

Self-evaluation report – Bachelor Programme in Circus

Programme: Bachelor Programme in Circus, 180 credits

Department: Department 1; Circus Subject

Date of approval of self-evaluation report: 2023-12-29

Head of Department/Vice-Rector for Research: Walter Ferrero; Alisan Funk

Students/doctoral students have participated as follows: Read; comments integrated

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Purpose and instructions

Programme evaluations are part of the systematic quality work at Stockholm University of the Arts (SKH). The purpose of the programme evaluations is to generate regular and systematic knowledge needed to ensure and develop the quality of the SKH's educational programmes. A programme evaluation consists of four steps: start-up, self-evaluation, peer review and measures. All programmes at first-, second- and third-cycle leading to a degree shall be evaluated. Programmes are evaluated on a six-year cycle, which means that every programme is evaluated once every six years. All programmes shall be assessed against the Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions' (SUHF) criteria based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). All programmes shall be assessed against all criteria.

Students' and doctoral students' representative shall be offered to take part in the work on the self-evaluation report.

The head of department/Vice-Rector for Research shall approve the self-evaluation report and submit it with the completed overview of qualitative targets to the responsible officer at the Research Office and the Educational Administration Department.

The template for the self-evaluation report is part of the Guidelines for Programme Evaluations; its use is obligatory.

- The report shall be descriptive and, where appropriate, analytical, evaluating and illustrated with examples. It should also state the strengths of the programme and any areas for development. See endnote.
- The report shall be based on present conditions and planned developments.
- Taken together, the different sections of the report shall provide a comprehensive picture of the programme without the need to link to additional information.
- As the criteria are numbered, it is possible to cross-reference the criteria.
- The report should not exceed 20–30 pages including the text in the template. The number of pages devoted to each criterion may vary depending on the programme being evaluated.
- It is not permitted to delete template text or criteria, except for those that refer specifically to third-cycle programmes when a first or second-cycle programme is under evaluation. It is permitted to add new headings.
- Self-evaluation reports must include the following appendices: general syllabus for third-cycle programmes or programme syllabus for first and second-cycle programmes, and an overview of qualitative targets.

Summary

- A summary of the self-evaluation in terms of the strengths and areas for development that have been identified.

The three-year bachelor of circus educates circus artists in the disciplinary techniques necessary to enter the field of circus at a high level of physical and artistic proficiency. In addition, the programme fosters engagement with autonomous and collaborative research/creation processes, enabling both the development of the existing professional field and preparation for second- and third-cycle studies in artistic research or other fields. While meeting and exceeding the standards for preparing circus artists to enter the existing field, this BA is recognized internationally for supporting artists to develop their individual artistic voice and aesthetic. This enables the students to enter and develop many different areas of the circus profession ranging from acts in variety theatre to site-specific performance, from replacement acts in existing shows to starting independent companies and touring multiple shows simultaneously.

The international reputation of this programme has meant consistently high numbers of applicants from countries across Europe, North and South America, and Australia. Many Swedish students also apply but with only one gymnasium programme and no preparatory circus education in Sweden, these students make up a small proportion of the graduates. Many of the international graduates have remained in Sweden and have contributed substantially to the development of the Swedish circus field.

The most significant challenge flagged by students in course evaluations is a lack of on-site physical therapy by a circus-informed specialist. The post-COVID, post-#metoo social climate has also increased calls for in-house mental health expertise to navigate and mediate individual and interpersonal discomfort. Pushing for available, specialized mental and physical care within the programme reflects important, burgeoning cultural shifts that were not accounted for in the way the programme was structured (rhythmically, economically, etc.). If not adequately considered, these adjacent but influential topics may have negative impacts on the educational environment within which the curriculum is delivered.

Introduction

About the programme

Describe the ambition, idea or purpose behind the programme.

Professional training in circus in Sweden was first established under the initiative of Cirkus Cirkör in the late 90s and then taken in by the University College of Dance in Stockholm in 2005. From the first graduation class in 2008 to the present time, the programme has undergone many changes associated with the evolution of institutional structures housing the education, namely, Dans- och cirkushögskolan (2010), Uniarts (2014), and now Stockholms konstnärliga högskola (SKH). The circus BA is part of the circus subject area, which also includes a master's programme, doctoral studies, and independent courses. The Circus Subject area is one of seven artistic subject areas in SKH, each of which include at least one programme in all of the educational cycles named above.

Changes to the programme from 2005 to present include the way content and learning outcomes are described in the syllabi, the way content and learning objectives are bundled into course descriptions and credit loads, and delivery of certain content and evaluations with regard to feedback from students. What has remained consistent is an emphasis on circus practice and developing articulation of each student's individual artistic voice. Learning experiences are arranged to assure that achievement of learning outcomes is closely connected with the personal practice and interests of each student.

The Bachelor of circus arts programme prepares circus artists for entry into the professional field of international circus arts performance, and also prepares circus artists to develop the field of circus. To reach these aims, students learn the tools of contemporary circus practices, critical thinking about performance arts, and to articulate their own artistic vision. These tools include disciplinary vocabulary

enabling interpretation and authorship in circus performance; situating contemporary circus practices from historical, socio-cultural, aesthetic, and compositional lenses; career sustainability through project management and physical health; and intersecting performance techniques and theories to nourish diverse approaches to staging and performance.

The programme structure scaffolds apprenticeship of tools and development of voice over the three years. First year courses focus on development of techniques in circus and other arts, and students present frequent, short works in front of peers (every 1-2 weeks). The aim of the first year is to learn and try different forms of physical, artistic, and theoretical practice. In second year, development of presentations is done over 2-5 weeks. Second year focuses on understanding artist-audience relationship through performance and critique of shows. Students are engaged in collective and solo creation practices. In third year, students deepen their artistic voice and offering through two large semester-long projects. In the first term degree project, students undertake a research-facing Artistic Research approach to their practice, which results in a presentation, essay, oral defence and participation as an opponent to another student. In the final term, students present a public-facing act, which is a tightly composed representation of their technical and artistic contribution to circus performance.

The existing structure of the programme assures continuity in the development of disciplinary techniques, individual vocabulary, and sustainable studio practices with full-time staff. There are five, full-time discipline teachers. At the time of writing all teachers are male. The majority of other content is taught by guest instructors from within or outside of SKH. These instructors come from a variety of fields (e.g., dance, acting, clown, mime, magic, circus, costume design, business, research). This structure has benefits and drawbacks. Students have critiqued and praised the consistency of discipline teaching as both stagnant and supportive. The influences of the broader SKH strategic plan and progressive merging of university subject areas, along with questions of resource allocation, may require reassessment of the way the programme has been delivered in the past in order to maintain its sustainability in the future.

The programme's structure and KPIs

Documentation is prepared by the Educational Administration Department.

	Course, credits	Course, credits	Course, credits
Semester 1	Circus Discipline 1a, 15 credits	Circus Performance and Interpretation 1a, 15 credits	
Semester 2	Circus Discipline 1b, 15 credits	Circus Performance and Interpretation 1b, 15 credits	
Semester 3	Circus Discipline 2a, 15 credits	Circus Performance and Interpretation 2a, 7,5 credits	Elective Course, 7,5 credits
Semester 4	Circus Discipline 2b, 15 credits	Circus Performance and Interpretation 2b, 15 credits	
Semester 5	Circus Discipline 3a, 7,5 credits	Circus Performance and Interpretation 3a, 7,5 credits	Independent Project, (Degree Project) – circus Bachelor of Fine Arts, 15 credits
Semester 6	Circus Discipline 3b, 7,5 credits	Circus Performance and Interpretation 3b, 7,5 credits	Circus Act, 15 credits

Comments

The cohort which will graduate in 2024 is the first to participate in the SKH-wide elective course. One reason to assure elective courses comes from student comments that they would like more interaction with the students in other subject areas and that they would like the opportunity to learn within other art forms. Circus students are strongly encouraged to participate in the elective courses offered by other subject areas. In this first experience, two of 16 circus students remained within the circus subject and all others took courses in other areas.

KPI*

	2022	2021	2020
First- and second-cycle			
Number of applicants and admitted students (sex-disaggregated data)	No admission	163 applicants (99 women, 64 men). 16 admitted (9 women, 7 men)	No admission
Number of full-time equivalent (FTE) students Regardless of the year of admission	21,6	21,39	22,19
Number of annual performance equivalent Regardless of the year of admission	27,97	13,96	31.05
Number of examinations	12	2	11

* Data retrieved from existing systems and annual reports.

Comments

The circus bachelor's programme admits students every second year. The exact number of admitted students depends upon our capacity to ensure their education. This includes adequate specialty knowledge in teaching, space for classes and independent training, and ability to safely rig and maintain the required equipment. We accept approximately 15 students, but it can realistically vary between 14-17.

It is not unusual for one student to take a leave of absence due to a long-term injury that prevents them from training for a semester or more, or for a student to take leave due to personal reasons. Of the students who do take leave, about half return to their studies two years later, which is the next opportunity to complete the degree. We also accept exchange students from other circus schools when circumstances are amenable. Finally, when student examinations are delayed due to injury, illness, or personal factors, courses are completed after the formal end date. These factors account for the differences in credits delivered between the different semesters above.

Self-evaluation

- 1. that the programme meets the requirements of the Swedish Higher Education Act (SFS 1992:1434) and the System of Qualifications, Annex 2 to the Swedish Higher Education Ordinance (SFS 1993:100) in that the intended learning outcomes correspond to the qualitative targets and that examination is legally certain**

Describe, analyse and evaluate, preferably with examples. Relate to the completed overview of qualitative targets.

This section describes how the bachelor programme in circus meets the qualitative targets of the intended learning outcomes listed in the programme syllabus (see appendix) and assures the integrity and legality of evaluations as required by the Swedish Higher Education Act.

The professional circus field, like many artistic fields, prioritizes demonstrated competence in field-related skills and community-related strengths over certificates or diplomas. Quality assurance for the circus BA therefore requires that a) learning outcomes are connected to relevant field knowledge, b) learning outcomes are aligned with the Swedish Higher Education Act, and c) content and evaluations meet equally the needs to prepare students for active work in a professional field while maintaining educational consistency and transparency. We believe we succeed in this mission because, although there is little professional or financial incentive to complete a bachelor degree in circus, and although there are ample non-accredited professionalizing circus programmes in the world, SKH's circus BA continues to attract substantial numbers of applicants for every selection process with a low attrition rate. Here follow the methods we use to meet the requirements and assure the high quality and integrity of our circus bachelor programme.

Examinations are aligned with the content of each intended outcome and examined on a pass/fail basis. This evaluation format is essential for supporting the development of artistic practices while also assuring the quality and coherence of alignment between examinations, learning outcomes, the development of individual artistic voice, and field practices. An important part of the creative process is attempting, re-assessing, and re-presenting artistic work based on imposed task parameters and individual artistic vision with the integration of informed feedback from self, peers and experts. Examination tasks and dates are communicated to students in syllabi and course plans. Tasks are revised and/or rescheduled when appropriate due to absence, injury, or alternative student-guided proposals which equally demonstrate ability to meet the learning objectives. In every semester, students have at least one evaluation in each of the following categories: practical demonstration, oral presentation, and written essay. Other types of required task include defence and opponent roles, providing feedback for peers, and visual arts representations of theoretical or embodied knowledge.

Examiners are selected for each course before the semester begins. Examiners are in direct contact with students and provide feedback on the examination task.

Students receive feedback at minimum from the examiner, but in many cases also participate in feedback dialogues with field experts (teachers), peers, and through self-evaluation.

The over-arching learning outcome is that students shall, after completion of the program, *demonstrate knowledge and understanding in the principal field (main field of study), including knowledge of the practical and theoretical foundation of the field, knowledge and experience of methods and processes in the field as well as specialised study within the field.* This learning outcome, and the detailed sub-category outcomes listed in the programme syllabus, are met throughout the course of the programme through course content, preparation of examinations, and the dialogic feedback process.

One area of critique raised by students is that the continuity of staff means they are regularly receiving feedback from a narrow set of people. They see room for improvement in broadening the possibilities for receiving feedback from other stakeholders.

For each student, the main field of study is considered to be their own practice of circus arts. Each student arrives to the programme with a selected specialty circus discipline which they continue to develop, in breadth and depth of technical and artistic vocabulary, over the course of three years. All other course content intersects with the student's own practice. Courses in career development ask students to develop practical plans related to financing, scheduling, transporting, and presenting their artistic work with consideration of their vision and the logistics required to employ their apparatus. Courses in history, composition, and the socio-cultural realities of circus ask students to situate their own practice sourced from past and current circus while articulating how their practice will develop their own artistic voice and the broader field. Furthermore, our students are encouraged to consider accessibility in their work, both from the perspective of access to being in a performance, and as an audience member.

In first and second year, most examinations require one type of task that is closely tied to the course content. In the "performance techniques" module where students learn studio practices like dance, theatre, clowning, and composition, most evaluations require students to present embodied expressions of the content they have learned, most often with consideration of its integration with their primary circus specialty. In other cases, students are asked to write descriptions of their practice, or present embodied representations of theoretical concepts – for instance representing different eras of circus dramaturgy through a presentation in their primary disciplinary specialty.

2. that teaching focuses the students' learning

Describe, analyse and evaluate, preferably with examples.

The Bachelor's education in circus contains a diversity of teaching and learning experiences, each suited to the learning objectives of specific courses while simultaneously maintaining the principles of student-centred learning. Within the containers of courses, students always have opportunities to influence the methods, structure and/or content. Over the three years, the courses develop from teacher-led/student influenced to student-led/teacher supported, as the students learn more tools for sustaining extended independent research and creation cycles.

Daily practice in the primary discipline course is both teacher-led and student-centred. Students arrive to the program with an existing main area of study – a primary circus discipline. The student provides the artistic and corporeal intentions of the vocabulary which will be developed over the three-year course. Teachers provide extensive domain knowledge to guide the students towards integration of physical and artistic principles and contribute to setting specific individual aims within the main area of study. Specific goals are adapted in dialogue between teachers and students on an ongoing basis throughout the education. Students further develop their vocabulary through task-based independent practice. These courses constitute the throughline and backbone of the education; they are a place where concepts and techniques from other courses are integrated into each student's own artistic and disciplinary vision.

Modules with more theoretical content, such as career management, circus culture and aesthetics, and stage production techniques, provide field knowledge from which students develop their own projects. By selecting the topic on which they will be examined, students have the opportunity to apply techniques and theory to their individual areas of interest.

In the second year of the program, students select an elective course among those offered in every subject area at SKH, enabling them to influence the content and techniques they are learning during their program. In the same year they experience guided co-creation of an ensemble performance in one creation project, and individual support for a short show entirely directed by their own interests.

The culminating projects in third year each last one full term. In autumn term, the individual project uses outside eyes, teachers and production staff to scaffold students in the development of an artistic research question, the research and documentation process, presentation, written reflection (thesis), defence and "critical friend" peer opposition discourse. In spring term, the students are supported to present a final, field-facing, self-directed circus act based on their artistic vision, voice and vocabulary, supported by teachers and artistic counsellors, within the resource framework of the bachelor programme.

Student investment in their personal vision and process, and apparent expectations that individual preferences related to that vision take precedent over collective

courses in theory and diverse techniques, can lead to frustration on the part of both students, educator, and administrative. Student frustration arrives when they feel content is not pertinent to their current vision of their artistic work. They may de-prioritize attendance or directly contest the value of required courses. Educator frustration arrives when met with absence, recalcitrance, or argumentativeness in their domain of expertise. Administrative frustration arises when extra labour is required to find content-relevant solutions for individuals who have chosen to de-prioritize core content or evaluations.

Due to the highly physical nature of circus practice, injuries can happen and significantly affect a student's ability to work with their specialized practice. When this happens, educators work to develop individualized learning experiences linked with the student's interest and with regard to their capacity while healing from the injury. This places significant burden on the educators and is not always found satisfactory by the students. It is difficult to assess the efficacy at a programme level as every case is individual because the tasks and scaffolding depend upon the educator's own specialties and their perspective on what will benefit the student, and additionally requires proactive engagement from the students to complete tasks that may seem unrelated to the way they envision their disciplinary practice. Student feedback has been both positive and negative. Because these tasks are adjacent to the existing, already individualized discipline programme, it has not yet been possible to standardize a response to injuries.

In summary, student-centred learning is a central part of every educational experience, though it appears in different forms for different content. The trajectory of the three-year programme guides students to develop tools for more independence in management of their time, content, and topics while maintaining enough scaffolding to respond to the diversity of individual learning needs, interests, and experiences.

3. that the content and form of teaching activities rests on an artistic and/or scientific foundation and proven experience

Describe, analyse and evaluate, preferably with examples.

The teaching activities of the bachelor of circus rest on both artistic and scientific foundations. One of the ways we use scientific foundations in our work is by approaching circus disciplines with pedagogical progressions that consider mental, physical and emotional preparation for the development of physically dangerous and/or high-risk activities. Our educators work closely with the students to ensure the biomechanical and anatomical integrity of the work students do with regard towards long term sustainability of their practice. Students feel their studies would benefit from increased medical intervention and consistently request the presence of a physical therapist along with the existing teaching team.

We also use learning sciences in the diverse teaching methods and learning experiences that are part of the programme. Students are participant in knowledge-gathering and knowledge development. In a classroom and studio settings alike, we frequently use techniques like guided discussion, think-pair-share, and student-led presentations of course content to meet different learning needs while fostering a community of practice. This is especially effective because our students often come from many different cultures and languages and may need time to find the right words in order to express their thoughts.

The artistic basis of the work is directly linked to current practices of circus in Sweden and internationally. In teacher-led and student-led content, students develop knowledge of circus composition, stage performance, and socio-cultural factors influencing audience interpretation. Guest instructors active in the field assure that students are exposed to current thinking and trends in contemporary performance so that they can make informed choices in their own presentations.

To assure up-to-date techniques are in use, teachers receive ongoing professional development training in techniques for assuring integrity in the mental, physical, and emotional study environment.

4. that the programme is useful to students in their future careers

Describe, analyse and evaluate, preferably with examples.

Circus is a rapidly evolving field that has high demands for artists to be competent in their creation and performance skills, as well as knowledge of personal career management and practicalities of show design and production. Students graduating from the circus BA have a high rate of professional integration. It is typical that all graduating students have contracts with existing circus companies. Whereas the normal pathway for most circus professionals is to work as a replacement or creation artist in established circus companies, a number of the BA students launch their own companies as part of their graduation project or soon after graduating. Students from the circus BA are an active part of developing circus in Sweden and internationally.

Students are prepared for the diversity of expectations in professional life with a diversity of approaches to content in the program. One example from the second year of the program is called the 'Short Show' project. Each student creates a solo or collaborative 30-minute show with limited resources but with emphasis on composition. This prepares them to think about compositional practices longer than a circus act. Students participate in developing the rehearsal and performance schedule, which prepares them to plan logistically for training and technical needs. After the show is completed, students write a residency application for the show itself, which prepares them to describe their artistic project in writing and consider the necessary resources and budget which would be required outside of the school context. By creating rich learning experiences like this that intersect multiple

knowledge types around a central project, students are prepared to think and act multidimensionally in real-world post-graduation scenarios.

5. that those working in the programme have relevant, up-to-date knowledge of the subject and competence in subject didactics and higher education pedagogy

Describe, analyse and evaluate, preferably with examples.

All teachers have an individual development credit time in order to update their competences and knowledge. Through festivals, conferences and collaborations they also meet colleagues in the field and participate in the development of circus pedagogic material (FEDEC pedagogical manuals, for example). Diverse lectures and seminars provided by SKH in teaching practices and equity contribute to updated competence, sharpened the teachers' persistent motivation to accompany students with high quality technical, artistic, and field knowledge.

Guest teachers have established professional practices in teaching, performance and other adjacent fields that align with content provided to expand approaches to the practice of circus. With ongoing professional development a priority, suggestions for workshops and content are derived from teacher requests, student suggestions, field developments, and overall values at SKH.

Students suggest that staff exchanges between circus schools would encourage dialogue and knowledge-sharing, especially as the SKH circus team is well-established has longevity.

6. that students can exert influence over the planning, implementation and follow-up of the programme

Describe, analyse and evaluate, preferably with examples.

Circus students are involved in the planning and implementation of their studies while they are students in the programme. Their feedback evaluations on the courses significantly contribute to how the courses are delivered for subsequent cohorts. Every term, students take a course in circus disciplinary techniques where they are accompanied by a teacher who follows and supports their progression over the course of three years. Within this course, students choose their disciplinary focus and are in constant dialogue with the teacher and course leader regarding the schedule and balance of techniques being studied. In other courses, as the example above shows, students are included in the planning, scheduling, and resource management of certain course content.

Student feedback has initiated several modifications to content delivery over the past several years. For example, students requested time to "digest" the material they were learning in dance and theatre courses. This has become a highly-valued learning opportunity called "digest week" where students have an open opportunity

to create a presentation that integrates their ideas and interests without the prerequisite of a specific task.

7. that all students are offered an accessible, fit-for-purpose study environment

Describe, analyse and evaluate, preferably with examples.

Students in all programmes within circus department have access to studios that are custom designed for rigging and training circus disciplines. These spaces include safety material (mats, lunge belts) and regular inspections. Students are provided with pertinent circus apparatus for their discipline and supplementary training, and they have additional access to a gym for independent and teacher-led strength and rehabilitation training. Our studios are versatile and, in most cases, students can work in small spaces with a mirror or larger spaces, as needed by specific artistic projects. The main circus training space can be converted into a performance space that welcomes audience and includes structures for theatrical light and sound.

Our classroom spaces have large screens, audio, and video connections for hybrid classes, which enables students to work with international guests. The students have access to multiple SKH-owned computers and laptops with which they can access the technological resources of the school. Our library has an extensive collection of contemporary and historical circus texts, as well as texts associated with the other artistic, pedagogical, research, and philosophical content in SKH more broadly. The library includes access to many scientific and arts journals for academic research.

The broader SKH community provides many more opportunities to see artistic performances by students, artistic research presentations by graduate students, staff and guests, and the possibility of involvement in student unions and other student representation in university decision-making groups. Nevertheless, it is difficult to ensure circus representation as most circus students prefer independent work with their discipline practice to the required union meetings.

One area where resources are consistently found lacking in student evaluations is the mental and physical health support provided by SKH. With increased awareness of the importance of mental health, students expect to have more local and rapid access to discussion with experts. SKH subscribes to a student health service used by many other Stockholm universities (KTH, KMH, etc.). It is unclear if the services offered are inadequate for the students, or if the students are not partaking in the available services. Internationally, some comparable circus schools provide students with an in-house physical therapist or similar professional to assess injuries and work with students individually on injury prevention and rehabilitation. Although the students have access to the Swedish health care system and health expense protection – above which all public health services in a year are

free – this is persistently critiqued by the circus students in the programme due to the long timelines and practitioners without knowledge of the physical pressure required of circus disciplines.

8. that the programme is continuously monitored and developed, supported by course evaluations

Describe, analyse and evaluate, preferably with examples.

The course evaluations follow the SKH guidelines by providing every student an online form to rate their experience of each course and comment on how the learning aims were met.

The circus subject uses the six key questions required by SKH, but emphasizes a more detailed approach to feedback by listing the aims for each course, the learning objectives, and the content that was presented towards the achievement of those objectives. Course evaluations are therefore comprehensive and give students an opportunity to reflect on the relationship between the learning experiences and the specific learning outcomes with which they are associated. Open comments enable course leaders and program heads to track the relevance and impact of different learning experiences, and the pedagogical prescience of different instructors.

Course evaluations are sent by the head of program or head of subject to students. Information is collected and summarized. These summaries are sent to the SKH archive for reference and commented on by the course leader/program head and head of subject. Teachers in each course are provided with relevant comments and summaries of the feedback.

One significant benefit of the evaluations is that student responses to specific learning experiences helps course leaders to determine if a) the content is achieving its purpose and/or b) if the content needs to be presented or prepared differently in order for students to see the connection with the learning objective. This method is labour intensive for program and subject heads, but has proven to be essential for understanding gaps between intended delivery and what the students receive.

9. Other

Describe, analyse and evaluate any other aspects, such as internationalisation, broadened recruitment, sustainable development and gender equality.

The circus BA programme has recently become more available for Erasmus exchange students in circus as more circus programs in Europe join Erasmus. Visiting Erasmus students has opened interesting communication between students and teachers, which is an especially important aspect in Sweden where we are a bit isolated from hubs of circus in the rest of the world. Sustainable development and

gender equality are topics constantly discussed by SKH seminars, but also raised by the new generation of students. An effort has to be made by SKH regarding facilities to ensure equal access for all staff and students in daily work.

Students have begun to raise important socio-cultural questions within the training space, such as the question of nude performance and clothing equity in training. Because nudity is not expressly prohibited by university rules, the students question whether male students should be permitted to train topless when not all genders are comfortable doing so, and what kind of trigger warnings might be needed if a student wants to choose a “nude costume” for a specific performance.

Students also express concerns that the teaching team is historically and persistently entirely male. This additionally brings critique regarding the gender diversity of guest instructors, which, if balanced across different gendered instructors, is by default imbalanced due to the preponderance of male discipline teachers.

These discussions are an important reflection of existing social movements and are similar to discussions happening in comparable circus schools internationally. The fact that they are being raised in the educational environment also indicates that students feel enabled to express their concerns and have an expectation of being included in decisions regarding their educational experiences.

Compulsory appendices

Programme syllabus Kandidatprogram i cirkus, 180 högskolepoäng (Bachelor Programme in Circus, 180 credits)

Overview of qualitative targets