

Oslo National Academy of the Arts Rector Election 2021

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Electoral programme

The recent years have been a turbulent time at KHiO, with budget cuts, the MeToo debate, the corona pandemic and this autumn's intense KHiO debate on freedom of expression, racism and identity politics, and not least the very high turnover of staff in leadership positions. The students and academic staff have nevertheless managed to perform at a high level and achieved outstanding results, and KHiO is probably still the most interesting and promising institution for arts education in Northern Europe. Few institutions can compete with KHiO's academic autonomy, disciplinary range, and wealth of resources regarding staff, locations, and technology.

In brief, we find the potential at KHiO highly exciting, and the large and unused potential is what motivates us as candidates. As staff members at KHiO – in our respective roles as dean of the Art and Craft department and associate professor at the Academy of Dance and KHiO board member – we have acquired a good deal of insight into the factors that have caused several of the well-known issues at KHiO. With this in mind, and given that the mandate for the upcoming rectorate is for two years only, the aim of our electoral programme is not to identify new challenges for KHiO, but rather to attempt to solve the issues that constantly appear in the school's internal discussions. Our vision is therefore:

To create a more well functioned study-, research-, and working environment through focusing at and prioritize the quality of our core tasks; education, research, and dissemination.

Carving out time and space for the school's core activities requires a willingness to come together to find better and more workable decision-making processes and organisational solutions.

Organising in order to aid the academic work

As stated, KHiO has a large and untapped potential based on high baseline quality. However, in our roles as staff members at KHiO we have unfortunately experienced that the school's organisation of its activities is often to the detriment of its core tasks, such as educational and curriculum development, research and collaboration applications, artistic and academic research, academic discussions and interdepartmental collaboration. Many processes are executed over again several times, department by department, and it is not uncommon for roles, mandates, and decision-making processes to be unclear. This often leads to ad hoc solutions and additional work when cases are sent around throughout the organisation in a quest of a clear answer, something that ultimately also negatively impacts students, staff, and research fellows.

The board has already ordered an evaluation of the previous reorganisation that led to today's model with a centralised administration and decentralised academic operations. In the following evaluation process, and to deal with the problems that have ensued, we believe that three elements are critical:

- the quality of the study programmes and the artistic research must guide the school's operations
- to provide a realistic overview over KHiOs total resources and autonomy
- that we establish a consensus and a common commitment on the path forward

Educational quality

We want to work systematically on increasing educational quality. Developing educational competence has to do with raising awareness on our roles as artists, teachers, and supervisors in an academic, pedagogical, and ethical perspective. We believe this is best accomplished by working “from within” and establishing a professional community of arts educators at the institutional level, anchored in the various disciplines in the departments. In turn, this community might facilitate the development of relevant practice-based educational competence and arts-educational research. Specifically, we therefore want to:

- Complete the establishment of a collegial education panel at the institutional level and implement systems, structures, and co-determination regarding questions about educational quality work and teaching recognition [merittering] at KHiO
- Develop the staff's educational competence by providing teaching and study planning courses at both basic and advanced level to fulfil the requirements addressed to academic staff in Norwegian higher education.
- Initiate education-oriented innovation and pilot projects that explore e.g., artistic research-based teaching, student-active learning, new teaching methods and teaching formats, internationalisation, as well as digitisation, by strategically applying for external financing from DIKU (the Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education).
- Initiate a continuing education programme [EVU] at KHiO, develop a strategy for life-long learning, and develop more flexible study programmes. Hence, we might assume a greater social responsibility, share our competence and academic results with more parties in the community, take care of our alumni's, and, hopefully, ensure a stream of income.

Artistic and academic research

KHiO has managed to obtain its autonomy as a specialized university. There are many important advantages to this academic autonomy, but it also requires that invest and maintain high research quality. Artistic and academic research are therefore areas that will become even more important in the future.

Even though KHiO has been given a boost in this area with a prorektor of research and a dedicated PhD programme, there are still many issues to deal with. Artistic and academic research are the areas that are probably the most interdepartmental in nature, and we believe that much might be gained by establishing collaboration and larger academic communities both within and across departments, institutions, and borders. For instance, building research synergies, improve in how we are profiling KHiO's artistic and academic research, improve administrative research support, and initiate programmes to develop the staff's research competence, are important steps forward. All in all, we believe such actions could provide better opportunities to increase our external funding as well as to take full advantage of KHiOs investment in the KUF -time and to relate the KUF-activity to teaching and organizational development.

Internationalisation

The concept of internationalisation has recently shifted into the recognition of cognition and perspectives, which is more a question of expanding our knowledge and encouraging a variety of perspectives in contrast to focusing merely of measuring quantities such as mobility, recruitment and hiring statistics.

From a knowledge-based perspective, it is important to recognise that internationalisation is more organic than the political division into a local, regional, national and international geography. According to Statistics Norway (SSB), Norway has nearly 800,000 inhabitants who were born in a foreign country or whose parents were. Even though internationalisation largely continues to be a question of exchange programmes – and they are of course still important and must be encouraged – recent developments and debates indicate that KHiO's internationalisation strategy should partially also be seen in relation to questions of diversity.

Inclusion and diversity

KHiO must have deliberate and well-founded strategies for inclusion and diversity. Some processes have been launched, but a clear-cut and shared foundation and knowledge base for this effort has yet to be articulated. The basis of such a critical process should be to stimulate reflection on and awareness of ourselves. Such a “getting to know yourself” process is based on an exploration of the various layers, signs and historical processes that form the basis of how we understand our past, present and the future outlooks. When factors such as ambitions, connections, and positions have not yet been identified and articulated, it is hard for KHiO to take a stance, identify a path forward and then invest trust in this direction.

- In short, KHiO should continuously work on inclusion and diversity. Since this work may include ethical aspects and tensions, the work must be anchored in good internal processes and surveys, and constantly be reevaluated based on common self-reflective processes.

The green shift and digitisation

In working towards a more sustainable higher education, it is important to continuously focus on resource consumption and recycling. However, without focusing on travelling and digitisation, it will be hard to realise an extensive green shift. Although our artistic activities largely require a physical presence on stages, in studios and in workshops, we have seen that many meetings, lectures, public dissemination activities and even a few collaborations have been able to take place digitally, and then in an advantageous way. Even though we all are tired of digital formats after an intense year of the pandemic, we should nonetheless try to optimize the realisation of digitisation and acknowledge that it is fully possible to be present in the world even though we work from different geographical places, and that this may allow for new and increased crossinstitutional and international collaborations.

- KHiO should set up an action plan for the green shift and make use of what we learned from the pandemic. One of the most effective ways of severely reducing the school's climate footprint is to find out which of the school's activities are both possible and desirable to continue in digital formats, so that the need for travelling may be reduced.

Involvement, democracy, and a good learning environment

We will work for establishing KHiO as a good place to be, and hence, focusing on the students' and staff's physical and psychosocial learning environments. The aim is for KHiO to be grounded in core values such as safety, trust, openness, respect and a diversity of opinion. Especially, considering the recent intensive debates, we believe that KHiO need to promote collaboration and develop more transparent and clear decision-making processes to move forward. The school has decided to uphold its democratic processes, but being involved requires trust, safety, the ability to listen, engagement, and not at least time. KHiO must cultivate a stronger institutional community that can bridge a "silo mentality" both between the administration and the academic activities and between the various disciplines. This might be achieved by taking a look at KHiO's organisation and ensuring an open flow of information, dialogue and participation in all lines of communication, establishing good evaluation and feedback routines, and invest in social and morale-raising activities for students and staff. What is required includes the following:

- Providing better opportunities for students to meet and benefit themselves of KHiO's resources through the various facilities, workshops, lectures, and courses, in addition to have the ability to influence on own learning situation, through a well-functioning student democracy
- Have an eye on the students' total workload, and establishing auxiliary courses in e.g. mental training, stress coping, study techniques and study planning when needed.
- Anchoring the academic involvement and democracy in the staff's work schedules and establishing decision-making forums and formats and ensuring that academic voices/visions are incorporated in administrative decisions
- Being clear in regard to responsibilities, roles and decision-making processes, and provide more transparent processes by improving the organisation's flow of information

Economy

Increasing KHiO's financial means through budget allocations, applications, external financing, the renting out of facilities, etc. is important and should always be on the agenda. But given KHiO's current organisation and resources, we experience that it is hard for the school to process external Norwegian Artistic Research Programme (PKU) applications, Erasmus projects, Nordpluss applications and revenue-generating developmental projects such as continuing education programmes [EVU]. Even though a drastic increase in the school's budget would be welcome, we believe it is unrealistic to base all the solutions on such a scenario. Instead, we believe that a more available source of financial leeway does not lie externally outside our control, but rather in internally reviewing our own consumption and our own organisational structure, and to search for better solutions and resource use. As mentioned above, KHiO has many resources that could have been used to the benefit of our teaching and research activities, and in turn, hopefully, might increase the school's possibility of external financing in the future.