

## **RESPONSE OF FAMU LEADERSHIP TO THE "8 POINTS" LETTER SENT TO THE ACADEMIC SENATE OF FAMU**

The following is a response of FAMU's leadership to the document known as *8 bodů (8 points)*, which according to our information was sent to the Academic Senate of FAMU in April, whereby 10 members of the academic community voiced no confidence in FAMU's leadership. They did not send the *8 POINTS* to the leadership. On 5 May 2022, a *Deník N* journalist sent the text to the Dean, asking for comments; we have also been informed that certain Heads of Departments have sent it to students and teachers. We expect the FAMU Senate to discuss the document, but since it has been circulating within the school and the media, we are sending you our response to explain the position that the FAMU leadership takes to the text in general and to comment in detail on the individual issues.

In light of the turbulent developments in recent days where illegally obtained e-mail conversations between a group of teachers, including the writers of *8 points*, were disseminated across the Faculty, we cannot pretend being unaware of or ignore the broader context in which this document criticising FAMU leadership originated. Even without the leakage of e-mail messages, it was obvious for a long time that a certain group of Heads of Departments and programme guarantors were disappointed by the fact that Andrea Slováková became the Dean of FAMU in May 2020. In the summer of 2020, they formed a "shadow collegium" that would meet throughout, according to our information which, please note, we have not gathered from the leaked e-mails. There is no need whatsoever to discuss the group's internal communication (we fully understand that some academic community members principally refuse to read any stolen material circulating in the school) to understand the strategy and activities of this group of influential academic community members. What was happening can also be seen in events that are publicly accessible and traceable through the minutes of meetings of various school bodies. The school's objective was to oppose in a coordinated manner the leadership of FAMU in all platforms possible (group letters of protest, critical suggestions and speeches delivered during the meetings of various school bodies such as the Internal Evaluation Committee, Academic Senate of FAMU and AMU, AMU's Internal Evaluation Board and FAMU's trade unions, and complaints sent to AMU's Rectorate and the Ministry of Education), with the intended effect of hindering the leadership's effort towards ensuring that the school operates normally and enforcing certain changes in school, and, in the long-term perspective, achieving the removal of the Dean from the office. There have been dozens and dozens of such complaints since 2020; there were times when we would address a suggestion sent to a Faculty body or a collectively signed protest e-mail protest every single week. Voicing the group's no confidence in the leadership after the group won several chairs in the FAMU Senate during the March election, *8 points* appears to have been intended as a final summary of the group's activities to date.

The academia is a self-governed environment and it inherently involves a certain amount of internal politics, which leads to frequent debates and disputes. These operate to explain differing opinions and interests, different notions as to how the school should be managed, and the general approach to creating, teaching and internal culture that the school should prefer. We have to say clearly that we perceive this as being very useful and important; we see it as a genuinely beneficial principle of functioning of tertiary schools that fosters critical thinking and discussion. It is correct for the Faculty leadership to face opposition, be compelled to bring forth arguments, and justify its decisions to the Faculty's academic senate and other bodies. It is correct when someone strives, through public debate and senate elections, to change the way the school should be managed and the general way it should be there for students and for employees.

We have known about the coordination and goals of the said protest group of Heads of Departments and guarantors since 2020. To a great degree, we respect the fact that their opinions on how the school should function are simply different from those of the current leadership and that they strive to oppose certain changes they likely, quite honestly, consider inappropriate. Unfortunately, we have neither succeeded to convince them with our arguments nor won them over to build and transform the school together.

With that being said, we do not know if we ever stood a chance faced with the group. Their resolute and premeditated resistance to a great part of what the leadership does came so early after our arrival, so strongly and in such an *a priori* fashion that we are left wondering. While we respect differing opinions and concepts, we perceive as problematic the methods and tools that our opinion opponents use to achieve their goals. In our opinion, the tools are unnecessarily destabilising and extreme for the school: they range from overloading all school bodies with incessant complaints on recurring topics to deliberately boycotting the work and decisions of the leadership to misusing positions in certain bodies of the school to sending complaints to the Ministry of Education and giving the Faculty a catastrophic media image through the media such as *Mladá fronta Dnes*. If someone wants the school to transform and, for example, have a different Dean, there are means and tools available that are much less invasive and manipulative, and in turn more transparent and thus – paradoxically – more efficient. We strongly wish for the group to become aware of this.

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Let us leave the broader context and focus on the text. It is a typically ambivalent example of the methods this group of people uses to internally oppose the direction that we try to lead our school in. We tried to analyse and perceive any justified objections to the operation of the school that the text may contain with an open mind. Upon closer inspection, though, we see the great majority of objections contained in *8 points* as a collection of artificially generated and manipulatively described affairs that are little more than deliberate tools being used in the aforementioned internal politics dispute.

The text recycles issues that were discussed by the relevant bodies many times and long ago, without the writers reflecting on the discussions, arguments, explanations or any resultant solutions. After all, a large part of *8 points* actually just repeats the text *9 issues* the same group wrote before the election to the FAMU Senate last February. We as the Faculty leadership also prepared a written response at the time, refuting most of the accusations, and we are now repeating some of the arguments offered previously. The fact that the writers do not agree with the form of all the solutions that were adopted should not constitute the reason for them to constantly return the discussion to the beginning and burden us all with having to argue and explain over and over again. In general, the great majority of the document is not based on problems having an actual impact on the school (except the issue of doctoral studies) – rather, it is a listing of issues on which the writers have a different opinion from that of the school's leadership.

Opinions on certain matters are inconsistent – with one tendering procedure, it is a “problem” that a candidate was selected from the second position; with another, it is seen as the “correct” solution: apparently, the opinions presented depend on the writers' personal affinities. On the one hand, mentoring is criticised as an activity that the Vice-Dean for International Affairs focuses on; on the other hand, more than half of the writers are involved in these activities and the Vice-Dean has actually helped them to bring in international guests that the writers wanted their students to meet.

It has to be said that, with regard to certain points, we see it as essential to avoid ignoring the writers' sense of wrong (for example, their objections to the tendering procedures or the perception that teachers are approached from a position of power), even though we disagree with their particular arguments and claims to the effect that substantial mistakes were made (since mistakes that were made were acknowledged and remedied). Personnel changes are an extremely sensitive issue that strongly affects the microcosmos of each Department, and we do realise that it is and will be necessary to work better, in the greatest possible agreement with the other Faculty stakeholders including teachers and students, and with patience in communicating and seeking common solutions as regards both the Head and teacher positions.

Yet, some of the matters criticised, which are the results of our activity in school to date, are, quite paradoxically, among the achievements that we are the proudest of (improved student evaluation, game design, and the actual pay raise for most employees secured in spite of the pandemic).

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The following text responds specifically to the individual criticisms. We go into great detail also because it will probably be read also by people who have not followed the school politics to date and therefore have no knowledge of the explanations provided earlier and the previous discussions on the issues mentioned here.

## **1) NON-TRANSPARENT SELECTION PROCEDURES FOR THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT POSITIONS**

The writers of *8 points* criticise the Dean's allegedly non-standard interventions in the selection procedures for the Heads of Departments, specifically the CAS, Department of Animated Film, Department of Cinematography, and FAMU International. The selection of the Heads of Departments is within the Dean's competence and this rule was observed in all cases. The Dean is elected by the Senate with a concept for developing the school, and they are obligated to pursue the concept; the Dean is responsible for the Faculty's HR policy. Logically, they make their vision of the Faculty reality, among other things, through tendering procedures for the Head positions. The form of the selection procedure is defined by the *AMU Tendering Procedure Rules for Academic Staffing*. It defines clearly that the Dean selects and appoints, at their discretion, the members of the panel – it is the Dean's consummate right. It is absurd to suggest that this is the Dean acting from a position of power. By the same token, the *Rules* define the procedure of making the final decision. The panel determines who succeeded in the procedure and who did not. For those who did, the panel determines their order. The key point is that it is then up to the Dean's decision which of the recommended candidates they will actually appoint the Head of Department. If the Dean wants to appoint someone who succeeded but the panel did not rate them first, the Dean has to explain their choice to the FAMU Senate. Even in this case, the choice and responsibility rests with the Dean; the Senate can comment on the decision but cannot reverse it. As such, there is no manipulation or non-standard practices on the Dean's part – this is the procedure for selecting Heads of Departments defined in regulations and is standard in multiple tertiary schools in the Czech Republic.

Let us point out that, during the previous Dean's tenure, all selection procedures for the Heads of Departments except one (Dept. of Production) involved a single candidate. During the current period, there are typically multiple applicants for the selection procedures, making the procedures what they should in fact be: a clash and a discussion over the concepts for the potential development of the Department over the course of the next three years.

We consider it undignified to address the incorrect personal diatribes from *8 points* writers against the panels and applicants in the tendering procedures for the Department of Animated Film ("KAT") and FAMU International ("FI"). As far as Jitka Hejtmanová, the winner of the procedure for the Head of FI, is concerned, the writers describe her as a "manager without erudition in the field and practical professional experience"; let us just say that she graduated in photography and has been working at FAMU as a teacher for many years. She was there when FAMU International was founded and has been involved in its programmes since 2008 (she prepared the first accreditation of the CDM master's programme). She led unaccredited programmes of the Department from 2014 on.

The writers' anger over the fact that two applicants took part in the selection procedure for KAT, both with many years of teaching experience and multiple awards from international festivals to their credit, is difficult to ascribe to anything else than a lack of understanding of how selection procedures work and are intended to work.

The *8 points* writers interpret the selection procedures for the Department of Cinematography ("KK") with a bias. In the first selection procedure for KK, a good knowledge of English was required, since the Department also runs a programme for international students. No candidate meeting this criterion ever applied. This is why the Dean made another call for tenders – entirely in accordance with the rules – with less stringent requirements for the candidates' language skills. The selection procedure was announced in this modified form precisely to enable Prof. Jaroslav Brabec to apply, since he voiced his interest in taking part in the procedure. This second procedure elicited an

extensive debate Faculty-wide, as the panel did not recommend the appointment of the only candidate, Prof. Brabec, as the Head of the Department. The majority of KK students and teachers started voicing their protests. As much as we understand that the result of the selection procedure disappointed certain members of the academic community, there were many unnecessary and inadequate attacks at the correctness of the procedure, attempting to reverse its result. The writers' claims mentioning manipulative practices of the chair of the panel, Vice-Dean David Čeněk, are unfounded and based on mere speculation. The disagreement with the course of the procedure was voiced by persons who attended only the public part of the procedure and could not have any knowledge of all the circumstances of the non-public meeting of the panel; all they knew was indirect information. The situation being quite exacerbated, the Rectorate lawyer stated that the final record from the panel meeting was incorrect. Although our Faculty had a different legal interpretation that considered the error in the record minor and immaterial, we agreed with the Rectorate, in order to calm the situation, to render the panel meeting record invalid; as a result, the selection procedure was also declared in valid and a new one was announced. During this third procedure, the panel with different members from the second procedure recommended Prof. Brabec for the Head and the Dean then appointed him.

With the selection procedure for the Head of the Center for Audiovisual Studies ("CAS"), *8 points* writers criticise several matters. The participation of teacher and former Head of CAS Eric Rosenzveig in the procedure was explained, including the required documentation, during a meeting of the Academic Senate of FAMU. Unlike, for example, Mr Fusek who took part in the selection procedure for the Head of FI from a position other than as an in-house teacher of the Faculty, Mr Rosenzveig currently enjoys FAMU's exemption from the required education. The document enables teachers who lack certain academic degrees yet possess excellent creative and teaching competences to work in our school. The Dean openly informed the selection procedure ("SP") panel of this and invited the members to address this circumstance at their discretion. Ignoring an internal teacher's exemption from required education would constitute discrimination if the teacher was precluded from taking part in the SP. The writers also point out a delay of several weeks between the panel meeting and the appointment of the Head; all authors of *8 points* know that the delay was caused by a prolonged sickness leave of the Dean. All three applicants succeeded in the selection procedure, so it was up to the Dean to decide who of them she would appoint the Head of Department. The discussions that the Dean subsequently had with both the teachers and students of the Department were motivated by the good intention to obtain as much relevant background for the decision and listen to the opinions of the Department people. After Martin Blažíček rejected his nomination, the position was offered to David Kořínek who accepted it and was appointed the Head of CAS.

## **2) TREATING TEACHERS FROM A POSITION OF POWER AND IMPACT ON PROGRAMMES OF STUDY**

The authors of the document claim dramatically that the allegedly non-standard selection procedures resulted in humiliating certain employees and disrupting the atmosphere at Departments. Deciding on the results of selection procedures as well as on prolonging employment contracts is, however, the Dean's competence. Institutions with multiple employees – FAMU has 69 non-academic and 141 academic employees – logically undergo personnel changes on an ongoing basis. Some leave, some arrive, and for some the type of contract may change, etc. The contract form largely depends on arrangement between the Dean and the Heads of Departments. If no employment contracts were ever terminated, the same teachers would stay in school forever. Thee requests to the effect that no changes should be made, effectively causing FAMU to stagnate in HR terms, is a reoccurring theme in the texts that the dissenting group of Heads of Departments and guarantors send to the Faculty leadership. However, when determining the Faculty's HR policy, the Dean primarily takes into consideration students' interests, development of the studies in terms of quality, audiovisual developments, student evaluation, etc.

Of the eight people named in the text as victims of humiliation inflicted by the Dean, only one employee switched from an in-house employment contract to an external employee contract. At the time of writing the document, everybody else had an in-house employment contract (David Kořínek left the school at his own request later on). Almost two years ago, Mr Mathé was recalled from the position of the guarantor of a doctoral programme for about 14 days. This was then subject to extensive school-wide debates on both a legal and communication level, and the Dean subsequently apologised to him for her mistake both publicly and personally. As far as the others are concerned, it is difficult to understand what constitutes their humiliation. We do not consider the fact that someone takes part in a selection process and/or that they resign on a position of their own decision to be humiliation inflicted by the Dean.

The *8 points* extensively discuss mainly the situation at FAMU International in this chapter. The writers offer an utterly catastrophic image of the Department – allegedly, there are (unspecified) “problems with fulfilling and implementing the study programme”, the “destruction of a successfully developing programme”, and the Department has allegedly been through a “major personnel degradation” with the departures of Assoc. Prof. Trajkov and programme guarantor Prof. Marek. In reality, however, all study programmes covered by the Departments are functioning and both teachers who left at their own request were replaced in good time before the winter semester, even though their departure was disloyal and sudden during the summer, just days prior to the induction of the new Head of FI. Eva Papoušková, whom the writers mention, is indeed not an in-house employee, but she continues cooperating with FI, albeit on an external basis, providing instruction during both semester programmes and summer courses. With the arrival of the new Head, Jitka Hejtmanová, the Department has made a significant conceptual progress and its organisational structure and activities became more streamlined. Unfortunately, and unexpectedly, she took over the helm with the Department facing a debt of several million, yet she has tackled and is tackling this difficult situation in an excellent managerial fashion.

It is an outright lie to claim that, as a result of some unidentified destruction of study programmes, there was a “decrease in demand for studying at FI, which means a loss for FAMU budgetary income”. There are 50 applicants for the Directing Cinema and Digital Media master’s programme this year, while the other accredited programmes taught in English at the Departments of Cinematography, Editing and Photography are witnessing a major downturn in the number of applicants. During the last pre-covid year 2019/20, there were 37 applicants; in 2020/21 there were 50; and in 2021/22 there were 51. The total number of applicants for all the specialisations as part of the Academy Preparation Program during the last pre-covid academic year of 2019/20 was 45. During the pandemic, the Department focused more on the applicants for this programme since all the semester and summer courses were cancelled. In the academic year 2020/21, there were 95 applicants, and in 2021/22 there were 87 of them. Unfortunately, 31 of the students admitted could not participate due to the restrictions in approving Czech visas for third country applicants. Their admission was postponed for the academic year 2022/23. These admitted applicants do not have to reapply for the programmes, which is why they are not included in the final figure of 77 applicants. If, however, we included these admitted applicants to the figure, the final number of applicants for this programme in 2022/23 would be 108. In the autumn of 2021, 14 students arrived as part of a CET semester programme. The summer semester 2022, which is coming to a successful close, there were 34 students in both sub-programmes (16 and 35 mm). The CIFE semester programme has had the usual number of students for two consecutive semesters now, and we expect the same developments in the autumn. The summer schools are coming back with the previous scope and numbers of students. In aggregate, FAMU International has actually been growing, as opposed to the claims contained in *8 points*, so these claims of the authors can be considered a deliberately biased statement.

### **3) MARGINALISATION AND DYSFUNCTION OF THE DEAN’S COLLEGIUM**

The claim of *8 points* writers to the effect that the opinions of the Collegium members are not taken into consideration in the leadership decision-making is not true, as everyone can see in publicly accessible minutes of meetings. The FAMU Dean's Collegium meets once every month, and during the pandemic (in the latter half of 2020) the frequency of its meetings was increased to once every 14 days. The fact that the Collegium is an advisory body to the Dean, and not a body that manages the Faculty, is not a subjective opinion of the Faculty leadership – it is defined by the *Statutes of FAMU* (Article 11). As indicated in the minutes of the meetings, the voices of the Heads of Departments are not neglected during the meetings. The opposite is true. The Collegium often serves to give its members a venue to make ad-hoc comments on many internal affairs. The matters that the Collegium discusses include the academic year schedule, Faculty budget, current issues with individual programmes, cooperation between Departments, organisation and course of producing hands-on exercises and films, collective decisions of Departments in affairs related to study agenda, science and research, investment plans, open days, certain ad-hoc safety/sanitary measures, etc. The instruction during hands-on exercises, mentioned by the authors of the text, was also discussed by the Collegium countless times (for instance, during the meeting on 15 December 2021). The Collegium recently discussed an extensive capacity study commissioned in order to verify the workload of the various professions during the exercises required by the White Book.

In addition to the functioning of the Dean's Collegium, the *8 points* writers take issue with the fact that subject guarantors are not members of the Collegium and that the guarantors' plenum was not established until February 2022. However, as has been said, the Collegium members are defined by the *Statutes of FAMU* and the guarantors are not its members. As far as the guarantors' plenum is concerned, it is not a governing (statutory) body and it does not have to be established. Since it is a forum that can contribute to interdisciplinary communication, however, we decided to establish it. We are the first of AMU's Faculties in this respect; HAMU and DAMU do not have guarantors' plena. (The guarantors met in an informal manner several times during the previous Faculty leadership, but this was not an officially established body as defined by the *Statutes of AMU*.) The *University Act* (Section 44(7)) rules as follows: "Study programme guarantor coordinates, without limitation, the preparation of the contents of a study programme, oversees the quality of its implementation, evaluates the programme, and develops it." The Faculty leadership not only enables programme guarantors to observe the statutory provision; as can be seen in the process of preparing new accreditations, it also offers them substantial to above-standard methodological support. (Despite that and countless reminders, the certain programme guarantors submitted the new accreditation files for their programmes with significant delays.)

Minutes of the Dean's Collegium meetings:

<https://www.famu.cz/cs/vnitřni-zalezitosti/zapisy-z-jednani/kolegium-dekanaky-zapisy/>

#### **4) DYSFUNCTIONAL DOCTORAL STUDY PROGRAMME**

The cancellation of the admission procedure for the doctoral programme, *Výzkum a teorie audiovizu (Audiovisual Research and Theory)* is, to a great extent, the outcome of intentional and coordinated activities of the aforementioned "dissenting"/opposition group of FAMU's academics who deliberately decided to compromise or even annul the accreditation of doctoral studies and then use it as part of their political struggle as "evidence" of FAMU leadership's errors. Unfortunately, it appears that this happened with the knowledge of the great majority of the group's members, including several Heads of Departments and guarantors, two members of the FAMU Internal Evaluation Committee and one member of the National Accreditation Bureau Council. In 2020 and 2021, the group members wrote (at least) four complaints to the Ministry of Education, aiming to elicit an audit procedure on the part of the National Accreditation Bureau ("NAÚ"), which was actually initiated in early 2021. Then, the aforementioned group did its best in a coordinated manner to impair and endanger the *Audiovisual Research and Theory* as

much as it could during the audit (also in a meeting between NAÚ representatives with guarantors and senators). The resultant NAÚ report was critical, but it did not suggest to interrupt or even discontinue the accreditation; it only proposed individual modifications to the programme. On 13 January 2022, AMU's Internal Evaluation Board ("RVH") adopted a position that was more stringent than the resolution of the NAÚ Council and forbade admitting students to the doctoral programme for the upcoming academic year.

In turn, it has to be said that certain issues the audit discovered in the accreditation file have a real foundation. The primary problem is that, according to the NAÚ, the doctoral programme's scientific focus does not fit the 'Art' education sector, in which it was accredited; instead, it fits the education sector of Art and Culture Sciences. The NAÚ recommends addressing the conflict between the two different fields of education, which also manifests as problems in staffing and subject structure, by creating a "concept of doctoral study at the Faculty that will integrate the methods of theoretical research, artistic research, and authentic art creation with a view to creating a single doctoral programme with a broader concept." The AMU RVH – which had originally approved the accreditation of the programme – then suspended the admission procedures until the conceptual changes are completed.

The section of 8 *points* focusing on the doctoral programme contains several untrue statements:

a) The authors wrote that, for a period of time, FAMU had dual doctoral programmes ("DSP") with a focus on theory, "just to play it safe". This is not true – the *Teorie filmové a televizní tvorby (Theory of Film and TV Art)* doctoral programme has valid accreditation until the end of 2024 – "until completion", and no new students may be admitted from this June on. This is why *Audiovisual Research and Theory* was accredited last year in order to maintain the continuity of a science/research doctoral programme; it is similar in certain aspects and innovated in others. FAMU has never had two redundant doctoral programmes; we have one that will end soon (in 2024) and another one with a similar focus that follows it. This is the same in all Departments – one accreditation is running out while new students are admitted for a newly accredited programme with the same or similar focus.

b) The authors wrote that a report of the FAMU Internal Evaluation Committee from January 2021 points out the fact that FAMU lacks a doctoral programme of research into art and that the leadership dismissed this. However, in her response to the report dated 22 January 2021, Dean of FAMU wrote: "I agree that the best way for the future would be having at least one science/research DSP and at least one art/research DSP at FAMU. In conversation with the workgroup, I explained my concerns regarding the launch of an art/research doctoral programme stemming from certain practical, mostly financial, considerations. Following thoughts and discussions with other school bodies, I agree with the workgroup's opinion that doctoral programmes at FAMU should be structured this way (each of them having a clear identity) and that it would be meaningful to students."

c) Responding to the suspension of the admission procedure for the *Audiovisual Research and Theory* doctoral programme, the authors claim that "since the Faculty leadership had earlier refused to announce admission tests for the original doctoral programme, *Theory of Film and Multimedia Art*, despite repeated requests of the DSP guarantor Assoc. Prof. Ivo Mathé, no students will be admitted to doctoral studies at FAMU for the academic year 2022/2023." Both FAMU leadership and Assoc. Prof. Jobertová, quality guarantor and Vice-Chair of the Internal Evaluation Council, repeatedly explained to Mr Mathé that the admission procedure for the earlier DSP, *Theory of Film and TV* is impossible this year (and even if it was possible, students would be left with just two years to complete a 3-year programme, which makes no sense). This was also explained at the Dean's Collegium meeting and, via e-mail, to several Heads and guarantors who had voiced the same request.

d) The writers then untruly claim that, following the suspension of the admission procedure for the doctoral programme, in January, FAMU leadership “proceeded to develop another DSP focused on artistic research, with haste in procedural and content terms and insufficient human resource backing, which most of the guarantors’ plenum subjected to well-founded criticism and recommended to create it from the ground up.”

After the RVH had stopped the admission procedure, a procedure was agreed with the Rector, PhDr. Ingeborg Radok Žádná (in her capacity as the Chair of the AMU RVH) and quality guarantor Assoc. Prof. Daniela Jobertová, and the two actively participated in several times during meetings at FAMU. Specifically, it was agreed that the programme guarantor Prof. Jakub Kudláč would modify the existing accreditation of the doctoral programme in a debate with Heads of Departments and programme guarantors, with a view to resolving the issues pointed out by the NAÚ. To date, there have been four meetings, on 21 February, 9 March, 24 March and 7 April, and all of them were open to suggestions from anyone. So, it is difficult to understand how the writers – who took part in some of those meetings – came to the conclusion that the changes in the DSP were being made “with haste in procedural and content terms”. One version of the accreditation file was modified to date, and another version is being prepared following an agreement made at the last meeting. The writers claim that the guarantors’ plenum subjected the change process to radical criticism, but the guarantors’ plenum of FAMU only met once this year to date, on 18 March 2022, and the meeting did not discuss the doctoral programme at all.

In conclusion, it has to be said that the FAMU leadership perceives this year’s interruption of recruiting new doctoral students for one year as a major problem. Among other reasons, this is a problem because the number of doctoral students at FAMU has been low in the long run, as there was no admission procedure in 2019 and, in 2020, only two applicants were admitted. We do not deny our part of responsibility for the problems with the *Audiovisual Research and Theory* accreditation file, along with other stakeholders in the accreditation processes. The accreditation file was sent to the Rectorate’s Quality Control Section prior to its completion in 2020, and no essential issue was detected. The guarantor is in charge of writing the accreditation file; then the Dean proposes to the Academic Senate of FAMU to discuss it and to the Artistic Council of FAMU to approve it. The final body that makes the decision on whether the accreditation file is in order and compliant with all statutory requirements is the AMU RVH. All of the above authorities discussed and/or approved the *Audiovisual Research and Theory* DSP at the very first time. Even though it was said during the debates that the DSP lacked a more specific connection with artistic creation and that it was pity for FAMU to run an artistic/research doctoral programme, **not one** of the stakeholders in the approval and audit procedures ever pointed out that the DSP did not fall within the Art education section under Government Order No. 275/2016, which is a failure on an Academy-wide level, and not just Faculty-wide.

Matters are being rectified as proposed by the NAÚ and RVH, in consultations with quality guarantor Ms Jobertová and within a discussion open to all Heads of Departments and guarantors. The admission procedure should take place again next year.

## **5) GROWTH OF THE FACULTY LEADERSHIP’S BUREAUCRATIC APPARATUS AND ACROSS-THE-BOARD DECREASE IN SALARIES**

In this point, the writers claim outright lies, stating that teachers’ salaries were not raised in 2021 as the Dean had promised as a priority during her candidatedship, even though the finance from the Ministry of Education allowed for the raise. The full amount of the increase in the funds provided by the Ministry in 2021 at CZK 2,808,000 was used for teachers’ bonuses including the Heads of Departments and their secretaries (a bonus is part of the salary). The Dean did not propose an across-the-board increase in tariff or contractual salaries in 2021 because of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the

uncertainty as to the amounts to be allocated by the Ministry in the years to come and the potential impossibility of maintaining the amount of such salaries in the subsequent years. The authors of the document suggest that a major part of such funds newly allocated by the Ministry was "used for the Dean's office costs" in favour of "growth of the bureaucratic apparatus". Of course, as the salaries of all FAMU employees grew, so did the salaries in the chapter referred to as "Dean's office" (except for the salaries of the FAMU leadership, which did not grow). This is because the chapter includes all secretaries at all Departments as well as all office workers, including at the Department for Student Affairs, the library, HR Department and facility management. For 2022, the leadership proposes a 5% increase in salaries for all FAMU employees with effect from 1 July 2022.

The following statement is also highly misleading: "In 2021, following the eight years during which the average salary trend is being monitored, the average salary and its median, which is more precise in taking into consideration the situation of an average employee, decreased by more than 3.5%." In fact, the average salary at FAMU in 2021, paid from the A+K allocation, i.e. from the Ministry funds, actually grew compared with both 2019 and 2020. The average salary from ancillary activities, science and research and projects, grants, and subsidies decreased. The primary reason was Covid-19 and the impossibility to run international courses as part of our ancillary activities, along with the completion of several grant projects, which are usually scheduled for a limited period. So, even though the total average salary decreased, it has to be seen in this context: those were mostly the salaries of a specific category of employees where the decrease could not be prevented. All of this was explained in an e-mail for employees, presented at a meeting of the Dean's Collegium, and included in the *Management Report for 2021*, which was submitted to AS FAMU.

## **6) GAME DESIGN STUDY PROGRAMME WITHOUT BACKING IN TERMS OF SPACE, BUDGET AND PERSONNEL**

The very first sentence regarding the Game Design study programme is problematic. The authors write: "FAMU leadership enforced the launch of a new Game Design programme of study without a transparent presentation of the budgetary, personnel and capacity implications for the school." It was the **past** FAMU leadership, in particular Dean Zdeněk Holý, who came with the idea of opening such a new programme, promoted it with the relevant bodies (including the Dean's Collegium) and incorporated the preparations for its accreditation in the OP RDE project. The project was merely completed under the current Leadership, and if it was not, FAMU would be compelled to refund millions for a failure to observe the terms and conditions of the OP RDE.

Why did the current leadership continue the efforts at founding the Department of Game Design? Why is it impossible to expect that a completely new and, in the Czech Republic, a pioneering programme will have enough associate professors and professors with enough experience in the game design field? We answered these questions last February, *de facto* responding to the same Heads and guarantors who feel endangered by the new programme. Allow us to quote ourselves again:

"Game design represents a new audiovisual field that is rapidly developing, and FAMU as a prestigious school that has the ambition to be the vanguard in this field should respond. The instruction includes series, web formats and various quality TV genres. Game design has for many years been part of the world's leading film schools. The programme is very much in-demand among applicants (...)

For almost four years, the project team worked on preparing the accreditation for the programme; it was then discussed and fine-tuned based on suggestions from all the relevant bodies. When the file was approved, the Academic Senate received and approved the plan for setting up a workplace to deliver the programme (the Department of Game Design). The preparation of the accreditation was financed fully under the OP RDE (with no added strain on FAMU's budget), and the equipment for the classroom that the Department will use (...) is also financed under the OP. (...)

It is logical and inevitable that, with completely new programmes of study, there is a lack of associate professors and professors who are experts in the specific field. With

Game Design, this circumstance was repeatedly discussed with the relevant approving bodies, and they approved Professor Jan Bernard as the programme guarantor entirely in accordance with the relevant regulations. However, they also ruled that the accreditation would be valid for 5 years, specifically with emphasis on the fact that, in the meantime, a person who is more professionally involved in the field may habilitate and become its guarantor. Witnesses will remember that the first Head of the Department of Sound Design was a HAMU professor – this is a natural process of emancipation of new fields that represent new developments.”

Concerning the attacks at the competence of the new Department’s teachers, it appears that they are motivated by the letter writers’ insufficient orientation in the field of game design. The head of the first-year workshop Michal Berlinger worked at three game studios as a developer; he currently works at Amanita Design and has authored several games. The head of the second-year workshop Jaroslav Meloun was recently nominated with his game FixFox among the 25 nominees (of a total 189 applicants) at the A MAZE festival, one of the three most prominent independent game festivals in the world. The success is similar to when a film selected to compete at a Category A festival. Ondřej Paška, the Middleware subject lecturer, is the game development leader at Charles Games, the studio that has authored internationally renowned historical games (Attentat 1942, Svoboda 1945). In addition, we managed to provide external and guest teachers from among cutting edge experts, including from globally renowned game studios. The teachers in this year included Viktor Bocan of Warhorse Studios, Jakub Dvorský and Jaromír Plachý of Amanita Design, Ivan Buchta of Bohemia Interactive and others.

The claim that “theoretical competence strongly dominates over practical competence at the Department” is also easily refutable. Of the 95 credits included in the curriculum in terms of obligatory and elective profile subjects, only 8 credits are attributable to theory subjects.

The leased premises next to the FAMU Studio, on which the Department of Game Design uses one classroom (not classrooms), also include two long overdue editing suites for the Department of Editing and one shared room that houses the leadership of the Department as well as three employees in charge of sending student films to festival and operating FAMU’s VOD portal. It is difficult to understand why the lease of these multi-purpose areas is “blamed” only on the Department of Game Design whose space demand is minimal, and not on the Department of Editing, or why, paradoxically, the complaint of the lease of such space was also signed by the guarantor and the Head of KSS who welcomed the new premises and editing suites.

## **7) INEQUAL ATTITUDE TO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

The following paragraphs respond to the untrue “myth” about unequal approach to international students.

During the two years of our tenure in school, we have focused on building a bilingual environment that had never existed at FAMU in such a consistent form. International students and teachers receive an English version of the FAMU News newsletter at the beginning of every month. Its content is tailored to the needs of international students and teachers. Sharing news and information, the school’s website and social media are operated in both Czech and English. E-mails distributed by the Faculty leadership are also in both languages. Consultations with the Faculty psychologists and the ombudswoman can also be held in English. The school has major events interpreted into English. Students can regularly meet the Dean. Instruction under the mentoring programme is organised in English. International students can attend special meetings regarding stays abroad (twice a year) and our mentoring programme (twice a year) in English only; they can also hold consultations on an individual basis, and they do so frequently. For the first time in FAMU’s history, international students have their own study affair ambassadors.

Regular weekly meetings organised by the Vice-Dean for Student Affairs were newly introduced to address programmes delivered in English. Even if these meetings do not always yield the desired solutions, the problematic areas are discussed and mapped.

The problems mentioned (excessive bureaucracy, incomprehensible application forms and obsolete methods of tuition fee payments) are in fact an issue across AMU and not just at FAMU. FAMU's leadership is involved in a dialogue with the leadership of AMU and we seek solutions to the various problems together. The statement to the effect that the Department for Student Affairs treats international students in an unacceptable manner is utterly untrue and unfounded. It is hardly possible to comment on such a vague claim, yet it is necessary to disagree and support the employees of the Department.

The writers claim that FAMU is an "expensive European school" and that this is endangering the recruitment of students for international programmes. This is not supported by any relevant arguments. For instance, please note that studies cost about EUR 25,000 at the National Film School of Denmark, about EUR 14,000 at the European Film College, and GBP 19,500 to 42,000 at the London Film School. If we compared the pricing, we would conclude that paid film studies at FAMU are in the mid-price category.

The resistance to the mentoring programme is obviously based on the ignorance of the international context, where many film schools (in countries such as Denmark, Sweden, UK, Spain, France, Italy, USA, Mexico, and Argentina) improve the quality of instruction and increase the attraction of study programmes through connection by having successful filmmakers take part in the instruction process in a narrowly focused manner over a limited period of time. We can introduce mentoring as part of accredited programmes if the individual programme guarantors are open to the idea.

The statement to the effect that Departments have no opportunity to shape the mentoring programme is not based on truth. The Dean's Collegium discussed this several times, including the specific form of student applications, and no one voiced any objections. To be specific, the Department of Animated Film represented by its Head Michaela Pavlátová decided in April 2021 to highlight 10 priority names in the students' list of filmmakers that they provided. In 2021, the Department of Production started to discuss the specific instruction and its preparation, which would be paid as a mentoring programme. The Department of Scriptwriting and Dramaturgy represented by its Head Marek Vajchr has appointed Assoc. Prof. Tereza Brdečková as the coordinator of the selection of filmmakers for the mentoring programme. The Department of Photography applied for the Protocol Plaza project managed by Assoc. Prof. Hynek Alt to be included in the mentoring activities. At its own request, the Department of Editing modified students' involvement in the mentoring programme only through a list of mentors (drafted by the Head Tomáš Doruška and programme guarantor Ivo Trajkov), from which the students can choose. It is alarming that the signatories do not advertise these activities in a manner adequate to the actual state of affairs.

Equally erratic are the statements regarding the agenda of the Vice-Dean for International Relations who, in reality, does the same work that his predecessor did plus additional development activities, taking much more consistent care of international relations and international students, as stated above. Vice-Dean David Čeněk works for the benefit of international relationships *inter alia* by preparing the entire Faculty to the transition to a new programming period, Erasmus 2021-27, which means terminating all the agreements (FAMU had approximately 75 active ones in place), concluding new ones and entering them in a digital database (EWP). He has also contacted all European film schools not involved in Erasmus and tried to win them over for collaboration. The tangible result interest on the part of France's La Fémis and The National Film School of Denmark. He also seeks targeted hands-on international stays for students to gain truly professional experience.

The position of the Vice-Dean for International Relationships usually includes representing the school, which is why the Vice-Dean represents the school to various industry networks, such as CILECT, Council of Higher Education Institutions and Association for film and audiovisual education. He selects and verifies international offers of cooperation. Another task is stabilising the possibility for students to visit international film festivals. Aside from the Berlinale, our Faculty was the first international school to take part in a new activity at the Cannes IFF, which intends to collaborate with international film schools on a long-term basis.

One of the associated objections concerned the OIRFET Erasmus+ project. The statement that OIRFET Erasmus+ is AMU's largest multiple-year project. The total benefit amounted to EUR 58,000 over three years (rounded), which means almost CZK 500,000 per year. The largest current grant project at FAMU in terms of both scope and financial amount is GAČR's EXPRO with the allocation of approximately CZK 20 million for 5 years, which more than ten times the amount under OIRFET.

The researchers under OIRFET prepared an imperfect budgetary balance, which necessitated financing the final trip from the science and research budget and under ERASMUS, which was originally intended for different purposes. In this case, the FAMU leadership helped the researcher in a above-standard manner, as they intended to pursue activities for which they did not obtain finance under the project. The statement regarding alleged outages in HR policy that damaged the project is unfounded. One office worker was in charge of OIRFET (part-time) and, when she left, another office worker assumed her duties.

### **8) UNJUSTIFIED CHANGE IN FACULTY EVALUATION**

It is an intra-Faculty legend that the Faculty evaluation was changed for no reason. There is nothing such as Faculty evaluation. The claimants are ignorant of the methodology and make no distinctions between self-evaluation and student evaluation. Self-evaluation, internal evaluation and external evaluation are three stages of AMU's quality assurance process, which is crucial for institutional accreditation. The Internal Evaluation Committee manages and oversees the process on the Faculty level and the Internal Evaluation Board does so on AMU level. Intra-faculty evaluation leading towards student evaluation was introduced at FAMU in the academic year 1993/94. Evaluation in its current form using the KOS was introduced in 2005/2006. Student evaluation is not governed by an internal policy, but only by settings in the KOS based on an arrangement between the Rectorate and the Faculties. What happened under our leadership of the Faculty is that the number of questions increased and their form was modified. This was discussed by the Dean's Collegium (on 7 April 2021) and repeatedly discussed with student ambassadors. Evaluation does not represent any office work burden – the Department leadership can obtain the results further to one e-mail sent to the Vice-Dean. Student evaluation is anonymous, most exact in the quantitative sense, and most objective in relation to students. They are part of tertiary school operation in any democratic country.

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We understand that the writers speak with the knowledge of their Departments and their respective issues and agendas that affect them directly. Our response is based primarily on our viewpoint of the Faculty as a whole. The leadership has acted and will continue acting in a transparent and open manner vis-à-vis the entire Faculty community: in addition to regular meetings between the Dean and students, we have met student ambassadors several times. Every week, the Dean has 'open door' hours for employees. We are always open to discussion as long as it is based on facts and avoids a vicious circle of repetition. In certain aspects, our opinions are simply different from those of the authors of *8 points*. In many aspects, however, their text contains manifestly untrue or severely distorted statements, as we have tried to explain, and as such we consider it deliberate and manipulative. We hope that the readers of this reaction will be patient enough to check other sources for facts (we recommend reading primarily minutes of the meetings of various bodies on the Faculty and Rectorate levels and various regulations). Maybe this has a hidden meaning as a critical thinking exercise.

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