



UNIVERSITETS- OG HØGSKOLERÅDET
The Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions

Norwegian
Artistic Research
Programme

Research and Development in the Arts

1995–2015: Twenty years of artistic research

Report from the working group appointed by
the National Council for Artistic Research,
Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions

Excerpt in English

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BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

Artistic research has been a statutory component of higher art education since 1995, and a driving force in professional development in the twenty years since then. The academic environments exercise considerable ownership in relation to the content of the term artistic research. The National Council for Artistic Research was established in 2012 under the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions and quickly became an important strategic academic body. In 2013, the Council raised the issue of how a greater shared understanding of artistic research could be achieved among its member institutions, and appointed a working group in 2014 with the following mandate:

- a) *describe the relationship between artistic research and*
 - 1. *reflection*
 - 2. *artistic practice*
 - 3. *competence requirements of employees based on artistic qualifications (cf. the wording of ‘Regulations concerning appointment and promotion to teaching and research posts’)*
- b) *propose important specifications of which qualities artistic research brings to the field (‘what does artistic research do?’ – in contrast to ‘what is artistic research?’)*
- c) *examine possible alternatives to the term ‘artistic research’¹ and assess the consequences of any changes*
The group’s work shall reflect international trends in the field.

The working group has found it expedient to take an up-to-date overview of the history and status of artistic research in Norway as its point of departure.

The report in Norwegian contains several chapters and source material of relevance to readers in Norway.² The English version has been edited to describe the background to and an understanding of artistic research in Norway for international readers.

¹ In Norwegian, the term ‘kunstnerisk utviklingsarbeid’ is used, which is literally translated as *artistic development work*. However, there is consensus in the artistic research community in Norway to use the translation ‘artistic research’ in order to be in line with the international term.

² The Norwegian report is available here: <http://artistic-research.no/kunstnerisk-utviklingsarbeid/dokumentarkiv/forskning-og-utviklingsarbeid-innen-fagomradet-kunst/>

ARTISTIC RESEARCH IN THE ACT RELATING TO UNIVERSITIES AND UNIVERSITY COLLEGES AND THE NORWEGIAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

In the Norwegian Act relating to Universities and University Colleges, artistic research have enjoyed equal status as other forms of research since 1995.

The Act stipulates the social mandate for our institutions. The Act states that artistic research is one of the main components of art education in the university and university college sector, and that artistic research is an academic precondition for art education at a higher level, just as other forms of research are for other disciplines.

The working group wishes to give special emphasis to the wording of Section 1-1 of the Act:

- c) disseminate knowledge about the institution's activities and promote understanding of the principle of academic freedom and the application of scientific and artistic methods and results, both in the teaching of students, in the institution's own activities and in public administration, cultural life and business and industry.

For art education programmes, this means developing knowledge on an artistic basis, strengthening the academic environments' insight, knowledge and awareness in relation to the content, methods and context of artistic processes, and articulating this internally and externally.

The requirements of the 2011 Norwegian Qualifications Framework are based on the parity stipulated in the Act. For level 8 (third cycle, PhD), the learning outcome requirements are worded as follows, under Skills:

(The candidate)

- can formulate problems, plan and carry out research and scholarly and/or artistic research³
- can carry out research and scholarly and/or artistic research of a high international standard

Under Knowledge, the qualification framework is open to work methods being different, based on the subject areas' own terms:

- can evaluate the expediency and application of different methods and processes in research and scholarly and/or artistic research projects

We find the same acceptance of difference in other wordings in the Act. The parity of research and artistic research is correspondingly followed up in regulations issued by the Ministry of Education and Research and the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT). The Qualifications Framework has an inclusive wording, in that very many of the detailed requirements are the same for everyone.

The consistent parity in the 1995 Act, which is continued in other key documents, has been a precondition for ensuring that higher art education has the scope and mandate to develop the field on its own terms. Explicitly mentioning 'artistic' puts this beyond debate. Few other countries' legislation is as clear.

³ *Kunstnerisk utviklingsarbeid* is translated as 'artistic development work' in the 2011 translation of the Norwegian Qualifications Framework and the 2005 translation of the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges. Changed here to 'artistic research' by the translator for the sake of consistency. (See footnote 1)

THE NORWEGIAN ARTISTIC RESEARCH PROGRAMME

In the latter half of the 1990s, the issue of establishing a doctoral degree in art was raised in earnest by the art education institutions. A working group appointed by Bergen National Academy of the Arts, Oslo National Academy of the Arts and the Norwegian Academy of Music submitted a proposal to the ministry in 2000 outlining a common national programme. The Ministry of Education and Research established the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme in 2003 as a Fellowship Programme. From 2010, the Programme was extended with a Project Programme. In both programmes, the projects are expected to produce results of a high artistic standard of national and international relevance. The requirement for artistic activity of a high standard is key, along with requirements for reflection on process, methods and context, highlighting the result and its connection to the institution's academic environment.

The guidelines for the Fellowship Programme were thoroughly revised in 2014, a process in which the participating institutions were strongly involved. One of the conclusions from ten years' experience of the programme was that the result requirements, as they were worded, led to the reflection work being separated from the artistic process to too great an extent in projects and assessments. The requirements have been revised in the new guidelines, based on an understanding of reflection as an integral part of artistic processes. The Fellowship Programme now calls for an artistic result and documentation of such reflection.

The Project Programme's criteria have been applied in six allocation rounds since 2010, and until now it has been too soon to evaluate how the criteria help to promote different qualities in artistic research.

The Norwegian Artistic Research Programme is the only public source of external financing in Norway dedicated to artistic research, and the guidelines for allocations under the programme thereby serve as strong constraints on the institutions' understanding. The requirements for artistic activity of a high standard give the programme a clear artistic profile, which has been developed and was desired by the involved academic environments. The Project Programme gives institutions the option of conducting large joint projects in which participants can experiment with project form, with different partners and critical dialogue. Such projects represent a large potential for artistic research in the future, and will help to more clearly highlight what artistic research contributes to society.

ARTISTIC RESEARCH, ARTISTIC PRACTICE AND REFLECTION

In the same way as other research, the term artistic research refers to both an academic activity and an administrative category – an institutional area of the law, regulations and public administration. This text covers both these aspects.

At an international level, there is a substantial body of publications from the past 20 years in which artistic research is analysed, problematised and discussed. It is outside the working group's mandate to summarise and consider all of this material, but to give a brief description of the practice in Norway today.

The working group will highlight certain references that are particularly relevant to the description of the mutual relationship between artistic research, artistic practice and reflection.

In the work on developing the Norwegian Artistic Research Fellowship Programme in 1999–2000, the following statements from Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London had considerable influence, because they so clearly describe art as a subject area that communicates in a peer context:

- Art and design practices are intellectual pursuits in their own right not requiring translation to other terms in order to have sense and coherence
- Art and design works embody 'meaning' through their interior symbolic languages and syntax (formal organisation)
- Art and design works embody 'meaning' through their discursive relationship to other works in their field and their corresponding cultural positions
- Art and design works can be read by those trained in the subject in the same way that, for example, mathematicians read mathematics or philosophers read philosophy.

In 2006, Henk Borgdorff described three different terms linked to research and art:⁴

- *research on the arts* (... investigations aimed at drawing valid conclusions about art practice from a theoretical distance...)
- *research for the arts* (... applied research in a narrow sense...)
- *research in the arts* (... the artistic practice itself is an essential component of both the research process and the research results...)

Artistic research in Norway takes the artist's special experience and reflection as its point of departure, and, as such, is in line with the category *research in the arts*. A high artistic standard is a key requirement for artistic research in Norway. This is part of the platform of the Artistic Research Programme and the institutions' research activities.

Artists develop work methods that prove to lead to an artistic result. The methods employed can be individual or specific to each artistic field, such as composition, design or dance. The field of art is experimental in nature, and critically testing, challenging and overturning methods are integral parts of its culture. Questions about and reflection on method are fundamentally interwoven with the artistic work itself. The reflection that is part of artistic practice, on content, process and methods, has a central place in artistic research.

Borgdorff has also described how artistic methods and processes produce artistic research, and how this is a crucial quality of this type of research:⁵

4 Henk Borgdorff: *The Debate on Research in the Arts*, Sensuous Knowledge no 02, Bergen National Academy of the Arts 2006, p. 12. ISSN 1890-2154.

Borgdorff based this text on previous input from 1993/94 from Christopher Frayling, the then Rector of the Royal College of Art in London: Christopher Frayling: *Research in Art and Design*, Royal College of Art Research Papers, Volume 1 1993/94. This article is available at http://researchonline.rca.ac.uk/384/3/frayling_research_in_art_and_design_1993.pdf

5 Henk Borgdorff: *The production of knowledge in artistic research*, The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts, 2010, p. 46 <https://www.routledge.com/products/9780415581691>

We can justifiably speak of artistic research ('research in the arts') when that artistic practice is not only the result of the research, but also its methodological vehicle, when the research unfolds in and through the acts of creating and performing. This is a distinguishing feature of this research type within the whole of academic research.

Elucidating and discussing artistic methods and results are important elements of the institutions' work, cf. the assignment set out in Section 1.1 of the Act. Artistic methods are both a tool for and the subject of reflection. Through continuous dialogue in the academic environment, and explicit reflection, artistic research at the institutions differs from artistic practice outside the university and university college sector. Artistic research at universities and university colleges is a space for knowledge development on an artistic basis, as well as a space for the development of artistic results.

Reflection is a tool for sharing and dialogue, and contributes to artistic discourse within institutions and across academic environments. Reflection can take different forms, such as speech, writing, film, images or other forms of expression. Academic staff reflect every day while performing tasks in the institutions' academic environment, for example:

development of the subject area

- academic strategy work
- programme description work
- quality assurance processes
- project applications and project work

academic assessments

- admission of students and research fellows
- wording of tasks and research questions for students
- supervision/tutoring and reviews with students
- grading
- evaluations
- expert evaluations
- appointments to academic positions

sharing

- presentations of artistic practice and artistic research
- research groups, seminars, conferences, networks
- lectures, papers, articles
- peer reviews

The Norwegian Artistic Research Programme makes requirements with respect to elucidating methodological issues, premises, processes, concepts, context, references and the results of projects funded by the programme. The assessment of quality in this respect is based on whether choices, processes and consequences are articulated and assessed, and whether the process and reflection produce an interesting and relevant artistic result.

Artistic research as an administrative category is currently linked to the university and university college sector where it has dedicated sources of funding. Institutional and national frameworks provide room for arenas, networks and infrastructure for artistic research and reflection. At the same time, projects are generally established in contact and collaboration with external art environments and art scenes with professional expertise and production or exhibition resources. Contact with the external art environments is crucial to ensure artistic relevance.

QUALITIES THAT ARTISTIC RESEARCH BRINGS TO THE FIELD

Artistic research

- generates knowledge development on an artistic basis
- articulates and accentuates academic questions through artistic practice and reflection
- develops and challenges a broad spectrum of forms of expression and documentation
- establishes arenas for sharing both processes and results
- qualifies reflection in the institutions through academic contextualisation and critical discussion
- contributes to and challenges artistic practice and the art fields' discourses
- strengthens artistic competence in society

Artistic research helps to meet the commitment set out in Section 1-1 of the Act to

disseminate knowledge about the institution's activities and promote understanding of the principle of academic freedom and the application of scientific and artistic methods and results, both in the teaching of students, in the institution's own activities and in public administration, cultural life, and business and industry.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARTS – SUMMARY

Artistic research as a concept and practice has strengthened the field and had a consolidating effect since the term was included in the act in 1995. In close collaboration with, and with the support of the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, the art education programmes have succeeded in establishing a national discourse for artistic research on an independent basis, establishing a national programme for funding projects and research fellows and putting questions about quality and ambitions on the agenda. The explicit references to artistic research in the Act and regulations have been a precondition for this development. Artistic research as a concept now has a distinct and established place in the public framework: the Act, regulations and sources of funding.

In its 2015 White Paper, the AEC (Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen) has listed the institutional characteristics required of established research disciplines.⁶ We see that artistic research in Norway today, in dialogue with international environments, meets these requirements:

AEC supports the growing number of its member institutions who have embraced the concept of Artistic Research. It welcomes the progress being made towards the eventual achievement of the full range of institutional conditions typical of any established research discipline, such as:

- Its own national and international associations
- Its own journals
- Its own distinctive discourses (not just one discourse)
- Its own acknowledged leading experts in the field
- Its own regular conferences
- Full-time faculty positions in conservatoires
- Relevant Doctoral training and Post-Doctoral development
- Research funding programmes specific to it
- Funding for graduate students

In Norway, we place particular emphasis on artistic methods and the artistic result in artistic research, and this understanding has been accepted and established in a national institutional context. This Norwegian strategy, in which artistic work of a high standard is a key factor, is deeply engrained in a Nordic and European context, is very visible and has had an impact on the development of corresponding frameworks in other countries. There is a continuous dialogue with the international umbrella organisations and networks in which the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme, the Norwegian institutions and individual experts play an active part. A large number of international resource persons are used as supervisors and assessors in the Fellowship Programme.

The conclusion of the working group's review is that artistic research in Norway has established itself during the last 20 years as a concept and an activity that covers research and development in the arts. The review shows a field in strong progress. Today, artistic research in the university and university college sector is understood as a specific field on equal footing with other research and as part of a broad research concept. This must form the basis for the work to be carried out in future. Its strategic position and academic development must be closely monitored by the institutions involved, the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme and the National Council for Artistic Research.

⁶ *Key Concepts for AEC Members, no 1: Artistic Research* (2015)
<http://www.aec-music.eu/about-aec/work--policies/key-information>

Act relating to universities and university colleges, 1 April 2005

A few relevant excerpts

Section 1-1. *Purpose of the Act*

The purpose of this Act is to make provisions for universities and university colleges to

- a) provide higher education at a high international level.
- b) conduct research and academic and artistic development work at a high international level.
- c) disseminate knowledge of the institution's activities and promote the understanding and application of scientific and artistic methods and results in public administration, cultural life and business and industry.

Section 1-3. *The institutions' activities*

Universities and university colleges shall promote the purpose of the Act by:

- a) providing higher education on the basis of the foremost within research, academic and artistic development work and empirical knowledge.
- b) conducting research and academic and artistic development work.
[...]
- d) helping to disseminate the results of research and of academic and artistic development work.
[...]

Section 1-5. *Academic and artistic freedom*

[...]

(3) Universities or university colleges may not be instructed regarding

- a) the academic content of their teaching and the content of research or artistic or scientific development work.

The translation is taken from

https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/kd/vedlegg/uh/uhloven_engelsk.pdf

The Norwegian Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning
 Ministry of Education and Research December 2011

Level 8: Phd (third cycle)

A candidate who has completed his or her qualification should have the following learning outcomes defined in terms of knowledge, skills and general competence:

Knowledge	Skills	General competence
<p>The candidate...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is in the forefront of knowledge within his/her academic field and masters the field's philosophy of science and/or artistic issues and methods • can evaluate the expediency and application of different methods and processes in research and scholarly and/or artistic development projects • can contribute to the development of new knowledge, new theories, methods, interpretations and forms of documentation in the field 	<p>The candidate...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can formulate problems, plan and carry out research and scholarly and/or artistic development work • can carry out research and scholarly and/or artistic research work of a high international standard • can handle complex academic issues and challenge established knowledge and practice in the field 	<p>The candidate...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can identify new relevant ethical issues and carry out his/her research with scholarly integrity • can manage complex interdisciplinary assignments and projects • can communicate research and development work through recognized Norwegian and international channels • can participate in debates in the field in international forums • can assess the need for, initiate and practice innovation

<http://www.nokut.no/en/Facts-and-statistics/The-Norwegian-Educational-System/The-Norwegian-qualifications-framework/Levels/>

The Norwegian Artistic Research Programme

For **the Fellowship Programme** (Guidelines 12 September 2014, adjusted pursuant to the resolutions of 19 May 2015 and 15 September 2015), the objective is worded as follows:

The Norwegian Artistic Research Fellowship Programme is intended to qualify candidates for artistic work, teaching and research positions in higher art education and for other work in society that demands a high level of artistic expertise and insight.

[...] The project shall be an independent artistic project of a high standard with national and international relevance to the subject area. Focus on different forms of reflection also has a central place. The project should contribute to developing new insight, knowledge and/or experience.

(from Section 2 Scope, content and objective of the programme)

The requirements of the result presented for assessment, are worded as follows:

The project should contribute to developing new insight, knowledge and/or experience. The project should be an independent body of work of a high standard with respect to originality, expression, coherence and communication of results. The project shall be of national and international relevance to the subject area.

Material that communicates the reflection involved in the work shall be submitted as part of the artistic result.

The artistic result should be a free-standing, independent body of work, consisting of one or more parts, or a collection of pieces that together make up a whole.

[...] Reflection is part of the artistic work. Material shall be submitted that communicates this reflection, particularly in relation to:

- the process (artistic choices and turning points, theory applied, dialogue with various networks and professional environments etc.);
- the research fellow's personal artistic position/work in relation to the chosen subject area nationally and internationally;
- how the project contributes to professional development of the subject area, including any artistic innovations.

(from Section 10 The Project)

For **the Project Programme** (Guidelines from 2010, revised 19 May 2015), the objective is worded as follows:

In accordance with the goal formulated in the *Norwegian University and University Colleges Act Section 1-1 (b)*, the *Project Programme* shall contribute to Norwegian artistic research projects of a high international standard being initiated and implemented.

The programme shall contribute to challenging and developing our understanding of artistic research, in dialogue with relevant national and international environments.

On its own initiative, the programme shall initiate measures to promote dialogue on artistic research.

Implementation of the programme's profile through projects and arenas shall contribute to developing and promoting international debate on artistic research.

In this context, artistic research should include the following dimensions:

- A sound basis in artistic practice
 - New artistic perspectives and contributions to the development of the art field
 - Contributing to critical reflection on content and context
 - Articulating and reflecting on methods and work processes
 - Promoting critical dialogue within one's own discipline and with other relevant disciplines
 - Being accessible to the public in relevant academic forms
 - Be limited to a project format, based on a project description and subsequent public presentation of the results
- (from Section 1 Aims)

<http://artistic-research.no>

The National Council for Artistic Research

is a strategic unit under the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions (UHR). It is an advisory body to UHR and its member institutions in matters concerning artistic research. The council shall work to strengthen artistic research in higher education and it provides advice and input to UHR on overriding academic and policy issues in that connection. The council shall also follow up matters considered by UHR's board and collaborates with other bodies under UHR.

www.uhr.no

The Norwegian Artistic Research Programme

has national responsibility for promoting and stimulating artistic research in Norway. The Programme is intended to fund artistic research at Norwegian higher educational institutions, and with the institutions' artistic/academic staff as key figures in the project development. The Programme is governed by a Board appointed by the Ministry of Education and Research.

More information at

<http://artistic-research.no>