



# **PEER REVIEW REPORT**

**An Evaluation of the Alignment of Two Academic Programmes  
(‘Masters in Design’ and Bachelor in Computer Graphics’) and  
their Quality Assurance at ‘Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts’  
(YSAFA) – November 2016**

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## 1. Introduction

The ALIGN project seeks to enhance the intelligibility, consistency and transferability of qualifications through development and implementation of mechanisms for Higher Education Institutions (HEI) to achieve alignment with Qualifications Frameworks (QF) and for European Quality Assurance (EQA) to check such alignment.

The ALIGN project aims at:

- promoting a better understanding of HEIs and EQAs of the role of QFs, their structure, the differences between the different kinds and levels of student achievement;
- building on the capacity of HEIs to write and assess Learning Outcomes (LO) that define the various types of student achievement;
- building on the capacity of the HEIs to use the QF alignment to facilitate student transfer, joint qualifications and benchmarking;
- enabling the EQAs to check whether proposed LOs and their assessment mechanisms match the QF descriptors at each level by establishing mechanisms for ensuring consistency of judgments across institutions.

In conducting a peer review of two academic programmes at Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts (YSAFA) and of the quality assurance to support these programmes, our purpose has therefore been developmental. We hope that our findings and advice will be helpful both to the Academy (in documenting the achievements to date and in identifying further opportunities for enhancement) and to the Armenian higher education sector more widely as it seeks to align with European models of programme design, delivery and quality assurance.

## **2. The Peer-Review Process**

The aim of the peer-review process is to review two academic programmes, and the quality assurance principles and processes that relate to the approval/validation, review and enhancement of academic programmes at the university. The panel will seek to advise the university (through discussion and a written report) on the nature and extent to which

- (a) the two selected academic programmes have been aligned with European (European Higher Education Area) standards and national qualification frameworks;
- (b) the HEI's quality assurance processes are aligned with European and national requirements and expectations; and to provide
- (c) any recommendations that may help the university to further the alignment of its academic programmes and quality assurance processes with European and national standards.

### **Membership of the Panel**

David Quin (peer panel chair), Lecturer in the Faculty of Film, Art and Creative Technologies, Institute of Art Design and Technology, Dublin, Ireland.

Prof dr André Govaert, Visiting Professor, KULeuven, Belgium.

Zbigniew Palka, AMU Poznan, Poland.

Iring Wasser, Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA), Dusseldorf, Germany.

Ruben Topchayan - ANQA

Vahan Balasanyan - Lecturer at Computer Graphics

Bagrat Gyulkhasyan - Lecturer at Design

Narek Palasyan - Employer

Erik Vardanyan - Student (ANSA).

### **3. Observations on the Documentation Submitted and the Conduct of the Site Visit**

Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts is to be commended on its facilitation of the Tempus ALIGN site visit (November 2016). The meeting room provided was appropriate, translation was provided for both days of the site visit, and the peer-review panel was provided with all additionally requested facilities, such as wifi and printing. The Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts executive and senior managers, including the Vice-Rector, were clearly fully engaged with and enthusiastic about the ALIGN project, and we are grateful both for the hospitality shown to the external members of the panel, and for the professionalism and courtesy of all the Academy's staff throughout our visit.

Most of the panel members selected by the Academy (including staff, students, and employer representative) had good (often excellent) grasp of English, had clearly read the programme documentation carefully and were quick to understand and contribute to the peer review workings of the group. One Armenian panel member was also able to contribute to the written report.

The Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts QA team were well prepared and enthusiastically engaged with the work of the project. The team is to be commended on its professional approach to the process of peer review, and on its professional conduct during all of the panel's meetings and discussions. The panel is also very grateful to the students and alumni that it met for contributing so clearly honestly and helpfully to the discussions: these students were certainly a credit to the Academy and a testament to the quality of its academic programmes.

The two programme teams and leaders for "Design" and "Computer Graphics" are to be thanked for the documentation provided, and on meeting the deadline for submission. Both programme teams had clearly attempted to provide the information and the honest, critical self-assessment that had been requested, and had taken genuine 'ownership' of their documents. During the meetings with panel members, the teams argued clearly, collectively, and constructively in defense of their documents and programmes.

These two programmes have been brave in presenting their work for peer scrutiny and leading their Academy and other HEIs in Armenia in this challenging developmental process. They are to be commended on their on-going efforts.

## 4. Review of Two Academic Programmes

### 4.1 Programme ‘Master in Design ’

The expectation of the panel will be:

**In designing, delivering and monitoring an academic programme, the programme team (including its teachers and supporters of student learning) will meet the appropriate European and national standards and requirements.**

The panel has used a rating-scale to assess each of the ‘10 indicators of good practice’ for alignment of academic programmes. Each assessment may be accompanied by a short commentary on the rating given.

| INDICATOR 1   | ASSESSMENT   |
|---|--|
| The academic programmes are properly titled and lead to awards at the appropriate level, consistent with European and national frameworks for higher education qualifications, and the Dublin Descriptors for Masters’ awards.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> not achieved</li> <li><input checked="" type="radio"/> <b>partly achieved</b></li> <li><input type="radio"/> largely achieved</li> <li><input type="radio"/> fully achieved</li> <li><input type="radio"/> not applicable in this stage of the alignment</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>The review panel feels that the Master in Design is not yet clearly demonstrating alignment with the existing Armenia National Qualification Framework, either on the programme or on the course level. No clear alignment with EFQ or with Dublin Descriptors was provided in the documentation. The programme itself is developing and evolving, and its outcomes are strong – it’s just not being clearly mapped against the NFQ in the SER documentation.</p> <p>The ‘Design’ title is very broad and is potentially confusing for applicants, employers and other stakeholders. The programme team are aware of this and are struggling to reframe their programme (and its title) as they move forward, with an ongoing debate between industrial design, interior design, environmental design, product design, the need for national industrial development and the requirement to cope with changes in technology etc... The programme team’s current plan seems to be to title three specific programmes – Industrial Design, Product Design and Environmental Design. In the absence of Armenian sectoral frameworks, the current programme has ‘benchmarked’ against some ‘similar’ international programmes – all of the benchmarking exercises were desk-based, internet reviews, with little or no functional mobility for YSAFA staff and lecturers. The programme is not helped by the fact that there is currently no current YSAFA strategic plan in place (the old strategic plan has reached its end and the programme team claim that a new Academy strategy will be in place by December 2016).</p> |  |

The argument for keeping the current broad title is that a broader (more generalist) approach to design opens more doors to graduates. In order to justify this, the general design learning outcomes would need to be strengthened and courses which are not delivering the required knowledge, skills or competences would need to be removed or replaced. Alternatively, specialization in certain promising fields (eg. interior design, product design or environmental design) would impact not only on the name, but on the structure of the revised programmes. Whatever the outcome of this internal discussion, the Quality Assurance perspective demands that the programme name, content and learning outcomes need to correspond and need to be aligned with NFQ, with professional standards, with programme teaching, learning and assessment and with available staff and resources.

Crucially, alignment with Armenian NFQ, with EFQ and with Dublin Descriptors must be clearly mapped and explained in any SER documentation.

| INDICATOR 2   | ASSESSMENT   |
|---|--|
| <p>The academic programmes are informed by and consistent with professional/industry standards/requirements, where appropriate.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> not achieved</li> <li><input checked="" type="radio"/> <b>partly achieved</b></li> <li><input type="radio"/> largely achieved</li> <li><input type="radio"/> fully achieved</li> <li><input type="radio"/> not applicable in this stage of the alignment</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Comment</b></p> <p><b>A note here: It's difficult to form a complete or accurate opinion in this matter because the employer representative on the YSAFA peer review panel only attended the earliest part of the first (Day One) session, asked no questions and did not appear on Day Two of the peer review panel at all. No explanation was offered.</b></p> <p>The 'Design' programme clearly needs stronger, functional links with a broad industrial and employer base. The peer review panel would recommend that the Academy and the Masters in Design programme would completely reimagine, broaden and deepen their links with industry and employers.</p> <p>It's recognised that the quality assurance centre of YSAFA periodically (every four years) conducts surveys among graduates/alumni as well as employer organizations and professional unions according to the documentation (last in 2013 and 2016). These surveys are executed in order to get a feedback on professional and industry expectations, on the needs of the Armenian labour market and to identify the potential for curriculum adjustment.</p> <p>In terms of recent programme changes and developments, the programme team made it clear that 'we didn't discuss them with students or with employers'.</p> <p>There is a concern that such surveys should be conducted more regularly due to the fact that the field of Design is undergoing rapid transformations and that alternative tools and contact modes are used (focus groups, round tables and discussion groups for example). Some meetings with the employers are currently described as <b>"informal"</b>. This should be reconsidered (not least in light of the fact, that in a professionally oriented study program like design the need for close industry cooperation (through internships etc.) is especially high.</p> |  |

'80% to 90%' of the lecturers teaching in the Master course are practitioners in industry and, for a field of study that is closely connected to the professional world, this should be an important asset. However, this '80% to 90%' must be viewed in the context that all of the YSAFA lecturing teams are small in size and questions must be asked about the ability of a small number of lecturers to maintain informational currency across broad aspects of rapidly changing industries and technologies. Lecturers with limited opportunity for international mobility find it difficult to keep up to date with international best practice, new developments, innovation and change.

The execution and the defence of the Master thesis in cooperation with industry is one of the practical means to generate more feedback on the quality of the program.

Furthermore topics for the Master theses are said to usually emanate from the working place 'Our programmes come from the marketplace'.

Limited benchmarking exercises have been completed (there is even a handbook for academic program review) to identify ways for curricular modernization. The program coordinators themselves point to the high national competition in the field and argue that there is "a dire need to revise it and make it comparable with the national standards" (p. 20 of SER).

It is not clear (not least to the absence of a strategic plan for the period 2017-2022 which is currently being completed) which path the program will take in the future. This needs to be resolved. The Academy and the programme team need to take ownership of the future direction and potentials of this programme.

| INDICATOR 3   | ASSESSMENT  |
|---|---|
| The aims of the programmes are appropriate for the student intake, and can be realised through students' attainment of the programme/module learning outcomes.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ not achieved</li> <li>○ partly achieved</li> <li><b>x largely achieved</b></li> <li>○ fully achieved</li> <li>○ not applicable in this stage of the alignment</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>It is important to note, that this Masters programme is arranged on a full-time basis for very small groups. There is a strong emphasis on an individual approach to each of the students, whilst regular (weekly at least) contact with lecturers or with supervisors is encouraged. Students actively cooperate with lecturers in their learning process, which does lead to individual learning. Special emphasis is attached to the formation of students self education.</p> <p>This individual approach has its downside as students sometimes do not participate in formal classes offered on campus and the lecturing team seem to struggle with issues surrounding student attendance and participation. There seemed to be few or no developed Academy policies, guidelines or regulations on Masters attendance and participation, meaning that lecturers (and students) were unclear about procedures and best practice. There is close individual cooperation between the students, mentors and master thesis supervisors.</p> <p>No precise information could be found on the numbers of the students, on student intake, drop out and</p> |   |

completion rates which also renders any final judgement difficult.

Information gathered during the course of the on site visit revealed a concern about the very small number of Master students given a tight national competition and having also negative effects on budgetary issues.

| INDICATOR 4  | ASSESSMENT  |
|--|---|
| All learning outcomes at module level are at the appropriate level, and are assessed through fair, valid and reliable student assignments/tests.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ not achieved</li> <li><b>x partly achieved</b></li> <li>○ largely achieved</li> <li>○ fully achieved</li> <li>○ not applicable in this stage of the alignment</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>YSAFA currently has no clear criteria for assessing the learning outcomes and this was said to be work in progress. Also missing are criteria for the final work assessment, but again plans are reported to define and use them together with the already existing guide one preparing the final work.</p> <p>Course descriptors have been formulated and published appropriately stating the course purpose, learning outcomes, student’s workload, assessment methods and the list of literature according to a uniform fixed course description format.</p> <p>Course assessment is conducted through formative (daily and weekly periodic reviews, tests) and summative assessments (semester or final exams) conducted by professional commissions.</p> <p>On the positive side it is worth noting, that student assessment is conducted according to YSAFA Student Assessment system, published in the programme handbook, which explains assessment methods, ‘components of mark’, assessment scales, assessment criteria and some appeal procedures.</p> <p>As regards the issuing of a so called Diploma Supplement, this still needs to be addressed as currently it does not correspond to the “Bologna model”.</p> |   |

| INDICATOR 5   | ASSESSMENT  |
|---|---|
| Throughout their course of study, students are able to monitor their academic progress and development, and receive advice on how they can improve and enhance their work.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ not achieved</li> <li><b>X partly achieved</b></li> <li>○ largely achieved</li> <li>○ fully achieved</li> <li>○ not applicable in this stage of the alignment</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>Currently, students can get feedback from lecturers during the courses and can get individual advice when needed, though there appear to be no formal, written guidelines on these feedback procedures. In their meetings with the peer review panel, lecturers explained ‘the feedback is mainly oral. The teachers just tell</p> |   |

them’. ‘During the term reviews, all the feedback is written. In class, all the feedback is oral.’

However, with individualistic approaches to design studies where students frequently work on their own and are not on campus, the monitoring of academic progress constitutes a bigger challenge than in other types of postgraduate study programs.

Each Masters in Design student has a supervisor and weekly meetings are said to take place. One point of concern is the fact that as of now, industry representatives are not involved in the monitoring the progress and final **outcome** of the thesis.

The SER states that YSAFA is currently working on establishing a system that would enable to follow and monitor the student academic progress all along the student life cycle (from enrolment to graduation). Again this is work in progress and should be further elaborated in the implementation of the new (December 2016) strategic plan for the institution.

| INDICATOR 6  | ASSESSMENT  |
|--|---|
| <p>The teaching and learning activities employed within the modules are informed by reflection on professional practices, and designed to enable students to develop the knowledge, skills, abilities and professional competencies that will enable them to achieve the modules’ learning outcomes.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ not achieved</li> <li>○ partly achieved</li> <li><b>X largely achieved</b></li> <li>○ fully achieved</li> <li>○ not applicable in this stage of the alignment</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>During the review visit it was confirmed that students actively work together with their lecturers in an interactive learning process, leading to individual learning.</p> <p>The teaching and learning processes are characterized by two important facets: lecturers on the one hand in their vast majority are coming from the professional field. As the all professors and lecturers are currently working in their professional field, they know what market needs, and they’re trying to put all the needed for them in future, even when such market needs are not reflected in the course curriculum.</p> <p>Special emphasis is attached to the formation of students’ self-education. The Master theme is developed between lecturer and student in the first semester of the second year. Students said that they could ‘suggest’ thesis subjects. The Design internship is organized after semester exams. Lecturers ‘mostly’ chose where students went on internship, though students could ‘suggest’. Design students said that they ‘went to companies, to see how work is organised, but they did not do any work’. Design students wanted more practical internships, with real work for them to do.</p> <p>The alignment of teaching and learning methods with the programme LOs is a work in progress and needs further development and monitoring. At the moment, the tools for checking the alignment of the teaching and learning methods with assessment and with the course LOs are currently being developed for the programme. These will be applied for all YSAFA programmes in the future.</p> |   |

In spite of reported replenishment of laboratories, computer classrooms, photo laboratories and printing equipment, the material resource base of the study program under review was said to need further improvements. Library resources were said to be insufficient. 'We have small (Chair based) libraries. We give our students a bibliography and they can find books on the internet. We do check the links.'

| INDICATOR 7   | ASSESSMENT   |
|---|--|
| The structure of the programme ensures the progression of students' learning, and provides appropriate opportunities for student choice.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> not achieved</li> <li><b>X</b> <b>partly achieved</b></li> <li><input type="radio"/> largely achieved</li> <li><input type="radio"/> fully achieved</li> <li><input type="radio"/> not applicable in this stage of the alignment</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>At best, the feeling is that this indicator is only partly achieved. The structure of this programme does not seem to be strictly organised, subjects can be reordered and it's not clear which subjects are prerequisites for others. With any postgraduate programme student choice and the negotiation of self-directed student learning pathways should be the norm.</p> <p>Examples on this indicator given on page 23 of the SER were lacking in empirical evidence and key performance indicators (such as student progression, dropouts etc.).</p> <p>As was mentioned before, YSAFA is only now working on establishing a system that would enable to follow and monitor the student academic progress all along the student life cycle (from enrolment to graduation).</p> <p>As regards the question of choice, the Master program in Design offers 8 compulsory and 7 options courses; two of the list of electives can freely be chosen by the student during the course of his/her studies. With such small Masters student numbers, the opportunity for real subject choice is, in reality going to be extremely limited?</p> <p>The internship is organized after semester exams. Lecturers 'mostly' chose where students went on internship, though students could 'suggest'. Design students said that they 'went to companies, to see how work is organised, but they did not do any work'. The students wanted more practical internships, with real work.</p> <p>On choice of thesis subject, Masters in Design students indicated that they could 'suggest' subjects. This is not clear evidence of postgraduate student choice.</p> |  |

| INDICATOR 8   | ASSESSMENT   |
|---|--|
| The credits ratings (national and ECTS) for modules are properly aligned with the designated student workloads for the modules. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> not achieved</li> <li><input type="radio"/> partly achieved</li> <li><b>X</b> <b>largely achieved</b></li> <li><input type="radio"/> fully achieved</li> <li><input type="radio"/> not applicable in this stage of the</li> </ul> |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
|  | alignment |
| <b>Comment</b>   |           |
| <p>The 2 year study program carries 120 ECTS, with one ECTS being equal to 30 hours of student work load.</p> <p>In an art related study program, the calculation of average student workload constitutes a challenge with a lot of emphasis being given on academic self study and less on formalized lectures. Again, as no reliable data was given on student progression rates or dropout rates, it is difficult to come to a final conclusion on this indicator.</p> <p>Students when interviewed did not report discrepancies in the calculation of the programme workload.</p> <p>Students did point out that credits were not recognised on return from study placements abroad. 'You have to do extra exam on return? The courses are different. The subjects are different.'</p> |           |

| INDICATOR 9   | ASSESSMENT   |
|---|--|
| Students are provided with clear and current information about the learning opportunities and support available to them.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> not achieved</li> <li><input type="radio"/> partly achieved</li> <li><input type="radio"/> largely achieved</li> <li><input checked="" type="radio"/> <b>fully achieved</b></li> <li><input type="radio"/> not applicable in this stage of the alignment</li> </ul> |
| <b>Comment</b>  |  |
| <p>YSAFA has to be commended on the development and issuing of their Student Handbook – a great start, well done. The student handbook is in place with a description of the different academic courses and detailed information on YSAFA as an institution.</p> <p>Furthermore individual course descriptors are provided as part of the programme handbook. Teaching staff at the outset of each course do seem to inform students about courses aims, objectives, LO and assessment methods.</p> <p>Additional services are provided by the Career Centre, organizing seminars, job trainings etc. Last but not least the surveys of the QA centre of YSAFA by virtue of conducting multiple surveys on student's satisfaction rates provide valuable information.</p> |  |

| INDICATOR 10  | ASSESSMENT   |
|---|--|
| The design, delivery and monitoring of the academic programmes is 'student centred', engaging students collectively and individually as partners in the development, assurance and enhancement of their educational experiences (e.g., through effective representation of the student voice, discussions about opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> not achieved</li> <li><input checked="" type="radio"/> <b>partly achieved</b></li> <li><input type="radio"/> largely achieved</li> <li><input type="radio"/> fully achieved</li> <li><input type="radio"/> not applicable in this stage of the alignment</li> </ul> |

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| for course enhancement, involvement in quality assurance processes, and the monitoring and evaluation of student experiences). |  |
|--|--|

**Comment**

On page 26 of the SER and during the review visit a strong case was presented that students at YSAFA in general, in this program in particular are taking active part in the quality management of their learning experience. An important new organizational structure is the existence of the newly established Students Community (as a result of the ESPAQ TEMPUS project), to raise student awareness and participation.

However, in terms of recent programme changes and developments, the Masters in Design programme team in their peer review discussions made it clear that ‘we didn’t discuss them with students or with employers’.

When asked about student involvement in programme design, the programme team responded ‘We didn’t have students involved in this process. It needs preparation for the students. We formed a QA group and students are involved. They are trained in the QA process.’ Once again, the Academy needs to move on from its initial dependence on student surveys, to additional tools like focus groups and discussion groups.

Masters in Design students did however feel confident that they could make successful representations to The Dean, should they feel the need to ask for a new subject on their programme.

The Quality Assurance Centre regularly conducts the evaluation of the courses, the effectiveness of the course delivery and teacher progression skills, taking into account the student feedback. As regards the quality of physical facilities, student’s feedback led to an improvement in the laboratories for fashion design, computer graphics, design and applied arts.

The professionalization of staff was identified as a weak point, support services are not really there, no courses for lecturers were available and lecturer mobility was extremely poor. Training and ensuring capacity for staff development is said to be a priority in the next strategic plan (draft to be completed by December 2016), but again a plan for implementing this strategic goal and measuring its success needs to be elaborated.

### **Assessment of the Expectation for Alignment of the Academic Programme**

The YSAFA Masters in Design is a strong programme, with evident graduate satisfaction and solid graduate outcomes. However, it is appropriate that the programme team are examining the programme’s (perhaps over-broad) title and the ‘dire need to revise the programme and make it comparable with the national standards’ was clearly identified in the SER documentation (p.20).

Crucially, alignment with Armenian NFQ, with EFQ and with Dublin Descriptors must be clearly mapped and explained by the programme team. Such alignment must be clearly mapped and explained in any SER future documentation.

The programme team are to be commended on their enthusiasm and commitment, but, with such limited resources (including human resources) at their disposal, will need to carefully manage the ongoing challenges of development and alignment. Students and alumni too are to be commended as confident and communicative, a credit to the Masters in Design programme.

Opportunities for student choice seem very limited – both thesis subjects and internship locations seemed to be largely decided by lecturers, with students permitted to make ‘suggestions’. This is not clear evidence of appropriate, student-led, self-directed postgraduate pathway opportunities.

Students were not clearly involved in programme development – a lot of work goes into student surveys and the new Student Community allows student voice to be heard but functioning QA loops seemed informal at best.

The programme’s links with industry and employers need a complete reimagination. The programme needs broader, deeper and more systematic links with industry, with regular focus and discussion groups, rather than a dependence on surveys and ‘informal’ (ad hoc) contacts. The Masters in Design internship as described by the students seemed to be largely ‘observational’, with no work for the students to do.

## 4.2 Programme ‘Batchelor in Computer Graphics’

The expectation of the panel will be:

**In designing, delivering and monitoring an academic programme, the programme team (including its teachers and supporters of student learning) will meet the appropriate European and national standards and requirements.**

The panel has used a rating-scale to assess each of the ‘10 indicators of good practice’ for alignment of academic programmes. Each assessment may be accompanied by a short commentary on the rating given.

| INDICATOR 1  | ASSESSMENT   |
|--|--|
| The academic programmes are properly titled and lead to awards at the appropriate level, consistent with European and national frameworks for higher education qualifications, and the Dublin Descriptors for Masters’ awards. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> not achieved</li> <li><input type="radio"/> partly achieved</li> <li><input checked="" type="radio"/> <b>largely achieved</b></li> <li><input type="radio"/> fully achieved</li> <li><input type="radio"/> not applicable in this stage of the alignment</li> </ul> |

**Comment**

The Bachelor of Computer Graphics has been offered at YSAFA since 2001. The program prepares highly qualified specialists with in-depth knowledge and skills in computer graphics, 3D graphics, WEB site projection and graphic programming, product packaging, firm style design, computer advertisement and electronic business. Special emphasis on developing students' aesthetic perceptions as well as their abilities to turn their ideas into computer projections.

The name of the program is considered to be appropriate as is its alignment with the European Qualification Framework and the National Armenian Qualification Framework.

| INDICATOR 2  | ASSESSMENT  |
|--|---|
| The academic programmes are informed by and consistent with professional/industry standards/requirements, where appropriate. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> not achieved</li><li><input type="radio"/> partly achieved</li><li><b>X largely achieved</b></li><li><input type="radio"/> fully achieved</li><li><input type="radio"/> not applicable in this stage of the alignment</li></ul> |

**Comment**

The Quality Assurance Office of YSAFA periodically (every three or four years) conducts surveys among graduates/alumni as well as employer organizations and professional unions according to the documentation (according to oral testimony last in 2013 and 2016). These surveys are executed in order to get feedback on professional and industry expectations, on the needs of the Armenian labour market and to identify the potential for curriculum adjustment.

There is a concern that the surveys should be conducted more regularly due to the fact that the field of Design is undergoing rapid transformations. In addition, meetings with the employers however are said to have an **"informal status"** which also should be reconsidered (not least in light of the fact, that in a professionally oriented study program like Computer Graphics the need for close industry cooperation (through internships and placements etc.) is especially high. As a meeting with the employer side/alumni was not part of the review schedule, there was no possibility to further verify this information.

On the positive side it must be noted, that most of the lecturers teaching in the Bachelor programme in Computer Graphics are practitioners. For a field of study that is closely connected to the professional world, this is an important asset. In any future 'Computer Graphics' Programme SER, the 'story' of the programme's linkages with industry must be told better, explained better. The execution and the defence of the Bachelor thesis (diploma) in cooperation with industry is one of the practical means to generate more feedback on the quality of the program.

YSAFA furthermore organizes internships, e.g. in the second semester of each of the three academic years

each with a duration of 4 weeks. The organization of these internships however remain a concern (more meaningful internships in industry ('with real work') were requested by the interviewed students). Students also requested more exchanges between programmes and at international level (even for short periods of time).

Also benchmarking exercises have been carried through (there is even a handbook for academic program review) to identify ways for curricular modernization. The program coordinators themselves point to the high national competition in the field and argue that there is “a dire need to revise it and make it comparable with the national standards” (p. 10 of SAR).

| INDICATOR 3   | ASSESSMENT  |
|---|---|
| <p>The aims of the programmes are appropriate for the student intake, and can be realised through students’ attainment of the programme/module learning outcomes.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ not achieved</li> <li><b>x partly achieved</b></li> <li>○ largely achieved</li> <li>○ fully achieved</li> <li>○ not applicable in this stage of the alignment</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>It is important to note that as opposed to the permissive admission rules for other Armenia HE study programs, this Bachelor programme does feature entrance examinations before the beginning of the study programme, testing the artistic aptitude of applicants and thereby contributing to a “more homogenous” student intake. It must also be noted that there appears to be a consistently high demand for this programme (‘one of the 3 most demanded programmes’ (SER P.16)).</p> <p>One of the specific features of art and media programs is the emphasis on an individual approach to each of the students. In the Bachelor in Computer Graphics programme students actively cooperate with lecturers in learning process, which leads to individual learning. Special emphasis is attached to the formation of students self education.</p> <p>This individual approach has its downside as students frequently are not participating in formal classes offered on campus. On the other hand there is usually a close individual cooperation between the student and his/her mentor (or supervisor of the master thesis chosen in the first semester of the second year together by the students and the lecturer).</p> <p>In the SER, no precise information was provided on students intake numbers, drop out and completion rates which renders a final judgement difficult.</p> <p>The programme team have worked hard on programme and module LOs, but work the assessment of LOs is still to be completed. As a result, it’s difficult to know with any reliability whether programme and/or</p> |   |

module LOs are consistently being achieved by successful students.

| INDICATOR 4  | ASSESSMENT   |
|--|--|
| <p>All learning outcomes at module level are at the appropriate level, and are assessed through fair, valid and reliable student assignments/tests.</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> not achieved</li> <li><b>X</b> <b>partly achieved</b></li> <li><input type="radio"/> largely achieved</li> <li><input type="radio"/> fully achieved</li> <li><input type="radio"/> not applicable in this stage of the alignment</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>Course description have been formulated and published appropriately stating the course purpose, learning outcomes, student’s workload, assessment methods and the list of literature according to a uniform fixed course description format.</p> <p>Course assessment is conducted through formative (period reviews, tests) and summative assessments (semester or final exams) conducted by professional commissions.</p> <p>Concerns remain as YSAFA as of now has no clear criteria for assessing the learning outcomes, but this was said to be work in progress. Also missing are criteria for the final work assessment, but again plans are reported define and use them the together with the already existing guide one preparing the final work.</p> <p>On the positive side it is worth noting, that all other student assessment is conducted according to a YSAFA Student Assessment system, published in the programme handbook, which explains assessment methods, ‘components of mark’, assessment scales, assessment criteria and some appeal procedures. Students were content with their assessments and were quite clear about the validity, reliability and fairness of the assessment methods.</p> <p>As regards the issuing of a so called Diploma Supplement, this still needs to be addressed as currently is does not correspond to the “Bologna model”.</p> |  |
| INDICATOR 5  | ASSESSMENT   |
| <p>Throughout their course of study, students are able to monitor their academic progress and development, and receive advice on how they can improve and enhance their work.</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> not achieved</li> <li><b>X</b> <b>partly achieved</b></li> <li><input type="radio"/> largely achieved</li> <li><input type="radio"/> fully achieved</li> </ul>  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ not applicable in this stage of the alignment</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>During the review process it was confirmed that students can get feedback from the teachers during the courses and can get individual advice from lecturers where needed. Most of the (daily and weekly) feedback offered is oral, with written feedback presented for term assessments. A problem is the individualistic approach to art and media studies where students (even undergraduate students) work on their own and are not on campus or are not attending the classes. Under these circumstances, the monitoring of academic progress constitutes a bigger challenge than in other study programs. There is currently no formal 'system' to enable students to monitor and review their progress. The SER does allude to the fact that YSAFA is currently working on setting a system that would enable to follow and monitor the student academic progress all along the student life cycle (from enrolment to graduation). Again this is work in progress and should be further elaborated in the implementation of the new strategic plan of the institution.</p> |   |

| INDICATOR 6  | ASSESSMENT  |
|--|---|
| <p>The teaching and learning activities employed within the modules are informed by reflection on professional practices, and designed to enable students to develop the knowledge, skills, abilities and professional competencies that will enable them to achieve the modules' learning outcomes.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ not achieved</li> <li>○ partly achieved</li> <li><b>X largely achieved</b></li> <li>○ fully achieved</li> <li>○ not applicable in this stage of the alignment</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>Again, the programme team have worked hard on programme and module LOs, but work on the assessment of LOs is still to be completed. As a result, it's difficult to know with any reliability whether programme and/or module LOs are consistently being achieved by successful students.</p> <p>During the review visit it was confirmed that students actively work together with their lecturers in an interactive learning process, leading to individual learning.</p> <p>The teaching and learning processes are characterized by two important facets: lecturers on the one hand in their vast majority are coming from the professional field. As regards the learning process on the other hand, special emphasis is attached to the formation of students self education.</p> <p>As regards the alignment of teaching and learning methods with the course LOs, this is again work in progress to be further developed and monitored.</p> <p>In spite of reported replenishment of laboratories, computer classrooms, photo laboratories and printing equipment, the material resource base of the study program under review was said to need further</p> |   |

improvements. Library resources for the Bachelor in Computer Graphic programme were said to be insufficient.

| INDICATOR 7   | ASSESSMENT  |
|---|---|
| <p>The structure of the programme ensures the progression of students' learning, and provides appropriate opportunities for student choice.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> not achieved</li> <li><input type="radio"/> partly achieved</li> <li><b>x largely achieved</b></li> <li><input type="radio"/> fully achieved</li> <li><input type="radio"/> not applicable in this stage of the alignment</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>It is important to note that as opposed to the liberal admission rules for other Armenia HE study programs, for this Bachelor program comprehensive entrance examination are taking place before the beginning of the study program testing the artistic aptitude of potential students thereby contributing to a "more homogenous" student intake.</p> <p>What was already mentioned for the Master program in design also applies to this Bachelor: empirical evidence, are key performance indicators (such as student progression, dropouts etc.) were not provided in a systematic fashion in the SER in order to demonstrate compliance with this criterion.</p> <p>On a positive note: YSAFA is only now working on setting a system that would enable to follow and monitor the student academic progress all along the student life cycle (from enrolment to graduation).</p> <p>As regards the question of choice, the Bachelor program in Computer Graphics has 31 core and 8 optional courses. According to p.18 of the SER, 'the student through study period has a chance to choose between several optional courses to enhance his/her professional skills in the field'. The SER documentation fails to explain the optional courses and/or how such courses might enhance professional skills.</p> <p>On the internship, students made it clear that lecturers 'mostly' chose where students went on internship, though students could 'suggest'.</p> |   |

| INDICATOR 8  | ASSESSMENT  |
|--|---|
| <p>The credits ratings (national and ECTS) for modules are properly aligned with the designated student workloads for the modules.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> not achieved</li> <li><input type="radio"/> partly achieved</li> </ul> |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p><b>X largely achieved</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ fully achieved</li> <li>○ not applicable in this stage of the alignment</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>The Bachelors degree in Computer Graphics is a full time, 4 year study program carrying 240 ECTS, with one ECTS being equal to 30 hours of student work load.</p> <p>In an art related study program, the calculation of average student workload constitutes a challenge with a lot of emphasis being given on academic self study and less on formalized lectures. Again, as no reliable data on student progression rates or dropout rates was presented in the SER, it is impossible to come to a final conclusion on this indicator.</p> <p>Students when interviewed did not report discrepancies in or problems with the calculation of the workload.</p> <p>From the SER documentation it was not clear how or why 26 credits was given for the internship.</p> |  |

| <b>INDICATOR 9</b>  | <b>ASSESSMENT</b>   |
|---|---|
| <p>Students are provided with clear and current information about the learning opportunities and support available to them.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ not achieved</li> <li>○ partly achieved</li> <li>○ largely achieved</li> <li><b>x fully achieved</b></li> <li>○ not applicable in this stage of the alignment</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>Compliance with this criterion was demonstrated during the review visit. A comprehensive student handbook is in place with a description of the different academic courses and detailed information on YSAFA as an institution – well done.</p> <p>Furthermore individual course descriptions as part of the programme handbook are provided. Teaching staff at the outset of each course do inform students about courses aims, objectives, LO and assessment methods.</p> <p>Further services are provided by the Career Centre, organizing seminars and job trainings etc. Last but not least the surveys of the QA centre of YSAFA by virtue of conducting multiple surveys on student's</p> |   |

satisfaction rates provide valuable information.

| INDICATOR 10   | ASSESSMENT  |
|--|---|
| <p>The design, delivery and monitoring of the academic programmes is ‘student centred’, engaging students collectively and individually as partners in the development, assurance and enhancement of their educational experiences (e.g., through effective representation of the student voice, discussions about opportunities for course enhancement, involvement in quality assurance processes, and the monitoring and evaluation of student experiences).</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ not achieved</li> <li>○ partly achieved</li> <li><b>X largely achieved</b></li> <li>○ fully achieved</li> <li>○ not applicable in this stage of the alignment</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>A strong case was presented through the SER documentation and the review visit that students at YSAFA in general, and in this Bachelor in Computer Graphics programme in particular are taking active part in the quality management of their learning experience. An important new organizational structure is the existence of the newly established (as a result of the TEMPUS ESPAQ project) Students Community, to raise student awareness and participation.</p> <p>However, in terms of recent programme changes and developments, the YSAFA teams in their peer review discussions made it clear that ‘we didn’t discuss them with students or with employers’.</p> <p>When asked about student involvement in programme design, the programme team responded ‘We didn’t have students involved in this process. It needs preparation for the students. We formed a QA group and students are involved. They are trained in the QA process.’</p> <p>The YSAFA Quality Assurance Office regularly conducts the evaluation of the courses, the effectiveness of the course delivery and teacher progression skills, taking into account the student feedback. As regards the quality of physical facilities, student’s feedback led to an improvement in the laboratories for fashion design, computer graphics, design and applied arts.</p> <p>The professionalization of staff was identified as a weak point, support services are not really there, no course for lecturers available for now. Training and ensuring capacity for staff development is said to be a priority in the next strategic plan, but again a plan for implementing this strategic goal and measuring its success needs to be elaborated.</p> |   |

### Assessment of the Expectation for Alignment of Academic Programme

The YSAFA Bachelors in Computer Graphics is a strong programme, with evident applicant demand, strong graduate satisfaction and solid graduate outcomes.

Crucially, alignment with Armenian NFQ, with EFQ and with Dublin Descriptors must be clearly mapped and explained by the programme team. Such alignment must be clearly mapped and explained in any SER future documentation.

The programme team are to be commended on their enthusiasm and commitment, but, with such limited resources (including human resources) at their disposal, will need to carefully manage the ongoing challenges of development and alignment. Students and alumni too are to be commended as confident and communicative, a credit to the Bachelor in Computer Graphics programme.

Opportunities for student choice seem limited – the SER documentation did not adequately explain the 8 ‘optional’ courses and internship locations seemed to be largely decided by lecturers, with students permitted to make ‘suggestions’.

Students were not clearly involved in programme development – a lot of work goes into student surveys and the new Student Community allows student voice to be heard but functioning QA loops seemed informal at best.

Again, the programme’s links with industry and employers need a complete reimagination. The programme needs broader, deeper and more systematic links with industry, with regular focus and discussion groups, and stronger internships rather than a dependence on surveys, ‘informal’ (ad hoc) contacts and lecturer-practitioners.

## **5. Review of Quality Assurance for Academic Programmes at ‘Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts’ (YSAFA)**

The Expectation of the Panel will be:

**In setting and maintaining standards and assuring quality, the university will operate clear and effective processes for the design, approval, delivery, monitoring, and support and development of its academic programmes in accordance with European and national standards and requirements.**

The panel has used a rating-scale to assess each of the 10 indicators for alignment of quality assurance. Each assessment may be accompanied by a short commentary on the rating given.

| INDICATOR 1   | ASSESSMENT   |
|---|--|
| <p>There are clear criteria against which academic programmes are assessed in the programme approval, monitoring and review processes.</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>not achieved</i></li> <li><b>X</b> <i>partly achieved</i></li> <li>○ <i>largely achieved</i></li> <li>○ <i>z - fully achieved</i></li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>According to the SER documentation, programme approval, monitoring and review at YSAFA is conducted according to 'Quality Assurance Handbook' procedures, 'National Guidelines on Aligning the Academic Programmes to the NQF' and 'YSAFA Guidelines on AP design, monitoring and alignment'. None of these documents was clearly explained in the SER documentation and no clear picture of the role or place of such documentation in the YSAFA QA process was presented. Similarly, no clear criteria against which academic programmes in YSAFA are assessed was presented through the SER documentation.</p> <p>Students, employers and other stakeholders (including the painters' union and the designers' union) are consulted and alumni are questioned – especially in relation to employability. The YSAFA Quality Assurance Office does conduct regular evaluations of the programmes, the effectiveness of the course delivery and teacher progression skills, taking into account the student feedback, but (again) the criteria for such evaluations are not clear in the SER documentation. Some guidance documents do exist (notably the 'YSAFA Students Assessment System' and the 'Guide on Preparing Bachelor Diploma Work and Master Thesis Paper'.</p> |  |

| INDICATOR 2   | ASSESSMENT   |
|---|--|
| <p>The roles and responsibilities for programme design, development, approval and monitoring are clearly articulated.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>not achieved</i></li> <li><b>X</b> <i>partly achieved</i></li> <li>○ <i>largely achieved</i></li> <li>○ <i>z - fully achieved</i></li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>The difficulty in YSAFA in relation to roles is that the programme teams are extremely small. Because of this, the same people tend to be responsible for every aspect of programme design, development, approval and monitoring. An additional challenge is that the financial resources of the Academy are limited, making it problematic or impossible to provide adequate staff training, staff pedagogical development, adequate staff foreign language development and staff mobility. The YSAFA QA Office is staffed by two people (one of these a very recent appointment). Some advantages are that the QA Office is in no way isolated in YSAFA and (theoretically) it should be somewhat easier to make changes in a small macro-organisation such as the Academy.</p> <p>YSAFA have been involved in several Tempus projects (including ALIGN and ESPAQ) and have benefitted from the capacity building opportunities afforded by such projects. YSAFA are also commendably involved in cross-institution linkages at a national level and such national benchmarking (and the sharing of best practice) has also brought clear benefits. Despite all of this, the team at YSAFA are at the earliest stages of modernisation and alignment and will need substantial capacity building over the coming years, possibly through Erasmus+ style linkages and mobilities.</p> |  |

| INDICATOR 3   | ASSESSMENT   |
|---|--|
| Students are involved in programme design and in the processes of programme development, approval, monitoring and review.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>not achieved</i></li> <li><b>X</b> <i>partly achieved</i></li> <li>○ <i>largely achieved</i></li> <li>○ <i>fully achieved</i></li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>Students are surveyed and feel confident that they can make actionable suggestions on programme development (or change) to The Dean. But students in YSAFA are not yet directly involved in programme development, approval, monitoring and review.</p> <p>In terms of recent programme changes and developments, the programme teams in their peer review discussions made it clear that ‘we didn’t discuss them with students or with employers’.</p> <p>When asked about student involvement in programme design, the programme team responded ‘We didn’t have students involved in this process. It needs preparation for the students. We formed a QA group and students are involved. They are trained in the QA process.’</p> |  |

| INDICATOR 4  | ASSESSMENT   |
|--|--|
| There are effective policies which ensure that the academic standards for credits and awards are rigorously maintained at the appropriate level, and that student performance is judged against these standards.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>not achieved</i></li> <li><b>X</b> <i>partly achieved</i></li> <li>○ <i>largely achieved</i></li> <li>○ <i>fully achieved</i></li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>Again, according to the SER documentation, programme approval, monitoring and review at YSAFA is conducted according to ‘Quality Assurance Handbook’ procedures, ‘National Guidelines on Aligning the Academic Programmes to the NQF’ and ‘YSAFA Guidelines on AP design, monitoring and alignment’. None of these documents was clearly explained in the SER documentation and no clear picture of the role or place of such documentation in the YSAFA QA process was presented. Similarly, no clear criteria against which academic programmes in YSAFA are assessed was presented through the SER documentation.</p> <p>The SER documentation asserted that student assessment is conducted according to the ‘YSAFA Student Assessment System: conceptual provisions’, a document which ‘clearly states the assessment principles, table as well as the student integrity and appeal procedure’. The final diploma work or Master thesis papers are prepared and defended according to the ‘Guide on Preparing Bachelor Diploma Work and Master Thesis Paper’.</p> <p>The current system does not yet include the assessment criteria for LOs. The SER documentation also admits that YSAFA has to develop ‘certain criteria for assessing the final project/work’.</p> |  |

| INDICATOR 5  | ASSESSMENT  |
|--|---|
| There are clear and effective policies and processes for assessing the recognition of prior learning and supporting student mobility between courses of study and institutions.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>not achieved</i></li> <li><b>X</b> <b><i>partly achieved</i></b></li> <li>○ <i>largely achieved</i></li> <li>○ <i>fully achieved</i></li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Comment</b></p> <p><b><i>There is no mechanism for assessing the recognition of prior learning in Armenia. There appears to be little or no mobility between Armenian universities or Academies.</i></b></p> <p>On international mobility, some mechanisms exist, but language and finance remain the biggest challenges for Armenian students. Students also pointed out that credits were not recognised on return from study placements abroad. ‘You have to do extra exam on return? The courses are different. The subjects are different.’</p> |   |

| INDICATOR 6   | ASSESSMENT  |
|---|---|
| Knowledge of professional standards/requirements and external expertise (e.g., from subject experts, employers and professional associations) is used to inform the design, development, approval and monitoring of academic programmes.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>not achieved</i></li> <li><b>X</b> <b><i>partly achieved</i></b></li> <li>○ <i>largely achieved</i></li> <li>○ <i>fully achieved</i></li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>The Academy and the programmes need to completely reimagine, broaden and deepen their links with industry and employers.</p> <p>It’s recognised that (according to the SER documentation and the peer review discussions) ‘80% to 90%’ of the lecturers teaching on the revised programmes are practitioners in industry. For fields of study which need to be closely connected to the professional world, this should be an important asset. However, this ‘80% to 90%’ must be viewed in the context that all of the YSAFA lecturing teams are small in size and questions must be asked about the ability of a small number of lecturers to maintain informational currency across broad aspects of rapidly changing industries, trends and technologies. Lecturers with limited opportunity for international mobility will also find it difficult or impossible to keep up to date with international best practice, new developments, innovation and change.</p> <p>Students, employers and other stakeholders (including the painters’ union and the designers’ union) are consulted and alumni are questioned – especially in relation to employability. But in terms of recent programme changes and developments, the programme team made it clear that ‘we didn’t discuss them with students or with employers’. Regular consultation with employers and external stakeholders needs to be a core part of the YSAFA QA process and needs to be a priority in any Academy strategic plan.</p> |   |
| INDICATOR 7   | ASSESSMENT  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>There are appropriate arrangements to train and support academic and professional/administrative staff who are involved in the design, delivery, approval and monitoring of academic programmes.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>not achieved</i></li> <li><b>X</b> <i>partly achieved</i></li> <li>○ <i>largely achieved</i></li> <li>○ <i>fully achieved</i></li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>According to the SER documentation, YSAFA has not developed a policy to systematically train its staff and faculty members. Yes, the Academy is involved in numerous grant-based projects (including Tempus projects) and ‘trainings, seminars, workshops and conferences’ are attended. In addition, local seminars and trainings are conducted with Universities in Yerevan (notably Brusov) and in-house trainings and workshops are organised. All of this activity has brought modest, incremental benefit to the YSAFA staff.</p> <p>However, staff training and development remains a key weakness. The situation is not helped by the fact that there seem to be little or no resources to enable staff international mobility. YSAFA staff express the need for more training on the use of appropriate tools for programme development, programme delivery, programme monitoring and feedback to students. The use of QA department questionnaires is not enough to ensure the required programme development, delivery or monitoring.</p> <p>A policy is required and staff training and development (especially ongoing and continuous pedagogical development) needs to be prioritised in any YSAFA Strategic Plan.</p> |  |

| <b>INDICATOR 8</b>   | <b>ASSESSMENT</b>  |
|--|--|
| <p>There are clear policies and processes in place to ensure the integrity of student assessment (e.g., though marking schemes, moderation processes, examination board regulations), and the effectiveness of these policies is regularly reviewed.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>X</b> <i>not achieved</i></li> <li>○ <i>partly achieved</i></li> <li>○ <i>largely achieved</i></li> <li>○ <i>fully achieved</i></li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>The current system does not yet include the assessment criteria for LOs. The SER documentation also admits that YSAFA has to develop ‘certain criteria for assessing the final project/work’.</p> <p>The SER documentation asserted that student assessment is conducted according to the ‘YSAFA Student Assessment System: conceptual provisions’, a document which ‘clearly states the assessment principles, table as well as the student integrity and appeal procedure’. The final diploma work or Master thesis papers are prepared and defended according to the ‘Guide on Preparing Bachelor Diploma Work and Master Thesis Paper’. The Diploma work and Final Theses are currently assessed by commissions, who are operating without clear assessment criteria.</p> |  |

| <b>INDICATOR 9</b>  | <b>ASSESSMENT</b>  |
|---|--|
| <p>The policies and processes of programme design, development, approval and monitoring</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>X</b> <i>not achieved</i></li> <li>○ <i>partly achieved</i></li> </ul> |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| are regularly reviewed in order to ensure the effectiveness and continuous enhancement of current practices.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>largely achieved</i></li> <li>○ <i>fully achieved</i></li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>Again, according to the SER documentation, programme approval, monitoring and review at YSAFA is conducted according to ‘Quality Assurance Handbook’ procedures, ‘National Guidelines on Aligning the Academic Programmes to the NQF’ and ‘YSAFA Guidelines on AP design, monitoring and alignment’. None of these documents was clearly explained in the SER documentation and no clear picture of the role or place of such documentation in the YSAFA QA process was presented. Similarly, no clear criteria against which academic programmes in YSAFA are assessed was presented through the SER documentation. There was no reference to the ‘regular review’ of such policies and regulatory documents.</p> <p>The SER documentation asserted that student assessment is conducted according to the ‘YSAFA Student Assessment System: conceptual provisions’, a document which ‘clearly states the assessment principles, table as well as the student integrity and appeal procedure’. The final diploma work or Master thesis papers are prepared and defended according to the ‘Guide on Preparing Bachelor Diploma Work and Master Thesis Paper’. Again, there is no reference to the ‘regular review’ of such policies and regulatory documents.</p> |  |

| <b>INDICATOR 10</b>   | <b>ASSESSMENT</b>  |
|---|--|
| There are effective policies in place to ensure that staff appointed to teach and support student learning on academic programmes are appropriately qualified, and that delivery of the programmes is supported by the appropriate learning resources.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>not achieved</i></li> <li>○ <i>partly achieved</i></li> <li><b>X</b> <i>largely achieved</i></li> <li>○ <i>fully achieved</i></li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>YSAFA staff members are appointed according to ‘YSAFA regulations on job distribution and YSAFA Recruitment Policy’.</p> <p>However, staff training and development remains a key weakness. The situation is not helped by the fact that there seem to be little or no resources to enable staff international mobility.</p> <p>According to the SER documentation, YSAFA has not developed a policy to systematically train its staff and faculty members. Yes, the Academy is involved in numerous grant-based projects (including Tempus projects) and ‘trainings, seminars, workshops and conferences’ are attended. In addition, local seminars and trainings are conducted with Universities in Yerevan (notably Brusov) and in-house trainings and workshops are organised. All of this activity has brought modest, incremental benefit to the YSAFA staff.</p> <p>A policy is required and staff training and development (especially pedagogical development) needs to be prioritised in the YSAFA Strategic Plan.</p> <p>On learning resources, a lot of effort is being invested in upgrading the laboratories and teaching spaces. It’s obvious that the small, ‘Chair-based’ libraries are completely inadequate and unable to cope with rapidly changing disciplines like Design and Computer Graphics. Some innovative thinking is required to improve</p> |  |

access for YSAFA students to adequate library resources.

### **Assessment of the Expectation for Alignment of Quality Assurance**

*(The panel will provide a short account of how far and in what ways the expectation has/has not been met.)*

The Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts has clearly started to develop a team of people, policies and processes that will help it to move towards quality assurance and enhancement that is consistent with European guidelines. Although progress has been made on several important fronts, there is still more that needs to be done at Academy, Faculty and Programme levels in order to ensure that the Academy is able to demonstrate its attainment of this Expectation.

## **6. Summary of Findings**

From its desk review of the documentation provided and from its the discussions held with staff, students and other stakeholders throughout the site visit, the panel is confident that there are many admirable qualities and features of the two academic programmes submitted for peer review. These qualities and features are not always as clearly articulated in the documentation as they could be. The progress toward Alignment has been good, but inevitably there are still many elements of Alignment (of programmes and of quality assurance) that need further attention before full Alignment can be approached. Many particular aspects of Alignment that need be addressed are noted in the commentaries above.

Generally, the panel would like to commend:

1. The work already done by the Academy's programme teams on the alignment of both programmes.
2. The existing (often informal) QA loops in the Academy. The QA loops are not numerous, but they do work.
3. The communicative and confident students and alumni who met the peer review panel.
4. The overall level of student and alumni satisfaction with the study programmes.
5. The Academy's committed staff. The peer review panel would commend their efforts so far.
6. The programme handbooks which the Academy has prepared.

Generally, the panel would like recommend:

1. That the key principles of alignment, programme development and Quality Assurance now feed into the Academy's new (December 2016) strategic plan.
2. That the Academy, the QA Office and the programme teams focus on fewer strategic goals, that they clearly define timelines (perhaps with annual review and analysis) and that they set achievable action plans.

3. That the Academy, the QA Office and the programme teams set simple and measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Ongoing change needs to be carefully managed, because the Academy is small and because resources (especially finance and Human Resources) are limited.
4. That the Academy and the programmes completely reimagine, broaden and deepen their links with industry and employers.
5. The ongoing development and evolution of the Programme Handbooks for students.
6. A rethink of the overall design of Quality Assurance in the Academy, to establish clear roles, principles, regulations and processes to ensure and promote the Alignment of its academic programmes.
7. The development of more student choice and flexibility of study/modules, at least within academic programmes and fields of study, and possibly more widely.
8. More staff training on the use of appropriate tools for programme development, programme delivery, programme monitoring and feedback to students. A policy on Staff Training and Development. Staff training and development (especially ongoing and continuous pedagogical development) needs to be prioritised in any YSAFA Strategic Plan.
9. The ongoing development of student-centred education in the Academy. The panel would recommend greater student engagement in quality assurance and program-development processes and greater opportunities for student mobility, student choice and the development of more flexible study and module pathways, at least within academic programmes and fields of study and especially at postgraduate level.

## **Annexes**

### **Annex 1: List of Documents submitted to the Panel**

#### **C. Quality Assurance folder...**

1.Information on QA.doc  
 Course efficiency.doc  
 employers.doc  
 graduates.doc  
 passport to ev tool – employers.doc  
 passport to ev tool – graduates.doc  
 passport to ev. tool course assessment st .doc

#### **YSAFA\_Self-assessment\_ALIGN folder**

Documentation on Computer Graphics (BA).doc  
 Documentation on DESIGN (MA).doc  
 Documentation\_last point.doc  
 B.SER\_YSAFA\_ALIGN.doc

Computer Graphics(BA)\_Handbook.doc  
Course Description\_computer Graphics\_Sample.doc  
Course Description\_sample\_design MA.doc  
D. NQF\_draft translation \_ENG.doc  
Design(MA)\_Nagbook.doc

## **Annex 2: List of Participants at ‘Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts’ (YSAFA)’**

**Mkrtich Ayvazyan**, Vice-rector on Education and Science, Coordinator of the group  
**Yekaterina Kashina**, Head of the Academic Affairs Unit, Responsible for the development of the institutional policy on program development, implementation and alignment, preparation of the self-assessment report  
**Ruzanna Minasyan**, Head of Teaching and Learning Methodological Department, Responsible for the document reviewing on program design and editing the self-assessment report  
**Yelena Baytalyan**, Senior Specialist at Teaching and Learning Methodological Department, Responsible for the gathering materials and data on students, programs  
**Nune Minasyan**, Head of Quality Assurance Center, Responsible for the quality assurance policies and parts in the report  
**Mariam Hovhannisyan**, Specialist at QA Center, Responsible for the interpretation of the report  
**Hayk Payaslyan**, Head of Computer Graphics, Fashion Design and Applied Arts Chair, Responsible for analyses of the Computer Graphics Academic Program (BA)  
**Nara Mendelyan**, Associate Professor at Computer Graphics, Responsible for analyses of the Computer Graphics Academic Program (BA)  
**Stepan Gyulkhasyan**, Professor at Design, Responsible for analyses of the Design Program (MA)  
**Anushik Kirakosyan**, Lecturer at Design, Responsible for analyses of the Design Program (MA)  
**Arsen Abovyan?**

## **Annex 3: Programme for the Site Visit**



Co-funded by the  
Tempus Programme  
of the European Union



# PROGRAM

## OF THE SITE VISIT TO ARMENIAN HEIs

Locations: 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts (YSAFA)- 36 Isahakyan str.  
(near Cascade)

Peer-review of the academic programs at YSAFA

| Day 1: November 07, 2016 /Monday/ |   |  |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| <i>Time</i>                       | <i>Activity</i>                               | <i>Participants</i>  |
| 09:00-09:30                       | Arrival of the panel members to YSAFA         |  |
| 09:30-11:00                       | Private meeting of the panel                  | Panel members  |
| 11:00-12:00                       | Meeting with ALIGN project YSAFA team members | Mkrtich Ayvazyan, Vice-rector on Education and Science<br>Hayk Payaslyan, Head of Computer Graphics, Fashion Design and Applied Arts Chair<br>Ruzanna Minasyan, Head of Teaching and Learning Methodological Department<br>Nune Minasyan, Head of Quality Assurance Center |

|             |  |   |
|-------------|--|---|
|             |  | Nara Mendelyan, Associate Professor at Computer Graphics<br>Stepan Gyulkhasyan, Professor at Design   |
| 12:00-14:00 | Review of the alignment of “ <b>Design</b> ” academic program            | Hayk Payaslyan, Head of Computer Graphics, Fashion Design and Applied Arts Chair<br>Sergey Abovyan?<br>Stepan Gyulkhasyan, Professor at Design  |
| 14:00-15:00 | Lunch  |   |
| 15:00-17:00 | Review of the alignment of “ <b>Computer Graphics</b> ” academic program | Arsen Abovyan?<br>Hayk Payaslyan, Head of Computer Graphics, Fashion Design and Applied Arts Chair<br>Nune Minasyan, Head of Quality Assurance Center<br>Mariam Hovhannisyan, Specialist at QA Center<br>Nara Mendelyan, Associate Professor at Computer Graphics |
| 17:00-18:00 | Wrap-up. Private meeting of the panel                                    | Panel members   |

| <b>Day 2: November 08, 2016 /Tuesday/</b> |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <i>Time</i>                               | <i>Activity</i>  | <i>Participants</i>   |
| 09:00-09:30                               | Arrival of the panel members to YSAFA                          |   |
| 09:30-11:00                               | Review of alignment of quality assurance for academic programs | Mkrtich Ayvazyan, Vice-rector on Education and Science<br>Hayk Payaslyan, Head of Computer Graphics, Fashion Design and Applied Arts Chair<br>Nara Mendelyan, Associate Professor at Computer Graphics<br>Nune Minasyan, Head of Quality Assurance Center<br>Stepan Gyulkhasyan, Professor at Design<br>Ruzanna Minasyan, Head of Teaching and Learning Methodological Department |

|             |  |  |
|-------------|--|--|
| 11:00-12:30 | Meeting with students/alumni of the two academic programs under review | 4 students per academic program  |
| 12:30-14:00 | Lunch  |  |
| 14:00-15:00 | Private meeting of the panel   | Panel members  |
| 15:00-16:00 | Outline feedback of the panel to ALIGN project YSAFA team              | <p>Mkrtich Ayvazyan, Vice-rector on Education and Science</p> <p>Nara Mendelyan, Associate Professor at Computer Graphics</p> <p>Nune Minasyan, Head of Quality Assurance Center</p> <p>Hayk Payaslyan, Head of Computer Graphics, Fashion Design and Applied Arts Chair</p> <p>Stepan Gyulkhasyan, Professor at Design</p> <p>Yekaterina Kashina, Head of the Academic Affairs Unit</p> |

**Tempus ALIGN Peer-Review Report November 2016 - YSAFA 035 document end.**