



Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts
Self-assessment report against ASIIN criteria

YEREVAN 2017

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Introduction

Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts (YSAFA) was established in 1945 and during the period of its foundation it provided education in two professions: fine arts and sculpture and had 22 students. In 1953 the Institute of Theatre and Institute of Fine Arts were merged forming the Institute of Theatre and Fine Arts which was again divided into two separate institutes in 1994 and in 2000 the institute was renamed into Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts (YSAFA) according to RA Government decree.

Nowadays YSAFA together with its branches in Gyumri and Dilijan has 900 students. YSAFA provides educational services for the spheres of fine arts, design and applied arts with 17 academic programs for the 3 levels of education (8 BA, 8 MA and 1 PhD). Leading specialists of the RA sphere of art who are also known on the international level as honored actors of art and culture, folk artists, winners of international competitions, laureates of state prizes, 3 correspondent members of RA National Academy of Sciences, 37 professors, 25 associate professors, 35 senior lecturer and 36 lecturers are employed at YSAFA.

During the last few years YSAFA actively operates activities towards improvement of its spheres. Based on the current international practice the following aspects of YSAFA are being reviewed: the system of governance, academic programs, implementation of research and its link with teaching and learning, expansion of external relations and promotion of mobility, development of services to society, improvement of QA system, etc. All these activities are aimed at internationalization of the University and international recognition of YSAFA as an output. In order to solve these important issues YSAFA has established a group of specialists well-aware of the current trends and issues of education field. This group ensures not only the implementation of necessary activities and documentation of the processes but also deals with fund raising for reforms, improvement of material technical base and professional development of YSAFA staff.

The annual results of national ranking system on AM HEIs has been served as a basis for the effectiveness evaluation of the activities conducted at the university since 2014. The ranking is conducted taking into account the following aspects: students, learning outcomes, internationalization, research, teaching activities, capacity building, labour-market and public relations. All Armenian state and private universities are divided into 6 major groups:

1. Universities implementing programmes at three educational levels and at three or more disciplines.
2. Universities implementing academic programmes at three educational levels and at less than three disciplines.
3. Universities implementing academic programmes at master and bachelor levels and at three and other disciplines.
4. Universities implementing academic programmes at master and bachelor levels and at less than three disciplines.
5. Universities implementing academic programmes at only bachelor level
6. Art universities

YSAFA, being an art university, has been involved in the 6th group and is in the first place among the art universities in the last three years.

Since 2016 a general ranking has also been conducted among all Armenian public and private universities irrespective of the number of the offered academic programmes and disciplines. YSAFA is in 13th place among 55 universities all over Armenia participating in the ranking. Taking into account that YSAFA is rather a small institution (area, funding, number of students, number of faculty members and administrative staff), the result is quite high (the results of ranking can be found by the link: <http://ranking.armedu.am/> and <http://rank.armedu.am/>).

To conclude, all the above mentioned activities and achievements are a result of the university activities conducted in recent years to raise the quality of education, as well as are evidence of the effective implementation of the improvements at the institutional level.

I. Defining quality

I.1. Objectives

a) Institutional

Defining quality as fitness for purpose, YSAFA's quality policy is aimed at achieving the goals defined by the institution's mission and Strategic Plan. It defines quality objectives, effective implementation of processes at the institution and their continuous improvement, as well as making improvements based on the feedback from internal and external stakeholders. The quality framework includes processes of control, quality assurance, continuous improvement and documents regulating processes at the institution. YSAFA follows plan, do, check, act (PDCA) cycle in implementing its processes.

The objectives defined in the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan (see Appendix 1) aim at increasing the quality of teaching and learning at the institution and specifically refer to:

- reviewing of the Academic Programmes in line with the international standards, their successful provision and establishment of relevant learning environment
- ensuing sustainability and professional development of the teaching staff
- establishing and maintaining a sustainable system for applicants and students

Activities done towards the defined objectives have promoted improvement of different areas at the institution that has its positive impact on the effectiveness of the institution's functioning in general. The following strengths of the implemented processes can be noted:

- Quality assurance tools and mechanisms have been developed and incorporated (QA Handbook and questionnaires see appendix 2, 2.1, Template for annual activity planning see appendix 3, Template for quarterly and annual reports see appendix 4, Guide for academic programme development and review see appendix 5, A guideline for aligning academic programs to the Armenian national qualifications framework see appendix 6, Guidelines for planning and developing YSAFA Strategic Plan see appendix 7, Regulation on department annual planning, monitoring, evaluation and improvement see appendix 8 etc.)
- Guide for Academic Programme Development and Review (see appendix 8) was developed, and 6 programmes were reviewed accordingly being outcome-based.
- YSAFA initiated and conducted trainings to ensure professional development of the teaching staff.

However, these activities are not sufficient for comprehensively addressing all issues and

require additional measures to be taken which is reflected in the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan (see Appendix 9).

Besides, YSAFA attached importance to defining the key performance indicators (KPIs) towards its goals, which was a serious challenge while implementing the previous Strategic Plans. The university did not have defined KPIs, respectively it was difficult to measure and evaluate to what extent the defined key performance indicators have been achieved but existing procedures for planning and implementation confirm that conducted activities were aimed at implementation of YSAFA 2012-2016 Strategic plan. The university has already developed KPIs in the institution's 2017-2022 Strategic Plan, which will promote quality control and continuous improvement of the processes.

b) Procedural

As it has been mentioned, the quality objectives of the institution are based on the Strategic Plan and are directed towards its effective implementation. YSAFA Strategic plan is developed based on Guidelines for Planning and Developing YSAFA Strategic plan, where the relevant and clear information on the development process, working group etc., in details is presented and available (see appendix 7). In the preliminary stage of preparing a new Strategic Plan, the working group does an analysis that evaluates current state of the institution taking into account the actual international and national demands and challenges, needs of stakeholders and the outcomes of the processes planned within the previous Strategic Plan. Based on the results of the analysis, the institution's new Strategic Plan and objectives are developed. For quality objectives, processes are planned within the schedule of the Strategic Plan that are included in the annual plans of the Departments. The resolution of issues is monitored through quarterly and annual reports and activities done by the Quality Assurance Center. The effectiveness of the processes are mainly evaluated through surveys conducted by the QA Centre within different target groups. The survey results are introduced to the main stakeholders and governing bodies and serve as a basis for further improvements.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of different processes the Quality Assurance Centre has made a schedule for conducting surveys based on the specificities of the given process. Each survey has the description of its tool, (see Appendix 2.1).

The objectives of quality are reviewed when the Strategic Plan ends and a new Plan is under development, or in case certain changes are needed to be made in the current Plan. The current Strategic Plan defines the objectives and relevant KPIs that make the outcomes of the objectives measurable.

c) Cultural

Establishment and promotion of quality culture is attached importance for the implementation of YSAFA's goals and relevant objectives.

For the establishment and promotion of quality culture, it is crucial to raise the level of realization among the institution's internal stakeholders about the importance of promoting "quality" and "quality assurance" concepts and applying them in the institution's processes. For this purpose, seminars and trainings are organized in YSAFA that are mainly related to quality assurance and PDCA cycle, defining Academic Programmes and courses in terms of learning outcomes as well as methodology for allocation of credits and other subjects. Trainings were conducted for administrative and teaching staff also within a number of grant projects (DIUSAS, GOVERN, ALIGN) as well as by the National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance of the Republic of Armenia see appendix 10.

Meetings and discussions enable to raise responsiveness of the staff, and it has its positive impact on carrying out working responsibilities. Exchange of ideas during the discussions helps to create the culture of adopting new approaches that makes easier to promote establishment of quality culture elements at institutional level.

In its functioning YSAFA values the following:

- Involvement of internal and external stakeholders in quality management system, thus making them part of YSAFA's decision making and administrative processes, development and redevelopment of Academic Programmes and a number of other processes
- Ensuring transparency through providing information and reports on different processes to internal and external stakeholders

YSAFA's quality objectives address and refer to all processes at the institution. The internal stakeholders realizing the importance of implementing quality objectives actively take part in defining and reviewing them as well as while making changes. The quality objectives of the institution are accepted by the internal stakeholders as the objectives are regularly discussed and include the needs of the internal stakeholders.

I.2. (Quality-) Management Systems/Governance

a) Institutional

YSAFA's functioning is regulated by the RA Law on Education, RA Law on Higher and Postgraduate Education, YSAFA's Charter (see Appendix 11) and other fundamental documents.

YSAFA's quality management system is introduced in Appendix 2.3, that clearly

demonstrates quality assurance and management for different processes in the institution, interrelation of processes, evaluation of processes as well as the administrative units responsible for different processes and internal stakeholders involved, etc.

The management in YSAFA is carried out through sole leadership and collegial principles by YSAFA's Governing Board, Scientific Council and the Rector. The Governing Board is responsible for the approval of the Strategic Plan and the mid-term and long-term monitoring of its implementation (accepting reports), while the Scientific Council and the Rector are responsible for the implementation and management of the Strategic Plan long-term, mid-term and short-term plans. The Departments of the institution, their subordinate and functional communication links are presented in the organizational structure (see Appendix 15). The functions of the institution's governing bodies and/or units are described below as follows:

The Governing Board is the highest governing body of YSAFA that is established for 5 years through partial change of the Board members. According to YSAFA's Charter, state officials - 25% assigned by the RA Prime Minister, the Founder, are involved in the Governing Board as well as representatives from areas of science, culture, different fields of economy, employer representatives - 25%, teaching staff representatives - 25%, students - 25%. The Board sessions are held at least once a year.

The following are within the jurisdiction of the Board:

- Submitting a proposal on making amendments and additions to the Charter for the Founder's approval
- Election of the Rector
- Approval of the Strategic Plan
- Evaluation of the annual report on YSAFA's performance presented by the Rector
- Approval of the annual financial budget

YSAFA's **Scientific Council** is the governing body coordinating and arranging learning, science and technology activities established according to the institution's Charter. The Scientific Council is formed for 5 years. The composition of the Council includes the Rector, Vice-rectors, secretary, department deans, heads of the Chairs, heads of YSAFA's branches and learning and other scientific units, representatives of the Student Council as well as members selected by the faculties. The Scientific Council sessions are held at least once each month.

The Scientific Council within its jurisdiction:

- Approves its Regulation
- Approves paid admission places by professions within the total number introduced by the Rector

- Develops drafts of the Admissions Regulation and submits to the authorized body
- Discusses the directions for the institution's contacts with foreign states, international cooperation projects and drafts of international agreements signed by the institution
- Presents suggestions to the Rector for structural changes in the institution
- Approves the regulations and internal code of conduct of YSAFA's structural units Discusses the list of the titles for professions and specializations
- Approves curricula by programmes
- Discusses the institution's major and prospective areas for science
- Awards scientific and honored titles, rewards, nominal scholarships; rewards with the medal of the institution, certificate, presents candidates for national and international rewards
- Approves the regulations for the department dean and head of Chair elections
- Implements other duties related to methodological and scientific research activities of the institution based on the Charter

YSAFA's management is carried out by the Rector who is elected for five years.

The **Rector's** jurisdiction includes:

- Management of YSAFA's structural units
- Introducing YSAFA in state organizations and institutions not only in the Republic of Armenia but also in countries abroad
- Preparation of professionals and implementation of state requirements
- Signing agreements, opening bank accounts
- Defining YSAFA's structure and responsibilities of structural units
- Signing working agreements with the elected deans, heads of the Chairs and teachers according to the relevant procedure; assigning and firing heads of YSAFA's structural units; defining their rights
- Calling for the session of YSAFA's Governing Board, Scientific Council and the Rector's Office and ensuring their close cooperation
- Applying the code of conduct provisions towards staff and students
- Defining staff salary rates within the institution's financial resources; resolving issues regarding staff and student rewarding and financial aid, according to the RA legislation
- Giving orders on admitting students and PhD students, transferring from one year to another, leaving in the same year of study, removing, readmitting, signing for the relevant vacation as well as awarding degrees
- Assigning and firing the Vice-rectors and defining their responsibilities and performance areas
- Other duties defined by the RA legislation and the current Charter

The Rector's Office is the consultancy body operating by the Rector. It discusses issues regarding YSAFA's operations between the period of the Governing Board and Scientific Council sessions. The Rector's Office includes the Vice-rectors, the Advisory to the Rector, science secretary, department deans, heads of YSAFA's Educational and other Departments as well as the staff members appointed by the Rector. The decisions of the Rector's Office are implemented by the Rector's order.

YSAFA's Vice-Rector for Education and Science and Vice-rector for Economic and Financial Affairs are appointed by the Rector's order according to the RA Labour Code.

The Academic Affairs includes the Teaching and Learning Methodological Unit and the Registrar. The Academic Affairs carries out the organization/ensuring of YSAFA's education process, coordination of Academic Programmeme development, provision, evaluation and improvement processes, development of documents for educational process arrangements, registrar activities - collecting, inputting, maintaining all the necessary information about students and preparing the reports.

The Teaching and Learning Methodological Unit's functions are calculation of workload for the Chairs, approval of class allocations, approval of schedules, organization of internships, approval of exam schedule, development and improvement of curricula, development of documents for educational process arrangements, controlling provision of the educational process.

The Registrar's functions are students' registration, registering and maintaining students' grades, rotation, students' transfers, management of diploma supplements and other documents.

YSAFA has two **Departments** - Fine Arts, and Design and Applied Arts. The Department, within its jurisdiction, has the right to make its own decisions if they do not contradict with the RA legislature and decisions made by the institution. The Department is comprised of chairs, laboratories and other units. Organization and management of Department operations are carried out by the Department Dean. The Dean chairs also the Department Council.

The Department Council

- makes suggestions to the Rector about creating, restructuring and dissolving chairs (laboratories, divisions) and other structural units in the Department structure
- takes care of the issues regarding the Department educational, scientific activities, international relations and other areas
- presents Department curricula to the Rector for the Scientific Council approval
- elects Department representatives for the Department Council

- Manages other issues related to the Department methodological and scientific research activities

The Dean

- leads educational, scientific, international and other activities of the Department
- presents the names of Deputy Deans for the Rector's approval
- presents suggestions to the Rector on transferring students from one year to another, leaving them on the same year of study, removing, readmitting, and providing relevant vacation.

The Chairs are the major structural units that organize the educational scientific process and operate according to YSAFA's Charter. The Chairs' pedagogical staff includes professors, associate professors, senior teachers and teachers. YSAFA has the following Chairs: Painting and Drawing, Graphics , Sculpture, Theory of Fine Arts and Humanities, Decorative Applied Arts, Computer Graphics and Fashion Design, Drawing and Painting (joint) and Design.

The functions of the **Human Resources Department** include staff recruitment and vacancies replenishment, management of performance effectiveness and staff improvement systems, control and maintenance of staff workload and norms, organization of trainings and consultancy activities for the new hired staff members, HR management policy development and relevant administration, arrangement of staff security, social insurance and health related issues, support and consultancy provision to the staff, implementation of staff reward or penalty policy.

The Financial and Technical Department includes two units - accounting and technical. The relevant Vice-rector is leading the activities of these units. The main functions of the Department are management of purchases according to the RA policy on purchasing, arrangement and submission of the quarterly and annual financial reports, defining and implementing the procedures for accounting and control, budget analysis and review, administration of revenues, expenses, accounts and other accounting related documents, controlling revenues and expenses, introducing accounting registry policy to the staff and other stakeholders, cooperation with internal and external audits, calculation of salaries, registering main resources and depreciation, banking activities, solving other relevant issues.

The Department for External Relations provides information services and acts as a liaison for YSAFA between Armenian institutions and the ones abroad. The Department advises on scientific and professional events at national and international levels, develops projects and supports implementation and management of international projects, supports exchange programmes for students and teaching staff, creates contacts with institutions abroad, arranges foreign students' educational process and foreign teaching staff work and accommodation in Armenia, coordinates visa and other issues for foreign students, develops

and advises on the internationalization policy and strategy of the institution, arranges preliminary agreements and projects with foreign visitors to YSAFA, collects relevant information about the organizations providing international grants and possible projects for international cooperation, as well as disseminates that information among YASA's stakeholders.

The Career Center was established for extending and fostering the link between YSAFA and the labor market as well as managing data on students, alumni and employers.

The Center carries out a study of the labor market, provides services for students' employment and consultancy, conducts training for civil servants, develops mechanisms for data collection, enlarges the database, implements preliminary data analysis, advises on students' further career opportunities, makes contacts with alumni and employers, introduces YSAFA's Academic Programmes to labor market through different media sources. The Center also organizes exhibitions in high schools introducing YSAFA for involving potential applicants.

In November 2014, **the Research Center** was established within the TEMPUS Veritas project. The Center aims at implementing PhD reforms, according to Salzburg principles stated in YSAFA's QA Manual. The Center develops YSAFA's strategy for scientific research areas, organizes and coordinates teachers' and students' research activities, carries out publication-related works for the institution's journal "Taregirq".

There is a **gallery** named after Albert and Tove Boyajyan next to YSAFA that enables artist teachers, beginners and students to demonstrate their works. The staff members of the exhibition hall plan and organize exhibitions, elaborate on the events held in the exhibition hall or on the upcoming ones on YSAFA's official website and through media sources as well as organize discussions and meetings with artists.

The Quality Assurance Center is an independent structural unit of the institution reporting directly to the Rector. The independence of the Center guarantees the objectivity of the self-evaluation. The Center's activities are regulated by the Provisions of the "QA Center Regulation" (see Appendix 2.2) adopted by the Rector. The functions of the Center are as follows:

- Coordinate QA internal processes
- Interpret external quality assurance requirements and make them available to all stakeholders and staff involved in QA processes
- Implement annual preparation processes for institutional and programme self-assessment reports
- Train the staff about quality assurance approaches
- Increase stakeholders' awareness about the processes in YSAFA
- Organize and elaborate on issues related to external quality assurance processes

- Develop monitoring mechanisms that will enable to make improvements through PDCA principle
- Promote continuous improvement of all processes in the institution and establishment of quality culture
- Monitor the review process of Academic Programmes carried out by the Chairs to make the programmes in line with the European educational standards
- Develop mechanisms that will enable to evaluate:
 1. teaching methodology
 2. student assessment system
 3. current resources in YSAFA and provided services
 4. work done by teaching and administrative staff
 5. admissions
 6. awareness of applicants
 7. level of employer satisfaction with alumni
 8. level of alumni satisfaction with the education they received in YSAFA

There is a **library** operating in YSAFA that has art history, professional and fiction literature. The library staff members plan and present the library activities and information services, ensure the availability of library collections and resources to students and teaching staff, organize the maintenance of library materials, provide consultancy to library users, ensure the elimination of damages to library resources, make statistics and present the list of demanded literature. It is planned to digitize library resources in the upcoming future.

There are also **security and medical aid units** in the institution.

Each Department in YSAFA has a regulation (see Appendix 12) where the relevant functions and responsibilities for each staff member are clearly defined. The Departments have the relevant number of qualified human resources.

Each Department implements annual planning based on the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan. The Departments are provided with material resources annually through needs assessment. The required list of resources is attached to the plan. The needs that are identified along with this are addressed based on submitted reports. Complaint plans of the Departments ensure their interrelated functionality. This refers to the factor that the cooperation among the Departments for the activities requiring a joint action by several Departments is taken into account during the annual planning.

b) Procedural

YSAFA's quality policy is defined within objectives, documents regulating the processes, quality control, assurance and improvement for processes considering PDCA principle in all stages of its functioning.

YSAFA's quality policy is reflected in a number of documents that successfully coordinate current processes:

- Regulation on Department Annual Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Improvement (see Appendix 8)
- Quality Assurance Handbook (see Appendix 2)
- Guide for Academic Programme Development and Review (see Appendix 5)
- YSAFA's Code of Conduct, etc. (see Appendix 13)

For the effective functioning of the institution YSAFA takes into account the current requirements in higher education area from the perspective of internal quality assurance, YSAFA performs based on PDCA cycle. For instance, the annual planning and its implementation process are based on the "Regulation on the Annual Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Improvement of the Departments" (see Appendix 8).

- **Plan** - annual planning of the Departments' activities according to the Strategic Plan
- **Do** - actual implementation of the planned activities, submission of three-month and annual reports
- **Check** - comparison and evaluation of results by a special Commission for the planned and implemented activities; Commission's feedback to each Department
- **Act** - activities for further clearer planning and effective implementation

Annual planning of the Departments is coordinated by the Vice-rector for Education and Science and implemented by the Departments. Annual planning and accountability processes are coordinated by the Evaluation Commission and QA Center. Performance monitoring of Departments is implemented through the three-month reports, and further is planned to carry out evaluation of a Department performance based on the annual reports, together with the QA center. As a result of monitoring, a written opinion is submitted to the Departments about their performance that is taken into account for the next year annual planning.

The annual reports of all Departments are summarized in Rector's annual report available on the institution's official website to ensure transparency.

Previously in YSAFA, the effectiveness of quality control for the institution's processes was not measurable, while now it will be done through KPIs defined in the Strategic Plan. This will allow to evaluate the level of implementing the processes as well as the effectiveness of the defined goals and objectives.

a) *Cultural*

In quality management processes for teaching and learning, YSAFA specifically attaches importance to the following:

- willingness of the teaching staff in regards with teaching professional skills to students
- willingness of the administrative staff for establishing effective learning environment
- willingness of students to participate in the institution's processes and activities
- teamwork and collective responsibility.

Mentioned values promote more effective coordinate and manage processes of the institution. The peculiarities specific for an art institution impact also the quality management of the institution.

YSAFA involves the internal and external stakeholders in decision-making and a number of other processes to adopt the above-mentioned values. For instance, in order to ensure students' involvement and making their participation more effective in decision-making and reform processes, YSAFA created a Student community by participating in TEMPUS ESPAQ grant project. The community actively takes part in the institution's quality assurance processes raising the more concerning questions of students.

In teaching and learning quality assurance processes, the administrative, teaching and support staff members as well as students are mainly involved each of them promoting quality assurance not only for teaching and learning but also other areas at the institution. Involvement of external stakeholders (employer, Ministry of Culture, Professional Unions) is small because of limited cooperation.

Changes and reviews can be made in the institution's quality management system taking into account external demands as well as internal institutional processes. The involved stakeholders can differ depending on the type of the change. For instance, having outcome-based Academic Programmes/courses was an external demand for which the institution's teaching and administrative staff members were involved.

II. Education Programmes/Courses/Trainings

II.1. Creation and Development of Programmes / Courses

a) Institutional

YSAFA working group within the frames of TEMPUS “Achieving and Checking the Alignment between academic programmes & Qualification frameworks” (ALIGN) grant project developed a “Guide for Academic Programme Development and Review” (see appendix. 5) to coordinate more development and review processes of academic programmes. The Guide describes in details the process of organizing the necessary activities for a programme development and review.

In the past, the processes of Academic Programme development and review were not coordinated so well as there were no clear criteria and standards for that. The Guide is a comprehensive policy that aims at coordinating the alignment among Academic Programmes, ANQF and requirements by internal and external stakeholders. The Guide not only ensures the effectiveness of creation and development of programmes, but also clearly defines creation of working groups, involvement of internal and external stakeholders, methodology for teaching, learning and assessment, necessary material and human resources, etc.

According to the Guide, in case of revealing the necessity for the labour market to develop a new Academic Programme or review current Academic Programmes, a Commission is established, in which leading teachers of the Chairs, a representative from the Academic Affairs and students are involved. The Vice-rector for Education and Science is responsible for forming it. In Commission, the Academic Affairs is responsible for design an Academic Programme according to legal and other requirements and templates adopted by the RA Ministry of Education and Science, European Higher Education Area and YSAFA. The Commission studies the Academic Programmes of the leading international institutions, organizes meetings with the area employers and other main stakeholders, defines/reviews the new or current Academic Programmession, goals, learning outcomes, the list of courses, course descriptions, and presents the comprehensive package to stakeholders for discussion. In case the stakeholders accept the package, it is submitted to the Scientific Council for discussion and is approved at the Scientific Council session if getting a positive opinion.

The Administration is the initiator for any structural change in an Academic Programme while the Chairs - for content changes. The development of new Academic Programmes and review of the current ones can be associated with the new national and international approaches in higher education area, demands of main stakeholders in professional areas

and in case of other internal and external factors coming along.

The important challenges in the development of an Academic Programme are as follows:

- creation of comparable and competitive Academic Programmes. The institution has already taken steps towards this. The institution has already reviewed 3 Bachelor programmes (Computer Graphics, Design, Fashion Design) and 3 Master programmes (Computer Graphics, Design, Fashion Design) making them outcome-based programmes. The institution has also reviewed the postgraduate Academic Programme making it in line with Salzburg principles. In near future, it is planned to review the other programmes at the institution to make them also outcome-based.
- professional development of teaching staff. From this perspective, developing and sharing new professional skills for them is crucial. For this purpose, the institution always conducts trainings for the teaching staff.
- strengthening of institution-employer continuous interrelation. So far, the cooperation with employers has been only through surveys conducted among them. Currently, the institution plans to make institution-employer cooperation more active through regularly conducted surveys.
- enlargement of student involvement in creation and development of an Academic Programme. So far, the involvement of students has been ensured through surveys conducted among them. However, the Manual for Academic Programme Creation and Develop enables to ensure their involvement also in the very process of a programme creation and/or improvement.

YSAFA's Academic Programmes are in line with the future as they are based on creative thinking, new ideas and innovations. The majority of the programmes (Design, Computer Graphics, Fashion Design) are actual and competitive. Taking this factor into account, the mentioned programmes at Bachelor and Master levels were prioritized for review. The other Academic Programmes at the institution (Painting, Sculpture, Graphics, Decorative Applied Arts, Fine Arts) promote relevant taste within society and disseminating national culture.

b) Procedural

Currently, the processes for creating and further developing Academic Programmes are effective as the institution has comprehensively reviewed the programme development and review processes making them more regulated and coordinated. The new procedure for a programme development and review enables:

- to develop Academic Programmes that are in line with European Higher Education Area and ANQF ensuring the alignment of learning outcomes with ANQF descriptors at a given degree level. Due to the new policy, the institution already has the experience to align programme learning outcomes with ANQF. Fashion Design, Computer Graphics and Design Bachelor and

Master degree programmes were reviewed and aligned with ANQF descriptors. As a result, the methodology for teaching, learning and evaluation was reviewed. The best practice obtained will be used for reviewing the other Academic Programmes.

- to ensure involvement of internal and external stakeholders in the development and review of Academic Programmes. Previously, involvement of stakeholders was limited with the surveys conducted among them. However, the new policy allows to ensure their direct involvement in the development and review processes of Academic Programmes.
- to clearly define and differentiate the functions for the stakeholders involved in the development and review of Academic Programmes. In the past, mainly the Chairs were involved in a programme development and review. Now YSAFA involves stakeholders in the development and review of Academic Programmes.

In order to ensure the stimuli for the further development of Academic Programmes, the institution continuously carries out studies through surveys among different target groups. The results can be a foundation for making improvements. For instance, as a result of the analyses of such surveys, Design, Computer Graphics and Fashion Design Academic Programmes were reviewed and the relevant laboratories were updated.

c) cultural

YSAFA attaches importance to the involvement of internal and external stakeholders in an Academic Programme development process through creating environment that promotes openly exchanging opinions and defining programme requirements from different perspectives. The involved members are expected to have a critical and objective approach to the process, willingness to adopt and apply new approaches and be flexible for working in the team.

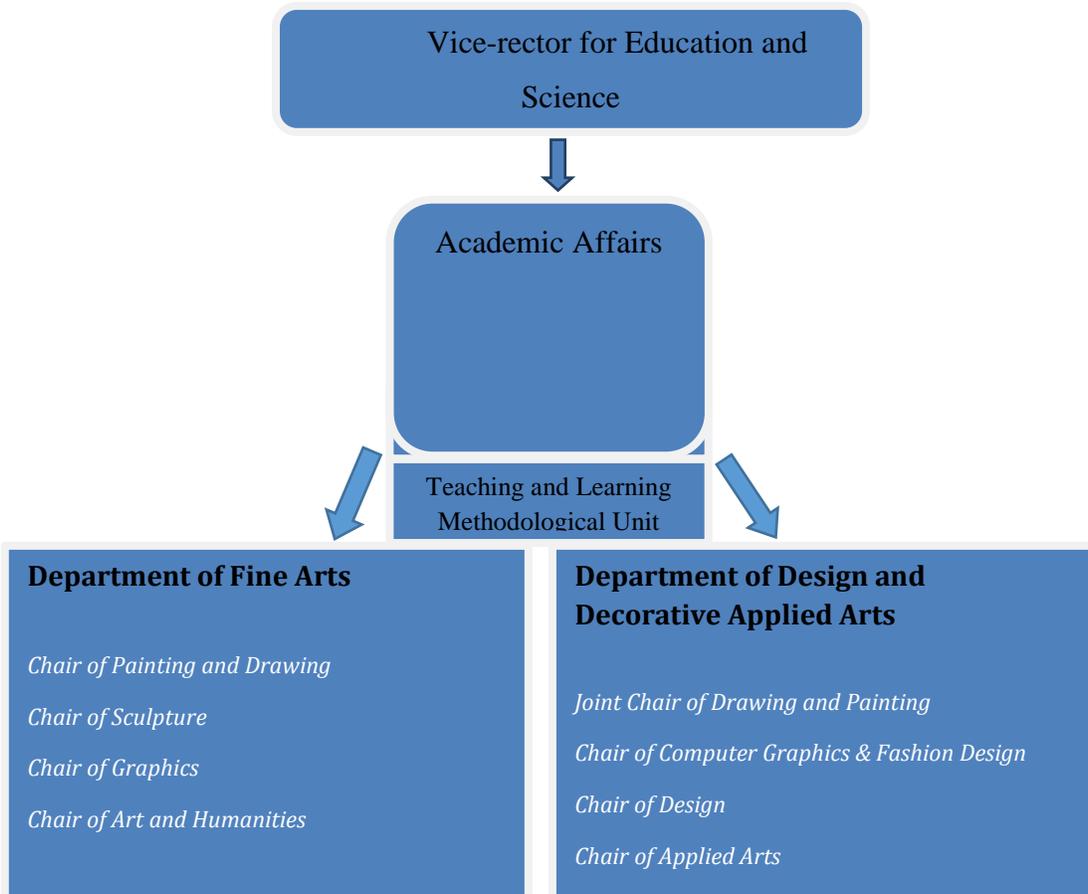
The stakeholder group involved in creation and development of an Academic Programme is defined according to the “Guide for Academic Programme Development and Review”.

According to the Guide, besides the teaching staff and employers of cooperating and/or leading organizations in the area, employers of the institutions having YSAFA graduates are involved in an Academic Programme creation/ development process. Not all stakeholders are interested to be involved in the processes of programme development and review. Therefore, the institution cooperates with interested stakeholders who are ready to have their positive input in creation and development of an Academic Programme. While cooperating with stakeholders, there may be different viewpoints on one issue. Such conflicts are resolved through discussions and clarifications.

II.2. Implementation of Programmes/Courses/Trainings

a) Institutional

The Vice-rector for Education and Science, the Academic Affairs, the Dean Offices, the Chairs are responsible for the implementation of academic programmes each operating within its functions.



The Academic Affairs is responsible for developing the necessary documents and redeveloping current regulations, studying international experience and adopting the good practice, developing curricula, determining the workload, registering the results of students' progress, transferring students, providing graduate diplomas and diploma supplements, as well as other documents and information for the effective arrangement of the educational process.

The Department Dean is responsible for the schedules, organizational activities for conducting courses - providing classrooms, arranging examinations and developing the schedule, as well as for ensuring good learning environment.

The Chairs are responsible for developing academic programme and course descriptions and for effective implementation of courses with the provision of both human and material resources and holding the examinations.

The Chairs have highly qualified teaching staff - national and honoured representatives of Art, people with doctoral degrees, professionals with high reputation in labour market, as well as YSAFA's young alumni (Appendix 14). Therefore, for academic programme provision having teaching staff of appropriate number and quality is considered to be a strength from human resources perspective. Teaching staff has the necessary professional competencies and YSAFA itself continuously promotes new teaching approaches and methods applied.

From material resources perspective, academic programme strengths are the updated laboratories, workshops and studios. Fashion Design, Computer Graphics, Applied Arts and other programmes are fully equipped with the necessary working items. YSAFA continues to get necessary material resources for all academic programmes. Sometimes, lack of classrooms is the reason to implement regular daily activities of academic programmes.

b) Procedural

For academic programme provision, a number of processes worked well and currently work well too. These are:

- collegial student assessment within educational courses. During mid-term examinations a student is assessed by the commission comprised of teachers from the given Chair.
- formative assessment when teachers provide feedback about the work done by a student, thus promoting improvement and formation of the learning outcomes
- teaching based on problem solving for applied sciences.

YSAFA implements its main processes based on PDCA cycles, thus reflecting on contemporary trends of higher education. Below is PDCA cycle from academic programmes perspective:

- **Plan** - Development and approval of curricula, development of syllabi and schedules according to the programme description.
- **Do** - Implementation of courses according to the curriculum and schedule in the respective studios and classrooms. The involvement of applicants is considered as the launch of the academic programme. For this purpose, YSAFA not only has announcements by media, in "The Armenian Higher Education Institutions" and other similar booklets, but also organizes meetings in the Armenian high schools and colleges introducing its programmes along with.

YSAFA conducts also preparatory courses for applicants.

The main educational process for the students who have successfully passed the admission examinations includes the following:

- Participation at lectures - provision of theoretical material
 - Work in studios, workshops and laboratories - application of theoretical knowledge and development of practical skills
 - Individual and team works
 - Literature review
 - Presentation of works done and participation at exhibitions
 - Internship, presentation of works done during the internship
 - Conduction of research
 - Presentation of final works
 - Contacts with alumni through HEN-GEAR platform and the Career Center's database
- **Check** - The following questionnaires are used for evaluating the effective implementation of academic programmes: "Evaluation of course effectiveness" (Appendix 2.1) and "Evaluation of YSAFA's current resource and service effectiveness" (Appendix 2.1). The issues revealed as a result of analyses are submitted to the Chairs. The analyses are also briefly presented on the website. The Chairs organize meetings to present survey results to the teaching staff for the improvement of teaching methods and relevant resources. The evaluation of programme implementation is also done according to learning outcomes through conducting surveys among alumni and employers.
 - **Act** - Implementation of improvements based on the evaluation results and comparative analysis of similar programmes. As a result of the survey -"Evaluation of YSAFA's current resource and service effectiveness", the laboratories and workshops have been updated for Fashion Design, Applied Arts, Design and Computer Graphics programmes that promoted the implementation of these academic programmes, improvement of learning environment.

c) Cultural

While providing academic programmes, smooth cooperation takes place among the Departments as the functions are clearly defined at the institution. The Academic Affairs develops the curriculum based on which the Dean Offices prepare the schedule and the Chairs develop course descriptions, then teaching and learning process is done. The results of student progress are recorded in the Academic Affairs, at the Registrar's' Office. If conflicts arise during cooperation, they are resolved through mutual discussions and clarifications.

The institution regularly organizes formal and informal meetings among the stakeholders involved in teaching and learning to discuss current issues and questions. This approach

helps to align the expectations of the institution and the stakeholders.

In the implementation of the academic programmes YSAFA values the involvement of leading professionals of the field in Armenia. Therefore, people with doctoral degrees and titles, national and honoured members, designers well-known at national and international levels, artists are involved in the implementation process.

YSAFA encourages also the involvement of young teaching staff into the educational process ensuring gradual generation change.

Besides lecturing, the teaching staff participates in the decision making processes according to YSAFA's Charter as well as in surveys and discussions.

The tools developed by the QA Center are still the ones used for the evaluation of teaching process and teacher performance. However, it is planned to have discussions with the HR Department to develop and apply new mechanisms for teaching staff performance evaluation.

The Financial Department/ provision of material resources/, the Research Center/ regulation of students' research activities/ and the support staff to the Chairs (ensuring maintenance of the property in laboratories, studios and workshops as well as smooth working of equipments) are also cooperatively part of the teaching process within their functions.

As an art institution and having relevant peculiarities such as a small number of students, the close cooperation with students is easier in YSAFA, and teaching is more student-centered. The reason is that the educational process for subject-specific courses is implemented in warm creative environment through exchanging opinions, jointly implementing ideas, mutual support, also individual activities are carried out with all students. However, the same cannot be stated for theoretical courses. The teaching methods need to be reviewed. It is planned in the upcoming future to conduct the survey, "Evaluation of Courses", and course improvement activities will be suggested based on the results.

The weak point in implementing academic programmes is the lack of courses in foreign languages. This does not enable the involvement of foreign students. However, the relevant activities are planned in the Strategic Plan of the External Relations Department.

II.3. Cooperations

a) Institutional

The university implements active cooperation with local and international educational institutions for the internalization of academic programmes, recognition of awarded qualifications, as well as for

improvement and continuous development of other areas of institution's activity. Depending on the type of cooperation, YSAFA relevant department begins negotiations with cooperating institution, come to an agreement etc., for instance the chairs may initiate cooperations concerning students' internships, Teaching and Learning Methodological unit initiates as well as implements grant projects, Department of External Relations implements cooperations concerning students mobility etc.

While implementing educational programmes, YSAFA's Departments cooperate internally. Cooperations are also implemented with a number of external organizations. The following units/representatives participate in internal cooperations: the Vice-rector for Education and Science (approves curricula, etc.), the Vice-rector for Finance (provides material resources), the Academic Affairs (determines the Chairs' workload, collecting information on students' progress, etc.), the Deans' Offices (develop schedules, provide classrooms, etc.), the Chairs (develop and implement academic programme and course descriptions, provide teaching staff), the External Relations Department (involves foreign students, implementing exchange programs), YSAFA's "Albert and Tove Boyajyan" exhibition hall (holds exhibitions of works done during the studies, conducting seminars), the library (provides literature). YSAFA's internal cooperation is presented in the institution's structure (see Appendix 15) and is carried out within the functions of each Department defined in the respective regulations (see Appendix 12).

YSAFA's external partners in implementing academic programmes are as follows: the RA Ministry of Education and Science (defining state financed admission spots, approving the ones subject to tuitions fees, appointing the president for the State Graduation Qualification Commission, etc.), the RA Ministry of Culture (participation at cultural events), the RA National Academy of Science (coordination for presenting PhD works, provision of library resources), a number of national and international higher education institutions, art institutions and unions (sharing experience, ensuring mobility, organizing internships, open presentation of diploma works in the halls of Painters' Union etc.). After the presentation the works are demonstrated in exhibitions for several days. See the list of cooperating organizations in (see Appendix 16).

The External Relations Department coordinates external cooperations within students' mobility and foreign students' involvement processes.

Cooperation among the Departments at the institution is smooth. However, cooperation with external stakeholders is poor as they do not have much interest and willingness to cooperate. To make cooperation with external stakeholders more active, the institution takes appropriate actions, specifically meetings and discussions with employers and professional unions.

b) Procedural

The "Regulation on YSAFA Student Mobility" (see Appendix 17) and the "Regulation on Admissions of Foreign Citizens" (see Appendix 18) to YSAFA were developed to ensure student mobility within international exchange programs. The cooperation is implemented with 21 foreign higher education institutions having cooperation agreements with them. The cooperation and responsibilities of the Departments involved in the processes are defined in the above-mentioned Regulations and

agreements signed with the partner institutions.

The External Relations Department staff implements relevant study of the field before signing student exchange agreements. The preliminary identified academic programmes are presented to the relevant staff responsible for programmes. After having a general discussion the given institution is contacted, thus starting the negotiations. In 2012-2016, many YSAFA students studied at the cooperating higher education institutions for a semester and 4 students studied in YSAFA at least a semester. Below is presented YSAFA in-coming and out-going students:

In-coming students						
	Country and institution					
		2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
1	<i>France, Touranger, Mans Higher Art School (exchange programme)</i>			1		
2	<i>Ukraine, The Lviv National Academy of Arts (exchange programme)</i>				2	
3	<i>France, Bezanson Higher Art School (exchange programme)</i>					1
Out-going students						
	Country and institution	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017
1	<i>France, Higher School of Fine Arts in Marseille (exchnage programme)</i>	1	1	3	1	
2	<i>France, l'École Nationale Supérieure d'Art de Limoges (exchnage programme)</i>				1	
3	<i>France, ECOLE SUPERIEURE D'ART & DESIGN DE REIMS (exchange programme)</i>	2				
4	<i>RF, St. Petersburg Stieglitz State Academy of Art and Design (exchange programme)</i>	1	3	4	2	6
5	<i>Italy, University of Perugia (exchange programme)</i>			1	1	
6	<i>Italy, Academy of Fine Arts</i>			3	1	

	<i>in Florence (exchange programme)</i>					
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Within student mobility, the small number of integrated foreign students is associated with the lack of courses taught in foreign language.

In 2008-2016, 189 foreign students and the ones from Diaspora studies at YSAFA. Their admissions were implemented within the cooperation with the RA Ministry of Education and Science.

Within last years YSAFA 1 lecturer applied for mobility but the level of in-coming lectures is a little high:

In-coming staff						
	Country and institution					
		2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017
1	RF, St. Petersburg Stieglitz State Academy of Art and Design					2
Out-going staff						
	Country and institution					
		2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017
1	RF, St. Petersburg Stieglitz State Academy of Art and Design					1

As a result of cooperation with international higher education institutions, the programme learning outcomes and allocation of credits, including student classroom and extracurricular workload are adjusted. For the purpose of adjusting ECTS, cooperation is also implemented with local higher education institutions to ensure and improve student transfer from one institution to another.

The cooperation with national higher education institutions is mainly carried out through grant projects within which documents promoting improvement of the national educational system and internationalization are developed: ECTS user guide, "A Guideline for Aligning Academic Programs to the Armenian National Qualifications Framework" (see Appendix 6). Within cooperation among institution, joint final papers are prepared. (For instance, in 2016 joint projects were done by the

groups of students and teachers from both YSAFA and the American University of Armenia).

Cooperation with art institutions is implemented in the following areas: participation at joint seminars, academic meetings, joint exhibitions, student internships. YSAFA currently cooperates with 18 organizations for student internships on contract-based (the list of organizations is attached to Appendix 19). The group of students visits the respective organization within the internship period where they apply their theoretical knowledge into practical activities. The Chairs' teaching staff lead the internships. There are cases when employers offer a job to the best students.

Currently, YSAFA strives to more strengthen the link with employers. The cooperation with employers at academic programme level is done with the teachers having classes in YSAFA and with employer teachers at the same time. The cooperation with other employers is limited by inviting them to the presentations of diploma works, involving them in surveys, having their suggestions on topics for diploma works. The QA Center and the Career Center are developing mechanisms to maintain continuous relationship with employers.

For more effective cooperation with the institution's internal and external stakeholders, it is necessary:

- to do student exchange programs with other institutions in Armenia and acknowledge the outcomes
- while preparing final works to do actual projects and form joint groups with other institutions for that
- to have membership to library networks
- to develop links with alumni and employers

Stimuli for changes and improvements can come from the suggestions and requirements of internal and external stakeholders. In order to improve cooperation, the institution takes appropriate actions - discussions at the institution followed by negotiations with the given cooperating institution.

c) Cultural

The main principle of YSAFA's cooperation is to implement mutually beneficial cooperation with its partners. However, increasing motivation among internal and external stakeholders still remains a main challenge for cooperation. Cooperation with different organizations, art institutions and unions is based on what kind of activities the given institution implements. Cooperation with art institutions promotes student and teacher mobility. Cooperation with art centers and unions gives an opportunity to students to participate at different events and always be in the center of cultural life. The cultural events organized in Albert and Tove Boyajyan exhibition hall also promote this (individual and group exhibitions, thematic meetings, etc.). YSAFA also cooperates with a number of local and international higher education institutions that are not art ones that promotes the staff capacity building. This cooperation is based on sharing the best practice - development and review of educational

programmes, defining measurable programme learning outcomes. These cooperation also enables to work closely the institution's teaching staff and students. Their involvement in different processes promotes strengthening teacher-student relationship - student-centered learning.

II.4. Examination Systems and Organization of exams

a) Institutional

Admission examinations

Admission examinations are held according to "YSAFA Regulation on Internal Admission Examinations for Bachelor degree educational programmes" (see Appendix 20), "YSAFA Admission Assignments and Evaluation Assessment Criteria" (see Appendix 21), as well as "YSAFA Regulation on Admission Examinations for Master's degree educational programmes" (see Appendix 22). In order to study at the educational programmes in YSAFA applicants pass admission examinations that are organized in the institution and held by the Commission comprised of teachers. The descriptions of student assignments and the assessment criteria for each subject are defined beforehand and published on YSAFA's official website at <http://www.yafa.am/?p=12124>, also see in Appendix 21.

After the examinations, students' grades are published in the institution as well as placed on the website.

Bachelor and Master admission regulations and Bachelor admission assessment criteria work well. Currently certain activities are undertaken towards clarifying the requirements for Master program admissions.

Current student assessment

Current student assessment is based on YSAFA Student Assessment System (see Appendix 23), where student assessment criteria are presented. The heads of chairs present "students assessment system" all 1st year students, besides it is available on YSAFA official web-site. 1st year students are given "Student Handbook", where there is relevant information on not only student assessment but also on YSAFA other processes.

During the first and second terms of study 2-3 midterms are organized (formative assessment). Feedback is provided to students about the strong and weak points of their works based on which they can improve their results. Thus, the teachers help students to achieve the intended learning outcomes more effectively. At the end of the term summative examinations and assessments are organized to evaluate knowledge and skills acquired by students. Each course description defines the assessment method for the given subject depending on the course type as well as the assessment criteria. The mid-term and

summative examinations of specialized subjects are held in the form of observations - students present their creative works that are examined by the Commission comprised of all teachers of the Chair. This approach during observations gives an opportunity to a student to receive not only his/her teacher's opinion and advice but also those of the other professional from the Chair while during summative assessment this kind of collegial approach ensures the objectivity and transparency of the assessment process. The assessment of theoretical subjects are held in the forms of oral exams, term papers, presentations, tests or paper writing. At the end of the examination the results are announced publicly to all students.

All staff of the Chairs and students are involved in the process of examinations. The Deans' Offices and the Chairs are responsible for conducting examinations. Examination results are registered in the Chairs' protocols, Deans' Offices and in Registrar.

In 2012-2016, the assessment policy paper of the institution was reviewed twice based on the internal stakeholders' feedback and now work well. It is planned to clarify the assessment criteria.

State final assessment

State final assessment takes place according to the "Regulation on Summative Assessment" (see Appendix 24). Students prepare their final papers based on the "Manual for Bachelor Final Papers and Master's Thesis" (see Appendix 25).

Bachelor and Master final papers are assessed by the Commission for Final Assessment. A well-known specialist of the area is appointed as the President of the Commission by the RA Ministry of Science and Education. The Commission includes representatives of YSAFA's teaching staff and other external specialists of the field. Employers are present at the presentations. The presence of the invited employers promotes employment opportunities for the best graduates. All people who want to be present can also do so as the presentations are open for public. The open presentations of diploma works state the transparency of YSAFA's activities as well as final assessment.

State final assessment is clearly described and effective.

b) Procedural

The admission of students for Bachelor degree programmes is implemented according to the "Regulation on Conducting Internal Examinations for Admissions to Bachelor Degree Programmes" (see Appendix 20) and the "Assessment Criteria for YSAFA Admission Examinations" (see Appendix 21). For each year admission examinations, a relevant

commission (coordinating the process) and specialized examination commissions (assessing) are formed to assess the applicants' exam works. The examinations are controlled to maintain academic honesty. The applicants are provided with molberts, posers and still life items.

The admissions for Master degree programmes are implemented by the relevant commission and specialized commissions according to the "Regulation on Conducting Admission Examinations to Master Degree Programmes" (see Appendix 22).

In order to organize examinations and assessments for the first and second terms, the Deans' Offices make the schedules for exams according to which they are conducted. The process of examinations is coordinated by the given Chair together with the lecturing teacher. The relevant internal stakeholders are involved in the assessment process each of them being informed accordingly about the examination results. Student assessment is implemented according to the concept provisions of Student Assessment System (see Appendix 23) that clearly define assessment principles, grading scale, as well as the regulation on appeals for grades. It is worth to note that YSAFA's student assessment system changed in 2012 and in 2014 based on the survey results conducted by the QA Center among teaching staff and students. Since 2014, an assessment system with new approaches is in place based on the assessment of learning outcomes as well as stakeholders' needs. After adopting this system there were certain issues related to its application. Some teachers had difficulties in assessing through the new modified system. Taking all this into account, the Academic Affairs and QA Center have organized meetings and different discussions with teaching staff to introduce again the assessment system in more details. Such meetings promoted the comprehensive application of the system till today. The university plans to conduct continuously surveys among teaching staff and students to evaluate the effectiveness of existing student assessment system. The surveys conducted among internal stakeholders help not only to improve student assessment system but also to make assessment methods and forms communicate to internal stakeholders' demands.

A Commission is formed for the state final assessment that involves teachers, members of creative unions, employers. Each of them gives a grade, and for the final grade an average is calculated. In case of appeal, the grade is reviewed by the Commission for which along with the members, student and administrative staff representatives are also involved. All possible internal and external stakeholders - teachers, students, invited employers, interested students, parents, have an opportunity to be present at final examinations thus ensuring transparency of state final activities and promoting professional reputation of YSAFA's graduates.

c) Cultural

YSAFA's assessment system differs by its nature - observations, feedback not only by lecturing teachers but also by other teachers of the Chair. Such an approach ensures maximum objective assessment of works as well as teacher-student close cooperation. Exchanging opinions and receiving other teachers' feedback help students to work more organized and systemized.

In current and final assessments the following factors are valued:

- assessment of learning outcomes
- ensuring transparency/publicity
- objective assessment

There is almost no plagiarism during current exams and assessments as students work in a cooperative environment with each other and the teacher, and their activities are controlled by the teacher. Such an approach promotes academic integrity. It is also attached importance to a student's independency in group and individual activities. If plagiarism occurs it impacts the grade (see Concept Paper on Student Assessment, Appendix 23). Students are informed about the examination results at place that enables to raise their concerns immediately as well as to appeal according to the procedure.

The feedback on admission examinations is received through the survey conducted among the first year students. Evaluation of Course Effectiveness survey conducted among students includes questions to evaluate the term examinations. Besides, surveys are conducted among teachers and students for evaluation of the assessment system. State final examinations are open for all internal and external stakeholders that also shows transparency of YSAFA's assessment system.

II.5. Recognition of achievements

a) Institutional

A student's prior educational degree is recognized according to the Armenian National Qualifications Framework and the RA Law on Higher and Postgraduate Education.

General and vocational education is considered to be the basis for applying YSAFA bachelor's degree according to the "Regulation on Admission to YSAFA Bachelor's Degree" (see Appendix 20) and "Regulation on continuing education from vocational educational institutions to higher educational institutions for VET graduates with high progress" (see Appendix 26). For the master's degree at least bachelor's degree is required according to the "Regulation on Admission Examinations for YSAFA's Master's degree Academic Programme" (see Appendix 22). Non-formal and informal education is not recognized at YSAFA, as its recognition is limited by RA legislation.

The process of student transfer to YSAFA who studies in another educational institution is implemented according to the "Regulation on Academic Mobility of Students in Higher Education Institutions" (see Appendix 27) adopted by the Government Decree N 1240-N, August 25 2011 in which the conditions and procedure for recognition of achieved outcome. The interinstitutional transfers are also implemented according to the provisions of this Regulation.

The Academic Affairs is responsible for the above-mentioned process involving the Deans' Offices and Chairs.

The mobility and recognition of achievements of students between foreign higher education institutions and YSAFA is arranged by the "Regulation on Academic Mobility of Students in Higher Education Institutions" (see Appendix 27). The External Relations Department is responsible for the process involving Academic Affairs, Deans' Offices and Chairs.

YSAFA provides state diploma and diploma supplement to its graduates (in Armenian and English) that clearly state the Academic Programme courses, the relevant credits, the grades in letters and numbers, average percentage, the credit for attestation and the grade in letters, the total number of credits during studies and the GPA (see Appendix 28).

YSAFA diploma is officially recognized in CIS countries, however many graduates work in Europe, the U.S. and Australia by their specialization received in YSAFA.

b) Procedural

General and vocational education is considered to be the basis for applying to YSAFA bachelor's degree according to the "Regulation on Admission to YSAFA Bachelor's Degree" (see Appendix 20) and "Regulation on continuing education from vocational educational institutions to higher educational institutions for VET graduates with high progress" (see Appendix 26). For the master's degree at least

bachelor's degree is required according to the "Regulation on Admission Examinations for YSAFA's Master's degree Academic Programme" (see Appendix 22). The admission to the bachelor's degree for the applicants with general and vocational education background is carried out on general basis (see II.4). Graduates from vocational institutions with high progress become 2nd year students of the relevant profession based on the recommendation from the vocational institution and approval of the relevant chair at YSAFA. 54 graduates from the vocational institutions became 2nd year students at YSAFA during the last 3 years.

A student being transferred from another institution submits application and academic statement that includes the studied courses in previous terms with credits and grades as well as GPA. After looking through this information, the Registrar submits a report to the relevant Chair mentioning the difference between the two institutions' Academic Programmes and credits. The Chair considers the compliance of the course content taken in the other institution with the ones in YSAFA and discusses the opportunity for the student to continue education in YSAFA. In case of the Chair's negative opinion, the transfer of the student is not implemented. If the Chair has a positive opinion, the student submits the paperwork from the previous institution to the Registrar and is registered (see Appendix 27 "Regulation on Academic Mobility of Students in Higher Education Institutions" adopted by the Government Decree N 1240-N, August 25 2011). The statistics for the last 3 years shows that 21 students were involved in the exchange programmes.

The transfers from foreign institutions are also carried out according to this Regulation taking into account the agreement of the RA Ministry of Education and Science. The statistics for the last 3 years shows that 15 students were transferred to YSAFA.

The institution does not implement joint and double degree programmes yet. Negotiations with other higher education institutions are envisioned in future for developing joint Academic Programmes and their implementation mechanisms and policy.

c) Cultural

The main principles of student achievements/progress recognition in YSAFA are as follows:

- trust towards education provided by partner higher education institutions
- ambition to establish intercultural relations.

Following these principles, YSAFA trusts the education provided by the higher education institutions having an official status and avoids additional assessment or examinations in the process of recognizing students' achievements in those institutions. In the process of recognition of achievements, YSAFA takes into account the official information provided by that student's previous institution (studied modules, ECTS credits, grades, etc.). This approach is accepted by all parties. Certain disagreements can arise only while reviewing the compliance of Academic Programmes. However, this is resolved through coming to a general conclusion as a result of discussions among the teachers of the Chair.

The mobility among institutions greatly promotes establishment of intercultural relations for students. The important conditions for increasing the effectiveness of student mobility are as follows:

- increase of the level of foreign language knowledge
- implementation of comparable and learning outcome-based Academic Programmes
- application of ECTS system.

Currently, YSAFA implements activities to increase the level of foreign language knowledge among students as well as develop and incorporate Academic Programmes meeting ECTS requirements, having defined learning outcomes, comparable with programmes in the European Higher Education Area.

Regulating documents on recognition of prior education degree, transfers and mobility processes are available on YSAFA official webpage. Additional information is provided by the Academic Affairs, the Dean's Offices and the Department of External Relations.

II.6. Assistance and Support

a) Institutional

Assistance and support provided to students aim at ensuring good educational environment that will promote easier and more effective implementation of a student's educational process. Support is provided to students by the following units:

- Deans' Offices
- Chairs
- Academic Affairs
- Department of Human Resources
- Career Center
- Library
- Quality Assurance Center
- Albert and Tove Boyajyan Gallery
- Student Council
- Department of External Relations
- Research Center
- Medical Aid Unit

These units have the sufficient material and human resources to provide assistance and support to students. The evidence is the results of the evaluation on the efficiency of YSAFA resources and services carried out among the students and teaching staff.

YSAFA's students are provided assistance through a number of services:

- information dissemination on YSAFA activities
- consultancy to applicants
- preparatory courses for applicants

- provision of the Student Handbook (see Appendix 29)
- consultancy by teaching staff as well as support and administrative staff
- provision of free foreign language classes

The challenges for providing assistance and support to the students are the follows: improvement of library resources, provision of necessary conditions for under-represented students' groups and improvement of campus conditions.

The following activities are undertaken in order to solve the above-mentioned challenges:

- in order to improve the library resources YSAFA will join Koha library network. Besides, the opportunities for the access to the other library resources will be discussed.
- in 2016 ERASMUS+ INCLUSION project has been initiated, which is coordinated by YSAFA. It aims at developing and implementing social dimension strategies at universities. Within the framework of the project the policy, mechanisms for supporting under- represented students' groups will be developed and implemented and the necessary equipment for the educational process will be purchased.
- Negotiations are carried out in order to improve the campus conditions.

b) Procedural

Students are informed about the relevant assistance and support through YSAFA's official website, the Student Handbook, announcement by Deans' Offices and other units.

YSAFA starts providing assistance and support to students since the beginning of a student cycle by involving applicants. YSAFA along with its offered Academic Programmes, admission conditions and requirements are presented through mass media, its official website as well as in the "Armenian Higher Education Institutions: Guide for Applicants".

Preparatory courses are organized for applicants conducted by YSAFA's teachers. The Department Deans are responsible for the organization of these courses. The classes are conducted in the respective studios of YSAFA's buildings.

While submitting the paperwork applicants are provided with comprehensive consultancy by the commission members accepting the documents about the necessary additional documents and regulation of examinations.

The first year students are given the Student Handbook (see Appendix 29) updated each academic year that introduces a historic abstract about the institution, the list of the Academic Programmes, tuition fees, the concept paper of knowledge assessment and other necessary information.

Furnished studios, laboratories and workshops as well as posers, requisite accessories and

work materials that are in line with the Academic Programme requirements are provided to students.

Students refer to the relevant Dean's Office with their questions that includes the function of guiding students to apply to the respective Department for administrative or academic advice. Administrative advice is also provided to students by the Academic Affairs, Accounting or the Department of Human Resources (statements, etc.). Besides administrative advice, students refer to their teachers or other teachers from the Chair with their specialty related questions who answer them with great willingness.

The Career Center operates in YSAFA and guides students in their representation in the labour market, ensures the link between alumni and employers, organizes seminars (about introducing to an employer, motivation letters, etc.).

The library that is regularly updated with new literature still does not satisfy all the student cohort. In 2017, it is planned to digitize the library and have access to the Koha library network.

The QA Center conducts surveys, organizes discussions - gives an opportunity to students to express their opinions, to maximum involve them into YSAFA's processes. A number of improvements have been made for students as a result of surveys conducted by the Center.

The student community for quality assurance was established in YSAFA within the ESPAQ project. Jointly with the Academic Affairs, discussions about internal quality assurance are organized, trainings are conducted on different subjects for the involved students - role of a student in quality assurance processes, what QA processes are implemented in the institution and what is students' role in them, how to develop questionnaires and conduct surveys etc.

There is an exhibition hall in YSAFA that gives an opportunity to students to organize free exhibitions.

The Student Council organizes events for students - joint exhibitions with other institutions, excursions, plenary, for which YSAFA provides the financing. The Youth Foundation provides financial aid to students with the support of the Student Council for the partial reimbursement of tuition fees.

The Department of External Relations supports students in continuing their education in other higher education institutions or having short study visits through exchange programmes (information, compilation of necessary documents, etc.). The Department provides additional assistance and support - organizes joint plenaries, workshops, master classes, exhibitions with the cooperating institutions.

The Research Center helps students of last years in choosing topics for their Master's thesis as well as guides on the structure of the work, provides relevant literature from the Center's library, etc. The Center also organizes extracurricular seminar-discussions during which students have presentations of their research. The successful and approved scientific articles are published free in YSAFA's journal for scientific articles, "Taregirq".

A clear system of transfers and discounts is at place in the institution that is regulated by the "Regulation on Providing Student Benefits and State Scholarships to the Higher Education Institutions in Armenia" (see Appendix 30) and by "YSAFA's Regulation on Partial Reimbursement of the Tuition Fee in the Form of a Student Benefit" (see Appendix 31).

YSAFA organized free courses of foreign languages (English, Italian, Russian and French) the whole year for students as support. Free Armenian and Russian classes are organized for foreign students.

In 2016, YSAFA developed and won the ERASMUS + INCLUSION project within which the teaching methodology and approaches for involving under-represented groups will be improved.

There is a medical aid unit in YSAFA that has the medicine and items for first aid.

The access and quality of the above-mentioned services are evaluated through surveys conducted among students and teaching staff, as well as through the feedback received from the YSAFA Student Council. The issues related to the availability and quality of services are also raised by the students involved in different administrative levels.

The QA Center coordinates the surveys, analyzes the results and presents them to the management and relevant Departments to plan for improvement activities and implement them. The Vice-rector for Education and Science, Vice-rector for Economic and Financial Affairs, the Academic Affairs, the Deans' Offices and Chairs are responsible for improvements. The survey results are also presented to stakeholders and placed on YSAFA's official website to ensure the transparency of the process.

c) Cultural

YSAFA always pays attention to student educational needs and takes appropriate measures to create a good learning environment.

The cooperation among different Departments and target groups is intense based on mutual respect, assistance and support.

The students can use services provided by YSAFA (consultancies, seminars, master classes,

financial support, etc.) and existing resources (laboratories, studios, library, etc.)

The efficiency of services and resources provided by YSAFA is evaluated through the surveys periodically conducted among the stakeholders.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of conducting admission examinations the QA Center conducts a survey each year among the first year students to improve exam conditions. The surveys have not indicated any major shortcomings.

The effectiveness of assistance and support to students is evaluated through two questionnaires of the survey “Effectiveness of Evaluation for Resources and Services in YSAFA” (see Appendix 3.1) for the two target groups - teachers and students. The last survey was conducted in 2015 and it greatly differed from the previous one in terms of results as the studios, workshops and laboratories for Computer Graphics, Fashion Design, Design and Applied Arts were updated which is crucial for the successful implementation of Academic Programmes. The studios for Graphics and Sculpture still need to be supplemented.

The surveys conducted for YSAFA’s all processes have not revealed any dissatisfaction by students regarding assistance and support. However, there has been dissatisfaction for the lack of certain resources that is being resolved in a possible short timeframe and within current possibilities.

For more effective implementation of consultancy and support processes, YSAFA continuously tries to provide additional skills to the staff to improve the quality of services.

III. Management of Resources

III.1 Material and Human Resources

a) Institutional

The development of the material and human resources in YSAFA is one of the permanently current issues of the institution. Therefore, it is stated in the objectives of the Goal 1 in the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan:

- Objective 4: Sustainability of teaching staff
- Objective 5: Ensuring quality growth of the Administration
- Objective 6: Maintaining and developing moral-psychological healthy and collegial environment
- Objective 7: Improvement of material and financial resources, ensuring their efficient management as a guarantee for Academic Programme provision.

The management and development of material and human resources are based on PDCA cycle. All the administrative and academic staff is involved in the process.

The allocation of material resources is regulated according to the “Regulation on YSAFA Departments’ Annual Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Improvement” (see Appendix 8). The material resources of each Department are planned and are indicated in the Plan.

The material resources of each Department are planned during the annual planning of activities and are indicated in the plan. The Vice-rectors for Education and Science and for Economic and Financial Affairs as well as the given Department are involved in the planning of material resources in order to ensure alignment between educational and administrative processes and allocation of finances.

Human resources are classified into 3 categories:

- Educational
- Educational support
- Administrative and support

The Chairs, Academic Affairs, Human Resources Department and Vice-rector for Education and Science are involved in the planning of educational and Educational support resources. The selection of the permanent teaching staff is done by the Scientific Council on a competitive basis. The Head of the relevant Department and Department of Human Resources participate in the planning of administrative staff. Signing of contracts with the employees is implemented by the Rector. Human resource involvement and management processes are based on the RA Labor Law, YSAFA’s Charter (see Appendix 11) and “YSAFA Regulation on Categories” (see Appendix 32).

The main challenges in the management of material and human resources are small

amounts of financial resources, resistance of employees towards changes. To be able to resolve the issue YSAFA is looking for external financial sources. One of such sources is grant projects. Within these projects, development and incorporation of new systems, criteria, standards and procedures that are in line with the requirements of the European education area are implemented, current systems are being improved, material resources are enlarged, and trainings for teaching and administrative staff are conducted.

b) Procedural

The allocation and management of material and human resources at the institution are carried out based on PDCA cycle. Each year, the Chairs and administrative units prepare an annual plan for activities in line with the institution's goals defined in the Strategic Plan. The annual plan includes the list of necessary material resources for the implementation of the plan.

The Chairs are considered to be the main units ensuring the educational process. While drafting the list of necessary material resources, the Head of the Chair has a discussion with the members. During the meeting, teachers and support staff introduce and discuss the material resources necessary for laboratories and workshops as well as for the implementation of a course taking into account the needs for student successful learning. The surveys conducted among teaching staff and students are also taken into account while preparing the list of material resources. The defined list of material resources is discussed at the meeting between the Head of the Chair and the Vice-Rectors for Economic and Financial Affairs and for Education and Science. After discussing and approving the final list of resources together, Vice-rector for Economic and Financial Affairs organizes the process of getting the material resources necessary for the Chair and specifically for provision of the Academic Programme. This process enables to align demands with university's finances.

The same procedure and approach are applied to prepare material resources for all other educational and administrative units' annual planning.

If there arises a need for any unforeseen material resource during the academic year, the Head of the relevant unit submits a request to Vice-Rectors for Economic and Financial Affairs who takes necessary steps to get the resource.

Recruitment of the teaching staff is done on competitive basis (long-term - 5 years) and/or by inviting them (short-term - up to 1 year).

Full-time teaching staff of the institution is recruited on competitive basis. The Human Resources Department announces the vacancy and minimum requirements. The recruitment for the applicants is done by the Scientific Council by closed voting. A 5 year contract is signed with the teachers selected on competitive basis. This process aims at involving the best professionals of the field into the institution's teaching staff.

The planning for the invited teachers is done for each academic year. The Academic Affairs prepare the workload of the Chairs and provides it to them. The Heads of the Chairs discussing with the members prepare the workload of the full-time (selected) teachers. After providing the workload for the full-time teachers, there is a need to invite new teachers in case of having non-complete courses/units. The Chair can offer a candidacy from the number of external professionals in the field to have that position. Otherwise, the Chair refers to the Human Resources Department to announce and organize the process. The Head of the Chair makes the selection for the position. A contract of up to 1 year is signed with the invited teachers.

If there arises new function and/or processes within university's functioning, it is given to existing staff of university or a decision is made on the recruitment of a new employee. The decision is made by top management. YSAFA's administrative and support staff is recruited on competitive basis. The Human Resources Department announces the vacancy and organizes the recruitment process. A committee of 5 members is established to make the selection that definitely includes the Head of the Human Resources Department, Vice-Rector for the area and the Head of the relevant Department. Depending on the announced position duties other staff members can also be included in the Committee. The recruitment is done in line with the position requirements and based on the mutual consensus of all Committee members as a result of discussions. The final decision is made by the Rector.

Getting material resources and recruiting human resources at the institution are based on RA Law on Purchases and RA Labor Code. In case of amendments in these laws or other external changes, the relevant area leaders are responsible for making the necessary changes in the internal regulations and disseminating information about them.

The main stimuli for changes and improvements are the desire to integrate into the European Higher Education Area and provide quality and recognized educational offers.

Stimuli for changes and improvements can arise as a result of external factors as well as internal initiations. The external factors can be executive or legal changes, tasks assigned from RA Ministry of Education and Science and other authorities. In case of external factors or receiving such a task, the Rector assigns the relevant Departments to plan and implement a process for adopting them. Depending on the nature of the changes (long-term, mid-term or short-term), they can be included into the schedules of activities in the Strategic Plan or into the annual plans of certain Departments, or without including in plans, the information about the changes can be reflected in the section "Non-planned Activities" of the annual and quarterly reports.

Internal initiations for improvements can be made by different units at the institution in different stages: while planning YSAFA's 5 year Strategic Plan, during discussions and meetings and/or preparation of annual plans for each Department.

For instance, the improvement activities for Academic Programmes and teaching methods are defined in Goal 1 of the institution's 2012-2016 Strategic Plan. This promoted the institution's participation in a number of projects on internationalization and compliance of Academic Programmes that are financed by the European Union, European Commission and World Bank. Within these projects, trainings and consultancy were provided by the European and local experts and good practice at different European higher education institutions was studied. As a result, the templates for Academic Programme and course descriptions were reviewed that include programme and course mission, goals, objectives and learning outcomes, as well as teaching and learning and assessment policy and methods. The "Guide for Academic Programme Development and Review" (see Appendix 9) and "A Guideline for Aligning Academic Programmes to Armenian National Qualifications Framework" (see Appendix 14) were developed. 6 Academic Programmes were reviewed according to new approaches and templates, and 10 others are currently under review.

An example of an improvement not planned by the Strategic Plan is the development of the institution's internal Code of Conduct and including ethical norms in it. This was promoted by the weaknesses revealed through SWOT analysis within TEMPUS GOVERN project as well as by the provided trainings. After discussing the necessity to address the issue, the Human Resources Department was assigned to ensure development and operation of the relevant regulations, which was stated in HR Department's 2016 annual plan.

In near future, it is planned to implement the following improvements/changes:

- defining the key performance indicators (KPIs) and measures of success in the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan
- establishing electronic management system
- finding external financial sources for improving material and human resources
- developing training policy and procedures for teaching and administrative staff qualifications
- improving material and financial resources (through involving external financial sources and getting the right for entrepreneurship operations)
- improving quality assurance mechanisms and tools for human and material resources.

c) Cultural

The Chairs' requirements about having necessary material and human resources are based on the feedback received from teachers and students. Therefore, teaching staff and students have a significant role in the management of the institution's material and human resources. Moreover, QA Center surveys about current resources and provided services conducted among teachers and students also promote to reveal their needs. A number of laboratories, workshops and studios have been updated based on the QA surveys and suggestions by the Chairs.

According to the "Code of Conduct in YSAFA" (see Appendix 13), teachers and students are required to take care of the equipment in laboratories. The Code of Conduct also includes rules of ethics and behavior for the stakeholders to follow within the institution. The defined rules promote creating healthy working environment in YSAFA. Having such environment is one of the important objectives of the Strategic Plan as maintaining and developing healthy and collegial environment promotes the establishment of organizational culture. This in itself has positive impact on the management and a number of other processes of the institution. If there are conflicts, they are resolved based on mutual understanding. If conflicts are not resolved through mutual understanding and negotiations, they are discussed with relevant administrative body based on the type of conflicts. For instance, the conflicts concerning learning process first of all are discussed in chair's sessions. If they are not resolved in chair's sessions then are discussed in rectorete. Many administrative conflicts are also resolved in the rectorete's session.

III.2 Human Resources Development

a) Institutional

Human resources development plays an important role in YSAFA that directly affects the effectiveness of different processes in the institution. In this regard, the main challenges in YSAFA are as follows:

- regulating and documenting the process of human resources development in line with YSAFA's goals
- application of quality assurance mechanisms and tools for the human resources development process
- smooth transition of generation

One of the priority areas for human resources development in YSAFA is the improvement of internal system for staff recruitment policy and professional development. Professional development includes the system of conducting trainings, promotion policy and environment that promotes professional growth. Despite the fact that the indicated elements are implemented in the institution, they are not deliberately planned and

documented.

The quality assurance mechanisms and tools for human resources development process is an important challenge. The institution attaches importance to the development and application of quality assurance mechanisms and tools for human resources development to ensure their effectiveness and serving to the purpose. In recent years, staff trainings have been organized within grant projects that focused on quality assurance.

Realizing the importance of quality assurance for improving staff development system, it is planned to include activities towards regulating, documenting and assuring quality of human resources development in YSAFA's 2017-2021 Strategic Plan.

Contemporary teaching and learning methods suppose the use of modern technologies. Therefore, an important challenge is the involvement of young human resources that have relevant competences and promotion of their cooperation with the experienced staff. Such an approach enables to ensure comprehensiveness of new approaches and best traditions.

b) Procedural

The effective functioning of the institution is based on the human capital. Therefore, to ensure high performance of the staff, YSAFA continuously organizes events promoting staff professional development, which are available and in which are included equally institution's all operational departments. The university provides internal stakeholders with comprehensive information on upcoming events through YSAFA official web-site. Besides, internal stakeholders are given comprehensive information on upcoming events, but there are cases when the training is implemented for specific purpose and it is only for one or a few targeted departments. In this case the information is provided not only through web-site, but also by the department, who coordinates the process: The chairs mainly participate in trainings on academic programmes, administrative staff participates in trainings on management/administration etc. Implemented improvements such as review of academic programmes, organizational structure etc., prove conducted trainings so far. The university continues to implement events/trainings for promoting staff professional development, particularly:

- YSAFA initiates trainings to develop professional skills and competences of different target groups in the institution. The trainings are conducted in different areas - Academic Programmes and learning process, management and administration, etc., that are in line with the institution's strategic goals.
- YSAFA also is a partner in a number of grant projects within which administrative, teaching and support staff members are trained. The trainings are directed towards the improvement of YSAFA's management system, development and revision of Academic Programmes, development of research activities, internationalization. The staff members who are trained

abroad conduct in-house trainings.

- YSAFA always promotes staff professional development giving an opportunity to creative teachers to demonstrate their works free in the institution's hall, and to researchers to publish their articles free in "Taregirq" journal of scientific articles, thus promoting their career growth.
- YSAFA creates appropriate conditions for young teachers to work that allows to implement smooth generation transition of teachers. Leading teachers guide the young ones who are doing their first steps in the field (see appendix 33).

As a result of the trainings, a number of documents were developed; the Academic Programmes, assessment system, management approaches and other processes were reviewed.

YSAFA plans to develop a policy for professional development and a clear schedule for trainings in order to make staff professional development activities more systemized.

The main issue in trainings is the lack of trust and resistance of the staff towards new approaches. That is the reason why additional meetings are often necessary to organize.

Changes and improvement in human resources competences can arise in case of identifying a necessity for planning and incorporating a new process or making improvements in previous processes. When launching new processes or improving the existing processes, YSAFA organizes trainings on how to effectively arrange the relevant processes. This promotes adopting the changes.

c) Cultural

The opportunities and activities for human resources development are YSAFA's primary issues. Given the rapid developments in education area, any activity promoting professional growth is encouraged by the institution. Staff also realizes this. A large number of staff members are involved in these processes and mainly positively appreciate the initiatives.

Particularly, the mentoring process is attached importance that enables to exchange the best practice in the institution, thus giving an opportunity to young staff to become familiar with the institution's years of traditions and to develop them with new and modern approaches.

The development of teaching staff creativity is also promoted by a number of demonstrations where YSAFA staff has an opportunity to show their works for free. These events definitely get the best feedback from the staff.

Besides, in recent years, the staff participates in many local and international trainings that are initiated, conducted or participated by YSAFA. Trainings are one of the best options for

studying the experience at international level after which the feedback is not in place immediately taking into account adopting difficulties and the institution's peculiarities. However, the acceptance and application is a matter of time that is regularly resolved through a number of internal discussions and seminars held in the institution. Nevertheless, YSAFA employees are satisfied with provided services and the university and the staff understands the necessity of organizing more often and deeper professional trainings. University's budget constraint prevents the organization of these trainings. The latter is a problem of time and to overcome this the university searches external sources for financing, particularly grant project in the higher education field.

Thus, YSAFA definitely realizing the need for changes and improvements, assessing its strengths and weaknesses and future plans, actively follows staff professional development and growth in recent years, creates new opportunities and tries to involve large target groups in different events, therefore summing these up as a clear policy for promoting professional development.

III.3 Interaction with Research

a) Institutional

In YSAFA, the interaction between teaching and research is ensured through developing students' research skills within Academic Programmes as well as through disseminating results of the surveys conducted by PhD students and teachers among students. However, interaction between research and educational process, particularly its regulation, still remains an important challenge:

- creating documentation
- development of clear mechanisms to integrate research outcomes into teaching
- establishment of a grant system for **goal oriented** research in the institution
- ensuring involvement of students in research activities
- acquiring external financial resources

YSAFA has addressed the aforementioned challenges so far through a number of implemented reforms that include the following:

- research element has been more considered in undergraduate and graduate Academic Programmes.
- to improve the system for the 3rd level in higher education, YSAFA has been involved in TEMPUS VERITAS project. Within the project, the research center was established and the PhD programme was reviewed.
- PhD students teach undergraduate and graduate students introducing their research.

Development of research remains one of the most crucial areas for the institution, and the next Strategic Plan gives a major role to even more intense interaction and coordination between current research and teaching process (see Appendix 9).

b) Procedural

Considering the development of research an important area, YSAFA has done a number of activities planned by the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan. The process in the institution is regulated by the Vice-rector for Education and Science. The newly established Research Center and the relevant Chairs are responsible for content-based reforms as well as regulating interaction between research and teaching and disseminating the outcomes. The following activities have been done in YSAFA so far:

- In order to ensure the link between teaching and research, credits have been allocated to research works for Bachelor's and Master's degree Academic Programmes in YSAFA. 26 credits have been provided for doing research and preparing diploma work within Bachelor's degree Academic Programmes, and 60 credits - for Master's degree programmes. The relevant Chair and Academic Affairs are responsible for ensuring the research component in Bachelor's and Master's degree Academic Programmes.
- Taking into account the specificities of the specialties, in the applied area specialties (such as "Design", "Applied Art", etc.) the specialized subjects also include a research component. The goal is to deepen awareness on materials and tools, enhance professionalism, learn and develop art, promote creative imagination and study these all in the context of fine arts. For instance, while drafting a new thing or solving another task, doing the research of the similar already existing things and their parameters is part of the student's assignment.
- In theoretical specialties (such as "Theory of Arts"), a series of courses is included where students are introduced to the outcomes of the research conducted in YSAFA. These courses are often changed and are intended for introducing the outcomes of the current research conducted by the teachers.
- Scientific-theoretical research is done in theoretical programmes aimed at studying art works and development of art thinking in historical process. Within such research, students study the facts of fine arts, the content, stylistic and formal patterns of their creation, etc.
- In order to guide students through their research activities, in 2014 a Guide on how to prepare bachelor and master thesis was developed and used in YSAFA that summarized the relevant requirements (see Appendix 25). Students use the Guide while writing their final papers that makes their research activities more coordinated and targeted.
- The development of the Academic Programme for a researcher in line with Salzburg principles is one of the fundamental steps for improving research

activities in YSAFA. For this purpose, the institution applied for VERITAS grant project which not only the research programme was revised, but also the Research Center was established.

- The students of the Academic Programme for researchers introduce their research outcomes to bachelor and master students. The scientific articles written by the students of the programme for researchers sometimes become the necessary literature for other students.
- The outcomes of the research conducted in YSAFA often become methodological guides and textbooks. In recent years, the textbooks “Armenian History of Fine Arts” and “Armenian History of Painting” as well as 12 methodological manuals were published approved by YSAFA’s Scientific Council and accepted by the RA Supreme Certifying Commission.
- The newly established Research Center has developed a detailed and targeted Strategic Plan for research and has defined the research areas in theory of art to be applied at the institution for the next five years. These areas have been defined taking into account the material and human resources at the institution, current situation in art research area at the international level, contemporary issues, development trends, competitive field and topics, as well as local demand.
- The Research Center, together with the Chairs, has developed the research areas for the fields of painting, design and applied art for the first time in Armenia. It has defined the development trends and selected topics that will ensure the realization of the institution's mission in research and the increase of competitiveness at national and international levels.
- The Research Center regularly organizes events - meetings, debates, report-discussions, theme based presentations, reports on trips with the participation of the institution’s teachers and students as well as external professionals and invited teachers.
- Since this year, as the Center has initiated it is planned to establish a system for the planned introduction of the defined research topics for full-time and part-time teachers for at least one and maximum of three years. The topics should be selected within the research areas defined by the institution and the Center as well as within the Strategic Plan.

The implementation of changes/improvement in YSAFA’s research activities may be based on internal institutional as well as external stimuli that promote continuous improvement of the area. Following up with already implemented activities, YSAFA has considered development of research, especially interaction between research and teaching, as an important aspect in its future activities also which is stated in the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan. As well as to develop university’s research area, YSAFA participates in ERASMUS+ “Promoting Internalization of Research through Establishment and Operationalization of Cycle 3 Quality assurance System in Line with the European Integration Agenda” (C3QA) grant project. It aims at developing and piloting quality assurance policy and mechanisms

for cycle 3 education, particularly for PHD programmes. The project will promote not only development of academic programme of YSAFA's 3 cycle and university's research area but also establishment and continuous improvement of relevant conditions for research.

c) Cultural

In research activities, revealing a new idea is attached importance to, as well as introducing research outcomes and exchanging the experience with colleagues and students are valued. Doing these through formal and non-formal meetings and discussions enables not only to disseminate research outcomes, but also find ways to interact them with teaching process.

To promote research activities and dissemination of research outcomes YSAFA gives:

- additional paid hours for research to the teachers having scientific research activities;
- an opportunity to publish articles free in the institution's scientific journal;
- an opportunity to conduct seminars and comprehensive courses on research;
- a floor to disseminate research outcomes among students, teachers and external researchers to introduce and discuss the outcomes as well as to create new ideas and approaches.

Attaching importance to development of research and student involvement in scientific research activities, YSAFA has implemented a number of activities that are were planned by 2012-2016 Strategic Plan (Annex 2). The process in the institution is coordinated by the Vice-rector for Academic Affairs, and the newly established Research Center and relevant Chairs are responsible for content reforms. Moreover, the institution takes measures to interrelate research with teaching. in order to increase level of student involvement in research, YSAFA plans to establish institutional grant projects that will promote also strengthening of cooperation between students and teachers in research area.

The majority of the institution's internal stakeholders - teachers and students, accept and value the necessity to develop a new idea in research and disseminate the outcome. However, the number of teachers doing research is not big which is associated also with the institution's specificity. In order to improve the situation, the institution's 2017-2021 Strategic Plan focuses also on establishing a system for internal research grant projects. This system will aim at financing the research groups comprised of teachers and students who are conducting research in certain research areas, conducting research in specific areas and publishing the outcomes in internationally and locally reviewed journals, as well as introducing them in scientific workshops.

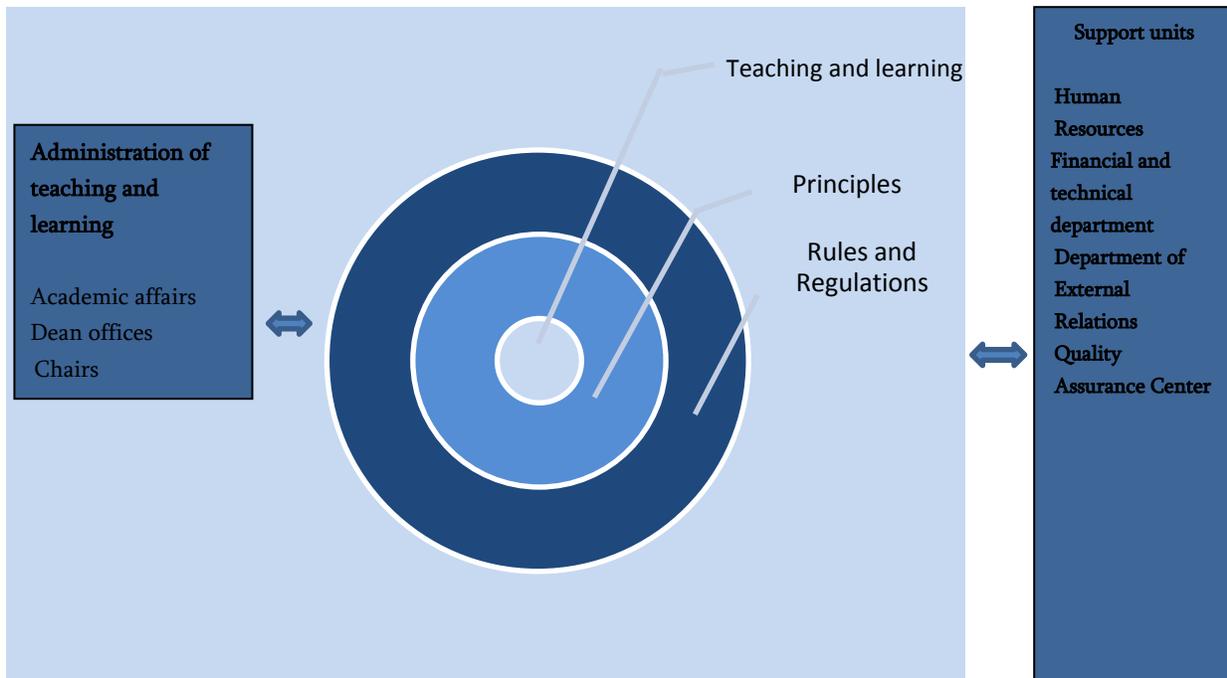
III.4 Interaction with Administration

a) Institutional

Attaching importance to role of administration in all processes of university's activity, YSAFA participate in TEMPUS "Fostering Autonomy & Accountability: Development of State-of-the-Art HE Management System for Efficient Changes in Line with Bologna Principles" (GOVERN) grant project to improve this. Within which YSAFA administrative staff were trained as well as many improvements were done: review of management system, development of many fundamental documents etc. The improvements done within the frames of project had their positive influence also on teaching and learning administration promoting increase of its effectiveness.

In YSAFA, the administration of teaching and learning is regulated by a number of documents - YSAFA Charter, Guide for Academic Programme Development and Review , Academic Programme Descriptions, Student Assessment System, YSAFA Code of Conduct, etc. These documents define the rules of ethics and how to implement processes, particularly the scope of cooperation and subordination links for the units involved in the relevant administrative process, the organizational procedure, as well as the authorities and responsibilities of the participants, etc.

YSAFA's Academic Affairs, the Dean Offices and the Chairs that directly coordinate and organize educational process are responsible for the administration of teaching and learning. However, the other administrative units in the institution - the Department of Human Resources, Quality Assurance Center, Financial and Technical Department, Department of External Relations, etc, support and promote smooth implementation of teaching and learning process.



All aforementioned units based on the regulating documents consider ethical norms as crucial while handling the administration of teaching and learning (see Appendix 13) and are led by the following principles:

- *Delegation management approach*: tasks are delegated and done in line with the links of subordination and communication among Departments
- *Cooperation*: processes are carried out based on mutual cooperation among Departments
- *Ensuring transparency*: YSAFA strives to ensure the availability of teaching and learning for internal and external stakeholders.

The Departments regulating the administration of teaching and learning support it in terms of planning the process, creating and developing the necessary documents, providing material and human resources, as well as financial aid to students, etc. As the results of the surveys conducted among teachers and students about the management and administration have indicated, these processes are well-coordinated. However, taking into account the expansion of the administration scope and documentation sharing being time-consuming, ensuring the efficiency and improvement of these processes has become a serious challenge for the institution in the recent years. For this purpose, YSAFA has launched the establishment of an electronic management system that will create a platform for teachers and students, thus making teaching and learning easier and more transparent as well as ensuring efficient coordination of its administration.

In addition, in recent years considering quality assurance of all processes, including administration as an important aspect, a number of processes have been initiated to promote

the evaluation of their effectiveness. However, the development and application of clear mechanisms and tools are another challenge that is addressed in the institution's 2017-2021 Strategic Plan.

b) Procedural

All units organizing the administration of teaching and learning are directly or indirectly involved in and ensure the development, implementation and further improvement of educational offers.

The Academic Affairs, Dean Offices and Chairs involved in teaching and learning have clear roles through directly supporting the implementation. The Academic Affairs provides necessary templates, regulations and deadlines to the Dean Offices and Chairs. As the ones responsible for teaching and learning process, they provide relevant feedback after using the documentations provided by the Academic Affairs which creates an opportunity for further improvements.

The Support Units also have their own specific role in the process of teaching and learning. They plan and provide material, human and financial resources, carry out quality assurance of the processes, as well as create opportunities for external cooperation and studying, adopting and exchanging international experience.

Taking into account the feedback on documentations provided by the Dean Offices, Chairs and Support Units and reviewing how the documentation has been used, The Academic Affairs takes measures towards changes and improvement.

The improvements and/or changes made in the administration area can be associated with internal institutional as well as external demands. YSAFA has done needs assessment to make the administration process more coordinated and efficient. As a result, the institution recruited more staff, redeveloped documents and procedures, initiated the establishment of the electronic management system, as well as took steps towards quality assurance of administration. However, the quality assurance of administration still remains a current aspect and is reflected in the institution's 2017-2021 Strategic Plan.

c) Cultural

In the administration of educational services, YSAFA attached importance to mutual cooperation among Departments, performing based on ethical norms, as well as be of benefit for teachers and students.

The Administration of the institution taking into account contemporary educational demands considers the involvement of stakeholders in Academic Programme development

and further improvement as well as in the management processes as an important area. The stakeholders should be responsive to the processes. The involvement of internal and external stakeholders enables to ensure the effectiveness of the institution's processes and their alignment with macro and micro environment in the institution. Stakeholders' involvement ensures the transparency of different processes in YSAFA. Moreover, accountability is considered important for each process. It itself ensures the follow-up implementation of the process. For accountability *purposes*, Rector's Annual Report that addresses different processes in the institution is placed on the website. These approaches being the basis for the administration processes are promoted through regular meetings and discussions as well as ensuring the availability of the regulatory documents and providing individual advising when required.

In order to ensure the awareness of the stakeholders and predict possible conflicts as well as to ensure effectiveness of the administration procedures, the drafts of the documents coordinating educational offers as well as the relevant procedures are submitted for discussion among YSAFA's different stakeholders. The received feedback serves as a basis for further improvements of the above-mentioned documents. If the effectiveness of the current regulations decreases or if a procedure needs certain adjustment, a discussion and further review can be initiated by the parties involved.

IV. Transparency and Documentation

IV.1 Rules and regulations for programmes/ courses/ trainings

a) Institutional

The institution has developed the appropriate documentations for the effective provision of Academic Programmes and courses. This significantly promotes regulating the institution's activities and ensuring transparency. The main administrative units responsible for developing the rules and regulations for educational offers are the Academic Affairs, Dean Offices and Chairs.

The admissions for the institution's Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes are held according to the "Regulation on Internal Admission Examinations for YSAFA's Bachelor's degree Academic Programmes" (see Appendix 20), the "Regulation on Admission Examinations for YSAFA's Master's degree Academic Programmes" (see Appendix 22) and the "Regulation on Admissions for YSAFA's foreign citizens" (see Appendix 18).

The following regulations refer to YSAFA applicants and to the professional and organizational Committees for Admissions. The assessment criteria and requirements as well as the organization of admissions and implementing procedure are defined by the above-mentioned Regulations.

There are certain documents regulating students' learning for the effective provision of the Academic Programmes.

All Academic Programmes in YSAFA are developed based on the "Guide for Academic Programme Development and Review" (see Appendix 5). Each Academic Programme has Academic Programme Description (see Appendix 34) for students and teaching staff. The description includes sufficient content and technical information about the Academic Programme, specifically the programme mission and rationale, learning outcomes, teaching and learning modes and methods, curriculum, material resources for the programme, necessary literature, etc.

Students have an opportunity to get appropriate information about Academic Programmes not only from a given Academic Programme Description, but also from the annually updated Student Handbook (see Appendix 29). The Handbook refers to YSAFA students and applicants. The Handbook includes comprehensive information on YSAFA operation in general as well as on Academic Programmes and other areas.

Another important document for the education process is the Concept Paper on Assessment in YSAFA addressed to administrative and teaching staff as well as to students (see Appendix

23). The Concept Paper describes the approaches and main principles for student assessment, as well as the processes for examination retaking, plagiarism, appeal for grades, etc.

While studying, students have an opportunity for mobility according to the “YSAFA Regulation on Student Mobility” referring to the administration and students (see Appendix 17). It is based on the “Regulation for Academic Mobility of Students in Higher Education Institutions” adopted by the RA Government. The processes for students’ mobility are coordinated by the Academic Affairs, and for international mobility - by the Department of External Relations.

The institution provides financial aid to students according to the “Regulation on Partial Reimbursement of Tuition Fee in the form of Student Scholarship” referring to the administration and students (see Appendix 30). The financial aid is provided to students by the institution based on good progress in their studies and/or on social status.

Withdrawals and readmissions of students at the institution are held according to the “Regulation on Withdrawals and Readmissions at the Armenian institutions” referring to the administration and students (see Appendix 35).

The relevant qualification is awarded to a Bachelor’s and Master’s degree programme student if he/she successfully presents the final paper and/or Master’s thesis. Students prepare their final papers based on “YSAFA Guide on Preparing Final Paper and Master’s Thesis” developed for teaching staff and students (see Appendix 25). At final attestation, students present their works. This is organized according to the “Regulation on Final Attestation” that refers to the administration, students, Committee for final attestation (see Appendix 24). The Regulation also defines the Procedure for Appealing Results of the Final Attestation. After successfully presenting the final paper and/or Master’s thesis, YSAFA provides state diploma. European-based Diploma supplement is also provided along with the Diploma (see Appendix 28).

The basic documents referring to educational offers are placed on the institution’s official website to ensure the availability of the current rules and regulations to internal and external stakeholders. It is worth to note that all current documents on educational offers appropriately coordinate educational process at different levels. However, the application requires efforts. So, the establishment of the electronic management system that takes into account all provisions outlined in these documents will help to increase effectiveness of the educational process.

b) Procedural

The initiation to review the rules at the institution can come from up to bottom (any change in state and/or international area) as well as bottom-up (suggestion/requirement made by the institution and/or a Department).

YSAFA's operation is based on a number of state fundamental documents. While developing the documentations for the educational and other processes, the institution takes into account a number of legal acts - RA Law on Education, RA Law on Higher and Postgraduate Education as well as other state regulations. Considering its Charter, the institution develops its rules and procedures as well as the code of conduct.

The institution reviews the current rules taking into account state policy in education area. The institution establishes a working group for the review of any rule involving the appropriate internal stakeholders. The working group makes necessary amendments that are discussed and approved by YSAFA's Scientific Council.

The institution's rules developed based on all state regulations are applied effectively and addressed to the main stakeholders at the institution. However, while following the rules different issues may arise associated not only with the current provisions in state regulations, but also with their application at the institution. Such issues are resolved through negotiations and discussions at the institution. The Academic Affairs is responsible for the organization.

c) Cultural

Students and teaching staff are adequately informed about the main approaches and principles of the rules, regulations and other basic documents for educational offers in the institution. The adopted rules and regulations are clear and understandable for all internal stakeholders. If there are certain points not clear to them, relevant discussions are held with required clarifications.

The basic documents regarding educational offers are on the institution's website, therefore they are available for internal as well as external stakeholders. Students and teaching staff are informed about the changes in teaching and learning by the Chairs and the Dean Offices. All current regulations and code of conduct in the institution refer to students as well as to all internal stakeholders.

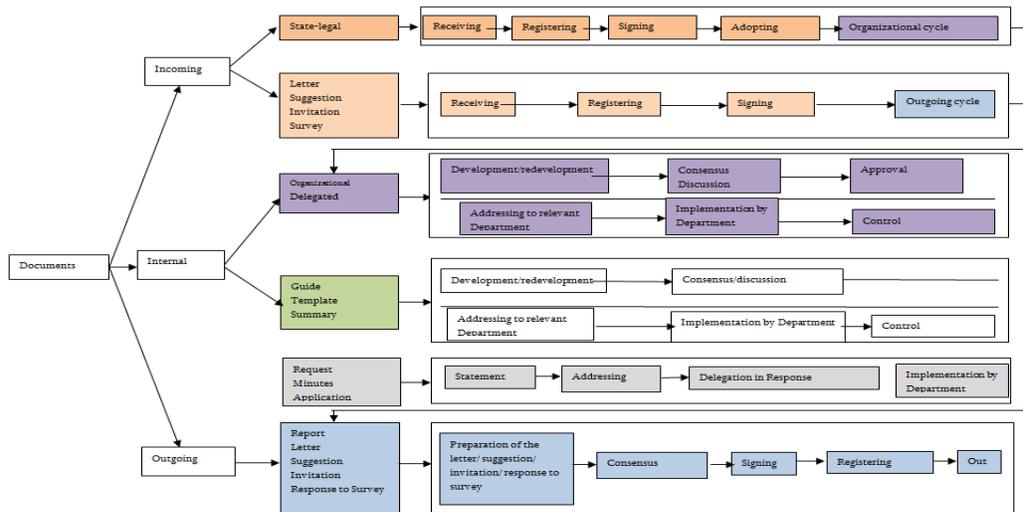
The effectiveness of the process to develop and apply the rules ensures not only the involvement of main stakeholders in development and review, but also the application of quality assurance tools for evaluation. For instance, the first year students in YSAFA evaluate the admission examinations from content and organizational perspectives. This approach helps to improve the process of conducting admission examinations.

IV.2 Documentation

a) Institutional

The system for the document management clearly distinguishes and demonstrates incoming, internal and outgoing document flow at the institution. The current system ensures smooth and transparent implementation of different processes at the institution. YSAFA's system for the document management is presented in the scheme below.

DOCUMENTATION FLOW IN YSAFA



There are organizational rules for development, maintenance and review of internal documents at the institution. Each developed document is available in paper and/or electronic forms. The necessary public documents are available also on the institution's website.

The documents are developed and available in different Departments depending on the nature of a given activity: basic documents referring to students are available at the Registrar's Office, documents on educational reforms - in Academic Affairs, information on the institution's staff - in HR Department, etc. All expired documents at the institution are archived based on the "Regulation on Archiving in YSAFA" (see Appendix 36).

There are electronic data management systems in separate Departments of the institution, such as systems for accounting processes, student learning progress and staff data. However, the current systems are not interrelated with one another. Therefore, the main challenge in the institution's documentation process is the establishment of a comprehensive electronic system. Currently, YSAFA takes steps towards the improvement of its documentation process. In 2017, a new electronic management system will be established that aims at increasing

effectiveness of the institution's documentation process. It will also promote strengthening communication links among Departments.

b) Procedural

In order to make documentation for teaching and learning more coordinated, the institution uses an electronic system for maintaining and managing student personal data and data on educational process. It includes information only on student progress, as well as personal and other information. Therefore, it does not reflect and include the comprehensive information and documents on teaching and learning. The main information and documents on teaching and learning are collected and kept in Chairs, Dean Offices and Academic Affairs.

The documents on teaching and learning promote more effective provision of the Academic Programmes. However, certain challenges may arise while using them. Seminars and discussions are organized and relevant experience is shared to overcome these challenges.

c) Cultural

The internal stakeholders of the institution receive comprehensive and necessary information about educational offers and provided services from different Departments.

YSAFA signs a contract with each member of the teaching staff that states in details the teacher's rights and responsibilities as well as general provisions on professional opportunities and working conditions (see Appendix 37). The relevant Chair provides information to teachers about teaching and learning, professional trainings and other scientific activities: in line with the institution's mission and goals and based on the curriculum, the Chairs provide a sample course description to teachers based on which the teaching staff develops its own course description.

A contract is signed with each student admitted to the institution stating the student's rights and responsibilities as well as general information about studying at the institution (see Appendix 38). The main information about educational process is provided to students by the Chairs and Dean Offices. The first year students have an opportunity to be informed about the educational offers and services at the institution also from the Student Handbook (see Appendix 29). Students get information about the institution as well as offered and provided services from YSAFA's website and different Departments. The Career Center provides information about trainings and seminars. Information on exchange programmes is provided and disseminated by the External Relations Department. Students are informed about educational administrative processes from the Registrar's Office, etc.

YSAFA attaches importance to confidentiality of the personal data about internal processes as well as students and staff. It is also defined by in the institution's work contract (see appendix 37) and YSAFA's Code of Conduct (see Appendix 13).

YSAFA considers the involvement of main stakeholders not only in teaching and learning, but also in other processes to be important. The institution continuously gets feedback about different processes at the institution from stakeholders through round table discussions and surveys. This promotes increasing the effectiveness of quality assurance as well as teaching and learning processes at the institution.