



**DECISION
DECREE N 21
11 May 2017**

**On Awarding Institutional Accreditation to
INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC EDUCATIONAL CENTER OF RA NATIONAL ACADEMY
OF SCIENCES**

General Information about the Institution

Full name of the Institution:	International Scientific Educational Center Of Ra National Academy Of Sciences
Official address:	24, Marshall Baghramian Ave. 0019 Yerevan, Republic of Armenia
Previous accreditation decree and date:	Not available

Guided by the regulation on “State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Educational Programs” approved by the RA Government on 30 June, 2011 N 978-Ն decree; by RA Government decree N 959-Ն (30 June, 2011) on “Approval of RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation”; by the Procedure on the Formation and Functioning of Accreditation Committee of “National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance” foundation (ANQA) as well as by ANQA Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel, in the open session held on 11 May 2017, the Accreditation Committee of “National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance” foundation (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) discussed the issue of state institutional accreditation of Yerevan State Academy Of Fine Arts (hereinafter :YSAFA or Academy) with the presence of the representatives of the RA Ministry of Education and Science, Chair of the Expert Panel, ANQA coordinator of the accreditation procedure as well as Academy representatives.

Having examined the self-analysis presented by Academy, the Expert Panel report, follow-up plan as well as ANQA conclusion, the Committee stated the following:
The main phases of the accreditation process were carried out following the below-given timeframe:

Submission of application	8 September 2015
Submission of self-evaluation report	01 March 2016
expert panel site-visit	10-13 May 2016

Submission of expert panel report	15 November 2016
Submission of action plan on elimination of shortcomings	27 December 2016

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

While carrying out the evaluation the expert panel took into consideration that International Scientific Educational Center of RA National Academy of Sciences is an educational scientific and cultural institution having national and regional role and its mission is “to promote social economic development of the country and integration into international educational area, to ensure quality and competitive education fostering continuous development of an individual as well as smooth and interconnected transition from education to science”.

Until 2011, according to the state accreditation standards and procedures, the ISEC did not receive accreditation. The Academy has participated in the current accreditation process according to his request.

The Center provides 26 MA programs 23 of which are in full time and 11 in part-time modes of study. The academic programs are structured based on the credit system and according to the state educational standards. They were reviewed in 2014 by adapting academic programs of a number of leading countries with the technical and human resources of the Center and the programs are aimed at preparing specialists with definite scientific educational directions.

It is fixed in the center's mission its aspirations to integrate into the international educational space, however, the Academy does not currently have any foreign language programs, as well as joint programs with other institutions. The Center has an experience of implementing academic programs in foreign language however currently it does not have any such program neither joint programs with other institutions or double diploma awarding programs. The programs linked with industry are limited. The expert panel is positive about the fact that the Center implements a number of interdisciplinary MA programs however the panel has noticed problems in defining learning outcomes for both the academic programs and separate courses.

The Center is provided with teaching staff with high research skills which is formed on the basis of RA NAS staff on a contractual base. Qualitative criteria for the selection of the teaching staff and procedures on the selection are not applied. Evaluation of the teaching staff is carried out through student surveys, class observations and attestation and the trainings are

organized according to the possibilities of the Center. The teaching staff has participated in trainings on the quality assurance in higher education system, and the involvement of the teachers in the leading scientific research project of the institutions of RA NAS ensures their professional development in practice. Stabilization and rejuvenation of the teaching staff is carried out through the involvement of PhD students in the teaching process. The Center is provided with a highly qualified teaching staff, which is formed on the basis of the staffing potential of NAS institutes on a contractual basis. The qualification criteria and selection procedures developed for the selection of professors are not actually applied.

Assessment of teaching staff is carried out through student surveys, tutorials and attestations, and trainings are limited. The teaching staff has participated in quality assurance trainings in the higher education system. Involvement of teachers in the top research programs of NAS institutes in practice ensures their professional progress. Steps to stabilize and rejuvenate the teaching staff are made by engaging postgraduate students in the teaching process. Current classroom, laboratory and library resources and teaching staff of the Center and the Institutes of RA NAS create an effective learning environment and foster the formulation of the main outcomes of the programs. Financial revenues are formed from the state funding, students' tuition fees, extra budgetary funds as well as scientific research and grant projects. Financial support for the modernization of technical equipment and for the implementation of research component of academic programs is provided by the Institutions of RA NAS and the Center provides resources for the organization of education process and for paying the salaries of the teaching staff. Currently sufficient resources for the stable implementation of the academic programs are under the disposal of the Center.

The operating mechanisms of student recruitment and admission give the Center an opportunity of ensuring a stable number of students during the recent years. The number of dismissed students which does not diminish for years is troublesome. It shows that steps taken by the Center in this respect do not serve their purpose. Education processes in the Center are organized in the academic environment- with small groups and directly involving students in research activities which fosters students centered learning and the acquisition of learning outcomes. The expert panel gives importance to the fact that according to the students teaching staff and supervisors of the thesis papers are always available for them.

Students become aware of the assessment system through the academic program guidebooks and the availability of mechanisms of assessment appeal and preventing plagiarism promote academic honesty, transparency of assessment process and impartiality.

It is problematic that the assessment methods for practical and laboratory works, internship, and participation in the seminars, group and individual works are not clarified in the assessment system. Interests and ambitions of the Center in research sphere are limited in short-term and long-term projects which are carried out by the staff members of professional chairs in the Institutes of RA NAS within the frames of the topics implemented by the

institutes. However taking into account the fact that scientific component should be one of the main directions of Research University, the Center should officially define its own primary goals and objectives in research sphere. Operating in the leading research environment of RA NAS the students of the Center have a unique opportunity of effectively combining research and learning.

The management of the Center gives much importance to international cooperation considering the internationalization of research outcomes and integration into EHEA as a primary goal. Without having policy promoting external relations the Center carried out some activities towards internationalization and expansion of external relations. However the Center does not operate effectively in terms of using the external relations of RA NAS and its Institutions for the development and fulfillment of the component of internationalization of the mission. The Department of International Relations does not have necessary professionals and does not carry out regulated procedures and the signed international or local cooperation agreements do not operate effectively. Proficiency in a foreign language, the attractiveness of the current academic programs as well as the activities carried out by the Center are not yet sufficient to enhance the mobility of the teaching staff and students and their participation in international exchange programs.

Management system of the Center is not a traditional one for the educational institutions providing academic programs in higher education. The management of the Center is carried out by RA NAS which is considered to be the founder of the Center, by the executive body- the Director and the Scientific Council of the Center. The Director and the composition of the Scientific Council are approved by the Presidium of RA NAS which can have its influence on the autonomy of the Center's activities. The current procedures on the formation of governing bodies give an opportunity to the teaching staff and students to participate in the decision making processes. At the same time the structure, regulations and job descriptions need to be coherent and need to clarify the scope of duties and authorities of the managers of relevant fields of activities.

In RA educational sphere the Center places itself as a model of Research University however it does not have a structural unit or person responsible for science. The current structure and management system need to be adjusted to the solution of strategic objectives, as well as to the clarification of the chain of subordination between the higher and lower bodies. The impact of essential external factors is studied by the Center, necessary information is gathered about the results of implementation of academic programs and other processes. The principle of total quality management while carrying out administration of the processes is in the process of investment.

The grant "Education Quality and Relevance" provided by the World Bank was an external driver for the establishment of QA department, development of documents and implementation of activities at the International Scientific Center of RA NAS. The Center

emphasizes the strategic plan for the continuous improvement of education quality which is reflected in the goals and objectives of the reviewed strategic plan. QA system of the Center is currently in the phase of development and does not fully carry out its functions. The system does not yet have necessary mechanisms and does not gather sufficient data for the evaluation of the effectiveness of the academic programs and provided other services to ensure accountability about their quality. The main QA documents of the Center are summarized in QA manual where QA structure and the allocation of functions among different levels of management and structural units are presented. However QA procedures by which the staff of the Center should be guided while carrying out QA processes as well as the main mechanisms for ensuring the participation of stakeholders in the main processes are not developed yet. The documents concerning QA system are available to the stakeholders through the QA manual placed in the web-site however the responsible staff is not fully aware of their duties.

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

Mission and Goals

1. To develop mechanisms and procedures for the evaluation and improvement of results of the implementation of mission and goals.
2. To develop a set of qualitative and quantitative indicators for the evaluation of factual implementation of strategic goals and objectives.
3. To make the participation of the stakeholders (especially alumni) more active in the processes of the development of mission, goals and objectives of the Center, their implementation, evaluation and improvement.
4. To develop own qualifications framework for the professions provided by the Center.

Governance and Administration

5. To analyze and evaluate the consistency of the Center's structure with the strategic goals and the effectiveness of the management system.
6. To clarify the responsibilities of all the structural units, to introduce the system of job descriptions.
7. Through the clarification of functions of the top management, to provide human resources in order to coordinate the scientific-educational activities of the Center as well as research component in the academic programs.
8. To develop ethical norms for management.
9. To ensure the broader and more functional participation of teachers and students in the decision making processes.

10. To develop policy and procedures on the evaluation and revision of strategic plan and the plans of the Center, to carry out monitoring and evaluation of the strategic plan.
11. To review the administration of the Center by introducing the principle of PDCA cycle in all processes.
12. To develop KPIs for the evaluation of the impact of external factors and the activities of the Center. According to the indicators, carry out annual evaluations and analyses.
13. To clarify the gathered information necessary for the analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of academic programs and the management of other processes carried out by the Center, to develop QA necessary mechanisms.

Academic Programs

14. To develop policy and procedures on carrying out benchmarking of academic programs and other processes in order to fully apply the international leading practice for making the academic programs of the Center comparable with similar programs provided by foreign universities.
15. To clarify the learning outcomes of the academic programs based on the results of benchmarking and the needs assessment of internal and external stakeholders, to ensure the linkage of the learning outcomes and the content of the subjects taught with the mentioned results.
16. To improve current interdisciplinary MA programs and to promote the development of new programs. To introduce programs interlinked with industry and other research or educational institutions.
17. To develop policy and procedures on the selection, evaluation of the effectiveness and modernization of student-centered teaching, learning and assessment methods in line with learning outcomes
18. To clarify the mechanisms of needs assessment and analysis of internal and external stakeholders and labor market in the process of contextual and structural modernization of the academic programs.
19. To clarify the criteria for the assessment of thesis papers and learning outcomes mentioned in the assessment system and in course descriptions involving all modes of assessment of teaching and learning results (practical and laboratory activities, internship, participation in seminars, individual and group works, etc.).
20. To carry out all the processes mentioned in the regulation of academic program monitoring and regular review with the participation of internal and external stakeholders, to develop indicators for the evaluation of the effectiveness of academic program implementation and QA.

Students

21. To develop special policy and procedures on the students' educational needs assessment.
22. To improve the activities of career center ensuring their continuity and accountability to the external and internal stakeholders.
23. To develop mechanisms and procedures for students to apply to the administrative staff.
24. To broaden the level of self-governance of the students ensuring their greater involvement and in governing bodies in decision making procedures.
25. To apply the rotation system of transferring students from paid to free of charge education basis.
26. To develop QA mechanisms and mechanisms for the evaluation of consultancy and other services provided to students.

Teaching and support staffs

27. To apply the Regulation on the Formation of Teaching Staff and carry out the recruitment of teaching staff of the Center on competition basis.
28. To develop policy and procedures on the promotion and penalties of the teaching staff including dismissal from work.
29. To define requirements for the competences of the teaching staff for all the academic programs in line with the qualifications awarded to the graduates.
30. To amend the mechanisms of evaluating the teaching staff including mechanisms of self-assessment and peer-review as well as requirements and procedures of summering the results of multilateral evaluation.
31. To introduce system of professional development of the teaching staff and to develop mechanisms of evaluating the effectiveness of trainings.
32. To take steps for regulating rejuvenation, assurance of stability and professional development of the teaching staff.
33. To develop necessary mechanisms and tools to evaluate the effectiveness of the activities of the administrative staff.

Research and development

34. To develop strategy expressing interests and ambitions of the Center in the research sphere, giving importance to the possible merchandise of research outcomes and linking the prospects of the Center's development with it.
35. To consider the opportunity of establishing the position of a manager responsible for the coordination of scientific-research activities within the framework of restructuring of the management system.

36. To develop policy on the promotion of young researchers, to improve the current mechanisms based on the indicators evaluating the quality and modernity of research outcomes.
37. To introduce policy and procedures on ensuring academic honesty and applying mechanisms of preventing plagiarism.
38. To carry out studies of the effectiveness of mechanisms interconnecting research and education processes.

Infrastructure and resources

39. To develop policy on the planning, management and monitoring of the activities of the Center in accordance with the financial resources.
40. To develop mechanisms of financial resource allocation in line with strategic goals of the Center involving funding for the services directed to the healthcare and security assurance.
41. To develop regulation on the administration and documentation of the Center.
42. To review the mechanisms of evaluating the usage, availability and effectiveness of the provided resources involving there the mechanisms of needs assessment of the teaching staff.
43. To take steps towards making the chairs of the Center accessible for the students with special needs in terms of organization of education.

Social responsibility

44. To remodel the format of reports based on the KPIs.
45. To develop indicators for the evaluation of effectiveness of the mechanisms ensuring the accountability of the Center to the public.
46. To amend the concept on public relations fixing the tools for the evaluation of operating mechanisms contributing to the formation of public relations.
47. To develop tools for the evaluation of additional educational services and consultancy.

External relations and internationalization

48. To develop policy and procedures promoting external relations and internationalization taking into account the relations of RA NAS and its Institutes and activating the cooperation with them.
49. To improve the resources and the works of the Department of International Relations of the Center, to activate the cooperation of that department with the chairs in order to make the information about the international project available to the possible stakeholders.

50. To develop mechanisms for the full implementation of signed agreements, to enlarge the participation of teachers and students in international projects.
51. To organize regular trainings of foreign language for students, teaching and administrative staffs. To introduce courses and academic programs in foreign language, to develop joint MA programs with foreign and local educational institutions.
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Internal quality assurance system

53. To clarify the structure of QA system and to align the operating systems with it.
54. To develop procedures for the processes of 7 main spheres mentioned in the QA manual of the Center.
55. To develop mechanisms for all the responsible parties to implement all the activities envisaged in the QA manual⁸.
56. To develop package of documents regulating the allocation of financial and material resources for the implementation of QA processes.
57. To develop mechanisms which will clarify the application of survey results for the continuous improvement of academic programs and the functions of external experts in the processes of monitoring and review of the academic programs.
58. To develop mechanisms of gathering internal information that will give reliable and fundamental information to the administration of the Center about the effectiveness of the provided educational services and academic programs on the one hand, and to the internal and external examiners, on the other hand.
59. To develop mechanisms and tools for regular review of QA system.

Observing the presented package of documents and considering the opinions of head of the Expert Panel and other representatives, the Accreditation Committee finds that the NAS being the International Scientific-Educational Center, utilizing the technical and human resources of NAS institutes, sufficiently fulfills its main objective: "to provide quality and competitive education by making smooth transition from education to science". Positioning itself as a prototype of a research university in the RA educational field, the academy has some achievements in the preparation of masters with research abilities. At the same time, there is work to be done on the internationalization of educational programs and research, development of internal quality assurance systems, integration of education and research activities and improvement of the educational institution management system with a unique structure.

In its mission "integration into international educational area" the institution should clarify its international cooperation policies and priorities, use the links of NAS institutes to implement active international exchange programs with the participation of students and lecturers, increase the number of existing international and local cooperation agreements.

The center emphasizes the continuous improvement of the quality of teaching, however, the QA system formed under the influence of external impulses is not yet fully operational. The key quality assurance documents have been developed, and there is a division of responsibilities between different levels of management and subdivisions. But the lack of necessary mechanisms and procedures, to which stakeholders are guided in quality assurance processes, makes the system unusable. The Academy should ensure that the staff who is responsible for the quality assurance be aware of and fully implement their responsibilities.

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

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

DECIDED

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

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

Chair of Accreditation Committee

11 May 2017

Yerevan

S. Avetisyan