



MASTER IN DANCE

P.A.R.T.S. - PERFORMING ARTS RESEARCH AND TRAINING STUDIOS
VZW

INITIAL ACCREDITATION • ASSESSMENT REPORT

15 June 2020





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1 Executive summary

P.A.R.T.S. - Performing Arts Research and Training Studios vzw is a school for contemporary dance currently offering two programmes that are only organised every three years: the three-year basic Training cycle that was first accredited as the Bachelor in Dance in 2019, and the two-year STUDIOS cycle running in parallel with the first two years of the Training cycle. The current assessment report concerns a one-year Master in Dance. Students can only enter this master's programme after successfully completing a bridge year that can only be entered itself after successful auditions. Both the Master in Dance and the bridge year originate from the STUDIOS cycle and are together referred to as such.

P.A.R.T.S.' main goal is to train dancers and choreographers as actively creative and independent artists finding their own way and defining their own practice in the contemporary dance world. A strict programmatic distinction between 'practical technical' and 'artistic content' is left behind and the resulting focus on the co-creative maker is utterly welcomed by the professional field. After years of experimenting the STUDIOS cycle aims for students who want to make work, feel insufficiently experienced yet, and want to acquire the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to become autonomous makers in the professional field.

The panel established that P.A.R.T.S. research is characterised by a dual path of collective and individual research made possible in a studio based practice facilitated by a quite unique residential setting. This results in a learning environment that is communal and collaborative allowing for the development of autonomous research in collaboration with peers and in response to different perspectives and experiences offered by the programme and characterised by an openness to link as much as possible to the national and international professional field.

For the panel, the bottom-up created programme of both the bridge year and the master year have a flexible but solid and coherent structure allowing students to engage in a personal (re)search trajectory that is realised within an open close community with a continuous dialogue and feedback by peers and by the extensive international and highly relevant teaching body for which P.A.R.T.S. year after year strives for a balance between continuity and renewal. This renewal of international voices guarantees a natural and smooth adaptiveness to changes in the field via an active dialogue in which all stakeholders among whom also the alumni are almost continuously involved.

What makes P.A.R.T.S. quite unique as an inspiring artistic environment according to the panel, is trust and dialogue and directly related to it the self-regulating culture of learning based on an artistic peer agreement. This is made possible through well thought out auditions and a scholarship programme enabling the school to select an international cohort of students on required competencies and not on the affordability of the programme for the students.

Students are well-informed on the content and the practical organisation of the programme and also on their progression via a concise model of evaluation that is primarily based on permanent and qualitative evaluation focussing on the learning process of the student with a broad input and feedback of all teachers involved and with continuity via the permanent follow-up by the coordinators.

For the panel, much of the established quality culture is linked to the small scale of the institution, but at the same time to a transparent division and allocation of clearly defined possibilities and responsibilities allowing staff, teachers and students to take responsibility for the development of the quality of the programme.

The panel formulates the following points for further development of the programme: performing an extensive formal benchmark of the field of advanced dance education for a more detailed positioning of the programme; a more extensive connection with research databases, fora and catalogues to allow students to broaden their reflective horizon and offer them more opportunities to distribute their documented work; and the search for even more contacts with the professional field and certainly other programmes, beyond the natural and already vast field of P.A.R.T.S.' connections.

The panel that assessed the quality of the new programme Master in Dance of P.A.R.T.S. - Performing Arts Research and Training Studios vzw, advises a positive accreditation decision for the programme to NVAO. The assessment is substantiated by the positive and critical elements from the examination conducted by the panel into the potential quality of the new programme.

The Hague, 15 June 2020

On behalf of the expert panel convened to assess the Master in Dance:

Prof. dr. Bart Verschaffel
(chair)

dr. Dagmar Provijn
(secretary)

2 Examination of the panel

Introduction

P.A.R.T.S. - Performing Arts Research and Training Studios vzw, is a school for contemporary dance currently offering two programmes that are only organised every three years: the three-year basic Training cycle and the two-year STUDIOS cycle running in parallel with the first two years of the Training cycle. In 2019, a panel of experts, convened by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) positively evaluated the basic Training cycle as the professional Bachelor in Dance allowing P.A.R.T.S. to offer its first accredited programme and to be registered by the Flemish Government as a provider of recognised higher education programmes.

The next logical step for P.A.R.T.S. was to have the STUDIOS cycle accredited as well, for which it applied in March 2020, at the start of the Corona-crisis in Belgium. In consultation with the institution, it was decided to have the STUDIOS cycle assessed by the same panel that assessed the Training Cycle. As this panel had recently experienced the material learning environment in which P.A.R.T.S.' programmes are realised and as such was still fully aware of the qualitative and unique atmosphere created in P.A.R.T.S.' facilities, it was possible to run a virtual accreditation procedure in an enriched international setting, allowing people from all over the world to sit together at a virtual table. So, lockdown restrictions on the organisation of the site visit could be avoided and at the same time a world-wide dialogue was facilitated. An important caveat is that the application for accreditation applies to a one-year Master in Dance of 61 EC that is always preceded by a bridge year of 56 EC. So, students can only enter the master's programme after successfully completing the bridge year that can only be entered itself after successful auditions. When referring to the STUDIOS cycle, both the bridge year and the Master in Dance are referred to as both in fact originate from it.

The panel virtually met on Monday 18 May 2020 for a preliminary discussion of the information file, shaping the examination to be performed during the virtual site visit in line with NVAO's 'Assessment framework initial accreditation (July 2018)'. As the panel was already acquainted with the origin and context of the institution and the professional bachelor's programme, the panel could focus on how P.A.R.T.S.' modus operandi allows for the organisation of an academically oriented master's programme. During the interviews of the virtual site visit on Monday 25 May 2020, the panel was able to discuss the following themes with representatives of the board, management and direction; the development team, teaching staff (dance teachers, coaches of Self-Directed Research, theory teachers); students and representatives from the professional field: the nature of the artistic research, the research identity of P.A.R.T.S. and its calibration, the documenting of work to interact with the field, the role of theory in view of academic orientation, the nature of the bridge year to enter the Master in Dance, the profile of the students, the assessment of collective work, the flexibility of the programme and the achievement of the intended learning outcomes, the coherence and continuity of the programme given the flux in teachers, the strengths and possible pitfalls of a close community, the realisation of a cross-cultural learning environment and the adaptiveness to a changing field.

Origin

The panel learnt that from the beginning, P.A.R.T.S.' main goal is to train dancers and choreographers as actively creative and independent artists finding their own way and

defining their own practice in the contemporary dance world. P.A.R.T.S., as an educational project, originated from Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's artistic practice and over the years incorporated many more other artistic practices from founders like Pina Bausch, Trisha Brown, William Forsythe and the latest generations of choreographers, resulting in a possible transfer of an eclectic wealth of experiences in which students should find their own artistic and creative voice. From the evaluation of the Training cycle it was already clear that technique and the strengthening and enrichment of students' skills in the broadest sense are fundamental, but even more it is essential to find a clear personal profile under the guidance of an abundant variety of experienced and carefully selected artists and teachers. Moreover, P.A.R.T.S. has always contributed to the movement to drift away from the all-determining choreographer and the dancer as obedient performer, hence allowing graduates to continue their own paths as either dancers, choreographers or dance makers. This shift, leaving behind a strict programmatic distinction between 'practical technical' and 'artistic content' and putting a focus on the co-creative maker is utterly welcomed by the professional field.

For the professional field the application for accreditation appears to come at the right time, after years of test running and experimenting with models for advanced education in dance as follow-up for the Training cycle that already started in 1995. The representatives of the professional field moreover highlight the relevance for P.A.R.T.S. to obtain accreditation for its programmes as many programmes in the international field that in one or the other sense were influenced by evolutions initiated or supported by P.A.R.T.S. have already turned into official master's programmes in their home countries. Between 2000 and 2014 the Research cycle was a two-year follow-up programme mainly for dancers and choreographers who just finished the Training cycle but also open for graduates of other bachelor's programmes. An impressive number of graduated makers from this programme were and still are influential in the choreographic field. However, for dancers, the then two-year Training cycle felt too short, while the four-year combined programme with the Research cycle was more than needed. Hence, the Training cycle transformed into a three-year programme allowing the Research cycle to become an experimental 'Research Studios – pilot programme' focussed on the needs of choreographers and makers with at least some experience in the professional field. This experiment however drifted away from the former emphasis on creation and public performances and as such lost visibility in the professional field. Moreover, the programme lost its influx of Training cycle graduates as they felt too unexperienced and found the thematic lines offered limiting and as such lost relevance for its main target group. All this resulted in the STUDIOS cycle for students who want to make work, feel insufficiently experienced yet, and want to acquire the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to become autonomous makers in the professional field. For the panel, this is a demonstration of the self-critical and quality driven nature of the institution to adapt its programmes to the needs of the students and the professional field. At the same time, the institution grew in the formalisation of procedures, required to apply for accreditation and registration as a provider of higher education in Flanders, without making concessions on what makes P.A.R.T.S. unique.

Research

The two-year STUDIOS cycle focuses on choreographic research and creation in which conceptualisation, development and creation of work are central, but may still just as well lead to a career of performing artist. In the information file and during the interviews it was very clear that P.A.R.T.S. in no way wants to pre-define what the result of the making should be. Studio-based research should allow for a supported search for the student's own position

in the field of the arts, but should, typically for P.A.R.T.S.' studio based research, simultaneously remain research into building a community together. This is in line with the expectations students and alumni uttered during the evaluation of the Bachelor in Dance as they conceived of the master's programme as a way to further develop their artistic work through in-depth learning and research opportunities, and knowledge integration into studio practice, benefitting from the mentorship and interaction with the professional field offered by the school.

After reading and discussing the information file, the panel was still wondering what exactly makes P.A.R.T.S. research unique – possibly as a well-defined research community, and how it relates to and is calibrated in view of other peer research communities or environments. This question was all the more relevant as, in contrast with the information file for the Bachelor in Dance, no formal benchmarking was ran in preparing for the application. During the interviews it became clear that although no formal benchmark was ran, the STUDIOS cycle was compared to other advanced programmes in dance (but not as rigorously yet as the one ran for the Bachelor in Dance in view of the 5-year funding agreement between P.A.R.T.S. and the Flemish Government) and that also representatives of the professional field have a fair and clear picture of P.A.R.T.S.' research identity. First of all there is the dual path of collective and individual research in a field where individualisation is gaining more and more ground and may be considered dominant. Next, this dual research is made possible in a studio based practice facilitated by a quite unique residential setting resulting in a learning environment that is communal and collaborative allowing for the development of autonomous research in collaboration with peers and in response to different perspectives and experiences offered by the programme. Finally, this is realised with an openness to link as much as possible to the professional field, both nationally and internationally. As P.A.R.T.S. does not have an employed faculty, it cannot rely on a broader research project. Still, there is the ambition to further explicate the nature of the artistic research based on the strong profiles that were and still are active in the realisation of P.A.R.T.S.' programmes. According to the panel, this should not necessarily lead to a formal research project, but should foster an artist driven forum fuelled by P.A.R.T.S.' network, active teachers and students' projects.

The bridge

Having studied the programme-specific learning outcomes, the panel concluded that they are in accordance with the domain-specific learning outcomes (validated on 15 October 2018) as developed at the Flemish level in the context of the accreditation procedure for the Master in Dance of AP University College, academically oriented and at the master's level. The 22 programme-specific learning outcomes are, as is also the case for the learning outcomes of the Bachelor in Dance, related to four areas of competences: creativity and performance, theory and reflection, communication and interprofessional collaboration and transfer to the professional world. A reflection of the 14 learning outcomes of the bachelor's programme can be discerned, even though they are convincingly further elaborated and extended to meet the master's level and academic orientation. However, this reveals a certain continuity between the Training cycle and the STUDIOS cycle and from that perspective the panel was a bit puzzled on the nature of the bridge year of 56 EC bridging the gap between the professional bachelor and the 61EC academically oriented master, knowing that both the bridge year and the Master in Dance originally were set up as a united STUDIOS cycle. Moreover, from the evaluation of the bachelor's programme the panel remembered that the focus was not on studying a specific amount of predefined theoretical content as such but on learning how to think theoretically and acquiring the skills and the level of thinking for

students to feel comfortable with using theoretical knowledge in their own practice. Hence, the panel wanted to know what role the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and academical skills plays in the bridge programme so students might 'catch up' with students that enter the programme from other academic bachelor's or master's programmes, and related to this, what the bridge programme means for these students.

The development team and teachers were somehow surprised by the strong emphasis put on the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and questioned whether this should be considered as a precondition for all academically oriented programmes as their focus may as well be on procedures, methodologies and documenting while performing (artistic) research. In addition, teachers that are also involved in other programmes stressed that students from this programme deal with more theory than is usual in similar programmes. The series of one-week long theoretical seminars cover three fields, topics of art (contemporary dance and art and aesthetics in general), abstract thinking (philosophy and science) and social theory (politics, sociology, critical theory including feminism, gender studies, ...) and consist of lectures, discussions and small tasks for writing and debating. Students write an essay for which they are individually coached. They can also opt for an additional individual theoretical trajectory for which they again are individually coached. All this should allow students to discuss, reflect and write on theoretical topics, but even more important, to position themselves related to the aforementioned fields. However, during the discussions it became clear that not the amount of theoretical provision or the content of the bridge year is what bridges the gap, but rather the paradigm shift that is enforced on the students as the bachelor's programme is a more top-down structured programme in which the students are inspired to develop an artistic personality, while in the bridge year and in the master year the students have to define and shape their own artistic personality to realise a bottom-up created artistic and research programme that should feed them with artistic, technical, practical and theoretical experiences allowing them to explicate themselves and develop as artists in a continuous process of peer- and individual reflection, mentored and coached by artists, teachers, coaches and coordinators involved in the programme. So, students entering the bridge year orient themselves within a common trajectory of 40EC and are allowed to select personal optional trajectories according to their needs in dialogue with the coordinators of the programme. In that way new students lay a solid basis for collaborative work and P.A.R.T.S. Training graduates can acclimatize to the further individualisation of their work. Students indicated they truly experienced the paradigm shift through which they had to express their own artistic personality by elaborating on their own work as quite confronting and in some sense even as shocking. At the same time, the dialogue with the students, of which half were non-P.A.R.T.S. graduates, revealed that the programme is flexible enough to fulfil their personal needs required to become an autonomous maker expressing the own artistic personality, be it on movement research, theory, or whatever that is required more than already commonly offered.

Flexibility

Looking at the set-up of the programmes for the bridge year and the master year, it is clear for the panel that the flexible but solid structure allows students to engage in a personal (re)search trajectory that is realised within an open close community, in which the (re)searching process allows for taking possibilities and responsibilities, that may lead to hindrances and even failure, but that is always secured by a safety net of continuous dialogue and feedback by teachers, coaches, mentors, coordinators and also peers.

The programme for the STUDIOS cycle (both bridge year and master year) consists of seven programme lines: 'Movement Research' offering a wide range of techniques, visions on movement and strategies for generating, building and writing movement, and offering the opportunity to develop a movement practice embodying an own artistic vision; 'Choreography & Composition' allowing students to get immersed in the artistic world of several choreographers and get first-hand insight into their artistic methodologies, again providing tools to nurture and place in perspective own artistic work; 'Theory' as mentioned before; 'Studio Practice' for the gradual development of a studio practice in which students individually or collaboratively conceptualise, develop and create own research and creation, accompanied by a mentor; 'Contextual Labs' consisting of sessions with experts to acquire practical knowledge for artistic research and production; 'Field work' allowing students to propose internships with professional artists or organisations; and the 'Graduation work' with 'Master Project I – creation and performance' in which a personal research question and trajectory is outlined to autonomously develop a graduation project leading to a live performance, supervised by a coach, and 'Master Project II – reflection and documentation' directed to documenting insights into the research questions, artistic methodology and the artistic vision of the graduation work partly prepared in the context of the 'Theory' seminars. The study objectives of all programme lines are transparently related to and coherently cover the learning outcomes of the programme. Moreover, the panel notes a wide variety and combination of methodologies, further strengthened by the plurality of skilled teachers involved in the realisation of the different programme lines bringing their personal working methodologies that are also discussed during or after the programme with the programme coordinators. Although the master year should allow for even more autonomous artistic practice, research and creation, than is already incorporated in the bridge year, the solid structure of the programme still seems quite rigid in the eyes of the professional field, and if possible, might increase its flexibility to further open towards collaboration with partner organisations in the national and international professional field.

Continuity

Given that running the bridge programme in 2019-2020 took thirty-five teachers and artists and nine coaches, of a total of twenty-three nationalities, the question on a coherent realisation and continuity of the programme given the flux in teachers becomes all the more significant, apart from the fact that these numbers also highlight the richness and renewal of experiences offered in the programme and that P.A.R.T.S. strives for a balance between continuity and renewal. From the interviews with the development team and the teaching staff and even the professional field the panel remembers that the core team of deputy director and the coordinators are the guardian angels and source of stability for the continuity and a coherent realisation of the programme and research identity of P.A.R.T.S.. Apart from Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, they are widely known as the representatives of P.A.R.T.S.' programmes in the professional field. Nonetheless, the stability they stand for is also created through a continuous co-creative dialogue with teachers, artists, coaches, mentors and students. Before a teacher, artist, coach or mentor is involved in the programme, the way how someone can contribute as an individual artistic voice to the programme as a whole is discussed in detail. This meticulously thought out and discussed renewal of international voices in the field guarantees a natural and smooth adaptiveness to changes in the field via an active dialogue in which all stakeholders among whom also the alumni are almost continuously involved.

Documenting and showing

The interviews increasingly clarified that during their (re)search students are also sufficiently trained in documenting their work, explicitly so in the Theory and Contextual Labs learning lines. Still the panel advises to engage in more platforms on which to share P.A.R.T.S.' realisations, which in fact is worked on but also complicated because of the independent status P.A.R.T.S. wants to maintain. The panel also advises to connect with more research databases, fora and catalogues to further broaden the reflexive horizon of the students. The dialogue with the professional field on the other hand is secured, as there is the immediate vibrant artistic context of Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's company Rosas (and music ensemble Ictus) with whom premises are shared, the engagement of an extensive and varying international group of teachers and artists bringing living connections with the professional field and the encouragement of the school to reach out to the artistic field for which the school acts as a mediator to develop a personal professional network. Examples of the latter mentioned during the dialogues are collaborations of students with BUDA in Courtray, Vooruit in Ghent and KANAL – Centre Pompidou in Brussels to name some. Furthermore, the programme offers integrated performance opportunities to confront the personal artistic work and vision with an audience and the professional field. There are the internal feedback sessions in which the school serves as a first audience. A second audience is the Brussels one invited for self-organised student performances in the context of parts@work. Finally, there's the graduation festival with a general public mixed with international professionals and a concluding international graduation tour in professional venues. Above that, students can self-organize presentations in professional venues in the context of Studio Practice, Master Project or Field Work. So, there's sufficient opportunities to open the artistic dialogue from the close community to a broad professional and non-professional audience. The representatives of the professional field added that students and alumni of P.A.R.T.S. are always welcomed at international festivals and venues as P.A.R.T.S. very often creates the blueprints for future evolutions in the field and counts as a valuable example.

Trust, dialogue and quality culture

During the interviews two important details popped up. The first is that much of what P.A.R.T.S. is and makes it unique as an inspiring artistic environment, is trust and dialogue. The second, directly related to the first, is that P.A.R.T.S. has a self-regulating culture of learning based on an artistic peer agreement, meaning that formal requirements should be minimized as they may in no way lead to a bureaucratic relation between school and student. And this is made possible because each of P.A.R.T.S.' programmes always starts with a cohort of students that walked through the gate of carefully elaborated and strict admission procedures, organised in and through P.A.R.T.S.-specific auditions. The STUDIOS cycle has its own audition process with a first selection based on a written application with a detailed Curriculum Vitae, a motivation letter, letters of recommendation and a portfolio of own work. After being selected, candidates take part in a four-day audition in Brussels consisting of the following elements: dance classes to evaluate dance techniques and skills in improvisation and composition, an extensive lecture performance – Walk & Talk – about own work, a creative assignment in the format of a solo, a performance analysis of another one's solo, the writing of an essay starting from the analysis of the solo of another candidate and an essay starting from the analysis of a given performance, an English language test, and as a final part of the audition a moderated group discussion with other candidates and an individual interview by the jury consisting of the director, the deputy director, general coordinator, faculty members and an external jury member. For the panel the meticulously elaborated and

detailed admission procedure for the STUDIOS cycle ensures that there is an ideal match between what the students are looking for and what the program can offer, and between the competences of the students and the initial competences required to successfully complete the program. Once past the auditions gate, trust is given to the students and, as it always takes two to tango, a reciprocal trust is facilitated through a continuous dialogue based on a structure of coherent consultations. During weekly briefings at Friday noon the coordinators meet the students to discuss concerns on planning and organisation, but these meetings also function as an antenna because students are encouraged to report problems the coordinator can take to the weekly staff meeting on Tuesday morning where the staff discusses the daily organisation of the work. Six to seven times a year there's also a student-staff meeting between the deputy director, the coordinators, the staff member responsible for student affairs, four students of the Training Cycle and two students of the STUDIOS cycle. Both students and staff can put topics on the agenda focussed on organisational and pedagogical issues. All students receive a copy of the meeting's report. Several times a year plenary meetings are organised, usually called by the deputy director, but possibly also by students or student representatives. Discussions concern the House Rules, problems of discipline or attendance or commitment, problems of communication, pressure of work or pedagogical matters and the organisation of student's performance. Moreover, students have permanent access to forms to (possibly anonymously) evaluate the teachers, information that will be discussed in the steering committee consisting of the deputy director and coordinators (and if needed teachers) and manages the daily pedagogical policy and issues of the institution. Every teacher is also evaluated by three random students at the end of a course and the during or after the teaching period the teachers also report themselves about their plans, developments of the course and the interaction with the students to the coordinators. If a student decides to leave the programme before graduating, the deputy director will have an exit talk with the student to finalise the collaboration in dialogue. For the panel, much of the established quality culture is linked to the small scale of the institution, but at the same time to a transparent division and allocation of clearly defined possibilities and responsibilities.

The panel observes that further informal dialogue is possible as part of the guidance of students. The teachers are the prime source of guidance and dialogue in the context of the individual courses. However, as they are most often only shortly involved in the programme, the coordinators fulfil the role of continuous follow-up and observation of the students' evolutions and are the students' first dialogue partners. They are always available for the students and are present at all the showings and feedback sessions and as such have a bird's eye view on struggles and growth of all students. The importance of the coordinators had already become clear to the panel during the assessment of the bachelor's programme and was reaffirmed during this evaluation. For creative research processes the students are followed and guided by coaches giving advice and feedback in the course of the creative processes. For reflexive tasks, coaches give advice on topics, literature and writing approach. Choices of coaches are again the result of dialogue between student and school, except for the writing task of the theory course where students choose from a pre-defined pool of coaches. Students also indicated that in the course of the bridge year they were involved in discussions on whom to invite as valuable contributors to the field of experiences that the master's programme should offer. Discussions on how to deal with the current field-threatening corona-crisis, for which there are no ready-made solutions available as agreed by the panel, professional field and the institution, are also conducted with the full participation of all stakeholders and as such also the students. This again demonstrates that staff, teachers and students can and do take responsibility for the development of the quality of the

programme. For example, students have a voice in selecting teachers that will contribute to their learning experience, they can express concerns on quality issues and also have a voice in the way how best to assess their personal projects. During the interviews the panel's confidence in the openness of the programme grew as students are offered ample opportunities to link their activities and work with P.A.R.T.S.-independent professionals in the flexible but solid structure of the programme. Furthermore, P.A.R.T.S. established a culture of open dialogue allowing for a quality culture that hinders the creation of a closed community. However, if needed, students can consult two independent mediators or the confidential counsellors for the teams of PARTS and Rosas, as indicated in the House Rules.

Community

In view of the close community, the professional field highly values the fact that P.A.R.T.S. still offers a residential programme, required to ideally realise the double path of individual and collective creation of work, in a field where advanced studies are more and more organised in a non-residential way. Therefore, the open close community that is created in the context of a residential programme with a rich and active contact with the professional field is considered a strength of the programme by all stakeholders and the panel. The openness also manifests itself in the 'extra muros' activities integrated in the STUDIOS cycle, that can be organised during the bridge or master year. Already in the course of the current bridge year, students engaged in a two-week exchange project in Taiwan and a five-week project in Senegal. Again, these activities are in line with P.A.R.T.S.' ambition to operate its programmes in an international and intercultural setting to facilitate cross-cultural thinking in all aspects of the programme. The auditions are open for all nationalities and students are selected based on their artistic profile and in no way on the fact whether the programme is affordable for them or not. Therefore, P.A.R.T.S. has always set itself the goal of co-financing the study costs for students who do not have the financial means to start this study. To this end, it provides for the raising of funds that enable a scholarship system. This is applauded and highly appreciated by both the professional field and the panel. It shows P.A.R.T.S. truly searches for profiles fitting its programmes by an as open as possible system of auditions and that mechanisms are set-up to allow for a true international and intercultural setting. The latter is also further realised by the versatile and balanced international teaching staff and the international projects in which the students and staff engage as a community. Unlike the inspiring professional network of P.A.R.T.S., the collaboration with other institutions providing advanced higher education in dance and with research institutions can be expanded, offering possibilities for further calibration of the master's level, for sharing good practices and experiences and as such broadening the perspective and enriching the already ongoing process of quality enhancement.

Well-informed students

The panel has established that students are well-informed on the content and the practical organisation of the programme via the Study Guide, the House Rules – information that also can be found on P.A.R.T.S.' website, and are also well informed on their progression via a concise model of evaluation that is primarily based on permanent and qualitative evaluation focussing on the learning process of the student with a broad input and feedback of all teachers involved and with continuity via the permanent follow-up by the coordinators. As already learnt during the evaluation of the Bachelor in Dance, written reports of the teachers, coaches, mentors and coordinators form the basis of the qualitative evaluation procedure, rendering conclusive information on the functioning during a short teaching period and

feedback for the students for the following seminars and studio practice. The Master project is evaluated by an external jury, but this jury also receives information on the process and the students' reflections. Self-evaluation is another important component of the evaluation process. Students write self-evaluations on specific course modules and an overall self-evaluation on their own process and development of skills, approaches and ideas at the end of the year. Again this is an opportunity for the students to reflect on their artistic identity and how it relates to what is offered in the programme. The qualitative evaluation on the binary scale 'passed', 'failed' is based on the evaluation procedure at the end of the year by the deliberation committee consisting of the deputy director, the coordinators and two teachers or members of the Faculty who have all reports and the general self-evaluation of the students at their disposal supplemented with their own experience of seeing the students at work in classes and during presentations. The self-evaluations have no specific weight in the evaluation but render important information on how students experienced their own participation and results. Students cannot graduate if they fail on a course since the evaluation is based on a holistic approach, in this case a tailored trajectory is elaborated for the students to finish their studies. There is a formal procedure for students who want to appeal against an evaluation of a course or a decision of the deliberation committee.

3 Judgement

The panel advises positively on the initial accreditation of P.A.R.T.S.' Master in Dance that is always preceded by a bridge year as both originate from the long prepared and tested two-year STUDIOS cycle.

The panel witnessed a small scale and unique school offering an inspiring international and intercultural learning environment nurtured by a wealth of contacts with the professional field that allows students to contextualise and develop their own personal artistic profile and voice in a continuous dialogue with peers and the relevant artistic field and reflect on it. Students are enabled to strengthen their artistic professionalism and to combine it with an academic research interest, both at master's level and together allowing for artistic excellence. The residential programme is realised in a well-organised practical and rich intellectual learning environment that is rather exceptional in the field. Through well thought out auditions that are only organised every three years and a scholarship programme the school is able to select an international cohort of students on required competencies and not on the affordability of the programme for the students. The programme offers a flexible but solid structure in which students can autonomously (re)search their own artistic and creative path through an ongoing process of reflection in which own work is contrasted with a variety of international artistic voices and experiences that are offered by peers and by the extensive international and highly relevant teaching body for which P.A.R.T.S. year after year strives for a balance between continuity and renewal. The STUDIOS cycle is performed by an open close community of students, staff, coordinators, teachers, coaches and mentors, all knowing their possibilities and responsibilities and as such creating a quality culture based on a practiced trust and dialogue that is sufficiently formalised where required. Both the evaluation system of the students and the quality assurance system are characterised by a permanent evaluation and follow-up on the respective functioning, development and process of the students and the programme, allowing for ample feedback and reflection directed at an ongoing process of qualitative development and improvement. Further points for development are performing an extensive formal benchmark of the field of advanced dance education for a more detailed positioning of the programme, a more extensive connection with research databases, fora and catalogues to allow students to further broaden their reflective horizon and offer them more opportunities to distribute their documented work, and the search for even more contacts with the professional field and certainly other programmes, beyond the natural and already vast field of P.A.R.T.S.' connections. These advices in no way contradict the highly valued participation of the students at national and international festivals and public performances, the established careers of P.A.R.T.S. alumni and the recognised model and blueprint function of the institution in an international context.

4 Review process

The assessment was carried out in line with the 'Assessment framework initial accreditation – July 2018'.

The panel prepared itself for the assessment on the basis of the documents provided by the institution. Prior to the preparatory meeting of the panel, each panel member formulated initial impressions and questions were listed.

During a preparatory meeting on Monday 18 May 2020, the panel discussed all information obtained and also prepared the virtual dialogue with the programme (institution).

The virtual dialogue took place on 25 May 2020.

During the dialogue in line with the Appreciative Approach, the panel investigated the context of the programme and the institution and collected all required information to make a judgement on the quality of the programme.

During a closed meeting of the panel on 25 May 2020 the panel discussed all information obtained and translated it into a holistic judgement. The panel took this conclusion in full independence.

All information obtained led to a draft assessment report that has been sent to all panel members. The feedback from the panel members has been processed. The assessment report adopted by the chairman was submitted to NVAO on 15 June 2020.

Annex 1: Administrative data regarding the institution and the programme

Institution	P.A.R.T.S. - Performing Arts Research and Training Studios vzw
Address, institution website	Van Volxemlaan 164 1190 Brussels, Belgium http://www.parts.be
Status institution	Registered
Programme	Master in Dance
Specialisations	-
Level and orientation	Master
(Additional) title	-
(Parts of) field of study(s)	Music and performing arts
Teaching language	English
Location where the programme is offered	Brussels
Study load (in credits)	61 EC
New training in Flanders	No
The required previous qualifications and admission requirements (master)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a professional Bachelor in Dance from PARTS; or • a professional or academic Bachelor in Dance from another institution than PARTS; or • a Master in the Arts; • applicants with a lower content of dance-related or choreographic subjects in their degree may also apply for admission if they can document other relevant education and/or practice/work competence of a scope and level that may also qualify them to admission to the programme; • minimum age in the year the cycle starts: 21, maximum age in the year the cycle starts: 27, the audition committee can grant exceptions to this; • sufficient mastery of English (C1 level or higher on the CEFR scale); • having passed the full audition procedure to start the obligatory bridge year of 56 EC preceding the master's programme

Annex 2: Composition of the panel

The assessment was made by a panel of experts convened and appointed by the NVAO. The panel is composed as follows:

Prof. dr. Bart Verschaffel (*chair*), professor architectural theory and architectural criticism, Ghent University, Belgium.

Prof. of Choreography Efva Lilja (*panel member*), is an artist, professor of choreography and activist, working with performances, visual art, film and writing, was for instance the Vice-Chancellor at DOCH, the University of Dance and Circus in Stockholm; the Expert Advisor on Artistic Research at the Ministry of Education and Research in Sweden and Artistic Director of Dansehallerne in Copenhagen.

Drs. Jan Zoet (*panel member*), general director of 'Zuiderstrandtheater' in The Hague and before that director of the Academy of Theatre and Dance at AHK in The Netherlands.

Jade Brouns (*student*), MSc in Educational Sciences, KU Leuven, Belgium and trained student panel member NVAO – cohort 2017, student 'Specifieke lerarenopleiding Gedragwetenschappen'.

The panel was assisted by:

Dagmar Provijn, policy advisor Flanders NVAO, process coordinator and secretary.

All panel members and the process coordinator/secretary have signed NVAO's code of deontology.

Annex 3: Schedule of the site visit

08:30-08:55	Teams	Closed meeting of the panel
		Preparing for discussions - morning

09:00-09:15	Zoom	Start Zoom session with institution
		Welcome

09:30-10:00	Zoom	Session #1
		Board and Management/Direction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President of the Board • Founder and director of PARTS • Deputy director PARTS • Financial and Administration manager PARTS 		

10:15-11:00	Zoom	Session #2
		Development Team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deputy director PARTS • Financial and Administration manager PARTS • Coordinator Training cycle and STUDIOS; working for PARTS since 2003 • Coordinator STUDIOS – future Deputy director 		

11:15-12:15	Zoom	Session #3
		Dance Teachers/Coaches Self-Directed Research/Theory Teachers/Development Team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Composition teacher, choreographer and dancer • Dance History teacher, and coach, dramaturg, director, author • Personal Work Coach in Training and STUDIOS, choreographer and dancer; curates, organizes and coordinates artistic projects • Sociology teacher, Senior professor in social theory • Masterclass choreography, during exchange project Ecole des Sables, Senegal, dancer, choreographer and director • Dance technique teacher in STUDIOS, also teaching technique, composition and repertoire in Training cycle, dancer, rehearsal director • Two coordinators 		

12:15-13:15	Teams	Closed meeting of the panel
		Lunch + Preparing for discussions - afternoon

13:15-14:00	Zoom	Session #4
		Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two graduates from P.A.R.T.S.' Training cycle • Two graduates from other institutions 		

14:15-14:45	Zoom	Session #5
		Professional field
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative from Sweden – curator, dramaturg, critic, editor • Representative from France – connected to Centre National de la Danse (Paris) • Representative from Singapore – curator, critic, dramaturg, producer • Representative from Belgium – connected to Kaaaitheater, Brussels, to DAS THEATRE / DAS Graduate School (Amsterdam), DasArts (Amsterdam) 		

15:00-15:55	Teams	Closed meeting of the panel
		Preliminary conclusions

16:00-16:30	Zoom	If required - Session #6
		Management and Development Team

16:30-17:30	Teams	Closed meeting of the panel
		Final conclusions

Annex 4: Overview of the material studied

Information file

- Information file – application dossier – ‘Recognition of the PARTS STUDIOS programme as a Master in Dance’

Mandatory annexes to the information file

- Domain-specific learning outcomes
- Similar programmes in the Flemish system of Higher Education
- Overview of the curriculum
- Descriptions of the courses - MASTER
- Descriptions of the courses - BRIDGE year
- Staff for the programme
- Overview of contacts with the professional field 2010-2020
- Budget of the Studios programme 2019-2021
- Management agreement with the Flemish authorities 2017-2021

Documents made available during the dialogue

- Evaluation procedure for STUDIOS
- House Rules
- Study Guide
- 4 Intention notes for the research project related to Self-directed Practice
- 4 essays related to Theory
- 4 Self-evaluations related to Camping Asia - Taiwan
- 4 Self-evaluations related to the exchange project Ecole des Sables - Senegal
- Copies of the courses 2019-2020

Annex 5: List of abbreviations

EC	European Credit according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)
NVAO	Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie)
P.A.R.T.S.	Performing Arts Research and Training Studios vzw

