

More, wider and better – internationalization academic years 2009 through 2013

Looking at the mobility in the academic years 2009 through 2013, the Aarhus School of Architecture (AAA) has managed to integrate more students, widen the cooperation and generate better income.

Mobility balance

Figure 1 below shows a steady high ratio of AAA students on external stays away from AAA. At the same time, the increased number of students away from the AAA has been matched with a reasonable number of incoming students. There is a slight tendency of a decrease in numbers; this is however matched by an increased number of international full-degree Master students (figure 4).

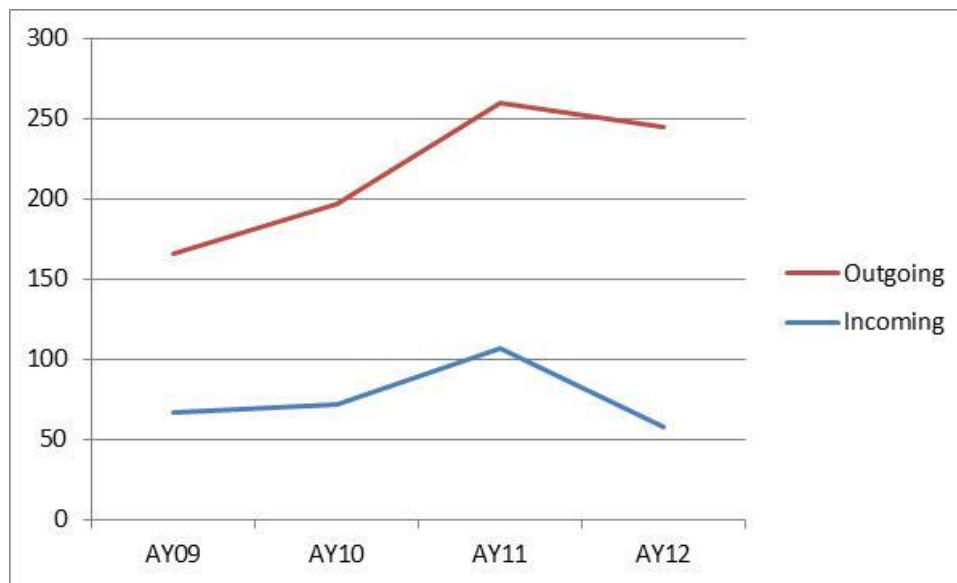


Figure 1. Total number of incoming students (exchanges) and out-going students (exchanges and internships) academic years 2009 through 2012 (2013 numbers not available yet).

Mobility – incoming student exchanges

The student exchange numbers has increased steadily in the past 4 years. Within the total number of students exchanged some differences can be observed:

The European exchanges have decreased slightly, giving room to new areas: Asia, Australia and South America. New destinations have become popular: China, Australia and Israel where new partnerships has been made, have had a significant popularity among the students.

South America is a dawning destination, where new partnerships with Argentine and Chilean institutions has been signed, or are under current contemplation.

Similar tendency is apparent in the numbers of the out-going student exchanges, especially spurred by the new possibilities for studying abroad among the Bachelor Program students – a possibility which was made available from 2010. Today, the Bachelor Program students constitute the bulk of the total out-going number.

The AAA is a very attractive exchange partner, and every year, the demand for studying at the AAA is higher than the number of places available. Selections are made among the students nominated by our partners. A method which should guarantee a certain quality level of the single student is however a process that is not always cheered by our partners (to say the least).

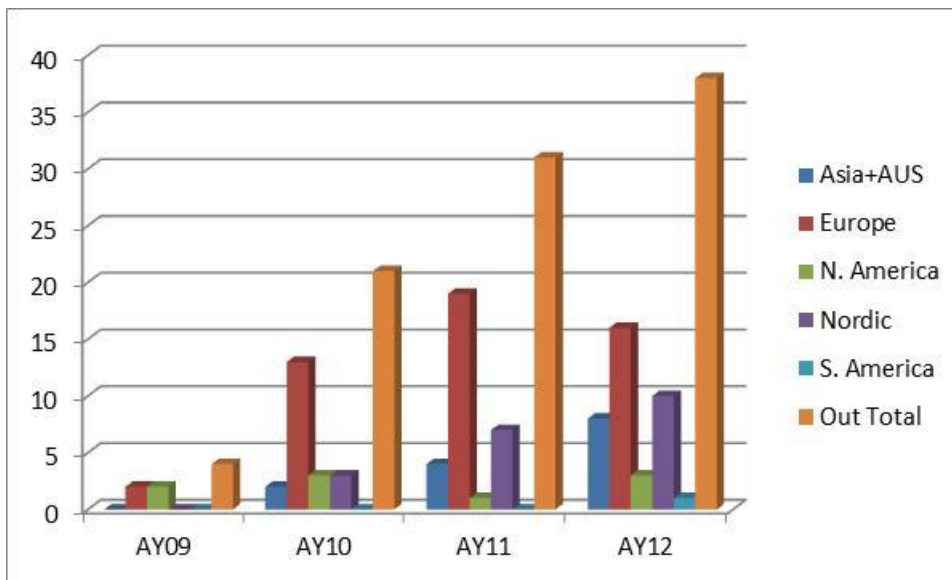


Figure 2. Development in the student exchanges academic years 2009-2012 (2013 numbers not ready yet)

Internships

For graduate (KA) students, the most popular external activity is an internship. With an exception of the academic year 2010, there has been a steady increase in the number of students spending a semester in internships. The increase/decrease situation in 2010 is most likely an effect of the global financial crisis, where more students went on student exchanges due to a reduced number of internships offered domestically and in Scandinavia, and other foreign internship hosts taking in more local interns in order to combat the effects of the crisis.

Internships outside Denmark has grown in a similar pace. The majority of students are choosing either a Nordic or a European internship, which most like is due to the portion of Scandinavian students enrolled in AAA and helped by the financial support for internships by the **EU Erasmus Program**. Students leaving for internships to overseas destinations are very few. Among these, students tend to favor internships in the US. The financial support for overseas destinations is less generous than for the European destinations, and we do not expect this picture change in the future.

The combination of a high number of students leaving AAA for internships makes it possible for incoming guest- and exchange students to study at AAA. The positive effect is thus that the international students fill up the studios, providing students unable to study abroad international student environment competencies and securing studio numbers that should ensure a sound academic level.

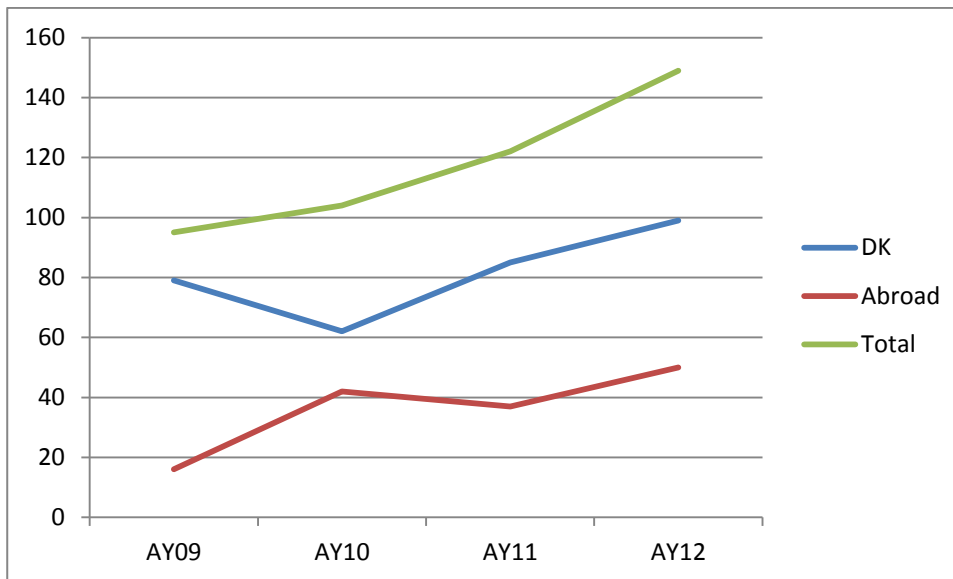


Figure 3. Number of KA students on internships in the academic years 2009-2012.

International Master Program admission

Since 2011, the English taught Master of Art in Architecture Program has been in operation at AAA. Before this, students only with high Danish Language competencies were able to study as **full-degree** students, obtaining the Master of Art in Architecture degree. The content of this degree is the same as in the Danish taught Program.

The number of **applicants** for this Program has risen from approx. 20 in 2011 to 155 in 2013. The popularity of the Program, we believe is the result of the following factors:

- Denmark as a tuition-free country for EU citizens as one of the few countries in the World
- The existence of an international program within a National show-case industry
- An active role by the Danish Government making Architecture and Design not only a toast of the Nation, but rather a deliberate, well-thought part of a National identity strategy.
- A focus on a quick, easy to handle and smooth application process and easy access to the relevant administrative guidance

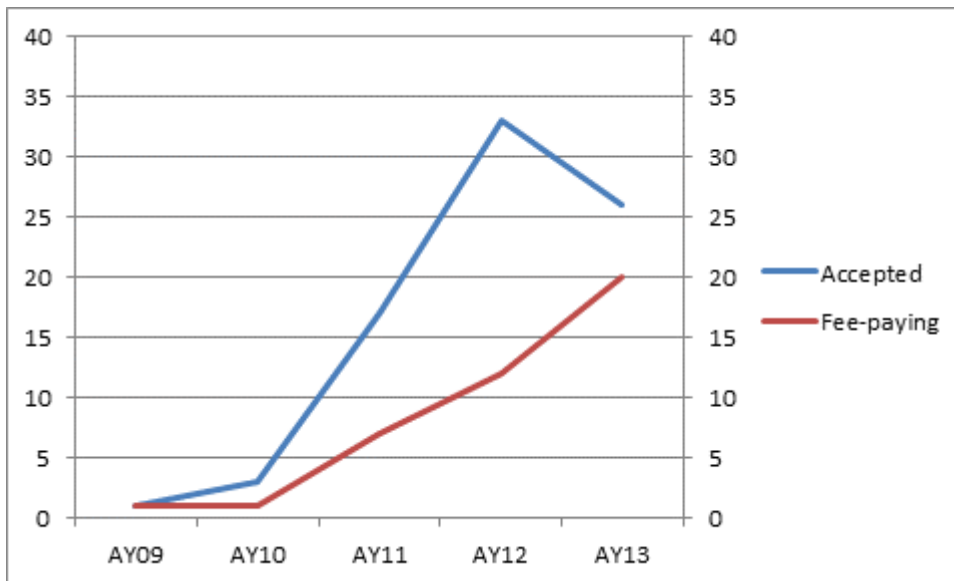


Figure 4. Number of Master of Art in Architecture students admitted. The fee paying students admitted are included in the “accepted numbers” (blue graph) but also shown as an individual graph.

As Figure 4 shows, the number of fee paying students has risen quite dramatically. Compared to the size of the school, the AAA has a very prominent Danish position as top performer in fee-paying student attractiveness. Besides internationalizing the school with students quite far from Denmark, this development is also contributing to the overall financial situation of the school.

This aspect of the international situation of the school is however also a volatile one. Even small financial changes in the world economy or in the perceived political situation can bring about changes in the number of fee-paying students to our misfortune.

International cooperation

The basis of the development in the international mobility is that of institution-to-institution cooperation. Throughout the years, the preferred way of cooperation at the AAA has been within the bilateral agreements. A bilateral agreement is a direct cooperation with the foreign institution, outside any network.

The typical exchange partner is a **comprehensive university institution** (a “classical” university) with Architecture/Design as just one of their Programs. One of the reasons for this trait is that the small independent architecture schools are limited in numbers, and the students admitted to these are not encouraged to study abroad to the same degree as their fellow students at the comprehensive institutions. The reasons for this are both structural arguments (program length, institution size etc.), but also financial ones. There is no sign, or indeed no need, of this situation changing in the near future.

The number of bilateral agreements has remained between 35 and 50 agreements. In the coming year, the number of agreements will be reduced due to a stronger focus on an equal balance between incoming and outgoing students at the institutional level, brought on by the Danish government.

The exchange equation is simple: ***in order to receive students, we must be able to send students. In order to send students, the institution abroad must be able to provide classes taught in***

English. The primary reason for the coming reduction of partners is that too many partners only offer programs taught in the local language. As most Danish students “only” master one foreign language sufficient for an academic Program abroad, we are forced to concentrate our cooperation on those partners willing to offer this.

Some challenges

One threat to this little international Shangri La is of course whether we can maintain our position as an attractive partner. Some of the most apparent challenges are:

Quality; it is imperative that the AAA continue to strive to be an excellent institution both within the educational programs and the research

Recruitment; it goes without saying that we must be able to recruit top talents for our programs and research. We are also depending on the academic staff to support the international ambitions wholeheartedly – perhaps this is the most imminent challenge today.

Market awareness; All institutions in Denmark are chasing the BRICS countries and/or “the next 11”. This “Yankee merchant” approach seems shortsighted and cost inefficient. Instead, we should perhaps analyze which countries have an Architecture/Design philosophy and/or tradition we can mirror in.

Conclusion

The international orientation is a deliberate choice made by the school and the results the past 4 years speak its own language and are a testament to the achievements and endeavors by the school. We have internationalized deeper, wider and at the same time contributed to the overall healthy financial situation.