

Periodic Assessment of Research, Development, Artistic and Other Creative Activities VER 2026

Final Report of the Performing Arts and Related Art Fields Sub-panel

Introduction

We three reviewers commenced review of the various outputs contained in the VER 2026 process for the Performing Arts from October 2025 through March 2026. Each output and submission was evaluated separately by each of us, then at monthly meetings the entire sub-panel discussed all the outputs from two to three institutions. The March 2026 meeting was reserved for the review and discussion of the Creative Environment and Social Impact rankings.

Our overall impression of the research submitted was positive, with some examples demonstrating significant international impact. The group did not rank any output as demonstrating “World Leading Quality”, and very few were ranked “Internationally Excellent”. Many of the outputs were ranked of having “National Quality” or impact. Some were under this level at the “Below National” level – more in this category than were in the “Internationally Excellent” level.

Knowing that the reviewers lacked proficiency in the Slovak language, it was surprising how many submissions did not include efforts to translate written works into English. This made it very difficult to review this research and its quality or impact on the field. In most of these cases, the result was a group ranking of “National Quality” or below.

Finally, there was a relationship between the amount of funding an institution received for research and the quality of the research from that institution. While it wasn’t consistent, and there were outstanding examples of research from relatively lower-funded institutions, we

felt it was important to note this. Not knowing the standards or rubrics used to determine research funding, we are unable to draw any conclusions to this seeming relationship between funding and quality of outputs.

What follows is a summary of the characteristics we used, in a general way, for each quality level, as well as a short feedback statement from each sub-panel member.

Summary of Characteristics for Quality-Levels

The quality levels within the VER2026 system included five parts, with each part having a title. There were no further evaluative criteria to guide the sub-panels further to describe each level, so two meetings were taken to establish both the general characteristics of each level, and what we might be looking for to identify this level within the research. A table with each level and our mutual characteristics is listed below.

LEVEL	CHARACTERISTICS
1 – World Leading Quality	Research would have to demonstrate a novel discovery or creation that was far-and-away above most all other research as understood by the reviewer. This would have to be demonstrated in the opinions of all three reviewers and ideally also supported by others (demonstrated by the materials submitted). Multiple language submissions were required for the sub-panel to make this determination.

2 – Internationally Excellent	Research would have to demonstrate a discovery or creation that was of significant international interest and scope in the performing arts in the opinion of the reviewers. Such submissions could also demonstrate this in ways beyond purely documentation of the research itself. English language submissions were required for the sub-panel to make this determination.
3 – Internationally Recognized	Research would have to demonstrate a discovery or creation that was of international interest and scope in the performing arts in the opinion of the reviewers. English language submissions were required for the sub-panel to make this determination.
4 – National Quality	Research would have to demonstrate a discovery or creation that was of domestic interest and scope in the performing arts in the opinion of the reviewers. Research could be solely in the Slovak language if
	appropriate other information was submitted to demonstrate the stature and characteristics of the research.
5 – Below National Quality	Research that DID NOT demonstrate a discovery or creation that was of domestic interest and scope in the performing arts in the opinion of the reviewers was assigned this category. Often submissions with this ranking included minimal documentation and only in Slovak.

Summary of Social & Cultural Impact Submissions

The sub-panel acknowledged that VER2026 expanded its scope of assessment and – for the first time – added *Social Impact Case Studies* to the material that had to be evaluated. Social and cultural impact is a relevant assessment criterion that strengthens the integration of

international standards into the Slovak Excellence Framework. However, the sub-panel felt it was a challenge for the institutions, to choose suitable case-studies and to relate them to all relevant aspects.

The submissions demonstrate a range of approaches to social and cultural impact, reflecting engagement with community, context, and practice. Many articulate valuable contributions within local environments, with emerging potential for broader international relevance. There remains an opportunity for the institutions to more confidently position themselves as agents of social cohesion and change, more clearly evidencing how creative practices contribute to community connection, cultural continuity, critical dialogue, and responses to contemporary social and environmental challenges. This could be further strengthened through a more explicit rationale in their engagement with practice-led methodological frameworks and critical theories articulating the paradigms that underpin arts research and extending beyond output-oriented measures to foreground process, relationality, and distinct forms of knowledge.

Individual Summary of Director Marijke Hoogenboom

The VER 2026 evaluation provided a great opportunity to get familiar with Slovak research institutions and to learn about the rich academic environment for performing- and related arts (or arts related sciences). Although the universities, academies and institutes demonstrate many differences in context, infrastructure and output, I felt immersed in a vivid field of engagement and encountered many submissions that triggered curiosity, appreciation and respect. Especially the outputs that relate to a clearly local source or concern (cultural-specific heritage, diverse national ethnicities, medieval material) made a strong impression and convinced with their relevance and integrity. Here, international quality or even excellence could be found.

Unfortunately, not all submissions fulfilled the task to make their research fully available to our international panel. Language proved to be a barrier, but sometimes also a lack of effort to use the format for dissemination that was provided. To me this shows that the profile of an institution does not necessarily need to function in an international environment, but for the quality of individual research, the dialogue, review and competition with peers is essential. It places the research in the broader world and enables valuable connections beyond local and national significance.

Therefore, I truly appreciate the choice of the Department of Evaluation of Creative Activities, to bring together experts from very different places and approaches. Throughout the evaluation process we were not only negotiating our own positions but also making them transparent to do justice to the task: to make our expertise fully available to the Slovak institutions. I would like to thank Barbora Forkovičová for her excellent guidance and my colleagues for such a professional and inspiring collaboration. I sincerely hope our peers and the quality of performing arts research in the Slovak Republic will benefit from our work.

Individual Summary of Dr Tia Reihana

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute as a sub-panellist in this process. My approach was grounded in acknowledging the distinct contributions of each institution, recognising the diversity of practices, contexts, and strengths represented across the submissions.

From an international perspective, I would encourage future applications to prepare more robust and complete submissions that fully utilise the provided templates. These offer an important framework through which institutions can clearly and confidently articulate the scope, depth, and significance of their work. Stronger applications made effective use of these templates and demonstrated a clear capacity to draw meaningful connections between their research outputs and their broader creative environments. This included a

more sophisticated articulation of social impacts beyond standardised interpretations, particularly through the communication of strategy and policy, and how these were evident within their outputs.

As an international scholar, the cultural interface was of particular interest, especially in relation to how international potential and relevance might be more explicitly communicated. There is an opportunity for institutions to more confidently position their work within wider global conversations, while still maintaining the specificity of their local and cultural contexts.

In a time marked by economic, social, and environmental uncertainty, the role of the arts is increasingly vital in supporting social cohesion, cultural wellbeing, and forms of creative diplomacy. This presents an ongoing challenge for institutions to consider how their work and aspirations respond to these conditions, and how this is reflected within their submissions.

Overall, clearer and more confident articulation, supported by complete, accessible, and well-contextualised applications, would enable a fuller recognition of the value, reach, and significance of each institution's contributions. Overall, the submissions demonstrate a vibrant and committed research landscape, with strong potential to further extend their impact, visibility, and contribution across both local and international contexts.

Individual Summary of President Ravi Rajan

The outputs of research in this year's VER evaluations for the Performing Arts mostly consisted of examples of national importance. Many examples demonstrated very traditional underpinnings that were common within academic discourse, or in long accepted artistic

oeuvre, and there were no “breakout” examples that stood at the top of the field (demonstrating significant novelty or impact of global distinction) in my opinion.

That said, there were examples of high-quality work, and it was clear from many, many submissions the amount of work and effort that had gone towards the research. Some examples did not demonstrate this level of rigor of effort, which was disappointing. I would have preferred that all the examples of outputs this year would have at least demonstrated significant effort on the part of the researcher.

Overall, it is my opinion that the arts within the academies of Slovakia have vibrant connections to the country and culture – and many very useful outputs from this year’s review exist to support the field. The institutions in Slovakia should be proud of such accomplishments.

Conclusion

The sub-panel wishes to thank the many people involved in the research review process across all the arts and creative disciplines, the VER staff, and the Ministry of Education, Research, and Development of Youth of the Slovak Republic. We are honoured by the responsibility to participate in the 2026 VER process evaluating research in the performing arts. We learned a great deal from participating in the process, especially regarding the institutions of education and research in Slovakia, and the research coming out of the country in the performing arts. Thank You!

Sub-panel members

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Ravi Rajan, California Institute of the Arts (Sub-panel Chair)

Tia Reihana, The University of Auckland