



photograph of a crow in flight across background of trees. A bright orange dawn shaft of sunlight rays up behind the bird. (image by Rajni Shah)

**THIRD review:**

**mapping where we  
have been**

**and where**

**we might go...**

Summary of findings, written by Rajni Shah

December 2023

## Introduction

In 2023, the THIRD programme at DAS Graduate School had been running for seven years. The team felt that this was an important moment to reflect, before recruiting new fellows in 2024. A survey was put together by THIRD tutor Rajni Shah, with input from Sanne Kersten (coordinator), Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca (Lector, head of DAS Research), and THIRD tutors Emilie Gallier, Gustavo Ciríaco, and Siegmar Zacherias. The survey was sent to current and past tutors and fellows, including fellows who were selected for the programme from outside the EU but were not able to complete or participate due to border and economic inequities.

In total, we received 22 reponses\* to the survey from a pool of 34 possible respondents, so we had approximately 65% response rate. The average time to complete the survey was 131 minutes. While it's likely most people didn't use two hours continuously to fill out the survey, this – along with the depth and thoughtfulness of answers received – clearly signals a high level of commitment and care from the THIRD community about the future of the programme.

As well as the option to provide written answers, respondents were also able to send spoken responses, and one respondent took up this offer. All other responses were submitted anonymously in order to encourage honesty and criticality. The responses have been read in full by Rajni Shah, who has written this report. The report will inform the shape of the programme from 2024, with some changes happening immediately and some over time.

### Note from Rajni:

I am not someone who has a history of analysing surveys. I was asked because I am a researcher with the ATD Lectorate and currently also a tutor for THIRD, and I care very much about making the programme as accessible as possible. I feel very humbled by the generosity of the responses that were shared. Over the following pages, I have attempted to provide a summary of the responses to each question, with a few direct quotes, as well as offering some suggestions as to how these findings might be taken forward.

No analysis can ever be neutral, and it is worth noting that as well as currently (since 2022) being a tutor on the programme, I bring to my reading and analysis the inevitable lenses of my own intersectionality: I am queer, trans non-binary, and a second generation immigrant; I am brown-skinned and grew up in the UK; I am an artist and I have a PhD; I am from India, from a family of merchants with privilege... and I could go on. Nothing is neutral. Having said that, I have done my very best to write this report to include all voices, and I hope that it reflects some of the many nuanced and passionate words that were shared.

I hope it will be the start of generative conversations, and sustainable changes...

\*One of the responses was blank apart from this first question, so in the percentages I give at the beginning of the following summaries, I am counting the total as 21.

## Question One: what is your relationship with THIRD?

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1. What is your relationship to THIRD?  
(select as many as you like and/or fill in your own beautifully complex answer in the 'other' box)

[More Details](#)

<span style="color: blue;">●</span> Tutor (current or past)	3
<span style="color: orange;">●</span> Fellow (current or past)	18
<span style="color: green;">●</span> Other	2



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Participants were able to tick more than one box for this first question, so the totals on the pie chart don't tally exactly with the total number of respondents. Most tutors are also alumni of the programme.

## Question Two: artistic research and 'Third Cycle'

THIRD describes itself as a place to develop artistic research in the Third Cycle. What is 'artistic research' to you, and how does/did THIRD support you in defining your own relationship to the term?

[BONUS QUESTION if you feel it: Do you relate to the term 'Third Cycle'?]

*21 responses to this question from a total of 21 (100%)*

### Artistic Research

Many respondents acknowledged that their experiences with THIRD had increased their levels of confidence around their own artistic research and/or given them tools to continue researching – often outside of formal institutions. Though opinions varied about how to define artistic practice, there was overall a desire for more active debate and exploration of the term within THIRD. Many people acknowledged the tensions between wanting to allow artistic research to remain plural and varied without over-defining it, while recognising the immense pressure in both artistic and academic settings to be able to define, articulate, and present research. Clearly and repeatedly articulated were the need to retain plurality and poetics, to acknowledge situatedness and interconnection, and to continue exploring with an opening to transformation.

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*In a way it reminds me of the endless dilemma of artist researcher who are asked "What is your research question?"  
This simple query often trips up even the most industrious artist researchers as it's slippery and always in flux.*

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Alongside a recurring demand (within the survey responses in general) for more support around writing practices, this seems to be one among several areas where the program could be developed to include a regular (annual?) component where participants actively explore the term 'artistic research' through peer sharings outside of the specific container of the annual forum.

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*THIRD seems this open space to not define the term or even have it as a valuable topic - and in a world where definitions are territories, this is maybe really good....? Maybe we could have more interactions on it.*

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In this section, experience was also mentioned – THIRD was described as a programme that values (life and creative) experience, and is often most suitable to those who wish to explore research questions later in life or later in their career paths. Whether related to a PhD trajectory or not, there is value in THIRD cultivating a culture of intergenerational knowledge-sharing as well as inter-disciplinary connection and dialogue. Within systems that often cater to younger or emerging artists, this feels important and needed.

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*Within the framework of universities, I also understand artistic research as a paradigm shift, suggesting that human knowledge is constructed not only from rational and scientific logics but also from the symbolic, the intuitive, and the arbitrary.*

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### **The term ‘Third Cycle’**

Out of 21 responses to this question, 14 mentioned Third Cycle. Those that expressed an opinion about the term were evenly split in their opinions about it. 50% expressed either a distance from the term, an uncertainty about the term, or a dislike for the term. Those who elaborated linked it with an expectation towards doctoral studies or categorisation within an educational institution (which they felt was not appropriate or desired for THIRD). Many expressed a fear of diminishing the breadth of THIRD by linking it to educational systems. The other 50% expressed a relationship or connection with the term. Several of these people felt it was an appropriate term, for many of the same reasons as those who didn’t favour the term: that it helps to link THIRD with institutional frameworks, or to define and position their own research within/alongside an institutional context. A few people mentioned specifically that they appreciate Third Cycle as a term that helpfully differentiates THIRD from PhD programmes.

The quote below, though it is not specifically about the term Third Cycle, feels helpful in thinking about the overall relationship between THIRD and other higher education structures:

“THIRD exposes you to the reality that each country has their own term and that each person needs to develop their own definition. This openness is powerful, but can also be complicated depending on where you pursue a degree.”

## Question Three: expectations

**What were your expectations of the programme when you applied or began working on it, and how did/does your experience differ from this?**

*21 responses to this question from a total of 21 (100%)*

### **Expectations**

There were three main categories of expectation expressed by respondents:

- building a community of like-minded artists
- learning to navigate a peer to peer environment/group processes
- information and guidance about PhD/PD programmes and contextualising artistic practice within academic contexts

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*I had not anticipated how deep the sense of community and communality would grow, this has been profound.*

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The responses to this question highlight some of the tensions that are present within THIRD between a desire for peer learning and a desire for PhD preparation. At the moment, THIRD is described as being able to contain both of these. However, based on responses to this question and to the survey in general, it seems there are often tensions between those who enter the program wishing to prepare for a PhD (a specific outcome) and those who enter because they are curious about the peer to peer process, and wish to explore and unsettle their own research practices alongside others. I don't mean to set this up as a false binary, but it does seem like an area that needs clarifying for future applicants.

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*I witnessed discrepancies in fellows' understanding of peer-to-peer/ discrepancies in what fellows search for through THIRD (causing at times conflicts).*

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Many respondents expressed entering THIRD with a desire for change, stating that they were ready to make some kind of change in their approach to artistic practice, or were looking for new ways to be in the world as an artist. This feels important to note, and could feed into the new application process – recognising that THIRD is a programme that people enter at a pivotal moment when they are seeking to unsettle or transform the ways in which they approach practice, and more specifically to de-individualise their practice.

The topics of care and trust came up in this section too – important factors to consider as we think towards the future shape of the programme. What allows for care and trust within a group of peers who have not chosen each other, who are held by peer mentors (i.e. the tutoring team), within a programme that is a loosely affiliated and unaccredited part of a large institution? How are care and trust cultivated with specific awareness of the fact that different bodies will enter the programme carrying histories and capacities unevenly distributed among the participants?

Finally, people who took part in the programme from out of town hoped to be introduced to the artistic scene in Amsterdam and the Netherlands, and found that this either did not happen, or was too dependent on chance.

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*I had not anticipated such intimacy and commitment to one another's practices and wellbeing.*

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### **How does your experience differ from your expectations?**

While many people expressed unfulfilled expectations, there were also many descriptions of surprise learnings: around working in a group, taking distance from one's own practice, the experience of continuity over the years of working together – to name but a few.

Some of the more troubling experiences described in this section of the survey have to do with how very much participants' experiences are influenced by the tutors, and therefore by the extent of the tutors' training, specifically regarding inclusivity, neurodiversity, and learning styles. This feels like an essential point to address: all tutors should have a shared training prior to joining the programme. From the perspective of tutor, I also feel this could be a very empowering tool in bringing the tutor team together. In relation to this, several people expressed that within the cohort groups, 'tired' dynamics were present: those who are most used to speaking, speak a lot; those who are afraid of using their voice become listeners etc. This is something we need to address urgently. If THIRD is primarily about holding space for peer learning, then the holding needs to happen with great sensitivity and awareness.

Of course, there were also those who were affected by the pandemic, who had an experience they never imagined. Though I personally feel there are many important learnings from the pandemic that we should take forward as a programme – because some people are still hugely affected by long COVID, and by being immuno-compromised, and because we are living in an era when disasters and pandemics are very likely to occur – in this section of the survey, respondents mostly expressed simply that the programme was very different from what they had imagined.

In summary, what is clearest from the responses to this question is that each participant in THIRD has an entirely different experience. For some, it works beautifully. For others, not so much. Some people want more structure, some less. While it will always be the case that participants take different things away from the programme, it is important that the dynamics within cohorts do not unconsciously re-enact social hierarchies of oppression and that we are proactive in addressing this.



## Question Four: access and support

**FOR FELLOWS (past and present):**

**To what extent were/are you able to fully participate in the programme? What kinds of additional support would enable you to feel more present and at ease?**

**This question is about access needs in the widest sense. Please answer from a personal perspective, drawing on your own lived experience and your unique situation. 'Additional support' might include financial support, travel and accommodation, timings of quarterlies, modes of communication, or anything else you consider relevant.**

*18 responses to this question from a total of 21 (86%)*

I have divided this section into topics as there were several key areas of concern.

### **Accommodation, travel, visas**

There were many strongly-voiced opinions about not requiring people to have to be proactive in order to meet their basic needs. Although THIRD cannot financially support every need, there are ways that we can address this aspect of pastoral care so that those in need are not put in the uncomfortable position of having to repeatedly ask for help. Perhaps a pastoral figure could support this – someone whose role is not that of tutor or administrator, but can provide a bridge between participants, tutors, and institutional structures – and who is equipped with specific information around avenues of support.

Unsurprisingly, accommodation was mentioned many times. As THIRD increasingly welcomes fellows from outside The Netherlands, it feels essential that there is some kind of support for people to be able to stay in Amsterdam without using up their study allowance. A major recommendation from this survey is to have a separate travel and accommodation allowance or fund that is only available to those travelling from out of town who have limited income or resources, and to put an end to the practice of having one allowance for each cohort member that they “can use as they wish” within which is hidden the assumption that those in more privileged situations will have more resource for research.

Financial support was also mentioned in a more general way in many responses – a desire for clearer information on how participants can get support with access (childcare, physical or emotional support during quarterlies etc) feels essential. Ideally, in the future we could also supply a basic income for those who need it during the times when people attend quarterlies.

As well as this financial consideration, many respondents pointed out the adjoining fact that if one is staying in cheap accommodation or with strangers, this can add huge stress to the experience of taking part in the programme – with little to no support unless participants actively ask for it and get lucky with the responses. This means that the emotional wellbeing of participants varies hugely between those who are based in the Netherlands and those who are not.

In relation to those travelling from outside the EU, there was a demand for clearer information about visa availability or possibility from various countries, and/or proactive support for those applying from overseas. In addition, clearer information about what is and is not available to those outside of the EU, and an understanding of the barriers involved for those who choose to apply to the program from non-EU countries.

One respondent suggested that they would appreciate extra resources to visit other cohort members in their professional context.

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*Accommodation is not only very expensive in Amsterdam, it takes a great amount of time and energy to find a place, that one feels comfortable enough to then stay at DAS with full concentration.*

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## **Scheduling**

Many responses commented on the duration and scheduling of quarterlies. Key findings include:

- One respondent suggested that having seven cohort members was a “magic number” offering diversity of practices but also less instability when people fall ill or need to step out of the group.
- Many respondents made suggestions around the length of quarterlies. One respondent wished for shorter quarterlies in order that THIRD might fit more easily around their existing schedule. A few suggested longer quarterlies, and in particular shorter sessions over a longer period, to allow for those travelling to do other things while they are in Amsterdam.
- Many mentioned slowness and neurodivergence in relation to quarterlies, suggesting that the current set-up can feel overwhelming or exclusive.

## Facilitation

There was a lot of overlap between responses to this question, and responses to other questions around tutoring and structure so I have not gone into a lot of detail here. Nevertheless, below is a summary of key findings relating to facilitation of the quarterlies:

- Requests for more facilitation during quarterlies, including sharing feedback methods with the group, and tutors being trained to offer mediation for non-violent communications within the group.
- Facilitation of active breaks, in order to resist cultures of overwork and exhaustion that are prevalent in the arts.
- Not to default to 'talking around a table' but have discussion and facilitation around different (and more inclusive) modes of sharing.

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*How do we take responsibility as a group for different capacities of being there. The different sort of energies that are there and how to take care of or to be aware of exhaustion and of rest and all these things.*

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## THIRD community

Many answers included requests for more interactions with the wider THIRD community including:

- More sharing with the wider community (via emails) of what THIRD members are up to, specifically including those outside Amsterdam and the Netherlands.
- More interactions with alumni and the wider community.
- A quarterly that happens outside DAS.
- First few quarterlies focusing on introduction of artistic research in academia and sharing case studies.

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*Alumni relations are interesting as a way to develop relations and the "body of work" of THIRD.*

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## Question Five: the application process

**We are aware that every application process takes (unpaid) time and energy. We are hoping to make the application process for THIRD more simple, clear, accessible, and inspiring. To this end, it would be great to know more about your experience of applying to the programme.**

**Questions to consider, if helpful:**

**Did you have the information that you needed in order to decide whether to apply for THIRD?**

**Did you feel like you could express yourself and share your creative practice with ease?**

**What would have made you feel more welcome, invited, or held during the application process?**

*19 responses to this question from a total of 21 (91%)*

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*I felt I had a lot of information but still quite a vague idea of how the programme functions until I started. This has to do with a lack of written materials that would communicate in advance how the programme is structured and what engagement with the programme is expected.*

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Most of the responses to this question reflected very positively on people's experience of the application process. Many said they felt the process was clear, that they felt it was kind and respectful, and that they felt a sense of dialogue during the process. However, several also acknowledged that the ease they felt in the process was related to their own privileges and skillsets. Several people also described having had helpful dialogues prior to applying with people in DAS or the ATD that they already knew. This highlights for me inequities between those who already have a relationship with (people at) DAS and those who do not. The information we supply to potential applicants can be significantly improved so that those who are new to DAS can also access dialogue and support as needed.

Key suggestions that were made:

- to have a group session as part of the process, as a way to understand how a peer group is being put together, and to have a sense of what kind of peer processes might be involved in THIRD.
- Video option in application process.
- Clearer written info about the programme in advance, including regarding visas.

- Open day(s) at DAS and/or online 'meet the tutors' or info session.
- Clearer framework for how a portfolio needs to relate to the practice being described.
- To make the language consistent – reflection that the wording in the written materials felt more formal and conservative (intimidating) than in the interview – request to bring language into alignment acknowledging that every part of the process conveys something about the tone and priorities of the programme.
- Clearer descriptions of the programme for people to read beforehand – including conveying the extent to which the structure really comes from the participants, and they need to bring a willingness for collaboration and compromise.
- Online interview is difficult for some people, can there be an in person option?

## Question Six: peer-to-peer experience

**THIRD is at core a peer-led programme, and each tutor and cohort has found a different way to engage with this aspect. Can you describe briefly your experience of the peer-to-peer aspect of THIRD, and whether there are things that you wish had been different?**

**[BONUS QUESTION FOR FELLOWS: Did you interact with other cohorts? Would you have liked to?]**

*20 responses to this question from a total of 21*

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*As far as I'm concerned, I feel that's what makes THIRD, THIRD.  
Or what makes it special, what makes it valuable and nourishing.*

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### Experiences of peer-to-peer

Words/phrases used to describe the experiences of peer-to-peer in responses to this question include:

affirmation	disowning	struggles
attentive	dispossessing	thinking along
companionship	generous	vital
continuous engagement	imagining alongside	witnessing
co-research	random luck	
digesting of the practice of someone else	reciprocal	

As you can tell from the list above, there were many positive comments regarding the peer-to-peer aspects of THIRD. Clearly, this is what is at the heart of the programme as it has been constructed, and it can be a very rewarding and transformative experience. However, it is worth noting that just under half of the responses also described difficulties, adversarial moments, or toxic behaviours within cohorts that often had not been dealt with adequately or even noticed by tutors. As with other answers, there was a strong feeling that without structural intervention, peer-to-peer groups end up replicating oppressive structures wherein dominant modes of being, ways of languaging (and languages i.e. English language) are favoured or take up more space without awareness that this is happening.

It feels to me like there is a demand for tutor training in order to bring all tutors into similar levels of awareness and capacity regarding structural inequities, conflict resolution, and anti-oppressive facilitation methods. As well as this, there is a clear request that participants in THIRD go through awareness training themselves at the beginning of their THIRD experience.

In relation to the above, there was a suggestion that as well as or instead of developing its own introduction to peer-to-peer working methods, THIRD tutors and participants could benefit from an introduction to the feedback techniques used by DAS Theatre and DAS Choreography. This seems like both a practical and generative suggestion, since there is such strong enthusiasm for more dialogue and interaction between the programmes that take place at DAS.

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*The 'open' structure and advertised peer to peer model, in reality means the dominant, outgoing person takes up the most space. This leads to unequal situations ... [and] when feedback methods are asked to be used, people who would lose their freedom to dominate, protest that it should remain 'open'. But open often meant the same structures of fastest, or loudest.*

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Other suggestions that came up in this section include:

- building in active breaks in order to make the programme more accessible.
- More awareness of neurodiversity, and building quarterlies to explicitly allow different modes of attention and engagement.
- Shared guidelines that each cohort follows, and can adapt.
- Clear support structures for tutors to regularly share techniques, experiences, and resources with each other.

In addition the following comments felt important to mention:

- Several respondents mentioned having three or four years as participants in THIRD, and felt that this was essential for building trust within a heterogenous group and going beyond a first stage.
- There was mention of the fact that many participants are freelancers, and finding time to co-organise at distance is a challenge. This again highlights that peer-to-peer environments can take a lot of time and work for participants, the labour of which is almost inevitably unevenly distributed.

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*THIRD needs more strategies to build towards a peer-led learning environment. It needs to lay clear grounds on what does it mean, how can one participate in it, and create a place of exchange.*

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### **Interactions with other cohorts**

More than half of the responses to this question included a strong affirmation that the respondents would like (more) interactions with other cohorts. Those who had experienced interactions with other cohorts, whether informal/social or invited/organised, felt that they gained insights individually and also as a group. In particular there were several mentions of the importance of new cohorts learning from previous participants in the programme – and one reflection on the importance and joy in having conversations with prospective applicants.

In conclusion, there is great enthusiasm for THIRD to become a more active community, with a mix of social/unguided, and more structured modes of encounter.



## Question Seven: the wider community

**Did/do you feel part of the wider community at DAS and/or the ATD? Did/do you want to?  
Are there things that would have enabled this for you?**

*20 responses to this question from a total of 21 (95%)*

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*My most precious learning from THIRD is getting to know the wider and inspiring community at DAS. DAS and THIRD are both unique in that manner; far more horizontal and transparent than in other institutional structures.*

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While several responses mentioned that they struggled to make time for it, there was an overwhelmingly positive response to this question: participants either felt connected to the wider community, or they wished to have ways and moments to feel more connected. As with other answers, responses showed that those who already had a connection with DAS or the ATD when they began their THIRD trajectory were at a great advantage.

Many people mentioned the kitchen as a great place to bump into others, but also noted that this in itself was not enough to form a sense of community. More structured moments of connection and introduction are needed. Practically, this could manifest through specific introductions to the wider community at the beginning of THIRD, including clearer sharing of information around resources, and information about specific events that are happening in the wider ATD community that might overlap or extend THIRD quarterlies. This could also be supported by a regular (rather than only responsive) programme of THIRD events that are open to all, themed to overlap with both THIRD and wider community interests.

Several respondents mentioned that they would be interested in opportunities to connect with undergraduate and masters students in the role of mentor, teacher, or peer support – these might be avenues to explore. This would be particularly helpful for those visiting Amsterdam, who might benefit from extending their stay, connecting with the wider community, and covering some of the costs associated with taking part in THIRD.

Other specific feedback:

- I missed understanding the general structure of DAS and ATD, its components and activities as well with the city, its art scene, the Dutch culture and so on. I think social interactions as the ones that have been proposed recently are a good way of making the distance between the DAS community less wider.
- I like that in THIRD there is a mentor who was part of the previous cohorts.
- Did not really feel part of the wider community and would have liked to. Would prefer to perhaps interact with other degrees or cohorts there, and not use the 3rd day each time to 'Talk about the next meeting'.
- Access to resources, exchange opportunities, publication matters or research packages was something I never got the chance to grasp. Who could have access to it, how, and when. What was the position of Arias for instance, why ASCA was somehow not accesible for all fellows, etc..
- I had also desired maybe like a local cohort of some sort so that the people who actually live here in the Netherlands from the different cohorts could maybe also meet and be in exchange in between.

## Question Eight: tutors and tutoring structure

**How did/do you find the THIRD tutoring structure? What would you like to change or add?**

*20 responses to this question from a total of 21 (95%)*

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*Both my two tutors have been there for me whenever I needed their support. I felt cared and supported.*

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As with other answers, there was a lot of praise and appreciation for tutors, and many people described positive experiences. There were in particular several comments about the ways in which tutors are able to hold space for peer processes without dominating. It is also worth noting that Sher's name came up a lot in these and all of the responses, as someone who has been incredibly important to participants, and whose departure felt like a rupture in the programme that happened without adequate transparency.

Although individual interactions with tutors were frequently described as supportive, many respondents also reported being confused about what to expect from tutors, and would have appreciated more clarity. The main reason for this was that fellows did not know what they could ask for, and therefore, even with the invitation to ask for what they needed, many found it difficult to access the full support of the individual tutoring sessions. In this case, those who already understood the system and/or had other contacts outside of THIRD, benefitted. Related to this, the topic of neurodiversity came up, with a few comments about how those who are quieter, slower to process, or shy find it hard to fully benefit from the tutoring system with the current set-up. As I have already suggested, it would be helpful to have some introductory sessions that are built into the structure of every cohort trajectory, in which participants are informed about the programme, including specific information about tutoring support, and can talk to alumni or other cohort members who are currently engaged in THIRD.

The question of whether THIRD is a pre-PhD program came up again in this section. In particular, a demand for more information about PhD programs, and clarity about whether preparing a PhD application is something that THIRD is set up to do. There was also a comment about how demanding it is on tutors to hold space for this ambivalent set-up – to respond to individual needs, as well as the possibility that some of those needs will include mentoring someone through a PhD application process. One idea to address this is that there could be someone or a team of people affiliated with THIRD who are available to support fellows specifically seeking support with a PhD process – thereby removing it from the core program, but continuing to make it available to those who find themselves wishing to pursue this route.

## Question Nine: structure

**One of the challenges of THIRD is creating a programme that is at once peer-led and also structured enough to hold people safely. Please share here any thoughts you have about structure – did/do you wish for more or less? What would this enable for you?**

*16 responses to this question from a total of 21 (76%)*

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*More structure would allow of equality with time and voices being heard and safety in ideas.*

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Perhaps what is most clear from responses to this question is that every answer is impacted by context. Namely, two main factors: firstly, that each person has their own personal preferences/needs in terms of how they organise themselves (relationships with more or less structured environments, also in relation to neurodiversity) and this will affect their answer; and secondly, that the kind of work and life environment that people are inhabiting outside of THIRD will affect what kind of environment they seek within THIRD. In relation to the latter, a few people noted, for example, that since most of the participants in THIRD are freelance, there is an appreciation for structure so that participation in the programme does not become ‘another project to organise’.

Having said this, most of the responses spoke to a need for more structure in general - particularly at the beginning of the process. This has already been mentioned in other sections, but in this section it is particularly worth noting a need for support within the first quarterlies for participants to get to know and trust each other before embarking on the work of crafting some of their own processes as a group.

The topic of PhDs came up a few times in this section, but I have not included those responses as I feel they have been adequately expressed in other sections.

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*It felt great and relevant that the provided structure was always kind of discreet and readily adapted to our needs. It took us some time to understand what to do of this flexibility, but it feels important that a peer-to-peer program for artist at this stage of their trajectory could be designed by the fellows themselves.*

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Suggestions, and appreciations:

- [I appreciated] having invited artists, theoreticians and experts to share their perspectives, or proposing practical workshops as how to use research catalogue, get to know an individual person's path of phd or be presented different artists' publications.
- I think THIRD tutors can be more responsible for noticing specific requests that may stem from a hidden disability, like dyslexia (a participant does not need to 'out' themselves) and supporting the member when requests are made to audio record for example. And differentiating when a different disability like depression means a student comes late (and thats ok.....) but doesn't mean the group has to start late FOR that person.
- The dynamics of "peer-to-peer" can be intimidating if there's a feeling someone gets more attention than others (in the group or from the institution of DAS).
- I would have enjoyed having profited more of the different DAS activities as the THIRD TALKS. Maybe having them in a calendar based structure with regular deadlines and periods of taking place.
- As someone in THIRD based in Amsterdam I'd wish for THIRD to have its own room/studio. In this way lots of possible encounters, presences can be had, can be captured & passed on.
- Maybe one cohort [quarterly?] extra would be nice.
- Better structure of all working sessions, making sure that they are known in advance, so one could prepare and test/ ask/ discuss what is relevant to the research at each given moment. A clear demarcation of what is going to happen in the course of the gatherings would have been highly appreciated.
- To include the peers, when inviting guests to give inputs into the Quarterlies, not only inform when the arrangement is already made.
- It took us a long time to learn our collective needs, and find forms to meet them. I hope these continue to be passed on through the cohorts and remodelled to fit specific needs. Perhaps cross-cohort meetings could enable this, also.

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*In my cohort I felt that the openness or the peer-led was a little bit too soon. It made my arrival feel more vulnerable and it took me a bit longer to really arrive grounded.*

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## Question Ten: how has THIRD influenced your life path and choices?

**How has THIRD influenced your life path and choices?**

**If you are an alumni, did it continue to influence you after your cohort completed their time at DAS?**

*20 responses to this question from a total of 21 (95%)*

For this section, I have included a selection of quotes without analysing or summarising:

THIRD has strongly influenced my path - it has been in my life for soo long! Keeping alive the question of peer-to-peer support structure caring for practices while moving out of the glorification of the individual.

This is an ongoing process. It gave me a safe space to try out different possibilities.

I feel I have articulated my research in a way that has been very generative for my further artistic practice and research.

The fact that I have been involved in the program created a ripple effect in my local art scene, in terms of that more people an institutions seemed to be open to take me serious.

It changed my life for the better.

The mentorship from my tutors have largely informed my choices, helped me to integrate many scattered parts, solidify my approach, held me up while making shifts and while being vulnerable. I felt seen, valued and was met with honesty and curiosity. The way we give each other space and feedback with peers have largely informed my pedagogical practice.

During THIRD I have started up a future trajectory towards PhD but at the same time I got reassured what I need personally and professionally to even follow such a process, so I feel encouraged to go there, but not rushed at all.

I've learned a lot in/with/through THIRD. It has drastically influenced my life. It has learned me that care is key.

THIRD has opened many avenues for dialogue, collaborations and work projects. The environment at the DAS building and THIRD has always been welcoming and inspiring, as it brings variety of artists and practices together, which as a freelance artist is rare to find.

I trust my own process a lot more than I ever used to. Somehow perhaps against my unfortunate cohort dynamic, I have become a lot more aware of my qualities in group and collective settings.

THIRD has helped me see the importance of artistic research within the traditional academy.

Third had a strong impact on my development as an artist. And in my ability to articulate my interest and research questions.

THIRD has been great for taking time to work with my research interests outside my locale.

It reinforced my belief that it is enough to organize in affinity or concern groups and dive into collective thinking, practicing writing, and that this might need a structure, but not an academic one.

THIRD with all the bad and good moments provided clarity and a horizon that was obviously not there when I applied.

It takes me out of all of my other conditioning factors to place, situate and make my work work. In terms of people and their trajectories, it feels like a an unexpected window to the world - to encounter many languages and paths of thought but in a setting, where in all the looseness, there is a sense of belonging and engagement.

It allows me to access more fearlessly new aspects, sides and fields of my work, more as a matter of fact, less doubting and subjecting to seemingly put conditions from elsewhere.

The semi-clarified state of not being a student but part of the program is a crucially helpful other inbetween state; as an official student I would loose my right to apply for project funds, which are my main and only way to make work happen so far. Like that I can say, I am affiliated and have the credits of being with a major institution for my work - but not a student.

Yes, the influence extends beyond my time in the program. It extended my imagination about artistic research and how it could be a collective endeavor, gave me tools, and ways of questioning that are still with me today.

It has been very important to be able to be part of this and meet these people and be in this kind of group - not to feel you have to do it all by yourself.

To have a space in which you can slowly, slowly just unfold and think and try out this topic that you're interested in or these different strands and how they can be braided together. And that I also felt there's no pressure to know or there's no pressure to get that position. And at the same time, sharp questions are being asked.

THIRD has strongly influenced my ways of thinking, being, learning and living, and continue to, dear friends – i'm deeply grateful and feel very blessed with this life-shaping community and learning experience.

## Bonus Question: final reflections

### 11. What three words would you use to describe THIRD?

+ Please use this section to share anything else you would like to tell us about your experiences with THIRD

*19 responses to this question from a total of 21 (90%)*

*This section is unedited, to retain the spirit of each response.*

accountability and commitment to a research ecology of artistic practices

amicable, growth&growing, relaxed

community emotion centripetal

CUMPLICITY - CARE - ACCOMPANIED FLIGHT

Curious, Reliance, Flowering: Academia could be fun!

extemporaneously- faithful-give and take

I really hope THIRD can remain a bit of this space that is shaped by the fellows, by the people in it. And then that's how it can stay articulated and sharp and relevant in the time that it exists - and porous for whatever needs to come in from outside, and critical and nourishing and so on. And I know it's difficult within a big institution. I'm also worried that if it gets formatted too much and if it has to have 'impact' and certain results and certain outputs and money, income and so on, that it will lose some of the qualities that it has, or that it had for us.



I'm thinking of a metaphor from organic life where a system which is too closed dies and a system which is too open disperses.  
Balancing this would be key.

maturation time listening. Many thanks to the program and those who make it alive today.

Never lost, never found, here to shake educational ground.

opportunity, community, paradigm-shift

radical in spirit, re/insistant in its criticality, fullheartedly embracing research as doing, as practice

Regular - attention - latencies

RESPECTING, SERIOUS, and VALUABLE ... However, I still have weird and bothering feeling of not being able to finish what I started. But  
am thankful for the short time with THIRD.

Seachange, com-passion, wonder

THIRD helped me to become less apologetic and made my artistic voice stronger.

TRUST ART KNOWLEDGE

Vitamins, friction, warmth

warm, inteligent, adventure

## Summary of recommendations

- Annual gathering (separate from forum) in which the wider THIRD community actively explores the term 'artistic research' through peer sharings.
- Clarity around THIRD and PhD application process, perhaps a person or team separate from tutors who can advise on this aspect.
- New application process including better accessibility, experience of peer processes, and clearer emphasis on peer learning.
- Information sessions or 'meet the tutors' for potential applicants.
- Information pack and specific systems whereby those participating from out of town are given practical information about Amsterdam and creative introductions, perhaps via a buddy or 'parenting' system.
- Introduction of a pastoral figure specific to THIRD but separate to tutors who can offer support and signposting around access, accommodation, additional funding, and a listening ear.
- Introduction of a travel and accommodation fund that is separate from personal budgets.
- Basic income for those who need it to be able to attend quarterlies with dedicated time and focus.
- Clear information about visa availability from various countries, and/or proactive support for those applying from overseas. Acknowledgment of the barriers involved for those who choose to apply to the program from non-EU countries.
- Review of quarterly schedules to include active breaks – explore the possibility of longer quarterlies with fewer hours in each day.
- Tutor training around conflict resolution, peer processes, and anti-oppressive facilitation methods.
- Introduction (for fellows) to peer processes and feedback methods at the beginning of each new year. Suggestion that participants in THIRD could learn about feedback techniques used by DAS Theatre and DAS Choreography.
- Clear support structures for tutors to regularly share techniques, experiences, and resources with each other.
- Readily available information for alumni community, and options to support participants who wish to extend beyond two years.

- More structure in early quarterlies, including introduction to DAS, ATD, and resources, as well as tutoring support. Include alumni in these gatherings, to encourage inter-generational support.
- Regular THIRD community public activities to encourage social and facilitated overlap – perhaps also overlapping in themes with priorities of other programmes within DAS/ATD.
- Opportunities for THIRD members (especially those who travel from overseas) to make themselves available as tutors or mentors on other programmes, in order to offer financial support, connection, and extension of visits to a more ecologically viable length.