

## **FACT-FINDING ON CYCLE 3 EDUCATION AT YEREVAN STATE ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS (YSAFA)**



## **Introduction (1 p)**

The report describes the Cycle 3 system adopted and implemented at Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts (YSAFA). It clearly states the approaches used at YSAFA and the activities that are planned to be conducted to improve overall research and Research Programme based on the internationally accepted standards and guidelines.

The report is mainly focused on the activities that are proposed by YSAFA when revised PhD Programme is to be launched. It is also noted that first the Programme and the overall approach to the development and implementation of PhD Programme has been revised, while still there is need for the development of tools and mechanisms for PhD Programme and research quality assurance. With this regards, secondly, the internal QA tools and mechanisms are to be finalized and applied based on the ESG, Salzburg Principles and external QA standards.

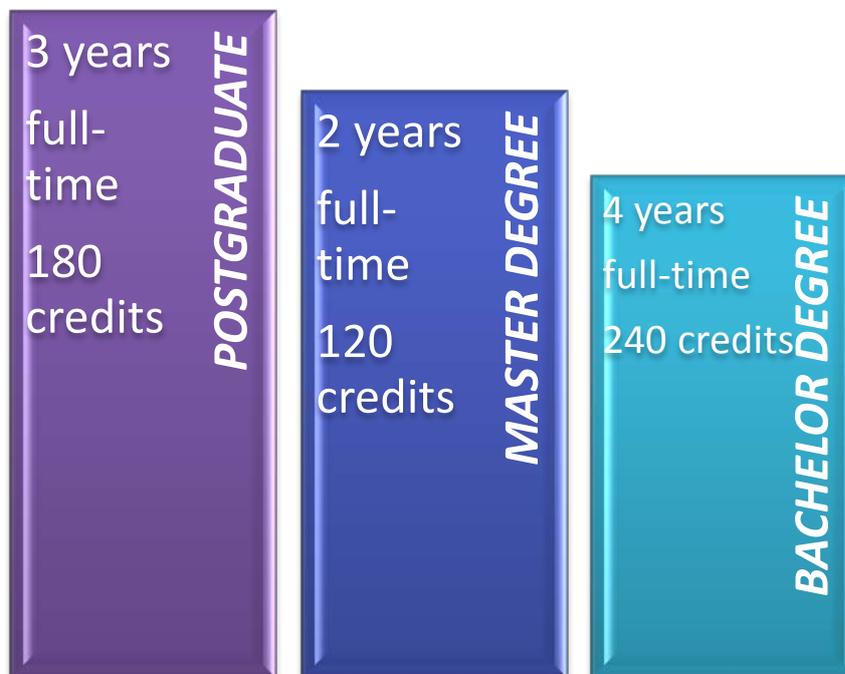
## 1 Chapter 1: Overall landscape – National Higher Education (HE), research and QA context (with focus on Doctorate level) (6-8p)

### 1.1 Brief presentation of the HE and research system

Armenia is a small country of having about 3 million population. Throughout its history prioritizing education and research Armenia conducted series of activities to improve the system and comply with the international standards in offering quality education. There are currently 27 state and 31 private higher education institutions ([www.edu.am](http://www.edu.am)) with the mission to develop and enhance education and science in the RA through preparing highly qualified and demanded specialists at national and international market. Higher education is provided by many types of institutions: universities, institutes, academy and conservatory.

**Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts (YSAFA)** is among 27 state universities (established in 1945) that strives to become a leading and competitive art institution and a center for developing and disseminating culture.

Throughout its history YSAFA values the cooperation with internal and external stakeholders of the institution, as well as with the society operating transparently and based on mutual trust. The institution attaches importance to the learning environment based on cultural diversity and creativity ensuring continuous improvement and internationalization of its operations. Prioritizing also research and development among its strategic dimensions it involves R&D in the strategic plan and conducts several major activities in this aspect.



*Three-level education system at YSAFA*

YSAFA is currently offering 8 BA and 8 MA Programmes in Painting, Drawing, Sculpture, Art Studies, Design, Computer Graphics, Graphics, Applied Arts and Fashion Design and 1 Research Programme in Fine Arts, Decorative and Applied Arts, Design for about 670 students.

**Research Programme at YSAFA:** YSAFA offers a three-year researcher Programme, which is equivalent to PhD, and is placed on the 8th level of the National Qualifications Framework. The Programmes at researcher level evolve around Fine Arts, Decorative and Applied Arts, Design. Upon completion of the study and defence of the thesis a student is awarded with the degree of Candidate in Art Studies. Currently there are 5 students studying in research Programme.

In recent years YSAFA attached particular importance to the development of research and revision of the research Programme in line with the international and national standards. The first and one of the most crucial steps was the involvement in the EU funded **TEMPUS “VERITAS – Structural Development of the Third Cycle Based on Salzburg Principles”** project ([www.tempusveritas.am](http://www.tempusveritas.am)). Within the project the PhD Programme was totally revised and redesigned in line with National Qualification Framework, Salzburg Principles and national newly developed QA standards. The cooperation with national, EU partners in general and with RA Supreme Certifying Commission (RA SCC – the degree awarding body in Armenia) opens new possibilities to respond to the contemporary demands with regard to research.

## **1.2 Overview of the national legal framework and regulations governing quality assurance (QA) of Cycle 3**

### **1.3 Strategies and incentives for Cycle 3 at national level**

In general the higher and postgraduate education in Armenia is regulated by the RA Law on Higher and Postgraduate Education which is currently under revision and where the postgraduate education will be considered as a Cycle 3 of higher education.

Postgraduate education corresponds to the 8<sup>th</sup> level of National Qualifications Framework (NQF) adopted on 7<sup>th</sup> of July 2016.

At national level the quality assurance of Cycle 3 has been considered an important incentive and strategy in recent years. And within the frames of VERITAS project Armenian National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation developed QA standards and criteria for 3<sup>rd</sup> Cycle that have undergone a pilot during the external visits to Armenian 11 HEIs and are to be finalized by the end of Project (November 2017).

### **1.4 Impact of European Principles, Standards and Guidelines at national level**

Joining the Bologna Process in 2005 and integration into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) entitles the implementation of EU principles and guidelines in Armenia. RA HEIs adopted ECTS and three-level system and developed internal quality assurance mechanisms based on ESG to ensure the successful implementation of their processes.

YSAFA is also implementing all the activities based on internal and external quality assurance standards. The improvement of third level and focus on the research Programme have been launched since 2014 when YSAFA joined VERITAS project and started revision of the research Programme based on Salzburg principles. The SWOT analysis has been conducted at the university to evaluate the current state-of-affairs with regard to Salzburg 10 principles. Further steps include:

- The establishment of the Research Center and nomination of staff for the unit operationalization

- Development of the regulating documents for RU (Roadmap, Strategic Plan, etc)
- Redevelopment of the Research Programme (Learning outcomes, curriculum, Programme handbook, etc)
- SWOT analysis of the Research Programme based on newly developed QA standards and criteria
- Self-evaluation of the Research Programme based on QA standards
- External review of the Research Programmes by the external peers

Based on the recommendations (to be received in May 2017), the Researcher Programmes will be revised and ready for launch.

Here is also worth to note that within the project VERITAS the external QA standards and criteria for third cycle have been developed by ANQA and piloted at 11 Armenian HEIs (partners of the project).

## **1.5 Financial conditions**

YSAFA is currently developing a strategy to increase the funding possibilities for its professors and students. In the new Strategic Plan (2017-2021) it is planned to develop internal grant system at the university that will enable the faculty conducting research get grants to develop their projects and involve students. Moreover, YSAFA is also working to find external funding sources to conduct research.

## **2 Chapter 2 – Cycle 3: state of the art (4-6 pp)**

### **2.1 Main characteristics of Cycle 3 Programmes (type of provision, of study, statistics...)**

In Armenia, the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle of higher education is implemented mainly through PhD study Programmes. A PhD student- a person holding Master's or Diploma Specialist's Degree, who carries out Doctoral research to expand his/her theoretical knowledge and to prepare scientific thesis for pursuing a PhD (Candidate of Science) degree. The main education Programmes are conducted in the following ways;

- Full- time,
- Part- time,
- Applicant

The duration of study Programme is 3 years (minimum). Upon completion of at least a 3-year postgraduate study and a successful defence of a thesis, the PhD student (researcher) is awarded with a PhD (Candidate of Science).

#### **2.1.1 Are there Cycle 3 Programmes in your university country?**

As mentioned above, the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle of higher education is implemented through PhD Programmes. The Armenian higher education institutions have been conducted PhD study Programmes since soviet times. However, after joining Bologna process in 2005, Ministry of Education and Science in cooperation with higher education institutions has launched a series of reforms in the field of higher education, including PhD Programme. Thus, presently, the main challenge for the HEIs is to design and implement PhD Programmes in accordance to Salzburg principles. This will increase the transparency of PhD Programmes making them comparable with the European ones.

YSAYA implements PhD Programme « Fine Arts, Decorative and Applied Arts, Design. The Programme is currently under revision and after the external report on recommendations a new revised Programme will be implemented at YSAFA.

## **Definitions:**

**PhD Programmes:** Students are expected to extend the body of knowledge in their field to apply the knowledge to solve for a real-world problem in their workplace or community. They demonstrate this through a dissertation.

**Professional doctorate Programmes:** Students are expected to apply existing knowledge in their field to a real-world problem in their workplace or community. Professional doctorate students demonstrate this through an applied dissertation doctoral capstone, comprised of a paper, product, or portfolio.

## **2.1.2 Nature of the doctoral Programmes:**

The logical progress of the revised Programme at YSAFA and the curriculum are structured and distributed by years taking into consideration:

- the 3 main aspects of doctoral education, which are the student- centered teaching, the creation and interpretation of new knowledge through original research, as well as the use of innovative- experimental techniques and technologies in the field of art.
- 3 components of learning quality assurance, which are knowledge, competences and skills.
- Research Capacity Building Scale suggested by ANQA, which includes 6 stages each of them having 5 degrees.

The Programme is elaborated taking into account:

- Learning outcomes,
- Salzburg principles,
- Strategy for the research activities of University,
- Strategy, work plan and research directions designed by Center,
- Current issues in the art research, unrivaled fields or unstudied topics, the latter's validity and relevance both in the national and international context,
- Student-centered approach
- Ensuring of YSAFA competitiveness on international level.

The curriculum of Programme is elaborated based on the Programmes' LOs. Hence, systematized tables showing the relevance of outcomes and modules/courses, as well as qualification descriptors and modules/courses are compiled.

The curriculum is expected for 3 semesters (36 credits) and has 4 educational blocs each of which includes 3 courses. The optional courses are also planned. Those blocs/sections are the followings.

- research knowledge and skills,
- linguistic and computing knowledge and skills,
- teaching and leadership,
- in-depth professional knowledge and skills.

Thesis defense includes 2 stages; pre-defense and the actual defense. Pre-Defence of the research paper is carried out at the relevant chair during the session.

Before the pre-defence the PhD student should submit at least 2 copies of the complete thesis or at least 3 copies of draft of thesis summary for opinions and debates.

It is preferable to select and convene special committee for each defence composed of 3 to 7 members, who in terms of professional qualification are closer to the topic and field of the thesis. In this case defence can be organized at University. At least one of the committee members should be an invited scholar (from other local scientific institutions or abroad). For artistic-performing professions one of the committee members should be a recognized, honored artist or art professor. If there is no need, the committee members can remain the same.

Committee members should be familiar with the research paper and during the defence each member should deliver examinational speech and express his/her opinion. The supervisor should also deliver speech. There is no need for an opponent.

At least 3 copies of the research paper should be submitted. Besides, at least 20 copies of research paper's summary are published.

To promote research internationalization, after the defence during 6 months, the PhD student is suggested to submit the English version of the research paper's summary which should be uploaded to the Internet and placed on special section of publications of YSAFA official webpage.

Scientific degree is awarded at Art Institute and confirmed by Supreme Certifying Committee of RA.

### **2.1.3 Characteristics of the Cycle 3 study:**

#### ***Revised PhD Programme at YSAFA:***

YSAFA implements PhD Programme which has been reviewed in accordance to Salzburg principles within VERITAS project. So, the PhD Programme has 2 parts.

- Art History and Theory for awarding the PhD Diploma in the Art History and Theory
- Fine Arts (Painting, Sculpture, and Graphics) Design and Applied Arts for awarding the PhD Diploma in Arts.

Taking into consideration the 2-part-structure of the Programme, the admission, learning and defense processes are organized with a slight difference based on the peculiarities, learning outcomes and goals of each part. However, the mandatory part of the admission process is the number of publications, portfolio and interview.

The selection and admission is done by a small committee (3 persons), where the Head of Research Center and if possible invited scholar should be included. For applicants of Fine Arts, Design and Applied Arts, one of the committee members should be an art professor.

To assure transparency of admission the committee members should compile a one-page bulletin for each candidate, where assessing conclusions about the admission requirements will be set based on the defined standards. The assessing conclusions are open and available.

The PhD Diploma/Scientific level for the above-mentioned professions is awarded after the thesis defence. The latter reflects the results of a researcher's qualifications in accordance with National Qualification Framework of RA, and should demonstrate creativity, originality, ability to conduct research in the field of arts, as well as professional skills, and the scientific competences in the given branch of art. The scientific level is awarded by Supreme Certifying Commission of RA, which sets minimum requirements for thesis and defence (See Regulations of SCC).

YSAFA revised the PhD Programme based on Salzburg principles, external QA standards. Taking into account the NQF descriptors, learning outcome were defined and aligned to RA NQF descriptors. The Programme handbook and curriculum have also been redeveloped.

### ***Learning outcomes for the Researcher Programme at YSAFA:***

After the completion of the study the PhD students is to demonstrate the following knowledge, skills and competences :

1. Deeply and comprehensively knows the historical development of the chosen field/branch and can systematically represent it according to chronological stages, geographical areas and main stylistic features.
2. Can interpret and classify knowledge gained on the chosen field/branch, as well as describe its current situation and achievements, identify actual trends and issues.
3. Completely knows the bibliography on the chosen area/branch/topic and is able to search and classify new bibliographical sources and use them in the research.
4. Is aware of research methods, technologies, computer opportunities and can easily use them.
5. Can make reasonable judgments on challenges and problems existing in that area/branch/topic even when the full data are absent, as well as has an ability to clearly and effectively communicate his/her thoughts and conclusions within professional and non-professional frameworks.
6. Demonstrates skills for team work and teaching.
7. Demonstrates skills for creating, developing, presenting and using research proposal concept.
8. Knows one or more foreign languages and can use professional skills and publish in those languages.
9. Is able to generate research topic and issue within the particular area/branch/topic and suggest ways of solutions demonstrating professional- researching intuition.
10. Is able to conduct an innovative and original research creating new knowledge, artistic or aesthetic value, performance techniques, applied technology through scientific or artistic problem and suggested solutions.
11. Demonstrates structural thinking by being able to understand and proportionally classify scientific, researching and artistic problems based on importance and priority, as well as use that skill in research and professional work.

### ***Supervision at YSAFA:***

The preparation and supervision of thesis can be described as research cooperation between a supervisor and PhD student, cooperation between senior and young professionals, during which the necessary functions for change of generation and formation of professional school are implemented.

The requirements for being a main supervisor are the following:

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- scientific degree,
- assessment by academic partners and students,
- supervising skills,
- Experience and ability to procure funds for research.

The requirements for being an assistant are:

- scientific degree or title,
- assessment by academic partners and students,
- organizational and management skills.

***Thesis Defense at YSAFA:*** It is of high importance to mention that two supervisors should be named for each student; a main and an associate, the working responsibilities of which are clearly stated by the Programme. In case of Fine Arts, Design and Applied Arts, one of the supervisors should be an art historian, the other - an artist. The first one is responsible for theoretical part and the final thesis, the second one is responsible for the realization of the artistic work. When choosing a supervisor the opinion of a student takes into account. After confirmation of a research topic a 3- party contract is signed between the student, University and supervisor(s), where rights and responsibilities of each party are clearly stated.

It is required that the main supervisor and the PhD student have meetings on the regular bases, soon after the contract is signed and until the completion of the research paper. The meetings are recorded in the eventual meeting lists (See Appendix, Meeting sheet), where discussed issues, joint works, assessment of the PhD student's work as well as the further activities are described. The frequency of meetings is decided by a supervisor and PhD student.

At the end of each year Meeting sheets along with the ongoing reports are presented and confirmed by the relevant chair and later by YSAFA Scientific Council. The main supervisor can be assigned simultaneously for 5 doctoral candidates.

The associate supervisor is responsible for practical progress of the work, consultations, support for administrative and organisational issues, as well as for assistance in any issue. The second supervisor supports a PhD student in compiling his/her work plan, yearly report, prepare the articles that should be published and communications for participating in conferences. The associate supervisor can be assigned simultaneously for 3 PhD students.

The statistics on universities granting cycle three can be found here: [http://armstat.am/file/article/soc\\_15\\_7.pdf](http://armstat.am/file/article/soc_15_7.pdf)

**2.1.4 Statistics related to Cycle 3: (in your HEI or in your country)**

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Nb of students starting a doctorate	7	6	7	6	5
NB of students coming directly after a Master of the same university	2	2	1	1	1
Nb of Male starting doctorate	2	1	1	-	-
Nb of Female starting doctorate	-	1	-	1	1
Nb of graduates	2	2	2	2	1
Nb of Male graduates	-	2	2	2	1
Nb of Female graduates	2	-	-	-	-
Nb of thesis in co-direction or bi-national direction	-	-	-	-	-
Nb of students having fundings	2	1	-	-	-
Nb of students becoming teacher at the end of Cycle 3	-	-	-	-	-
Nb of students becoming professors at the end of Cycle 3 at YSAFA	2	1	1	2	1

**2.1.5 Positioning of Cycle 3**

***Resources for PhD students at YSAFA:***

YSAFA provides its students with relevant laboratories where they can work and conduct researches. Moreover, Research Center has been established at the university with the necessary equipment (computers are available for the research students) which has also a separate library and provides with relevant academic literature for PhD students.

***Research Directions at YSAFA:***

Research topics are relevant with research directions (set by YSAFA in the newly revised Programme handbook), which were defined taking into consideration YSAFA potential and professional resources, existing traditions, actual, demanded and less studied topics in the professional field, current trends in the Art history and Visual Arts on international level that will assure competitiveness of researches conducted at University.

**2.1.6 Follow-up of Phd Students and graduates**

The main units that support a PhD student during their study are: relevant chair, Scientific Unit and Research Center. YSAFA provides students with the following support and opportunities:

- sufficient researching environment,
- working area and tools,
- privileged opportunity for using library and other repositories,
- obtaining permission by inter-institutional communication if there is a need to access to the services of scientific or artistic institutions, museums and libraries.
- recommendation letters and references if needed,
- opportunity and support for being published in local and international peer journals/reviews,

- support for participating in local and international conferences.

YSAFA supports its students in their academic pathway. For this purpose Research Center provides additional seminars and training for its students so that to assist them in their research processes.

YSAFA in cooperation with Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Armenia organizes exhibitions of students' works. The exhibitions are open to public and are free of charge.

PhD students are to report annually on the status of their work to their supervisor and together with the supervisor's feedback the report is submitted to the respective Chair and Scientific Unit that make decision on the continuation of the research at YSAFA.

YSAFA sets methods against plagiarism. The banning statement concerning plagiarism is included at the YSAFA Assessment system.

After the defense of the thesis YSAFA offers its PhD students to become faculty members of the university. Many of PhD students are currently working at the university.

As YSAFA is currently revising its research Programme and approaches to research several improvements are planned :

- After confirmation of a research topic a trilateral contract is signed between the student, University and supervisor(s), where rights and responsibilities of each party are clearly stated
- Meetings within academic environment and working relationships, it is preferable that supervisors and PhD students will socialize outside the academic environments (evenings, cultural events, travels and so on). YSAFA proposes to have two supervisors per PhD student. The main supervisor will be responsible for the contentual progress of the work, the acquisition of skills required for the formation of a PhD student as a young researcher, the solution of scientific and contextual problems, and for the final version of research paper. It is also required that the main supervisor and the PhD student have meetings on the regular bases, soon after the contract is signed and until the completion of the research paper. The meetings will be recorded in the eventual meeting lists, where discussed issues, joint works, assessment of the PhD student's work as well as the further activities are described. The frequency of meetings is decided by a supervisor and PhD student. The second supervisor will support a PhD student in compiling the workplan, annual report, preparing articles that are to be published and presented during the conferences.

Presently, YSAFA does not enough financial resources to provide funding to PhD students. However, the university will initiate the inner granting system. It will promote not only the research activities at the university but also the cooperation between academic staff and students.

YSAFA does not have Alumni association but the university plans to establish it in the near future including not only BA and MA, but also PhD students.

**2.2 IQA and EQA mechanisms of Cycle 3 (actors involved, statistics...)**

**2.2.1 Internal QA (mechanisms inside the HEI)**

<b>ESG PART 1</b>			
	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>EXPLAIN</b>
Do HEI have a policy to guarantee internally quality of the Degrees delivered?	+		The university has a quality assurance policy, which includes institution's all activity areas.
If yes, is it made public and part of its strategic management?	+		Quality assurance policy is presented in YSAFA Quality assurance Handbook which is available on official website.
If yes, do they have appropriate structure and processes?	+		They do have well structure and processes.
Are the pedagogical methods and methods of delivery assessed?			In Cycle 3 the pedagogical methods and methods of delivery are not assessed but the university has that experience for bachelor's and master's degrees.
Does the university assess the supervision of the director of thesis		+	The university does not have that experience yet as the cycle 3 Programme is under review. Respectively it is planned to develop tools to assess the supervision of the thesis.
Does the PhD student assess the supervision of his/her director during his/her thesis?		+	The university does not have that experience yet as the cycle 3 Programme is under review. Respectively it is planned to develop tools for PHD students to assess the supervision of his/her director during his/her thesis.
Does the university assess the success rates at the doctorate?		+	The university does not have that experience yet as the cycle 3 Programme is under review. So the university plans to assess the rates at the doctorate.
Are the criteria for the assessment made public?	+		The assessment criteria are available on website.
Is assessment carried out by an external examiner?			PHD students are assessed based on RA Supreme Certifying Commission's regulation. That is following:  PHD students write a report on the work done in a year. The report also includes supervisor's opinion.  The report is discussed in the chair or Scientific council session, where a decision is made on a student.
Is there a procedure for students appeals?	+		The appeal procedure is carried out based on regulation adopted by RA Supreme Certifying commission.
Are there regulations for student admission?	+		YSAFA has its admission procedure based on RA Supreme Certifying Commission's regulation. However, YSAFA is currently developing the internal admission criteria that will be additional to the general requirements.

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			<p>The successful and approved scientific articles of YSAFA all students are published free in YSAFA's journal for scientific articles, "Taregirq".</p> <p>The PHD students are to write 6 scientific articles while they are learning. The articles should be published in journals/periodicals that are accepted by RA Supreme Certifying Commission. Besides students have the right to publish their articles in international scientific journals/periodicals like Scopus etc.</p>
Are there regulations for student progression?	+		
How is the competence of teachers assessed?			The university does not have that experience yet as the cycle 3 Programme is under review. Respectively it is planned to develop tools for assessing the teachers competences.
Are there fair and transparent procedures for the recruitment of staff?	+		The university has fair and transparent procedures for the recruitment of teaching, administrative and support staff also for supervisors.
Do the HEI collect analyses and use relevant information for the management of Cycle 3?		+	The relevant information on PHD students is kept in Research Center.
Do the HEI publish clear, accurate and objective information on Cycle 3?	+		Relevant information on the Cycle 3 is available on YSAFA official website.
Are the Cycle 3 Programmes well monitored?			<p>YSAFA reviewed and monitored for the first time Cycle 3 Programme within the framework of TEMPUS VERITAS (Developing of the third cycle based on Salzburg principles) project.</p> <p>To ensure continuous improvement and development of cycle 3 Programme, the university plans to develop quality assurance mechanisms that are set in the Strategic plan (2017-2021) and in the Annual plan for QA Center.</p>
Are the Cycle 3 Programmes reviewed and modified?			The university reviewed Cycle 3 Programme within TEMPUS VERITAS project. The recommendation received in May 2017 will be embedded in the research Programme before the official launch of the new Programme.
Can the PhD students make their own evaluation of skills acquired throughout their thesis?	+		

## 2.2.2 External QA (mechanisms outside the HEI)

ANQA assures external quality for cycle 3 Programmes in the national level. The foundation developed criteria for cycle 3 within the frames of TEMPUS VERITAS grant project for the evaluation of RA PhD Programmes. RA each university is responsible for the internal quality assurance for cycle 3 Programmes.

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 within which not only the research Programme was reviewed and peer-reviews were done but also the Research Center was established in November 2014. The Center aims at implementing PhD reforms according to Salzburg principles. 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".

The Research Center gives a great support especially to students as it 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".

In 2016 to evaluate already reviewed third cycle Programme the university established a working group, which received an official status. Vice-rector for education and science, the head of the research center and the scientific secretary were involved in the working group. The self-evaluation process was coordinated by the Research center. The self-evaluation was conducted based on ANQA criteria for the third cycle Programme. While writing the self-evaluation, meetings and discussions were conducted among internal stakeholders to receive feedback and also get the relevant information needed for the evaluation processes. After conduction of self-evaluation, the working group shared it with all internal stakeholders.

Based on conducted self-evaluation, the third cycle academic Programme was monitored by external experts coordinated by ANQA: an international and two local experts. The experts will provide university with a report aimed at further development and improvement of 3 cycle Programme. In May 2017, the expert panel will provide a report. The university will do improvements and changes in PHD Programme based on their recommendations.

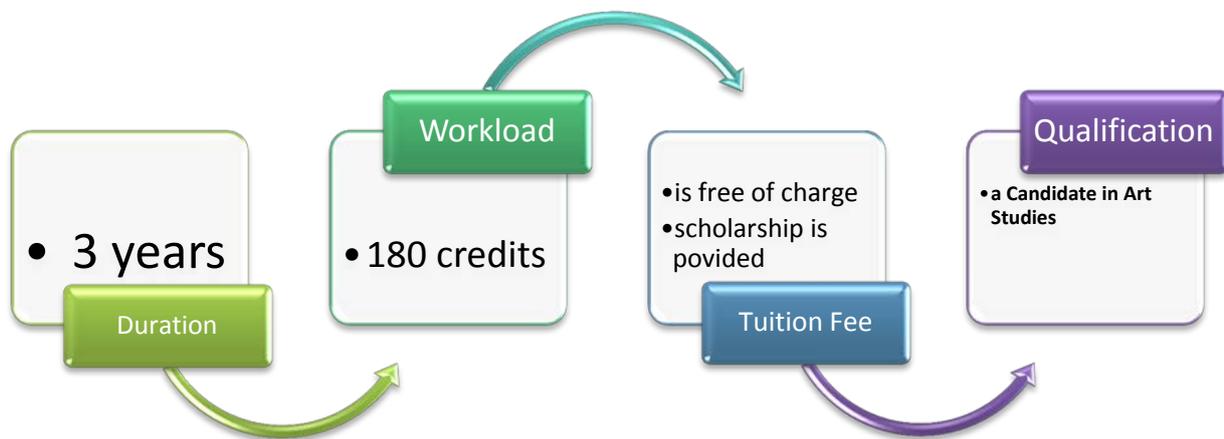
Before the above described, YSAFA did not have the experience to evaluate the third cycle academic Programme as there is a lack of quality assurance tools and mechanisms for the third cycle Programme. VERITAS grant project was the first fundamental step for the improvement of the third cycle Programme and C3QA is the next one for further development. Except for these grant projects, the university plans to develop quality assurance mechanisms for the third cycle academic Programme as the university understands and appreciates the importance of research and its great impact on university's further development.

## 3 Chapter 3 – Main challenges of Cycle 3 Programmes and its QA (4-6 pp)

### 3.1 For institutions

1. Does your university provide Cycle 3 Programmes?

YSAFA offers a three-year researcher Programme, which is equivalent to PhD, and is placed on the 8th level of the National Qualifications Framework. The Programmes at researcher level evolve around Fine Arts, Decorative and Applied Arts, Design.



2. What are the objectives of your Cycles 3 Programmes? What are their positioning in the university's strategies?

The Programme aims at preparing independent and highly educated researchers in the fields of art history and theory, fine arts, design and applied arts, gifted with deep knowledge and advanced researching skills for their professional development, as well as with creative abilities to link art and research.

3. How is Cycle 3 Programme articulated with ... :

- with Master Programmes of your university?
- with research strategies and activities

The Cycle 3 Programme is developed at YSAFA taking into account the the Master Programmes offered at YSAFA. The learning outcomes achieved by the MA students can be used and are sufficient to continue their study at the thrid level.

The research topics suggested to PhD students are in line with the university strategic directions and its research activities.

4. Describe how Cycle 3 is organized (from recruitment to Degree awarding)In your Cycle 3 s:

The recruitment of PhD students at YSAFA is currently done according to the following requirements:

- Diploma of a higher education institution,
- TOEFL (certificate),
- Certificate for Informatics examination,
- Scientific abstract,

- General art History examination passed

However, YSAFA is proposing a revised procedure for the admission that is described above.

## *5. Is there any follow up system of the PhD graduates?*

After the defense YSAFA is offering its PhD students to work at the university and many of them are currently staff members.

Now YSAFA is also planning to establish an ALUMNI association that will involve BA, MA and PhD students.

## *6. Can you explain if there are any mechanisms (internal or external) to guarantee quality assurance of Cycle 3 Programmes?*

YSAFA started the development of internal QA mechanisms for Cycle 3 when joining the VERITAS project. This was the first attempt to revise the researcher Programme and evaluate it in accordance with external QA standards.

Currently, YSAFA is planning to develop QA tools and mechanisms for Cycle 3 as defined by the university Strategic Plan (2017-2021) (also with support of participating in C3QA project).

### **3.2 For PhD Students**

*Data to be taken from the interviews.*

1. What were the rationales for you to start a Phd in your country?

The start of PhD at YSAFA is important taking into account the fact that it will help the student to have input in the development of art at country level and bring in new approaches and methods to the art.

2. Is the information related to PhD Programmes :
  - clear
  - easily accessible
  - transparent

The PhD Programme information is clearly formulated and available on YSAFA official website (admission, study requirements, regulations, etc). Moreover, the information can be easily received from the Scientific and Research Unit.

3. Do you feel you have enough support from your professors? from the academic staff ?

Both the professors and academic staff supports enough during the study. The courses taken during the study help to get sufficient skills to conduct research. Work with the supervisor (regular meetings and feedback) is conducted ensuring the successful preparation of the thesis. The administrative staff also supports the students providing them with the necessary resources (laboratory, computers and library) for the research. Moreover, the research center is constantly conducting trainings, workshops for the PhD students to disseminate the research results and present to the colleagues.

4. What are your expectations after your PhD?

The expectation upon completion of the study is to become a competitive specialist of the field bringing new ideas and methods to the art at country level that can be disseminated worldwide.

5. What would you suggest to improve Doctorate studies in your university/country?

The revised PhD Programme is more responsive to the current needs and requirements. It will be nice to have more funding opportunities for the staff and students engaged in the research in RA and have more opportunities to conduct research at international level as well.

#### **4 Chapter 4 – Good practice examples (2-4 pp)**

The good practice for Armenian HEIs for the improvement of Cycle 3 was the TEMPUS VERITAS (STRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE THIRD CYCLE BASED ON SALZBURG PRINCIPLES) Project launched in December 2013 and aiming at ameliorating doctoral education in Armenia Higher Education system through alignment with the European Qualifications Framework and Salzburg Principles.

11 Armenian Higher education Institutions (Yerevan State Medical University, Yerevan State University, Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts, Yerevan State University of Languages and Social Sciences, National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia, Armenian State University of Economics, Gavar State University, Vanadzor State University, Nortehrn University, National Academy of Sciences of RA, Public Administration Academy of RA), National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation, RA Supreme Certifying Commission and RA Ministry of Education and Science, 5 EU partner institutions (WUS Austria, Heidelberg University, University of Girona, Bath Spa University and Royal Institute of Technology) formulate a consortium to work on revision of PhD Programmes in line with Salzburg Principles and formulate QA internal and external mechanisms.

Within the frames of the project the following developments have been conducted:

- Development of the roadmaps for PhD education
- Establishment/revision of Reseracher Centers at 11 AM HEIs
- Revision/development of PhD Programmes at 11 HEIs and self-evaluation of the Programmes
- External review of the PhD Programmes.

The achievements and outcomes of the project will be disseminated among other stakeholders upon the end of the project (November 2017).

One of the greatest project outcomes was the cooperation at national and international level among AM and EU partners and discussion of the major challenges that are to be faced and solved in RA.

*Further information on the project can be found here: [www.tempusveritas.am](http://www.tempusveritas.am).*