



**Quality Enhancement  
Programme Review**

**REPORT**

**Bachelor Dance**

**Royal Conservatoire Antwerp**

**Antwerp, Belgium**

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## Content

Introduction .....	4
Key data on Bachelor Dance, RCA .....	6
1. Programme's goals and context.....	7
2. Educational processes .....	9
2.1 The curriculum and its methods of delivery .....	9
2.2 International perspectives .....	11
2.3 Assessment .....	12
3. Student profiles .....	15
3.1 Admission/Entrance qualifications.....	15
3.2 Student progression, achievement and employability .....	16
4. Teaching staff .....	18
4.1 Staff qualifications and professional activity .....	18
4.2 Size and composition of the teaching staff body .....	19
5. Facilities, resources and support.....	20
5.1 Facilities .....	20
5.2 Financial resources .....	22
5.3 Support staff.....	23
6. Communication, organisation and decision-making .....	25
6.1 Internal communication process.....	25
6.2 Organisational structure and decision-making processes .....	26
7. Internal quality culture .....	27
8. Public interaction.....	29
8.1 Cultural, artistic and educational contexts .....	29
8.2 Interaction with the artistic professions .....	30
8.3 Information provided to the public .....	31
Summary of the compliance with the Standards and recommendations .....	32
Conclusion .....	35
Annex 1. Site-visit schedule .....	36
Annex 2. List of documents provided to the review team .....	38
Annex 3. Definitions of compliance levels .....	39



## Introduction

The roots of the current Bachelor Dance programme were founded in 1973. The programme addressed the needs of the working field for well-trained and qualified dance teachers for the conservatoires and academies. Since this time the programme has undergone a multitude of name and structural changes before its latest move to the international art campus of deSingel in 2010.

In 1988 the programme State Education for Dance Pedagogy was transformed into a four-year programme for professional classical and contemporary dancers. In 1991, the Dance and Dance Pedagogy, Dramatic Art and Music programmes from three Antwerp institutes merged providing artistic opportunities for multidisciplinary projects. In 1992 the school, then called Higher Institute for Dance (HID) moved to Lier and became a certified three-year programme with a separate teacher training course. In 1994, the Decree for the Institutes of Higher Education instigated a change in the University College higher education landscape, and the programme became part of the Department of Drama, Music and Dance of Hogeschool Antwerpen, which later became Artesis University College.

In 2010 the dance programme moved to the deSingel arts campus. In 2013, Artesis University College fused with the Plantijn University College, forming the Artesis Plantijn University College (AP). The Royal Conservatoire Antwerp (RCA) and the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp (KA) became two Schools of Arts within the new AP University College. (Source: SER, p.7).

A decree in 2003 marked significant changes to the education system in Flanders. The implementation of the EU

Bologna Agreement reformed higher education into a Bachelor/Master structure and the European Credit Transfer System was introduced, universities and university colleges were clustered in associations and external quality assessment for the purpose of accreditation was introduced.

In 2012 the Integration Decree established the organisation of higher art education in semi-autonomous Schools of Arts, administratively embedded in university colleges. Also, in 2012, the Flemish government decided to increase the autonomy of its educational institutions and to simplify the process of accreditation by introducing a system of institutional reviews. The review assesses the educational policy in place and the manner in which the institution itself is ensuring the quality of its programmes. Universities and colleges are responsible for ensuring the quality of their educational programmes. Both music and dance within the Schools of Arts opted for external programme reviews carried out by MusiQuE.

The Belgian educational system distinguishes between professional and academic bachelor programmes. A professional bachelor programme has a professional orientation and provides direct access to the



labour market. The RCA Bachelor Dance is a professional bachelor programme with 180 credits. (Source: SER, p.8)

The procedure for the review of the dance programme followed a three-stage process:

- RCA prepared a *Self-evaluation Report (SER)* and supporting documents, based on the *MusiQuE Standards for Programme Review*;
- an international review team composed by MusiQuE studied the *SER* and carried out an online review visit at RCA on 29-30<sup>th</sup> March 2021. The online review visit comprised of meetings with representatives of Bachelor Dance and RCA management team, teaching staff, students, alumni, and members of the dance working field. Due to COVID, videos had to substitute for live to classes and performances. The review team used the *MusiQuE Standards for Programme Review* as the basis of its investigations;
- the review team produced the review report that follows, structured along the *Standards* mentioned above.

The review team consisted of:

- Samuel Wuersten (Chair) Director of BA/MA Dance, Zurich University of the Arts, Director Holland Dance Festival, The Hague
- Rasmus Ölme, Professor and Head of BFA/MFA, Danish National School of Performing Arts, Copenhagen
- Izah Hankammer (Student member) freelance dancer and recent graduate of Fontys School of Fine and Performing Arts, Tilburg
- Celia Duffy (Secretary) Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

The review team would like to express its sincere gratitude to the staff of the Bachelor Dance for their open and constructive attitude towards the review process. The review team hopes that the present report will be beneficial for the Bachelor Dance's continued high quality performance. The review team would like to encourage the Bachelor Dance to make the report available to all stakeholders by circulating it among its staff members and students and by publishing it in an appropriate place on its website.



## Key data on Bachelor Dance, RCA

<b>Name of the institution</b>	Royal Conservatoire Antwerp (RCA)
<b>Legal status</b>	University College
<b>Date of creation</b>	1994
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.ap-arts.be">www.ap-arts.be</a>
<b>Number of students</b>	44 students on the Bachelor Dance as part of the RCA student population of c.650 students. RCA in turn is part of the larger Artesis Plantijn University College (AP) (c.14,400 students).

### List of reviewed programmes

1. Bachelor Dance



## 1. Programme's goals and context

### **Standard 1. The programme goals are clearly stated and reflect the institutional mission.**

The Bachelor Dance programme is part of the RCA School of Arts which, in turn, is nested within Artesis Plantijn University College (AP), the latter described as a pluralistic, student-centred institution. RCA's mission is 'to train talented students to become professional, creative musicians and performing artists, with a large degree of autonomy and individuality, who are equipped with the professional excellence, know-how and sense of entrepreneurship to take their place in today's international socio-cultural and artistic framework'. The RCA's mission reflects the more generalised higher-level strategic goals of AP that emphasise social impact, maximising student opportunity, offering a unique learning portfolio and innovation. (Source: SER, p.10) A five-year project to align with AP's strategic goals will be initiated in the current year. (Source: SER, p.12)

The Bachelor Dance programme's mission is described as connecting tightly with the RCA's mission. It emphasises diversity in contemporary dance practice and empowering students from a range of backgrounds to develop a range of creative, performative and reflective skills, as open-minded individuals that can shape the professional field. The mission is contextualised with four groups of key stakeholders in mind (students, teachers, the working field and society). (Source: SER, p.10)

The SER (p.11) describes how Programme Specific Learning Outcomes (OLR) were defined in the academic year 2018-2019 and put into practice in 2019-2020. The process was described in Meeting 1 as a bottom-up process, reflecting the reality of the programme's practice, rather than being imposed, top-down. It is reported that in a recent survey 75% of alumni confirmed that both the mission and the programme learning outcomes were in line with their experience of the programme. (Source: SER, p.11)

The learning outcomes of the programme are described as fitting the Flemish qualification framework (VKS), linking to domain specific learning outcomes (DLR) (Source: SER, p.11) and meeting content, level and orientation of international requirements (to be benchmarked in 2021-2022). (Source: SER, p. 12)

The 12 programme learning outcomes (OLR) elaborate and concretise the Bachelor Dance programme's mission, including a broad range of skills and diverse dance practices including skills in making dance work (OLR 1-5); an appreciation of other disciplines and social culture (OLR 6-7); critical reflection and research (OLR 8-9) and personal skills (OLR 10-12). (Source: SER: p.11)

The review team tested the level of knowledge of the mission and programme learning outcomes with different groups of stakeholders and found that there was wide understanding of their ethos and content. (Source: Meetings 2,4 and 5)



The review team heard from various meetings and the SER how the programme strives to be connected to the world and society and in particular its emphasis on diversity. This is evidenced in the mix of dance backgrounds, nationalities and personalities of both teachers and students and in its ethos and advocacy for diversity in dance and developing conventionally restricted notions of the dancing body and engagement with wider society. (Meeting 1 and 6).

The review team probed the question of the Bachelor Dance programme's vision (which conventionally accompanies a mission statement). A clear vision was articulated covering an overall holistic outlook; engagement (with self, the dance field and society); change-making; investigation of students' full potential; and critical reflection. (Source: Meeting 6)

The review team finds that the mission of the Bachelor Dance programme is clear, thoughtful, ambitious and well expressed. It aligns with and extends the overall RCA mission through its particular emphasis on diversity and engagement. The programme learning outcomes (OLR) are comprehensive and reflect the holistic outlook of the department. The review team was impressed by how far the mission and programme learning outcomes appear to be understood, supported and enacted by different stakeholders, particularly in what is a very wide group of guest teachers.

When the review team questioned the extent of diversity that is manageable in a small programme and whether some specification and exclusion would be more practical, senior staff in (Meeting 6) defended the department's practice in terms of diversity being a key element in employability in a very varied working field and fitting students' different needs.

### **Compliance with Standard 1**

On the basis of the information in the *SER*, further documentation including annexes and the meetings during the online site-visit, the review team concludes that the Bachelor Dance programme is **fully compliant** with Standard 1.





## 2. Educational processes

### 2.1 The curriculum and its methods of delivery

**Standard 2.1. The goals of the programme are achieved through the content and structure of the curriculum and its methods of delivery.**

The SER summarises the skills needed to enter the professional working field thus: ‘Contemporary dance artists must create, execute, initiate, communicate, network, collaborate, document, self-evaluate, redefine and self-educate.’ A set of guiding principles (Diversity, Commitment, Embodiment, Creativity, Reflection and Integration) governs programme content and methods. The concept of the embodied dance artist (in which the mind, body and senses inform each other) is described as central. (Source: SER, p.14)

The SER articulates in detail how the thinking behind the Bachelor Dance translates into the content and structure of the curriculum. Each year of study comprises three main ‘clusters’ (Training and Development, Artistic Practice and Contextualisation and Reflection) that are focused on three of the programme learning outcomes (OLRs), with Personal skills weaving through all three, and under which various course units (for example, Dance training, Choreography and Portfolio respectively) are situated. Each course unit has its own set of learning outcomes, learning objectives and evaluation criteria. The way in which all these interrelate is specified in the comprehensive Pedagogical Concept spreadsheet. (Source: SER, p.15) The weighting of each cluster is specified, with almost half devoted to training and skill development. The SER clearly states that each of the OLRs is deliberately not given equal weight. (Source: SER, p. 17)

A wide variety of teaching methods is employed including studio practice, collaborative learning and mentoring, self-study, lectures, seminars and artistic practice and it is stated that a sole method is only rarely employed; for example, ‘studio practice in a contemporary technique class may include learning material, improvising, discussing, coaching and reflecting’. (Source: SER, p. 20)

It was emphasised in Meeting 1 that the design of the curriculum started with the essence of what was actually happening in the studio and that the structure provides a frame for existing practice. It was also emphasised that this structure is not set in stone; rather there is continuous dialogue and negotiation of change. (Source: Meeting 1) This sense of authenticity was endorsed by teachers in Meeting 4 who reported that the structure was easy to understand and relate to, as it directly reflects teaching practices.

In interrogating the balance of different types of work within the curriculum, the review team heard different shades of opinion. Representatives of the profession in Meeting 5 suggested that students are provided with good physical training but that making, and the risk-taking that involves, should be emphasised more



from the first year to encourage a mentality of creativity, rather than thinking of themselves as ‘just’ dancers. In Meeting 6 staff acknowledged that they were constantly holding elements in balance and defended their wide spectrum of activity in terms of the necessities in the professional world in which there are multiple and diverse inputs. The fact that there is rarely employment for just one type of dancer in the profession is also reflected in the programme’s emphasis on diversity. In Meeting 4 teachers were of the opinion that diversity does not impose a particular aesthetic and that the programme is open to and respectful of the artistic affinities of teachers, contextualising it into a broader artistic network.

As regards the balance between theory and practice, the review team heard from students in Meeting 2 that these elements related well to each other e.g. in the portfolio project, and that they were stimulated by theory to think through their own dance language. The review team also heard that students found theoretical classes well connected to practical work and could see the transfer of knowledge between the two. Students noted a clear progression between year 1 and 2 in tracking their own development and that they build up a bank of knowledge that is well guided.

Teachers in Meeting 4 commented that the balance between practice and theory was a key concern but that it generally works well. In comparison to similar dance programmes the load of theory is quite light, but this was reported to be a deliberate choice of the Artistic co-ordinators which is endorsed by the teachers. It was also emphasised that there is lively conversation and debate around this topic and that it is a goal of the programme to make the interconnection even stronger. In Meeting 5 (Members of the profession) it was felt that there is still room for change and that a more in-depth understanding of dance theory would help students be more knowledgeable about current debates. Specifically it was suggested that dance history 2 should be replaced with another approach.

The review team heard how staff research feeds into teaching and a developing research discourse in the portfolio class. It was reported in Meeting 5 that only a small minority of students might consider a research trajectory for Masters work as the Bachelor Dance programme is professionally orientated, but that in their third year portfolio and solo project students gain a sense of what research in the arts means.

The place of interdisciplinary work is covered in 8.2 below.

Feedback is covered in 2.3 below.

The review team was impressed by the depth of thinking evident in the SER’s account of the structure of the curriculum and its methods. The curriculum exemplifies the goals of the programme very well and is structured in a highly coherent way. Teachers in Meeting 4 commented that the diversity of the curriculum and teaching methods was both challenging and inspiring.



Commendation: The review team commends the SER's clear and persuasive diagrammatic layout of the curriculum and finds that it is well understood and enacted by teachers.

In terms of teaching styles the review team heard from students in Meeting 2 about a predominantly coaching and mentoring approach. Students commented positively on the openness of teachers to ideas and their support and encouragement.

The balance between theory and practice is always debatable but the review team heard only relatively minor criticisms; it notes, however, that the integration and quantity of theoretical courses is to be reviewed. (Source: SER, p.22)

As was noted in Meeting 4 there is lively and constructive debate around the theory/practice issue. Research is developing for both staff and students, but the overriding focus of the curriculum is on professional education.

Commendation: The review team commends the programme's enhancement-led approach and responsiveness to feedback that is evident from the thoughtful critical reflections in the SER, as well as in the involvement of stakeholders in the continuous evolution of the programme.

### **Compliance with Standard 2.1**

On the basis of the information in the *SER*, further documentation including annexes and the meetings during the online site-visit, the review team concludes that the Bachelor Dance programme is **fully compliant** with Standard 2.1.

## **2.2 International perspectives**

**Standard 2.2. The programme offers a range of opportunities for students to gain an international perspective.**

Internationalism is emphasised in descriptions of the profile of students and teachers of the Bachelor Dance programme in terms of their countries of origin (15 different nationalities represented in a cohort of 44 students). Important programme documentation is available in Dutch and English and a new multi-lingualism project is reported to be underway at RCA. Few students go out on Erasmus exchanges, with more coming into the programme. (Source: SER, p.23)

The international practice of guest teachers is an important source of international perspectives. In Meeting 6 it was stated that, in the course of their international professional practice, Bachelor Dance programme teachers are able to scan the field and to bring an international perspective to the RCA (as well as making a positive contribution to recruitment).



The programme's physical situation in the deSingel arts campus as well as within the wider internationalised arts scene of Flanders also lends an international perspective. (Source: SER, p.23) However, teachers in Meeting 4 expressed the desire that a non-Euro-centric outlook and a sense of the global dance community could be better reflected in the curriculum.

Greater connection to other international schools was reported as being in future plans and this has already started with a local peer institution, PARTS. (Source: Meeting 1) In Meeting 3 alumni were relatively unfamiliar with other international schools.

The review team finds that the definition of internationalisation lies primarily in the diversity of staff and students as well as being situated in a highly international artistic context of the deSingel campus. In the opinion of the review team the Bachelor Dance programme could develop its international strategy in terms of the relationship to other institutions; the programme's strategy seems based on its own context in terms of its situation, the wide variety of student nationalities and professional international practice of its teachers, rather than a more proactive outreach to other international institutions or organisations. Students do gain an international perspective, but primarily from within the department and its physical context.

Recommendation: The review team recommends that the Bachelor Dance programme's international strategy would be enriched by a more proactive and less ad hoc approach to international institutions and organisations, such as seeking exchange agreements or formal international collaborations as has already started with a local peer institution, PARTS. This would increase opportunities for both students and staff and cement the programme's international positioning.

## **Compliance with Standard 2.2**

On the basis of the information in the *SER*, further documentation including annexes and the meetings during the online site-visit, the review team concludes that the Bachelor Dance programme is **substantially compliant** with Standard 2.2.

## **2.3 Assessment**

### **Standard 2.3. Assessment methods are clearly defined and demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes.**

The principles that drive assessment methods and practice are detailed in the *SER*. Fostering student independence is emphasised in a 'development- and professionally oriented approach [that] can support future dance artists to independently monitor, assess and adjust their working practice'. The programme subscribes to the principles of assessment *for*, *as*, and *of* learning. The goals of assessment are to support



learning and are individually focussed to empower students, including fostering their self-regulation as learners. The SER notes that although the emphasis is on process, the need for accountability in assessment is also a given. (Source: SER, p.24-5)

Principles of assessment include reliability, transparency, feasibility, integration with the learning process and diversity. Assessment methods are detailed in a graphic in the SER; they take diverse forms and are carried out by a range of assessors, including externals, using an assessment rubric. (Source: SER, p.25)

The SER states that 'The course and cluster system enable students to practice a wide range of styles and techniques without a pressure to be 'successful' at everything, as the grades are averaged into a course grade'. (Source: SER, p.25) The definition of success is set out later: 'Passing does not equal success as reaching competences and gaining credits does not determine success in the working field. Assessors need to remain aware of the interdependency between students, and when an assignment is reliant or affected by the work of other students. Finally, credits are not an end goal for our students who are predominantly engaged in the programme for the extensive range of training experiences they will have and exploring their own potential. This mindset should be maintained, as the intrinsic motivation should remain rather than the attainment of credits.' (Source: SER, p.26)

In Meeting 1 senior staff noted the effort invested in achieving the current assessment framework. They emphasised a focus on feedback and assessment being connected as well as the diversity of assessment procedures which are as diverse as the content of the programme, students and teachers. It was reported that staff and students are 'on the same page', but that there is still dialogue necessary to refine the assessment framework and for teachers to 'own' it. Although a challenge, progress has been made in involving guest teachers in this development. (Source: SER, p. 27 and Meeting 1)

Many forms of feedback are detailed in the SER (p.20-21). Staff in Meeting 6 reported that thinking on both feedback and assessment has evolved to be simpler, more structured and more specific. The aim is to create a feedback culture that is productive for the learning environment; the Artistic co-ordinators are entering into dialogue with all concerned and ensuring that everyone has a voice in debates.

The culture of the Bachelor Dance is one in which constant feedback is part of the very close relationship between teachers and students. There is an awareness of the importance of setting boundaries in feedback in the SER: 'Clear communication of transparent rules for ethics, discipline and fairness, need to maintain a healthy balance for each student to develop in an autonomous way'. (Source: SER, p.22) Teachers in Meeting 4 evidenced a clear understanding of the principles of feedup/back/forward. They also commented on the need for sensitivity in giving feedback and their critical role in guiding such a diverse group of students; one commented that the key is to help students find their own voice and that



feedback must be tailored – ‘it’s not about a comparison between ballet and contemporary, you have to think about what is the right way for them’. (Source: Meeting 4)

Students in Meeting 2 appreciated the depth of feedback they had received after the twice-yearly assessment point. They also commented that they do not feel as if they’re being examined ‘it would feel wrong in terms of where we are with our education - you decide on your commitment to the course and assessment works hand in hand with that’. Assessment was described as open, personal, constructive and useful.

Members of the profession in Meeting 5 commented that when part of a jury on the Bachelor Dance programme there was no sense of ‘the censorship and narrowness of vision that there is in other schools’.

The assessment framework represents a large investment of time and thinking on the part of the Artistic coordinators and in the view of the review team as it develops it will be widely ‘owned’. In Meetings 2 and 4 both teachers and students understood details and appreciated the overall philosophy of the framework.

Commendation: The review team commends the assessment philosophy, structure and practice detailed in the SER. It is a model of its type, well-informed by current specialist educational practice, thoughtful and values-driven.

The Bachelor Dance operates with an intense culture of personal feedback; the review team heard that the question of boundaries is addressed and that staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities (e.g. as ‘gatekeepers’ who refer students on to qualified support) of giving feedback

The review team notes the high level of trust from colleagues in the judgement and leadership of the Artistic coordinators.

### **Compliance with Standard 2.3**

On the basis of the information in the *SER*, further documentation including annexes and the meetings during the online site-visit, the review team concludes that the Bachelor Dance programme is **fully compliant** with Standard 2.3.



### 3. Student profiles

#### 3.1 Admission/Entrance qualifications

**Standard 3.1. There are clear criteria for student admission, based on an assessment of their artistic/academic suitability for the programme.**

The SER (p. 29) outlines the Bachelor Dance programme's recruitment policy and its constraints. On the one hand the small scale of the programme facilitates its individualised educational approach; on the other, limited space means it is not possible to expand numbers. The aim is for a year-group cohort of 15.

The number of candidates auditioning has almost doubled to 289 in the past five years; the proportion of non-Belgian candidates has also increased to 79% of the total candidates in 2019-2020. However, the number of places has not increased, allowing a greater degree of selectivity. (Source: SER, p.29)

Requirements for both expected language and starting dance competencies are specified on the website and there is clear communication of the mixture of technical proficiency and artistic potential sought. (Source: SER, p.29)

Two auditions (following one another in quick succession) are held in Antwerp consisting of a three-day programme of classes, workshops, performances, condition tests, discussion and individual interviews. COVID restrictions in 2021 introduced an initial self-filmed element. (Source: SER, p. 29)

A jury of five experienced staff members makes the final decision, balancing technical and creative skills, diversity and consideration of the composition of the prospective year group. (Source: SER, p. 29) Staff in Meeting 6 reflected further on the balance of technical skills and creative skills in which the student's own voice and personal artistic development are foregrounded, in focus from the moment of audition.

In the self-reflective section, the SER (p.30) considers several aspects for development of the audition process.

The review team was impressed by both the clarity and care taken over what is an intensive audition process and the self-reflective section of the SER (p.30) that shows a keen awareness of the drawbacks of the current arrangements including: auditions in Antwerp restricting international candidates' ability to attend; cost for non-EU students and the limited availability of scholarships; and, bearing in mind the importance of diversity, balancing the requirements of different dance cultures. (Source: SER, p.30) This shows a clearly enhancement-led attitude.

#### Compliance with Standard 3.1

On the basis of the information in the *SER*, further documentation including annexes and the meetings



during the online site-visit, the review team concludes that the Bachelor Dance programme is **fully compliant** with Standard 3.1.

### **3.2 Student progression, achievement and employability**

**Standard 3.2. The programme has mechanisms to formally monitor and review the progression, achievement and subsequent employability of its students.**

The SER (p. 31) summarises completion rates which (for year 2018-2019) were 73% overall. Due to the small size of the cohort it is relatively straightforward to monitor progression and completion rates, and monitoring is backed up by detailed SAS Analytics available from AP.

An alumni survey dated April 2020 (linked from the SER, p.31) attracted a 48% response rate from 20 graduates (4 from 2015-2017, 8 from 2017-2018 and 8 from 2018-2019); it showed very high satisfaction with the programme and that almost all respondents were employed in the field with a variety of companies and organisations. Three respondents continued to Master-level study; the developing research opportunities at RCA will provide another avenue for follow-on study. Preparation and contact with the work field was rated as a weakness by 9 respondents. (Source: SER, p.31)

This point is echoed in the SER (p.50) and in Meeting 5 where it was reported that on the big 'island' of the deSingel campus the focus can remain within. There is a need to make connections with the workfield earlier, and acknowledgement (also expressed in Meeting 3) that time and effort has gone into that recently.

In Meeting 2 students appreciated in particular how the reflective tools they are given prepare them to 'jump into the professional field' and that they feel that they do have the capacity to deal with the transition into work.

In Meeting 3 it was reported that there is no specific Alumni platform, rather a general Facebook group for teachers, alumni and current students, that is not particularly useful.

Senior staff in Meeting 6 reported that there is, however, a community of graduates that stay in touch with each other and as a result two collectives have established themselves to create and produce their own work with a shared artistic vision.

The review team finds that completion rates are in line with international expectations for a programme of this kind and are appropriately monitored. Similarly, the employment profile of graduates - a combination of freelance or temporary contracts and self-generated work - is both in line with expectations and appropriate for the kind of dance artist that the programme educates.





In the opinion of the review team, and considering the relatively high proportion of respondents to the alumni survey that rated preparation for the work field as a weakness, the review team supports the programme team's further consideration of how to strengthen students' connections with and preparation for the profession. The review team finds that the programme's aim to reflect the professional world's multiplicity and diversity in its study programme (Meeting 6) is commendable; however, it inevitably stretches both content and resources. The self-reflective comments the SER (p.32) express the desire to incorporate even more elements into the programme in order to address the multiplicity of roles in the field; the review team advises caution in adding further to an already full curriculum and that other means (such as internships, already mentioned as an area for development (Source: SER, p. 22)) could achieve similar results.

Suggestion for enhancement: in order to further develop and strengthen the students' possibilities to connect with the work field, the Bachelor Dance programme could prioritise an enhanced internship programme. Other forms of activities, such as a community-based project, or seminars based on artistic practices of current professionals in the field, could also be valuable in bridging the student community and professional community.

### **Compliance with Standard 3.2**

On the basis of the information in the *SER*, further documentation including annexes and the meetings during the online site-visit, the review team concludes that the Bachelor Dance programme is **fully compliant** with Standard 3.2.



## 4. Teaching staff

### 4.1 Staff qualifications and professional activity

**Standard 4.1. Members of the teaching staff are qualified for their role and are active as artists/pedagogues/researchers.**

'Dance education is about sharing artistic competences in a pedagogical environment'. (Source: SER, p. 34) The programme encourages and celebrates the different approaches and functions of both working dance artists who have developed their competence in the field and those who are qualified dance teachers. It is also clear (Meeting 1) that there is not a hierarchy between pedagogy and artistic experience (indeed 'experience in the field holds more weight than a qualification' (Source: SER, p.34); and that it is a very positive experience for students to 'translate' and collaborate with guest artists, in dialogue. (Source: Meeting 1)

AP provides some professional development on pedagogy. The SER (p. 34) states that although the RCA's *Inspire!* annual professional development day is more tailored to the particular needs of its teaching staff than that provided by AP and is well regarded (Source: Meeting 4), nevertheless the Bachelor Dance programme continues to seek a professional development solution that is appropriate to the needs of its very diverse teaching staff. Guest teachers in particular are reported to be hard to reach and a method such as *Tiktak*, a digital platform for learning, feedback and evaluation is useful. (Source: Meeting 6) In Meeting 6 it was also reported that many teaching artists see opportunities that the programme provides such as symposia on inclusive dance as an important part of their own professional 'nourishment'.

In the past few years there has been a significant increase in research projects by dance staff, supported by a competitive process for government-sourced funds between the two schools of the RCA. The Dance department is strongly represented through chairing one of the four RCA research groups *CORPoREAL* that aims to support and broaden arts research.

The review team notes that the Bachelor Dance programme has a well-articulated philosophy which holds working knowledge and teaching qualifications in parity of esteem; it finds the mixture of approaches likely to be stimulating for students. The Bachelor Dance programme, with its staffing policy that includes working artists and qualified teachers, is particularly strong in this standard.

It also notes that the 2020 alumni survey showed that the diversity of teachers was appreciated. The review team considers the department's creative approach to finding appropriate ways of bringing guest teachers 'into the fold' very positive and that the increase in research opportunities marks a significant step in professional development.



#### **Compliance with Standard 4.1**

On the basis of the information in the *SER*, further documentation including annexes and the meetings during the online site-visit, the review team concludes that the Bachelor Dance programme is **fully compliant** with Standard 4.1.

#### **4.2 Size and composition of the teaching staff body**

##### **Standard 4.2. There are sufficient qualified teaching staff to effectively deliver the programme.**

In 2018-2019, over 50 teachers were involved in the programme; however, this equates to only 6.25 FTE, which indicates that the level of involvement from individual guest teachers can be very small. The teaching workforce is classified as: a Core team (Head of Dance and two artistic coordinators. (1.18 FTE)); Teaching team (28 teachers with variable contracts); and Guest teachers (c. 29 teachers on variable contracts). The main roles of each group is defined in the *SER* and the programme strives to find a balance of skills and artistic vision in the whole team (Source: *SER*, p. 35)

The *SER* notes the effect of the COVID pandemic on a dance programme that prioritises embodiment and that the management team has been stretched to its limits, at personal cost. (Source: *SER*, p.40)

It is normal in the sector to employ a large proportion of guest teachers, but the number employed in the Bachelor Dance programme is particularly high. The Artistic co-ordinators play a vital role in supporting a very large and diverse group of teachers and this results in a significant investment of their individual time and attention. The review team believes that the Artistic co-ordinators achieve a great deal with limited resources. Its meeting with teachers (Meeting 4) confirmed that teaching staff were knowledgeable and felt well supported which is a further evidence of their successful management of the group.

The review team finds that the division of the teaching workforce into a Core team, Teaching team and Guest teachers clearly and usefully delineates expectations of their different roles, responsibilities and levels of input.

#### **Compliance with Standard 4.2**

On the basis of the information in the *SER*, further documentation including annexes and the meetings during the online site-visit, the review team concludes that the Bachelor Dance programme is **fully compliant** with Standard 4.2.



## 5. Facilities, resources and support

### 5.1 Facilities

**Standard 5.1. The institution has appropriate resources to support student learning and delivery of the programme.**

The SER details the various types of resources offered by the Bachelor Dance programme to support student learning and programme delivery, starting from its physical location in the deSingel arts campus that offers opportunities for direct interaction with international artists and companies and possibilities for masterclasses and workshops. The SER describes shared arrangements for maintenance and the additional financial costs of operating from within an architecturally important building. (Source: SER, p. 37)

The Bachelor Dance programme has three studios for its exclusive use and use of other studio and classroom spaces shared with the Music department. (Source: SER, p. 37)

Two theatre spaces are available for shared use, which are also bookable by students and available out of hours. In Meeting 1 staff commented on the helpful co-operation of the production team at deSingel in optimising space. One additional dance studio will become available due to the departure of Radio 2 from the campus, and this is described as a necessary addition for the new Master Dance programme. (Source: SER, p. 37) In its critical reflection the SER reports that the available studios do not reflect the quality of the Bachelor Dance programme: they are too few, too small and (particularly important in current circumstances) not well enough ventilated (Source: SER, p. 38), notwithstanding recent investment in reducing the temperature. (Source: SER, p. 37)

The SER details a suite of digital learning and study support facilities, including subsidised laptop purchase, DigitAP, the electronic learning environment of AP, iBamaflex, the school's student administration system, where a student can consult their own student files, and MyArts for scheduling, and library services and e-collections. Many of these can be accessed by students from home. The RCA has the largest music library in Flanders and its holdings in Dance materials are growing. (Source: SER, p.37 and Meeting 2)

In terms of health and wellbeing support for students, there is an in-house physiotherapist, able to respond rapidly and flexibly to treat injuries or give advice (Source: Meeting 2) and a focus on preventative health care. (Source: SER, p. 37)

Social facilities are available out of hours for student use. (Source: SER, p.38 and Meeting 2)



The SER notes that, due to its small size and feedback culture, the Bachelor Dance programme staff are able to identify student health and wellbeing issues. 'Gatekeeper' training is available to staff from AP. There is also a student counsellor separate from programme staff, with a direct link to STUVO, the AP department for Student services that covers a range of student issues from housing and finance to psychological support.

Staff in Meeting 4 commented on the lack of a staff room.

The review team commends the comprehensive support available to students on the Bachelor Dance programme and found that students in Meeting 2 were enthusiastic about the range of resources available to them. The Review Team identifies two significant exceptions to this: the dearth of dance studios and the lack of a dedicated staff meeting room.

The review team understands the challenges of working within a shared campus, but finds a stark contrast between the state-of-the-art support available for digital and health and wellbeing of students with the very basic need for additional physical studio space. Although the 'can do' attitude the review team encountered means that staff in Meeting 1 tried to turn this lack of space into a positive because it forced them to look at other spaces in Antwerp thereby increasing links with the city, in the view of the review team the space issue needs to be addressed urgently.

Recommendation: the review team recommends that a realistic inventory of additional spaces required to realise the Bachelor Dance programme should be made, in line with the commitment to quality described in the SER.

The high number of guest teachers and the challenge of keeping them 'in the loop' is detailed elsewhere (4.2 above and 6.1 below). In the view of the review team, simple face-to-face encounters are a very efficient way of communicating and a dedicated space for staff would allow this. In this working situation such a room should not be regarded as an add-on 'luxury'; rather it is essential for efficient working and quality enhancement across the board.

Recommendation: the review team recommends that a staff room should be provided.

The review team finds that, with the exceptions noted above, students are very well supported in resources offered by the Bachelor Dance programme. Digital resources are comprehensive and in line with best expectations for the sector; the SER is confident about adding specialist dance materials to the already impressive library holdings (p.38). Comments in the SER (p.37 and p.38) hint that both staff and students could make better use of the digital resources provided; in the view of the review team digital literacy is an important transferable skill and the Bachelor Dance programme should consider how it can be more proactive in this area.



Recommendation: the review team recommends that training for staff and students to acquire or enhance the necessary basic requirements for digital literacy should be formulated and implemented.

Taking a wider focus, the review team finds that the Bachelor Dance programme's central European position in Antwerp and its specific location in the deSingel arts campus contribute significantly to supporting students' learning and this view was endorsed by students in Meeting 2.

### **Compliance with Standard 5.1**

On the basis of the information in the *SER*, further documentation including annexes and the meetings during the online site-visit, the review team concludes that the Bachelor Dance programme is **partially compliant** with Standard 5.1.

## **5.2 Financial resources**

### **Standard 5.2. The institution's financial resources enable successful delivery of the programme.**

The *SER* describes a complex multi-layered funding model in which working capital from the Flemish Ministry of Education combines with tuition fees. AP, after retaining a proportion for its general and administrative costs, allocates resources to RCA. In 2019 RCA received approximately €6 million, with the largest proportion of this going towards staffing costs. In addition to government allocated funds, RCA accesses funds from reserves and external project funding. (Source: *SER*, p.39)

The *SER* (p. 39) and Meeting 1 reported administrative difficulties in accommodating self-employed and temporary contracts for guest artists and teachers in AP's personnel systems. Staff in Meeting 1 noted that although the Bachelor Dance programme enjoys pedagogical freedom, it is sometimes hamstrung in administrative matters by the HR procedures of its host institution which are not geared towards freelance guest teachers. Teachers in Meeting 4 endorsed this and expressed some frustration not only in contractual procedures but also with their fees not reflecting their level of involvement in the programme.

In the view of the review team, overall the Bachelor Dance programme's financial resources are appropriate for the successful delivery of the programme. However, it may be necessary to seek capital funding for studio space (see 5.1 above).

### **Compliance with Standard 5.2**

On the basis of the information in the *SER*, further documentation including annexes and the meetings during the online site-visit, the review team concludes that the Bachelor Dance programme is **fully compliant** with Standard 5.2.



### 5.3 Support staff

#### **Standard 5.3. The programme has sufficient qualified support staff.**

The Bachelor Dance programme's proportion of support and co-ordination staff within RCA is 1.68 FTE. In addition the proportion of ICT, library, communication and quality control staff from AP is 0.3FTE. The SER reports that 'everyone is working at their limit'. (Source: SER, p.40) The Bachelor Dance programme shares the RCA's specialist communications staff (1.5 FTE). (Source: SER, p.52) A specialist quality assurance co-ordinator is provided by AP. (Source: Meeting 1)

There is a small budget for training available from AP for (unspecified) training available to both teaching and administrative staff. (Source: SER, p.40)

As noted above in 5.1, the programme has an in-house physiotherapist, the services of a counsellor and other services via STUVO. In Meeting 6 staff reported that their role in supporting student wellbeing had become much clearer and less hands-on over the years, as clear mechanisms for referral to specialist psychological services of STUVO are being implemented.

The review team finds that specialist support for students' physical, mental and wellbeing needs is well provided by qualified staff.

The SER asserts that Bachelor Dance programme administrative support is already stretched, and this has been exacerbated by COVID circumstances. In the view of the review team a total of 1.98 FTE (1.68 + 0.3 FTE) is not unreasonable for a small department that is part of two larger administrative units (RCA and AP). The SER (p.40) hints that the educational methods and format of the Bachelor Dance programme may not fit the right 'administrative boxes', indicating a tension between the needs of the department and its support staff, but also indicates that there is a healthy dialogue between parties. (Source: SER, p.40)

The SER notes that the management team is stretched to its limit, at a personal cost for those involved (p.40). This is obviously a matter for concern and in the view of the review team this is the responsibility of RCA management to address. The review team saw no evidence that the Bachelor Dance programme has suffered any adverse consequences from its overstretched management team; rather they are to be commended for their energy and commitment to the programme. However, as one alleviating measure, the review team suggests that the prevailing culture of intense individual feedback could be further adjusted to ensure it is manageable, without losing its essential ethos of care for the student; senior staff, acting appropriately as gatekeepers, should refer students to appropriate specialist support. A pattern of work in which all educational, welfare and administrative matters appear to funnel up to the two Artistic



co-ordinators is already recognised as a problem in the SER (p.40); this should be reviewed with workflows optimised and tasks delegated appropriately (see also 6.2 below).

Recommendation: The review team recommends that care is taken to ensure the culture of intense individual feedback is manageable and that the workload of the two Artistic co-ordinators should be reviewed with workflows optimised and tasks delegated where possible.

### **Compliance with Standard 5.3**

On the basis of the information in the *SER*, further documentation including annexes and the meetings during the online site-visit, the review team concludes that the Bachelor Dance programme is **substantially compliant** with Standard 5.3.





## 6. Communication, organisation and decision-making

### 6.1 Internal communication process

**Standard 6.1. Effective mechanisms are in place for internal communication within the programme.**

The SER analyses the various mechanisms that the Bachelor Dance uses for internal communication, presented in a tabular format, according to different staff roles. (Source: SER, p.42) Within the department, the Artistic co-ordinators have an important role in communicating with teachers and guest teachers. Guest teachers are hardest to reach, because of their relatively small teaching commitments and lack of finance to pay for more interaction, but the SER notes that as an unexpected result of COVID, the entire dance team participated in a SWOT exercise and the digital environment enabled many more guest teachers to participate. There are weekly staff meetings. (Source: SER, p.35 and Meetings 1 and 4) Teachers in Meeting 4 noted that much communication is ad hoc and picked up in corridors on the way to studios and that a dedicated meeting room would improve communication.

For communications with students, the Mentors and Pedagogical assistant play a key role. The SER describes how Mentors provide a platform for dialogue between students and the Artistic coordinators including a weekly drop-in session; the Pedagogical assistant's role is specifically to communicate between the programme and students. The role of class representatives is to pass on questions or problems and communicate back to their cohort. (Source: SER, p.42) Students in Meeting 2 confirmed that communication within the department was good, and that teachers and senior staff were approachable and helpful.

In Meeting 1 it was emphasised that due to the small number of students, communication between the staff team and students is direct, and personal contact works well. In Meeting 6 staff reported that they strive to make it clear to students that they can communicate in different ways according to need e.g. whether the communication is confidential or can be shared via class representatives e.g. for an issue with the programme. Students in Meeting 2 and staff in Meeting 4 mentioned that the *Trotter* (an information booklet given to staff and students at the beginning of each school year) is a useful source of basic information.

In all its meetings the review team encountered a positive attitude to communication; it finds that there are a number of varied internal communication mechanisms in the Bachelor Dance programme that together work very effectively. The review team was impressed by the presence of a Pedagogical assistant role and pleased to note the prevailing attitude of continuous enhancement and seizing opportunities, such as those provided by using video conferencing tools to include guest teachers in



discussions. As noted above (5.1), there is a need for a staff room to facilitate good communication with all teachers, and particularly with guest teachers.

### **Compliance with Standard 6.1**

On the basis of the information in the *SER*, further documentation including annexes and the meetings during the online site-visit, the review team concludes that the Bachelor Dance programme is **fully compliant** with Standard 6.1.

## **6.2 Organisational structure and decision-making processes**

### **Standard 6.2 The programme is supported by an appropriate organisational structure and clear decision-making processes.**

The *SER* comments that at some point hierarchical decision-making is inevitable, but that the department strives for a 'more horizontal structure with open communication and shared decision making'. (Source: *SER* p.44) There are numerous examples of shared decision making including the Student Council's very active involvement during COVID or the twice-yearly programme committee that includes students (who bring forward agenda items), teachers and management. (Source: Meeting 1).

An example of inclusive and transparent decision-making is cited as the weekly meeting of the artistic staff dance that consists of the Head of Dance, Artistic coordinators and Pedagogical and Administrative assistants. The *SER* also describes clear roles and responsibilities for senior staff (the Head of Dance and Artistic co-ordinators) in terms of their decision-making responsibilities, with the Head of Dance responsible for 'fine-tuning' RCA and AP policies and how they translate into strategic and operational goals in the context of the School of Arts. (Source: *SER* p.44)

The review team finds the organisational structure and decision-making processes are fit for purpose and informed by an ethos of inclusion. The review team notes that (despite the emphasis on shared responsibility) a great deal of day-to-day decision making funnels up to the Artistic Co-ordinators and that appropriate delegation should be a result of an ethos of shared responsibility (see also 5.3 above). There is clarity in the staff structure over areas of responsibility, with the Head of Dance playing a key role in wider strategic decisions involving the RCA and AP.

### **Compliance with Standard 6.2**

On the basis of the information in the *SER*, further documentation including annexes and the meetings during the online site-visit, the review team concludes that the Bachelor Dance programme is **fully compliant** with Standard 6.2.



## 7. Internal quality culture

### **Standard 7. The programme has in place effective quality assurance and enhancement procedures.**

The SER describes the RCA's quality policy as based on the overarching AP PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle. It notes that quality assurance takes place at various 'contact' levels and levels of formality (including interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, data analysis) with different stakeholders (students, alumni, representatives of the profession and staff). All of these elements combine to give systematic analysis and enhancement goals for the programme. (Source: SER, p.46)

In terms of formal quality tools, the programme was last accredited in 2008 as part of the former Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO). Every three years there is an evaluation of course units, a programme survey from a student perspective and an alumni survey with a focus on the programme and employment profile. (Source: SER, p.46) Learning Outcomes and Learning Objectives will be evaluated during the current academic year and amended as required in June 2021. (Source: SER, p.12) SAS-Analytics (via AP) is used to provide user-friendly statistical data. (Source: SER, p.46)

AP provides a specialist QA Co-ordinator post that acts in a liaison role between the Conservatoire and AP and as an ambassador for the special requirements of higher arts education. It was reported that there is an excellent working relationship with the QA Co-ordinator who has an informed understanding of the core of the Bachelor Dance programme. (Source: Meeting 1)

Formal tools are supported by the Bachelor Dance's culture of swift informal feedback and also, through the Artistic Council, the contribution of external professional perspectives as part of an ongoing conversation with the working field. (Source: SER, p.46 and Meeting 1) In Meeting 5 staff confirmed that they feel involved and consulted about the programme.

In a recent survey 75% of alumni confirmed that both the mission and the programme learning outcomes were in line with their experience of the programme. (Source: SER, p.11) In Meeting 2 students confirmed that their views are heard and acted upon, that there are good upward communications and that feedback loops are closed. Staff in Meeting 6 noted how the programme makes it clear to students in introduction week the different layers of support and communications available to them. RCA also has an active Student Council that represents the interests of the students of all programmes and representation on the study programme committee. (Source: SER, p.38)



The review team finds that there is a strong internal quality culture in the Bachelor Dance programme. It also finds that the programme is well supported by AP, both in formal tools and in the person of the QA Co-ordinator. Communication in the department is good and the proactive leadership of the Artistic co-ordinators in quality enhancement is clear and valued (Meeting 4, SER, p. 6). In the link to the Staff reflection SWOT analysis (SER, p.6) the co-ordinators and team are rated by staff as the no. 1 strength ("What should we be proud of?"). Noting the importance of a shared organisational culture it could be fruitful to find ways of delegating some responsibility for enhancement to the wider staff team, not least to reduce the already heavy workload of the Artistic co-ordinators.

### **Compliance with Standard 7**

On the basis of the information in the *SER*, further documentation including annexes and the meetings during the online site-visit, the review team concludes that the Bachelor Dance programme is **fully compliant** with Standard 7.



## 8. Public interaction

### 8.1 Cultural, artistic and educational contexts

#### **Standard 8.1. The programme engages within wider cultural, artistic and educational contexts.**

The Bachelor Dance programme has a strong ethos of engagement and its interactions with artistic, educational and societal contexts is detailed in the SER (pp.49-50). Artistically, its physical location within the deSingel arts campus gives an immediate connection with high-quality professional work being made and shown, allowing close collaborations, workshops, masterclasses and ongoing dialogue with the artistic team at deSingel. (Source: Meeting 5) However, deSingel is also described as a ‘cocoon’ (Source: SER, p.50) or a ‘micro-bubble’; there is an acknowledged need to encourage students outwards into the city in order to strengthen their relationship with other workspaces and gain more perspective and knowledge of the current dance scene. (Source: Meeting 5) The SER (p.49) notes how the programme seeks external residences in the internationally-renowned Belgian dance scene; in Meeting 5 staff reported that in recent years there have been focused efforts in this direction, encouraging students to make connections into the external work field earlier. (Source: Meeting 5)

Connections on the educational level include collaborations with STUK in Leuven and the University of Antwerp (including classes on dance theory open to students), international Erasmus exchanges and consultations with international and locally-based institutions such as Fontys Dance Academy (Tilburg) and PARTS (Brussels).

On the societal level the SER reports that integrated dance in an inclusive setting has become a major element of the curriculum. (Source, SER, p.49) The SER details initiatives such as the *Labo* project which connects dancers with mixed abilities, a biennial symposium, summer schools and thematic days on dance and diversity. The department is an active partner in the RCA-wide strategy on diversity and the SER also reports how this activity is supported by consideration of ethical issues in a code of conduct. (Source: SER: p.50)

Given its commonality of interests, in Meeting 5 it was reported that connections with *Danspunt* could be strengthened.

The review team finds that, in line with its goals to interact with artistic, educational and societal processes and contexts, the level of interaction with wider cultural contexts is high: it is detailed in the SER (pp.49-50) and was further elaborated in several meetings (e.g. Meeting 4). Ironically, its situation within deSingel, whilst it brings many benefits, can also be seen as a drawback as it has the tendency to ‘cocoon’ students within their immediate physical context rather than allowing them freedom to interact more widely within the city. This is acknowledged in the SER (p.50) and the review team has a suggestion for



enhancement in this regard (see 3.2 above). However, on balance, the deSingel context has to be seen as a rare advantage bringing high-quality enhancement to the student experience.

The review team finds connections with educational partners weaker; there is not so much interaction with institutions outside the local context (although connections with *Danspunt* could be strengthened and formalised) and the review team has the impression that the programme does not energetically pursue or prioritise international connections. It could be argued that this is reasonable for a small programme with an already packed agenda, but it could also be seen as another consequence of the deSingel 'bubble'.

Commendation: The review team commends the Bachelor Dance programme's work in the area of dance inclusion and diversity, which it finds exemplary.

### **Compliance with Standard 8.1**

On the basis of the information in the *SER*, further documentation including annexes and the meetings during the online site-visit, the review team concludes that the Bachelor Dance programme is **fully compliant** with Standard 8.1.

## **8.2 Interaction with the artistic professions**

### **Standard 8.2. The programme actively promotes links with various sectors of the art scene and other artistic professions.**

As the Bachelor Dance programme's interactions with the professional arts scene is detailed above (in 8.1), the *SER* concentrates on interdisciplinary opportunities offered to students such as *Next Doors*, an RCA-wide project week where students make work with their peers from other artistic areas, an *Open Stage* free space and an ongoing collaboration with the jazz department of RCA. (Source: *SER*, p.51)

The *SER* also notes the range of constraints on interdisciplinary activity, noting each programme's different needs, schedules, methods and priorities'. (Source: *SER*, p.51) There is also a lack of common spaces where students can meet organically, with e.g. colleagues from music. (Source: Meeting 1)

Staff in Meeting 5 advocated the advantages of opening up the school to more external input both artistically and socially; in Meetings 1 and 6 staff noted administrative, budget (e.g. to travel to other cities) and time constraints.

The review team finds that the Bachelor Dance programme is active in interdisciplinary work, but there are some missed opportunities. Interdisciplinary work always brings administrative and scheduling challenges - adding to an already-packed curriculum is not the answer; rather prioritising interdisciplinary work means taking tough decisions about curricular content. On the basis that wide engagement is at the



core of the programme's ethos, connections could be strengthened with other disciplines at RCA especially as contemporary dance is becoming an ever more hybrid form.

Recommendation: The review team recommends that connections could be strengthened with other disciplines at RCA. Artistic co-ordinators could look into creating learning experiences in which both the curricular content and interdisciplinary connection can be targeted together.

### **Compliance with Standard 8.2**

On the basis of the information in the *SER*, further documentation including annexes and the meetings during the online site-visit, the review team concludes that the Bachelor Dance programme is **substantially compliant** with Standard 8.2.

### **8.3 Information provided to the public**

**Standard 8.3 Information provided to the public about the programme is clear, consistent and accurate.**

The *SER* (pp 52-53) gives a comprehensive overview of the various channels of public information. There is a communications strategy for the Schools of Arts, supported by 1.5 FTE specialist staff members, which covers communications objectives, quality analysis, audiences, analytics and improvements. (Source: *SER*, p.52)

For each digital communication channel (website, newsletters, social media) the *SER* notes content, audiences, tone and analytics. All these are bi-lingual. (Source: *SER*, p.52)

Printed material includes a magazine in Dutch (an English translation is planned), programmes, calendars and events information and a journal showcasing research outputs from the two Schools of Arts. Events such as public open days complete the picture. (Source: *SER*, p.52)

In the view of the review team, the Bachelor Dance programme benefits from a highly professional communications strategy and team at the School of Arts level. It suggests that it might take more advantage of the AP PR department by regularly feeding it material.

### **Compliance with Standard 8.3**

On the basis of the information in the *SER*, further documentation including annexes and the meetings during the online site-visit, the review team concludes that the Bachelor Dance programme is **fully compliant** with Standard 8.3.



## Summary of the compliance with the Standards and recommendations

The review team concludes that the programme comply with the *Standards for Programme Review* as follows:

1. Programme's goals and context	
<b>Standard 1.</b> The programme goals are clearly stated and reflect the institutional mission.	<b>Fully compliant</b>
2. Educational processes	
<b>Standard 2.1.</b> The goals of the programme are achieved through the content and structure of the curriculum and its methods of delivery.	<b>Fully compliant</b>
<b>Commendations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The review team commends the programme's enhancement-led approach and responsiveness to feedback that is evident from the thoughtful critical reflections in the SER, as well as in the involvement of stakeholders in the continuous evolution of the programme.</li> </ul>	
<b>Standard 2.2.</b> The programme offers a range of opportunities for students to gain an international perspective.	<b>Substantially compliant</b>
<b>Recommendations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The review team recommends that the Bachelor Dance programme's international strategy would be enriched by a more proactive and less ad hoc approach to international institutions and organisations, such as seeking exchange agreements or formal international collaborations as has already started with a local peer institution, PARTS. This would increase opportunities for both students and staff and cement the programme's international positioning.</li> </ul>	
<b>Standard 2.3.</b> Assessment methods are clearly defined and demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes.	<b>Fully compliant</b>
<b>Commendations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The review team commends the assessment philosophy, structure and practice detailed in the SER. It is a model of its type, well-informed by current specialist educational practice, thoughtful and values-driven.</li> </ul>	
3. Student profiles	
<b>Standard 3.1.</b> There are clear criteria for student admission, based on an assessment of their artistic/academic suitability for the programme.	<b>Fully compliant</b>





<b>Standard 3.2.</b> The programme has mechanisms to formally monitor and review the progression, achievement and subsequent employability of its students.	<b>Fully compliant</b>
<b>Suggestion for enhancement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· In order to further develop and strengthen the students' possibilities to connect with the work field, the Bachelor Dance programme could prioritise an enhanced internship programme. Other forms of activities, such as a community-based project, or seminars based on artistic practices of current professionals in the field, could also be valuable in bridging the student community and professional community</li> </ul>	
<b>4. Teaching staff</b>	
<b>Standard 4.1.</b> Members of the teaching staff are qualified for their role and are active as artists/pedagogues/ researchers.	<b>Fully compliant</b>
<b>Standard 4.2.</b> There are sufficient qualified teaching staff to effectively deliver the programme.	<b>Fully compliant</b>
<b>5. Facilities, resources and support</b>	
<b>Standard 5.1.</b> The institution has appropriate resources to support student learning and delivery of the programme.	<b>Partially compliant</b>
<b>Recommendations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· The review team recommends that a realistic inventory of additional spaces required to realise the Bachelor Dance programme should be made, in line with the commitment to quality described in the SER;</li> <li>· The review team recommends that a staff room should be provided;</li> <li>· The review team recommends that training for staff and students to acquire or enhance the necessary basic requirements for digital literacy should be formulated and implemented.</li> </ul>	
<b>Standard 5.2.</b> The institution's financial resources enable successful delivery of the programme.	<b>Fully compliant</b>
<b>Standard 5.3.</b> The programme has sufficient qualified support staff.	<b>Substantially compliant</b>



<b>Recommendations</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The review team recommends that care is taken to ensure the culture of intense individual feedback is manageable and that the workload of the two Artistic co-ordinators should be reviewed with workflows optimised and tasks delegated where possible.</li> </ul>	
<b>6. Communication, organisation and decision-making</b>	
<b>Standard 6.1.</b> Effective mechanisms are in place for internal communication within the programme.	<b>Fully compliant</b>
<b>Standard 6.2</b> The programme is supported by an appropriate organisational structure and decision-making processes.	<b>Fully compliant</b>
<b>7. Internal quality culture</b>	
<b>Standard 7.</b> The programme has in place effective quality assurance and enhancement procedures.	<b>Fully compliant</b>
<b>8. Public interaction</b>	
<b>Standard 8.1.</b> The programme engages within wider cultural, artistic and educational contexts.	<b>Fully compliant</b>
<b>Commendations</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The review team commends the Bachelor Dance programme's work in the area of dance inclusion and diversity, which it finds exemplary.</li> </ul>	
<b>Standard 8.2.</b> The programme actively promotes links with various sectors of the music and other artistic professions.	<b>Substantially compliant</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The review team recommends that connections could be strengthened with other disciplines at RCA. Artistic coordinators could look into creating learning experiences in which both the curricular content and interdisciplinary connection can be targeted together.</li> </ul>	
<b>Standard 8.3.</b> Information provided to the public about the programme is clear, consistent and accurate.	<b>Fully compliant</b>



## Conclusion

As can be seen from its review report, the review team found much to commend in the Bachelor Dance programme. It has a clear, thoughtful, ambitious and distinctive vision and mission with a particular emphasis on diversity, an holistic outlook and wide engagement. Its work in the area of dance inclusion and diversity is exemplary. The review team was impressed by how far the thinking and learning outcomes are understood, supported and enacted by different stakeholders, particularly in what is a very wide group of guest teachers; this is largely due to the efforts and commitment of senior staff, particularly the Artistic co-ordinators. The review team encountered a nuanced understanding by the Artistic co-ordinators of current educational practices translated into the dance context and an enhancement-led attitude throughout. There is a positive, energetic and inspiring atmosphere in which care for the individual and curiosity and willingness to learn is much in evidence.

Of the few areas of concern, the number of studios is the most pressing. The review team finds that the lack of physical spaces does not reflect the high quality of the programme. The review team also felt that a great deal of stamina and 'plate spinning' is needed to sustain the ambition and complexity of the programme and that a strategy to support it with realistic workloads and curricular choices (e.g. makers vs dancers?) will be important in its next phase.

As noted above, the Bachelor Dance is forward-thinking and ahead of the curve. The review team felt it deserves to be better known outside its immediate context and this could be achieved by working more strategically with international partners. The review team will watch with interest the development of its strong inclusion and diversity-led agenda. We wish the programme well.



## Annex 1. Site-visit schedule

Day 1 – (29/03/2021)		
Time CEST	Meeting	Names and functions of participants from the visited institution
09:30 – 10:00	Review Team meeting	Review Team alone
10:00 – 11:30	<b>Meeting 1</b> Welcome and meeting with the management of the institution & programme	Meeting with 7 representatives from the institution and the dance programme
11:30 – 11:35	Break from the screen	
11:35 – 12:15	Review Team meeting: Review Team members share conclusions with the Secretary (debriefing)	
12:15 – 13:15	Lunch Break	
13:15 – 14:15	<b>Meeting 2</b> Meeting with students	Meeting with 6 students from the Bachelor Dance programme
14:15 – 14:45	Review Team meeting: Review Team members share conclusions with the Secretary (debriefing)	
14:45 – 15:00	Break	
15:00 – 16:00	<b>Meeting 3</b> Meeting with alumni	Meeting with 5 alumni from the Bachelor Dance programme
16:00 – 16:30	Review Team meeting: Review Team members share conclusions with the Secretary (debriefing)	
16:30 – 17:30	Review Team meeting: Wrap-up of the day and preparation for Day 2	



Day 2 – (30/03/2021)		
Time CEST	Meeting	Names and functions of participants from the visited institution
09:00 – 10:00	<b>Meeting 4</b> Meeting with teaching staff	Meeting with 6 teachers from the Bachelor Dance programme
10:00 – 10:30	Review Team meeting: Review Team members share conclusions with the Secretary (debriefing)	
10:30 – 11:00	Break	
11:00 – 12:00	<b>Meeting 5</b> Meeting with representatives of the profession	Meeting with 6 Representatives from the profession
12:00 – 12:30	Review Team meeting: Review Team members share conclusions with the Secretary (debriefing)	
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch break	
13:30 – 14:00	Optional meeting for clarifications	
14:00 – 15:30	Review Team meeting: Preparation of the Feedback session	
15:30 – 16:30	<b>Feedback session</b> Presentation of the initial findings by the Review Team	The institution invited all of the participants from the meetings that have taken place in the two days
<b>END OF THE VISIT</b>		



## **Annex 2. List of documents provided to the review team**

- Self-evaluation Report – Dance Bachelor – Royal Conservatoire Antwerp
- Critical reflection production timeline
- Historical timeline of the programme
- Pedagogical concept
- Programme spreadsheet
- PDCA cycle
- Bachelor dance 20-21 programme overview
- Overview Artistic Projects 2016-2020
- Trotter for students & staff
- Staff reflection
- Student survey on programme
- Student survey on individual courses
- Alumni survey
- Artistic council reflection
- ID card bachelor Dance: student and study profile
- International Student mobility
- Code of Conduct
- Video material from recorded classes



### Annex 3. Definitions of compliance levels

- **Fully compliant.** *A standard is fully compliant when the approaches, structures or mechanisms relevant to that standard are fully implemented in a coherent and consistent way.*
- **Substantially compliant.** *A standard is substantially compliant when the standard is in place, while minor weaknesses have been observed but the manner of implementation is mostly effective. In such cases Review Teams are asked to include a recommendation as to how full compliance can be achieved.*
- **Partially compliant.** *A standard is partially compliant when the standard is in place, while significant weaknesses have been observed or the manner of implementation is not sufficiently effective. In such cases Review Teams are asked to include a recommendation as to how full compliance can be achieved or a condition\*.*
- **Not compliant.** *A standard is not compliant when the approaches, structures or mechanisms relevant to that standard are lacking or implemented inadequately. In such cases Review Teams are asked to include a strong recommendation or a condition\*.*

*(\*Please note that conditions can only be formulated in accreditation reports and not in quality enhancement review reports.)*



