



DECISION

DECREE N 24

15 February 2018

**On Awarding Institutional Accreditation to
YEREVAN STATE ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS**

General Information about the Institution

Full name of the Institution:	" Yerevan State Academy Of Fine Arts" State Institution
Short name:	YSAFA
Official address:	Isahakyan St., 36 Building, Yerevan, Armenia
Previous accreditation decree and date:	Not available

Guided by the regulation on “State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Educational Programs” approved by the RA Government on 30 June, 2011 N 978-Ն decree; by RA Government decree N 959-Ն (30 June, 2011) on “Approval of RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation”; by the Procedure on the Formation and Functioning of Accreditation Committee of “National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance” foundation (ANQA) as well as by ANQA Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel, in the open session held on 15 February 2018, the Accreditation Committee of “National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance” foundation (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) discussed the issue of state institutional accreditation of Yerevan State Academy Of Fine Arts (hereinafter :YSAFA or Academy) with the presence of the representatives of the RA Ministry of Education and Science, Chair of the Expert Panel, ANQA coordinator of the accreditation procedure as well as Academy representatives.

Having examined the self-analysis presented by Academy, the Expert Panel report, follow-up plan as well as ANQA conclusion, the Committee stated the following:

The main phases of the accreditation process were carried out following the below-given timeframe

Submission of application	23 January 2017
Submission of self-evaluation report	21 March 2017
expert panel site-visit	29-01 June 2017
Submission of expert panel report	17 November 2017
Submission of action plan on elimination of shortcomings	25 December 2017

The expertise was carried out by an Expert Panel formed in compliance with the requirements set forth by the ANQA regulation on the composition of expert panel. The assessment was carried out based in line with 10 criteria of institutional accreditation established by N959-Ն (30 June, 2011) decree on approving RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation.

While carrying out the expertise the expert panel took into consideration the fact that the YSAFA considers "providing higher education through bachelor, master and PhD academic programs in the areas of art theory, painting, applied arts, design and architecture having academic and current approaches and aligning creative and educational processes with public needs, promoting the development of national culture and economy preparing competitive and highly qualified professionals at national and international levels, as well as citizens for lifelong learning, developing art research promoting scientific thinking and national culture, promoting uniting the society and increasing aesthetic value through establishing national values" as its mission.

The expert panel highlights that the policy of the YSAFA and its operations are generally in line with the mission it has adopted. The expert panel evaluates positively the fact that the drawbacks of the SP have been evaluated; in particular the new vision, mission, values, strategic directions, aims and objectives, approaches to implementation of objectives and the KIPs per aim, the operations were foreseen for carrying out the objectives, possible challenges, people responsible, deadlines and KPIs of success of the Academy have been highlighted. At the same time that the planned values of performance indicators representing the objectives are not grounded.

8 undergraduate (BA) and graduate (MA) APs are carried out in 2 faculties of the YSAFA: Design, Computer Graphics, Fashion Design, Applied Arts, Graphics, Art History and Theory, Painting, Sculpture. There is also 1 postgraduate (PhD) AP (Painting, Design, Decorative and Applied Arts). The APs of the YSAFA are generally in line with the mission; however, there are certain APs that need review. The TLI has initiated the review of 4 APs (Design, Fashion Design, Computer Graphics, and Applied Arts) following labor market demands. The remaining 4 (Graphics, History and Theory of Art, Painting and Sculpture),

which are academic in nature and are the most important APs for an art TLI, are still in the cycle of initiation.

Material-technical source efficiency and improvement of the academic environment are strategic objectives of the YSAFA. The implementation of the Academy APs requires an environment specific to its peculiarities, which includes laboratories saturated with up-to-date technology, ateliers, art rooms, library and else. The majority of the APs are applied in nature and require specific ateliers and laboratories, which, in the majority of cases, are existent. Based on survey outcomes, the Academy has re-saturated certain laboratories, yet, internal stakeholders are not yet contented with existing conditions. The surveys carried out in the Academy showcase that both teachers and students are not contented with current laboratory resources.

The university has policies and procedures for the selection of teaching staff for the implementation of educational programs. There is a competitive selection for the position, which helps the university to have more competitive and professional staff. The fact that the overwhelming majority of the teaching staff of the university are core staff significantly enhances the sustainability of the teaching staff and contributes to the implementation of sustainable educational functions. Another positive trend is that former graduates of the university continue their work at the university. There is a process of rejuvenation of lecturers at the University.

The expert panel evaluates positively the fact that the YSAFA has an elaborated mechanism of allocating financial resources. The annual budget foresees certain expenditures, which are directed towards the implementation of Academy purposes; however, the said expenditures are not detailed per strategic purposes and APs, which would otherwise make financial investment more targeted. The main source of financial means is education fees, which hinders the financial stability of the Academy given the decreasing number of students.

The lion share of budget allocation to salaries (89%) can hinder the possibility of making an investment in other core spheres (e.g. research, resources, internationalization) and weaken the effectiveness of SP implementation. The Academy has student recruitment, selection and admission mechanisms that correspond to the specificities of the YSAFA. Events organized by the university with prospective applicants contributes the recruitment. The expert panel evaluates positively the existence of Student Community, which tries to examine the academic needs of the students and voice the latter in higher cycles of management. The involvement of a greater number of students into the Community will encourage voicing larger scope of issues and will boost their initiative.

The Academy has elaborated research directions, yet the latter does not reflect the professional capacities of the Academy. Moreover, the lack of a holistic strategy of research field and interests weakens research operations. The resources of the Research Centre of the YSAFA are not satisfactorily planned for carrying out of corresponding research operations.

The research link of the Academy and other scientific establishments is quite loose, since the said link is mainly expressed by joint scientific projects. The insufficient amount of financial sources as far as science and research is concerned is the token of the fact that the YSAFA is quite vulnerable in this respect. Irrespective of the fact that certain works are being undertaken, research works at an undergraduate level (BA) do not form an inseparable part of the academic process, which can have a negative impact on the establishment of intended learning outcomes.

The academy is involved in international projects which have their impact on an array of operations of the TLI /review of APs, elaboration of a student manual, creation of a Student Community and else/. As far as the enhancement of internationalization and cooperation is concerned, the Academy is well aware of current issues /enhancement of internal and external student and teacher mobility, enhancement of foreign language acquisition level and else/. The active involvement of the Academy in international programs provides enough experience for the coming internationalization of the Academy. The existence of the Department of External Relations, functioning in the structure of the academy and aimed at targeted development, with its resources creates foundation for the further development of internationalization and external relations. At the same time, active operations of the Department of External Relations will enhance teacher and student involvement in myriad international projects, continuing education, and/or other operations abroad.

The implementation and the development of QA system throughout recent years have created favorable conditions for the establishment of quality culture, which, however, has not yet enveloped the Academy as a whole. The operation of the QA Centre and the existence of myriad regulations in generic terms allow for carrying out QA functions; however, there is a need for optimizing the elaborated documents and making them more targeted. The involvement of students and teachers in QA procedures is mainly ensured by means of their participation in surveys and a limited number of events. With the aim of ensuring a more targeted and effective operation, the level of their involvement must be activated.

The Academy recommends, within the framework of its strategy, to carry out the following consultations aimed at overcoming the issues raised by the expert panel in the accreditation process and further improving the university's performance:

Mission and Goals

1. To make the YSAFA strategic objectives more precise by making the latter in line with the opportunities of the Academy. Moreover, to involve external stakeholders in the process of implementing strategic aims and ensure feedback.
2. It is necessary to determine grounded KPIs, with the implementation of which it will be possible to evaluate whether or not strategic aims have been carried out.

3. To improve regulations applied with the aim of implementing the strategic plan by making the latter more operational.

Governance and Administration

4. To improve the structure of the TLI by making the latter more in line with strategic objectives.
5. To ensure a more active participation of internal and external stakeholders in governance.
6. To elaborate and implement precise mechanisms evaluating the effectiveness of the system of governance.
7. To increase the reliability level of surveys.

Academic Programs

8. To elaborate and implement a timetable of AP review.
9. To increase the participation of alumni and employers in the procedures of AP elaboration, review and implementation.
10. To carry out benchmarking for all APs.
11. To reflect the specificities of teaching and learning methods and the link of assessment methods with the intended learning outcomes in the APs.
12. To elaborate and implement a policy of academic honesty and struggle against plagiarism specifically for the APs of the field of art.
13. To elaborate grounded approaches towards credit calculation.

Students

14. To improve the mechanisms used for revealing academic needs of students and examine the effectiveness of the said mechanisms.
15. To develop research operations of the students and strengthen the link of research and teaching.
16. To increase the level of awareness as far as the operations of the Career Centre are concerned among vast masses of students.

Teaching and Support Staff

17. To elaborate and implement a system of professional training of the teaching staff.
18. To involve professional requirements put forward to the teaching staff in AP packages.
19. To elaborate mechanisms via which the process of saturating the Academy with young specialists will be carried out.
20. To evaluate the effectiveness of the works carried out by the support staff.

Research and Development

21. To elaborate directions of research operations for all specializations taking into account the scientific experience accumulated in the chairs and current resources.
22. To improve the operations of the Research Centre by allocating corresponding human, material and financial resources.
23. To enhance research operations at an international scale by putting the accent on the implementation of joint projects.
24. To implement research element in undergraduate (BA) APs and to foster the latter in graduate (MA) APs.

Infrastructures and Resources

25. To carry out financial planning and resource allocation taking into account SP purposes and objectives, AP requirements.
26. To improve library fund by saturating the latter with new and up-to-date literature in line with the APs.
27. To create special conditions for people with special needs with the aim of turning academic environment accessible.
28. To ensure external sources of financing and expand the number of grant projects with the aim of reaching financial independence and stability.

Societal Responsibility

29. To improve the website of the YSAFA and make it more functional.
30. To make feedback mechanisms with the society more precise and to develop the latter.
31. To elaborate and implement a stable system of services rendered.

External Relations and Internationalization

32. To enhance the level of foreign language acquisition among internal stakeholders with the aim of carrying out external cooperation and implementing APs taught in a foreign language.
33. To allocate corresponding resources to ensure outgoing mobility among teachers and students.
34. To involve invited/flying international professors via short-term projects.
35. To regularly organize events with the aim of involving foreign students.

Internal Quality Assurance

36. To ensure the continuity of professional development of the QA staff and involve internal stakeholders to activate QA operations at faculty and chair levels.
37. To implement a policy, procedures and mechanisms aimed at enhancing the participation of external stakeholders in QA operations.

38. To elaborate mechanisms of QA system monitoring, assessment and improvement.

Observing the presented package of documents and considering the opinions of the head of the Expert Panel and other representatives, the Accreditation Committee finds that Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts fulfills its main objective “preparing competitive and highly qualified professionals at national and international levels”.

The Academy solves a special issue in the educational field of the Republic of Armenia training of highly qualified specialists in the areas of art theory, painting, applied arts, design and architecture having academic and current approaches and aligning creative and educational processes with public needs. The Academy has serious achievements in the fields of activity: providing the sector with higher education staff promoting the preservation and development of national culture. At the same time, there is work to be done on streamlining educational programs and research areas, enhancing management efficiency, developing infrastructure resources and internal quality assurance system, integrating education and research.

The Academy should continue to study the needs of the labor market and its immediate stakeholders, take action to increase the involvement of external stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of its strategic goals and objectives. Actions should be taken for improving the governance structure, diversifying and increasing the financial revenues. This will make the realization of the strategic goals realistic, the acquisition of modern equipment for studios and laboratories which are directed to improve the learning environment.

The experience of participating in international projects has helped to develop a number of areas for the Academy's documentation base and to improve some educational programs. It is necessary to continue the process of updating international benchmarking and labor market-based education programs, broadly involving graduates and employers, reflect the specifics of the teaching, learning and assessment methods in the PAP's and their relation to educational outcomes. To develop critical thinking among students, it is necessary to add research and innovative components to educational programs for matching the student's thesis and graduation papers with ANQF characteristics, research and innovation components that need to be added to educational programs. The university should pay particular attention to internship programs and their targeted organization, implementation of academic honesty mechanisms, and the struggle against plagiarism.

Clarifying its ambitions in the field of research and setting more realistic goals, the Academy should review its strategy in this area and clarify the research directions of the Chairs. By providing appropriate financial resources for the development of the Research Center, encouraging individual research work of lecturers, and student engagement in them, implementing interdisciplinary research projects at the local and international levels devoted

to the field issues by implementing interdisciplinary research programs at the local and international level, the academy can become according to his ambition "An institution promoting scientific thought and national culture".

The Academy has made some achievements in quality assurance system, however, it is not yet fully integrated into inter-university processes. The basic documentary framework describing the quality management system has been developed, but the mechanisms and tools needed to be operationalized and evaluated. In terms of disseminating quality culture and improving institution performance, the Academy should also ensure that internal and external stakeholder's involvement in quality assurance processes, and system actor's awareness of their responsibilities and fulfill them.

Elimination of defects mentioned in the expert report and implementation of the proposed consultations will provide a student-centered and research-based nature of the educational services and promote effective management of the institution and integration into the international educational space, which is in line with the ambitions of the Academy.

Taking into consideration that the Academy can eliminate the shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report by methodically operating its internal QA mechanisms and fully accomplish vital state goals in a reasonable time period, as a result of the Committee voting:

DECIDED

1. To award institutional accreditation to Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts **for 4 /four/ years.**
2. After the publication of the decision on accreditation award, to submit the action plan for the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report and respective time schedule to ANQA within two months taking into account:
 - a) The necessity of finding solutions primarily to the problems existing in the fields of "Governance and Administration", "Academic Programmes" and "Research and Development";
 - b) Results and consultations of an international expert's partner assessment of the Center's aspirations to integrate into the European Higher Education Area.
3. In accordance with today's requirements, pay special attention to the strengthening of the link between learning and research, improvement of the management system, modernization of the necessary material-technical base, training of professors, mobility of professors and students, internal quality assurance, for improving the performance of the institution.
4. According to the requirements of clause 12 of the Regulation on "State Accreditation of RA Education Institutions providing professional academic

programs and their Professions” every 2 /two/ years to submit a written report to ANQA on the results of the carried out activities.

5. Based on the decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia N 474 of April 13, 2017, to issue the Accreditation Certificate to the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia, which is the legal successor of the "Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts" State Non-Profit Organization.

Chair of Accreditation Committee

16 February 2018

Yerevan

S. Avetisyan