. The committee furthermore observes that internal communication and the course descriptions in BamaFlex continue to refer to "year 4". It expects that the implementation of the new curriculum will fully establish the intended separation.

The students are free to choose the research topic for their project and dissertation, which the committee appreciates. In addition, the programme aims to educate students to become makers with societal impact, an ambition the committee fully supports. However, it sees room for improvement by offering stronger guidance towards topics with societal relevance.

The supervision of students in selecting and developing their topic varies in quality. The committee believes that this variation can be mitigated by providing students with more theoretical frameworks (e.g., psychology, cultural studies, art history) and by explicitly encouraging them to make use of these in their artistic practice and research. In the interviews, especially the students from the *Master of Arts in Visual Arts* explicitly indicated a need for such theoretical grounding. This group also emphasised that, alongside a warm and safe learning environment, there must also be room for constructive yet critical feedback that challenges them to aim higher.

The assessment of master's projects and dissertations is conducted by a jury composed of internal supervising lecturers, internal non-supervising lecturers, and external members. The evaluation considers both the process and the final product. The committee views the recent shift towards a more dialogical and holistic approach to assessment positively, as it allows for the discussion of both objective and subjective criteria.
However, the committee notes that, based on panel interviews, there is a perception that the input of external jury members does not carry sufficient weight. It therefore recommends consistently involving an adequate number of external members (including professionals from the field and peer lecturers) and ensuring that their contributions are properly recognised in the assessment process.

The committee makes the following recommendations for the *Master of Arts de Beeldende kunsten* and the *Master of Arts in Visual Arts*

- Conceptualise the notion of "artistic research" so that lecturers and students in the master's programmes have a clear understanding of the expectations, with the aim of raising the achieved learning outcomes.
- Challenge master's students more theoretically and conceptually in the context of the master's thesis.
- Acknowledge and valorise the involvement of external peers and representatives from the professional field in the juries assessing the master's theses.
- Refine the design of the internship and organise it in such a way that it contributes to the achievement of the learning outcomes of the master's programmes.

QC10 'Integration of Education in Research'

The committee concludes that the Bachelor of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten meets quality characteristic 10, "Integration of education in research."
The committee also concludes that the Master of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten and the Master of Arts in Visual Arts meet quality characteristic 10, "Integration of education in research."

For the integration of research into teaching, the programmes rely on several research-active lecturers and on a substantial group of doctoral researchers and PhD students. The programmes within the School of Arts also benefit from a strong research component in collaboration with PXL-Research and Hasselt University. This enriches both the curriculum and the learning environment.

The nexus between research and education is explicitly embedded in the programmes through a learning pathway (inquiry-based practice) that begins in the first phase of the bachelor. Along this pathway, students are guided in their exploration of artistic design and in the development of their own visual language. Through a process-oriented approach—bringing together different perspectives on art (research) in lectures and assignments—students gain insight into the research cycle and research skills. The art-theoretical course units establish connections with other disciplines, while theoretical examples are integrated into the practical studios. According to the programme, this allows students to adopt an investigative attitude at their own pace. Throughout this learning process, lecturers form a small supervisory group around each student, tailored to their artistic development. Proximity and familiarity are central in this approach. In this interplay between practice, theory and research the aim is to cultivate a inquiry-based attitude. At the start of the programme, students sometimes experience the various perspectives as challenging or contradictory, and the overall effectiveness of the approach is mixed (see earlier).

The committee notes that the learning pathway has not yet been fully developed, which is evident, among other things, from the absence of a clear definition of artistic research. This carries the risk that an implicit approach to research—while defensible—may lead to a dilution of research practices. For this reason, the committee considers it desirable, particularly within an academic programme, to place greater emphasis on an explicit approach to the research cycle, grounded in a shared vision and common terminology.

Notably, students and alumni express a positive attitude towards theory. Students indicate a need for sufficiently “pure” theoretical and research-oriented courses that provide frameworks and reference points for their artistic development. The committee sees opportunities in this regard to enrich the curriculum by strengthening the involvement of (inter)national partners.

The programme has chosen to integrate an important written linguistic component alongside the artistic visual language. This distinguishes it from other programmes. The committee believes that both components—language and visual language—can reinforce one another, provided that sustained attention is given to visual research. In the committee’s view, visual theorising must continue to play a fundamental role within the programme.

The committee makes the following recommendations for the *Bachelor and Master of Arts Beeldende kunsten* and the *Master of Arts in Visual Arts*:

- Approach the research cycle explicitly in the purely theoretical and research-oriented courses.

Recommendations

Based on its findings, the committee issues the following recommendation(s) for the *Bachelor of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten*:

- QC2: Educational Concept
    - Develop a refined and concise educational concept that is broadly supported and implemented at every level, and that provides lecturers with a framework for shaping their teaching, from learning objectives to assessment.

- QC4: Curriculum
    - Conduct a thorough evaluation of the renewed curriculum in years 1 and 2 during the 2025–2026 academic year. Listen to the needs of students, the professional field and alumni and integrate their input into the revised bachelor's curriculum.
    - Strengthen the vertical coherence between the practical courses.
    - Embed crossovers between disciplines structurally within the specialisations and studios.
    - Ensure that students come into contact with the professional field from the first year onwards, and with sufficient frequency.

- QC6: Admission, Progression and Completion Policy
    - Take targeted initiatives to attract a diverse and heterogeneous student population.
    - Objectify the admission test.
    - Establish a framework of agreements with objective criteria regarding the minimum level of student guidance.
    - Monitor the time-to-degree and take measures both to prevent further extension and to reduce the average duration of studies.

- QC8: Achieved Learning outcomes
    - Define the concept of artistic research so that lecturers and students have a clear understanding of expectations, in order to raise the achieved learning outcomes.
    - Use clear objective and subjective criteria in assessing the bachelor's theses, and communicate these criteria transparently.

- QC10: Integration of Education in Research
    - Approach the research cycle explicitly in the purely theoretical and research oriented courses.

Based on its findings, the committee issues the following recommendation(s) for the *Master of Arts in de Beeldende kunsten* and the *Master of Arts in Visual Arts*:

- QC2: Educational Concept
    - Ensure a refined and concise educational concept that is embraced and implemented at every level and that provides lecturers with a framework to shape their teaching — from learning objectives to assessment.

- QC4: Curriculum
    - Develop an implementation plan for the rollout of the revised master's curriculum, with attention to clear timelines, agreements among lecturers and transparent procedures.
    - Seek inspiration from national and international programmes in order to integrate potential profiling components into the curriculum.
    - Embed crossovers between disciplines structurally across all specialisations and studios.
    - Strengthen the connection between students of the master's programmes.

- QC6: Admission, Progression and Completion Policy
    - Take measures to reduce the average time-to-degree of the Dutch-language master's programme.
    - Develop a robust and in-depth learning pathway that prepares students for the visual arts job market.
    - Strengthen the alumni policy.

- QC8: Achieved Learning outcomes
    - Conceptualise the notion of "artistic research" so that lecturers and students in the master's programmes have a clear understanding of the expectations, with the aim of raising the achieved learning outcomes.
    - Challenge master's students more theoretically and conceptually in the context of the master's thesis.
    - Acknowledge and valorise the involvement of external peers and representatives from the professional field in the juries assessing the master's theses.
    - Refine the design of the internship and organise it in such a way that it contributes to the achievement of the learning outcomes of the master's programmes.

- QC10: Integration of Education in Research
    - Approach the research cycle explicitly in the purely theoretical and research oriented courses.