"NATIONAL CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE"
FOUNDATION



EXPERT PANEL REPORT
INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF
STATE ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS OF ARMENIA

Yerevan – 2022

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia (hereinafter referred to as SAFAA) was carried out according to the application submitted by the institution.

The process of institutional accreditation has been organized and coordinated by the "National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance" Foundation (hereinafter referred to as ANQA). Whilst carrying out its operations, ANQA is guided by the regulation on "State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Academic Programmes" set by the RA Government on 30 June, 2011 N978-Ն Decree as well as by N959-Ն (30 June, 2011) Decree on "Approving RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation".

The external review was carried out by the independent expert panel formed according to the demands of ANQA Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel. The expert panel consisted of four local and one international experts.

Institutional accreditation is aimed not only at external evaluation of quality assurance, but also at the continuous improvement of the quality of the institution's governance and academic programmes. Therefore, the experts had two objectives:

1) To carry out an examination of institutional capacities in accordance with the RA state accreditation criteria;

2) In order to improve the quality, to carry out an expert evaluation from the perspective of corresponding to the international developments and integration into the European Higher Education Area (hereinafter referred to as EHEA).

This report contains the results of the expert evaluation of institutional capacities of the Academy according to the RA accreditation criteria of the professional education and the observations of the peer review by the international expert from the perspective of integration into EHEA.

CONTENTS

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION 4
EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA 4
PEER-REVIEW FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE TLI'S INTEGRATION INTO EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA 11
COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL 15
PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW 15
EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA 20
I. MISSION AND PURPOSES 20
II. GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION 25
III. ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES 39
IV. STUDENTS 47
V. FACULTY AND STAFF 52
VI. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT 57
VII. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES 62
VIII. SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY 68
IX. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION 71
X. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM 78
APPENDICES 87
APPENDIX 1. CVS OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS 87
APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE OF SITE VISIT 88
APPENDIX 3. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED 91
APPENDIX 4. RESOURCES OBSERVED 93
APPENDIX 6. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS 95

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

The external review of the institutional capacity of the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia was carried out by the independent expert panel formed in accordance with the requirements of ANQA Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel. The evaluation was conducted according to 10 criteria of institutional accreditation approved by the RA Government Decree N 959-Ն dated June 30, 2011.

In carrying out the evaluation, the expert panel took into account that SAFAA strives to become a leading and internationally competitive arts university and a center for the development and dissemination of national culture. The mission of SAFAA is as follows:

- To provide higher education by implementing Bachelor's, Master's and Research Degree programmes in the fields of Art Studies, Fine Arts, Decorative and Applied Arts, and Design, through application of academic and modern approaches, as well as aligning creative and educational processes to public needs;
- To contribute to the development of the national culture and economy by training nationally and internationally competitive and highly qualified specialists, as well as citizens ready for lifelong learning;
- To develop art research by contributing to the dissemination of scientific thought and national culture;
- To contribute to the consolidation of the society and the increase of aesthetic taste through the formation of national values.

The expert panel also took into account that the Academy underwent an institutional accreditation process in 2017, as a result of which in 2018 the University was granted institutional accreditation for a period of 4 years. SAFAA has developed a deficiency elimination plan based on the recommendations contained in the expert report.

Since its previous accreditation, SAFAA has reviewed and made substantive changes to the academic programmes with the aim of making them more competitive and recognizable in the labor market, as well as approaching international standards to activate international mobility and promote the internationalization of the University in general. The academic programmes of a number of well-known Russian and Western universities were benchmarked. The goals and learning outcomes of the academic programmes derived from the mission of the University, the content of the Armenian National Qualifications Framework and labor market requirements. Employers and other external

stakeholders were involved in the AP review process. A modular system has been introduced, which enables the interconnection of teaching, learning and assessment of courses providing common learning outcomes. However, it should be noted that, due to objective and subjective circumstances, the review process was extremely long and slow. As a result, the new APs were launched in the 2021-2022 academic year. According to the new academic programmes, only the first-year courses of the 8 BA programmes have been reviewed, so SAFAA has a lot to do within a short period of time in planning and implementing the courses of the other years in the same way as the launched AP courses (it is clear that there can be no change in the curriculum). SAFAA should also pay close attention to the implementation of teaching, learning and assessment in a way which will lead to the achievement of the defined learning outcomes.

The academic programmes of SAFAA are implemented by the lecturers with appropriate qualification, scientific-pedagogical and creative experience and esteem. Being creative representatives in the field of art, they are enthusiastic and motivated to transfer their skills and experience to students. Being aware that it is difficult to require creative individuals to follow certain criteria (which is necessary to make the achievement of AP outcomes credible), the University should provide time and resources to motivate lecturers, as well as strengthen their professional, pedagogical, linguistic and IT skills, in order for them to carry out the research in a planned and documented way as much as possible, to have the opportunity to participate in experience exchange programs, and to be ready to be involved in the implementation of an international academic programme by the University. This is also a necessity in terms of sustainable generational shift, as after graduation the labor market outside the University is often more appealing in terms of material interest than teaching and researching/creating at the University.

In order to implement its academic programmes, the Academy has auditorium, studio, laboratory, library and other necessary infrastructure, for the improvement of which it allocates funds, acquires the necessary equipment, devices and materials. All this is enough to achieve the learning outcomes of academic programmes, but in order to improve the quality of APs and to make them internationally competitive, the University needs to systematically implement measures to expand and improve the infrastructure, as well as increase and improve the resources.

Taking into account that SAFAA has laid the foundations of competitive academic programmes, has human capital (teaching staff with appropriate professional qualities), infrastructure and material resources for their organization, continuously improves the infrastructure and resources as much as possible, it can be concluded that the University provides credible awarding of qualifications.

The mission of SAFAA is clear and definite, it is visibly reflected both in the descriptions of academic programmes, and in the outcomes of research/creative activities of lecturers, the process and outcomes of students' learning. It can also be measured through relevant labor market research. The University has made significant progress in localizing strategic planning in the activities of its subdivisions, evaluating what is planned, and developing a culture of accountability. Quality assurance has significantly improved compared to the previous cycle, quality assurance processes have increased and the number of tools has increased. Nonetheless, quality assurance has not yet set the objective of

extracting the data and identifying problems needed for more realistic planning, which sometimes leads to problems during planning or evaluating what is planned. SAFAA still has a long way to go to make the planning key performance indicators sound and to strengthen the analytical component of the accountability system. The progressive culture of governance and accountability that exists within a certain narrow layer of the University governance needs to be passed upwards and downwards in order to make governance more harmonious and to achieve the planned goals.

Therefore, it can be concluded that even though with the current quality assurance toolkit and functions, with the current governance culture, SAFAA ensures the fulfillment of its mission and, in particular, the achievement of learning outcomes of academic programmes, there is still a long way to go to develop in line with the ever-changing world aimed at re-evaluating relations, priorities and functions, as well as developing managerial skills and culture. This is a necessity, in particular, because due to low salaries and lack of other motivational mechanisms, the potential of lecturers is not realized in the development of the University, which can contribute to both increasing their recognizability and improving their financial situation.

The professional profile of the academic programmes of the Academy implies a large number of individual works with students, which is generally typical of art universities. The existence of a student-centered environment at SAFAA is also the result of a unique culture of relationships. In a free creative environment, students have the opportunity to communicate more openly and directly with well-known representatives of the art field, to borrow their experience and discover creative secrets. The management of SAFAA in its turn, does its best to create an inclusive environment and equal opportunities for students.

In accordance with its mission, SAFAA implements measures to transfer knowledge and value to the public. Having a systematized PR and a policy of applicants' professional orientation will contribute to the increase of the University's recognition and prestige.

Art research has features that are reflected in the creative activity and their results. Approaching the field of research in the Academy from this perspective, we are being convinced that the research takes place, that with the help of research both the work of art of the lecturer and the learning outcome of the student are created (which is again a work of art). At the same time, in order to ensure the academicity of education, there are tendencies in international universities to plan and present the researches in the field of art with more precise mechanisms, which SAFAA must take into account in its activity. It will also help to implement more research/creative projects (including international) and to commercialize the research/creative result.

After the previous cycle of accreditation, SAFAA has significantly regulated the process of international mobility and recorded a positive progress. Nevertheless, the low level of knowledge of foreign languages, first of all English, still keeps the University mobility indicator far from being sufficient. The launch of a new foreign language learning system will help solve this problem. The University should determine what to do in the areas of implementing international educational and research programs, attracting capacity building grants, and moving benchmarking to the level of

courses. This is not a separate process, and it is not possible to achieve this without accelerating the growth of the quality of academic programmes, increasing the efficiency of research management.

Based on the aforementioned, it can be concluded that SAFAA is not yet able to provide the necessary resources for the balanced development of activities, due to which certain areas are developing slowly. At the same time, the expert panel is hopeful that the present expert report will help the Academy to have a clearer idea of the needs and to plan the improvement processes, with a special emphasis on the field of governance.

Strengths of the Institution:

1. Existence of a clear mission and its reflection in academic programmes, research and public involvement services;
2. Existence of planning and internal accountability mechanisms according to it;
3. Introduction of academic programme review and improvement toolkit;
4. Student-centered environment;
5. Existence of teaching staff with the necessary professional qualities to achieve the goals of the APs;
6. Availability of administrative bodies and link with the students;
7. Continuous improvement of infrastructure and resources;
8. Existence of mechanisms for transmission of cultural values to the society;
9. Trends in diversification of quality assurance tools;
10. Involvement of a wide range of stakeholders in quality assurance processes.

Weaknesses of the Institution:

1. Lack of key performance indicators for the evaluation of the Strategic Development Plan and the imperfection of the evaluation mechanisms;
2. Asynchronous communication between different governance circles;
3. Most of the reports being descriptive and not analysis-based;
4. Lack of opportunities for income diversification;
5. The slow progress of the processes aimed at the development and internationalization of academic programmes;
6. Insufficient mechanisms for continuous professional development of the teaching staff;
7. Lack of systematized planning and implementation of research activities;
8. Absence of joint academic programmes;
9. Low level of knowledge of foreign languages, imperfection of knowledge assessment and further improvement mechanisms;
10. Disproportionate use of quality assurance tools in the Academy processes.

Main recommendations:

Mission and Purposes

1. To base strategic planning on a real, documented analysis of state priorities, labor market, and NQF characteristics;
2. For more objective evaluation of the degree of achievement of strategic goals, to supplement the KPI set with quality indicators;
3. To compile the annual performance reports of the Strategic Plan based on the performance indicators and to make the reports more analytical in nature, revealing the failures, shortcomings, their objective and subjective reasons.

Governance and Administration

1. To coordinate research, internationalization and development functions, defining clear responsibilities and performance indicators;
2. To provide managerial capacities for middle management (deans, heads of chairs) in order to coordinate research, internationalization and development functions;
3. To set an objective before the quality assurance system to provide credible data for strategic decision-making and strategic planning;
4. To establish mechanisms for the Board of Trustees to ensure substantive involvement in matters related to University governance, external relations, development programs, acquisition of resources, and other issues.

Academic Programmes

1. To match the descriptions of the modules based on the revised Bachelor's academic programmes to the goals and content of the APs;
2. To bring the academic programmes, functioning from 2016, as close as possible to the new logic of the academic programmes, by making partial changes to them, and by revising and reviewing the descriptions of the courses based on them;
3. To discuss the possibility of changing the requirements for Master's theses in order to make the research component more effective in Master's academic programmes;
4. To regulate the monitoring of academic programmes by defining clear periodicity and procedures.

Students

1. To develop and implement a policy and procedures of applicants' professional orientation;
2. To clarify the mechanisms for identifying students' needs and the periodicity of their application;
3. To develop mechanisms to clarify the scope of activities of the SC and to involve more students;

4. To make the additional counseling and foreign language courses more accessible to all students in order to help improve student mobility.

Faculty and Staff

1. To establish additional mechanisms to ensure the stability and at the same time the generational shift in the teaching staff;
2. To launch a program for raising the qualifications of lecturers with professional, teaching-methodical, research, language, and IT components;
3. To establish certain mechanisms to encourage the creative/research work of the teaching staff in order to link them to the educational process.

Research and Development

1. To enable lecturers and students to prepare research projects by considering the possibilities of international relations and/or grant programs in this area;
2. To improve research planning and evaluation system by setting realistic performance indicators;
3. To establish clear mechanisms for planning and accountability of the research activities of chairs.

Infrastructure and Resources

1. To distribute financial resources according to strategic directions;
2. To develop ties with library associations by ensuring greater inclusion of electronic resources;
3. To involve external stakeholders in the implementation of APs in order to create opportunities for specific financial investments, as well as to find ways to jointly use the employers' resources;
4. To come up with clear measures and implement them to commercialize the results in order to provide additional revenue to the University;
5. To use the potential of the Board of Trustees to expand the infrastructure of the Faculty of Design and the Faculty of Decorative Applied Arts.

Societal Responsibility

1. To encourage the best students and representatives of the teaching staff to participate in extracurricular as well as international exhibitions to increase the visibility of the University and to promote the growth of applicants;
2. To develop and implement a PR policy of the University, as well as introduce a strategy for the dissemination and popularization of national culture in accordance with the mission of SAFAA.

External Relations and Internationalization

1. To re-evaluate the system of relations built around the function of development of international relations and internationalization, endowing the responsible body of the process with functional opportunities and other capacities to coordinate the internationalization activities of scientific-educational and other subdivisions and to advance the direction of internationalization through that system;
2. To clarify the priorities of the University in the direction of internationalization and to restart the cooperation with the partner institutions according to them;
3. To join an international sectoral association, which will create a wide range of contacts for the internationalization of various processes;
4. To evaluate the effectiveness of lecturers' and students' foreign language learning and make methodological and assessment changes, if necessary, seeking to introduce international standards for foreign language proficiency testing and assessment.

Internal Quality Assurance System

1. To improve the research toolkit in quality assurance processes;
2. To re-evaluate the content and effectiveness of quality assurance mechanisms, based on the ambition, goals and objectives set by the forthcoming SP;
3. To introduce quality assurance mechanisms identifying deeply-seated issues and the potential in the areas of quality assurance, governance, research and internationalization.

_____

Menua Sogomonyan
Signature of the Head of Expert Panel

Date: July 20, 2022

PEER-REVIEW FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE TLI'S INTEGRATION INTO EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

During the site visit, the panel had meetings with a wide range of students, faculty, and management, all of whom were willing to participate in constructive discussions. During the days of the site visit, it became clear that although the expert panel had identified some weaknesses and areas to be improved, in general, SAFAA had implemented its many goals envisaged by the previous 2018-2021Strategic Plan, many of which are aimed at increasing its compatibility with international higher education standards and modern best practices.

In terms of aligning SAFAA's goals with those of, for example, universities within the EHEA, the degree to which an emphasis is placed on student and staff mobility, as well as inclusivity and accessibility, is something that should continue to be prioritized. Although there are still areas of external relations and internationalization where there is room for improvement, particularly around governance and planning, there is nonetheless much to be commended in terms of SAFAA's activities in this area over the last five years. COVID and the war both impacted on mobility figures for recent years, but it was clear from discussions with management and teaching staff, that there is widely shared understanding of the centrality of internationalization for progress across many areas of Institute activity. As a matter of some urgency issues around language competence among staff and students (SAFAA students but also for incoming exchange students) must be prioritized. The Institute will have to consider the degree to which language modules should be elective/obligatory as the numbers of staff and students availing of the classes currently on offer is not sufficient in order to build a fully functioning set of international relationships with other institutions.

Some stakeholders suggested that SAFAA should incorporate more "modern" approaches to teaching English, and this should certainly be considered as part of a comprehensive plan to tackle this issue. Language is a component of internationalization and its resolution is key to many interlocking components: the need to establish links and partnerships with international universities; to open up the global art world, including funding opportunities, collaborations, exhibitions and conferences, to staff and students; to foster a more outward-facing culture at SAFAA. SAFAA has already begun working towards these goals and they should remain central in the next iteration of the Strategic Plan. The observations of the expert panel showed some material benefits of, for example, the Erasmus+ relationship, in the form of tech and infrastructural development, and positive accounts of exchange programs with Institutions in Russia, Poland, Germany and elsewhere. This is all activity that is geared towards evolution and growth, and it should be tracked, built upon, and celebrated. It should also be acknowledged that, as the primary stakeholder, the student stands to benefit enormously from international mobility options and an increase in institutional partnerships: such exchanges have a proven positive impact on a student's sense of confidence and independence.

Modularization, among other advantages, should make traffic between SAFAA and other TLIs more straightforward. The move to the new modular structure seems to be proceeding successfully, and reflects positive steps taken towards benchmarking based on international standards. Given that one of the central goals of the EHEA is the achievement of mutual recognition of qualifications (in EU member states), this move, along with work done at the level of module design, especially around assessment and learning outcomes will see SAFAA more fully able to interact and collaborate with a broad range of international institutions. It is difficult to assess the level of this success at this early stage: eight programmes have introduced it for the Year One classes- and a complete sense of the efficacy of new approaches will probably not become clear until the first cohort of students completes the cycle to graduation.

Having said this, there is plenty of evidence that staff and management have a clear understanding of, for example, the streamlining and rationalization of module content (including the merging of complimentary modules) and of the importance of meeting international standards in these respects. One would not expect to find universal agreement across teaching staff regarding such impactful changes, but it was nonetheless widely reported to the expert panel that there was ongoing, open consultation and discussion, and that many initially cautious staff members were becoming more convinced of the benefits. Modularization hasn't yet been introduced at MA level- this is something that should be considered, along with the rationalization of credits (and the possibility of semesterization in the future).

I would like to emphasize that, meeting students and staff, I got a strong impression of genuine pride in the Institute, its contribution to Armenian national culture, and its specializations in art and design instruction. The strong traditions in classical art education at SAFAA are impressive and this is something that should be acknowledged and supported at the same time that the TLI seeks to evolve and develop according to the demands of the labor market and changing artistic, social and cultural contexts. Certainly, it is important that graduates emerge from SAFAA with the requisite skills to engage in contemporary art practice, to seek employment in related industries or to pursue further education, but there should also be an effort to preserve the unique character of the Institute. SAFAA is demonstrating an openness to change, in terms of the restructuring of existing programmes, as well as considering the introduction of new courses following identified gaps in the labor market (two possibilities that were mentioned as examples were art curation and restoration/conservation).

The lack of a new Strategic Plan for 2022-27 at the time of the site visit was problematic, partly because of the difficulties thus presented around assessing the mission and ambitions for the next five years in any kind of rigorous way. After discussions with stakeholders, it became clear that the broad goals for the Institute would remain similar and that a new SP would be seeking to capitalize and build on what are substantial and fundamental changes initiated following the previous review. The finalizing of a new SP must be prioritized and it would be advisable to interrogate procedures in order to ensure that the TLI does not place itself in this position when the time for the next review comes around. It will be important to initiate alternative structures of leadership with regard to the planning and execution of research strategies, both within the institute and in relation to external collaboration.

Even if leaning towards practice-led research, on the principle of the created object as the research outcome, documented and assessable reflection on/tracking of process can form a valuable element of deliverable coursework. Theoretical and contextual analysis can be complimentary to studio practice- and interlinked with it. I would also argue for the delivery of a certain amount of discipline-specific history/contemporary analysis as well as more broad-based art history/visual culture delivery. Media awareness, issues around representation, audiences/viewers, digital cultures etc: these are areas of knowledge that have real applicability for all graduates whether entering the labor market or planning to continue in education (and may indeed be particularly relevant to certain post-graduate programmes internationally). Some level of research activity helps to encourage critical thinking, understanding of historical and contemporary contexts, creative inspiration and curiosity. Currently this is confined to Year 4 and MA programmes, and it should be noted that we saw examples of some very strong research dissertations that were certainly on a par with international equivalents in terms of content, presentation and ambition. Maybe some earlier introduction to these kinds of scholarship- perhaps as a stand-alone module somewhere within existing syllabus, which might be easier to assess in terms of specific learning outcomes. Assessment need not be solely on the basis of traditional essays, but other types of deliverables can make this activity more appealing and rewarding for students- oral presentations, video essays etc.

It will be important to ensure that SAFAA is regarded as an appealing destination for incoming international students also. While the expert panel witnessed plenty of evidence that investment in infrastructure has been taking place over the last five years, the identification of additional funding streams remains an important consideration. While staff and students reported satisfaction with space and facilities it will be important to consider the "future-proofing" of the Institute in this regard. Assuming the ambitions for the coming years include expansion of space, staff, and student numbers, it should be central to any planning that account is taken of these goals. There are a number of spaces that are currently inaccessible to students with mobility problems, and while this is not an issue for the current cohort, full accessibility for all potential students should be prioritized with an eye on the future. Social spaces for students should also be considered as an important contributor to the culture of SAFAA. At the level of specific disciplines, module learning outcomes are clearly aligned with programme learning outcomes and SAFAA goals and are in line with international equivalents. Students report satisfaction with assessment processes and flexibility and openness on the part of tutors. I would suggest that most of the feedback received be documented and made available to students in written form.

SAFAA has taken decisive steps towards integration into the EHEA over a relatively short time period. It is hoped that the expert panel report will serve as an aid to continuing with this positive evolution and we certainly recognize the degree of energy and ambition that characterizes SAFAA's current thinking about its own pedagogical identity and about the kind of graduates the Institution hopes to produce in the future. It is further hoped that the advice and recommendations contained in the report can be taken on board with specific regard to increased collaboration and mobility, a sharing

in international developments and opportunities, and an environment that will foster students' ability to get themselves and their work out into the creative and industrial worlds upon graduation.

Michael Connerty
International expert

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

The external review of SAFAA institutional capacities was carried out by the following expert panel:[1]

Menua Soghomonyan - PhD in History, YSU, Lecturer at the Chair of Political Institutions and Processes, Head of the Expert Panel.

Michael Connerty - PhD in Arts, University of Arts, London, Lecturer at Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology, International Member of the Expert Panel.

Armen Harutyunyan - PhD in Arts, Yerevan State Institute of Theater and Cinematography, Dean of the Faculty of Art History, Theory and Management, Member of the Expert Panel.

Vahram Soghomonyan - PhD in Technical Sciences, European University of Armenia, Vice-Rector for External Relations and Internationalization, Member of the Expert Panel.

Klara Margaryan - 2nd year MA student of the "Graphic Design" specialty at National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia, Member of the Expert Panel.

The composition of the expert panel was agreed upon with the educational institution, and appointed by the decision of the ANQA Director.

The works of the expert panel were coordinated by the specialists of ANQA Policy Development and Implementation Division Meri Barseghyan and Roza Babayan.

The translation was provided by Arpine Abgaryan.

All members of the expert panel, including the translator and coordinators, have signed impartiality and confidentiality agreements.

PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

Application for State Accreditation

State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia has applied to ANQA for state institutional accreditation by filling in an application in a standard form, as well as submitting copies of the license and its appendices.

The ANQA Secretariat examined the data provided in the application and the enclosed documents.

After making a decision on accepting the application, a bilateral agreement was signed between ANQA and SAFAA. The work schedule has been drawn up and approved.

Self-Evaluation

[1] APPENDIX 1. CVC OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

In accordance with the schedule, the institution submitted a self-evaluation of the institutional capacity in a format set by ANQA in Armenian and English, as well as a package of accompanying documents.

ANQA coordinators reviewed the report to verify technical compliance with ANQA requirements. The self-evaluation submitted by the University within the prescribed period was accepted by ANQA. Then, the self-evaluation and the package of enclosed documents, the electronic questionnaire completed by the Academy were provided to the expert panel, the composition of which was previously agreed upon with the Academy and approved by the order of the ANQA Director.

Preparatory Phase

ANQA conducted four trainings on the following topics to prepare the expert panel for the work and to ensure the effectiveness of the processes:

1. The main functions of the members of the expert panel;
2. Preliminary evaluation as a stage of preparation of the expert report, the main requirements for the report;
3. The methodology of studying the documentation and resources;
4. Ethics and technique of conducting meetings and inquiries.

The expert panel, having studied the self-evaluation of the TLI and the accompanying package of documents, carried out a preliminary evaluation according to the format, preparing a list of necessary documents to be further studied, as well as problems and questions, also indicating the relevant departments or target groups. During the preliminary evaluation, the members of the expert panel conducted class observations at SAFAA. Then, the expert panel summarized the results of the preliminary evaluation and made a plan-schedule for the site visit.[2]

Guided by the ANQA Accreditation Manual, the schedule included expert meetings with all groups, open and closed meetings, document reviews, etc..

Preparatory Visit

On April 15, 2022, a meeting was held with the management of the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia. During the meeting, the schedule of the site visit was discussed and agreed upon with the University, the list of additional documents to be studied was presented, discussions were conducted, mutually agreed decisions were made on the organizational, technical, informational issues of the site visit, as well as ethics and behavior norms of the meeting participants. The conditions envisaged for the work of the focus group meetings and expert panel were discussed.

[2] APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE OF SITE VISIT

Site Visit

The site visit took place from April 25 to 28, 2022. The works of the site visit commenced with a closed meeting, the purpose of which was to discuss with the international expert Michael Connerty and agree upon the scope of the expert evaluation, the issues to be studied during the visit, the strengths and weaknesses of the TLI according to the criteria, the procedure of focus group meetings, as well as to clarify the further steps.

The site visit started with a meeting with the management of the institution. The lecturer and student participants of focus group meetings, deans, heads of chairs, employers and graduates were selected from a list provided in advance by the Academy. All scheduled meetings were held. During the scheduled visit, the expert panel also made document[3] and resource observations.[4]

During the closed meeting of the expert panel held at the end of each working day of the visit, interim results of the expert evaluation were presented, and at the end of the visit the main results of the visit were summarized with a closed discussion.

The expert evaluation was carried out within the framework of state accreditation standards and criteria and ANQA procedures, which envisages a two-level evaluation scale - satisfactory and unsatisfactory.

Expert Panel Report

The expert panel carried out the preliminary evaluation on the basis of the electronic questionnaire filled in by the Academy, the self-evaluation presented, the study of the enclosed documents, the class observations conducted, and the observations made during the site visit, as a result of regularly organized discussions. Based on the observations made after the discussions, the expert panel and ANQA coordinators prepared the preliminary version of the expert report.

The international expert also prepared a separate opinion on the peer review. The documents were translated and provided to the expert panel. The peer review opinion is fully included in the text of the report. After the approval of the members of the expert panel, the preliminary report was provided to the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia.

The Academy sent its feedback on the preliminary version of the report to ANQA on June 30, 2022. ANQA provided the institution's observations to the experts. On July 12, 2022, ANQA organized a meeting of the institution and the expert panel, during which the submitted observations regarding the preliminary expert report were discussed.

Taking into account the observations of the institution, the expert panel made the final version of the expert report.

[3] APPENDIX 3. LIST OF OBSERVED DOCUMENTS
[4] APPENDIX 4. RESOURCES OBSRVED BY THE EXPERT PANEL

_____ _____

Meri Barseghyan
Expert Panel Coordinators

Roza Babayan

July 20, 2022

BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT SAFAA

History: The Yerevan State Fine Arts Institute was founded in 1945. At the time of its foundation, it had two specialties: Painting and Sculpture, in which 22 students were enrolled. In 1953, Theatre and Fine Arts Institutes were united and the Institute of Fine Arts and Theatre was established, which in 1994 was again divided into 2 separate institutions, and by the RA Government Decree dated 2000, the institution was renamed into Yerevan State Fine Arts Academy SNCO. The last change in the legal status of the institution was made by the Government of the Republic of Armenia by the Decree №474-Ա dated April 13, 2017, according to which the institution was reorganized into the "State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia" Foundation.

Education: About 870 students study at the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia, as well as at the Gyumri branch and the Dilijan subdivision. SAFAA offers educational services with 18 academic programmes in the fields of Fine Arts, Design and Applied Arts at all three levels of higher education (9 Bachelor's, 8 Master's and 1 Researcher academic programme). Leading artists of the Republic, who also have international recognition teach at SAFAA: Honorary Workers of Art and Culture, People's Painters and Honorary Painters, winners of international competitions, laureates of state awards - 2 Correspondent Members of NAS RA, 30 Professors, 40 Associate Professors.

Research: SAFAA considers research and development as one of its three strategic directions. The institution has defined as its strategic goal to carry out research/creative activities and connect them with teaching. By carrying out research/creative activities in the field of art and through connecting them with learning, SAFAA contributes to the dissemination of scientific thought and national culture.

Internationalization: SAFAA aims to create new opportunities and conditions for the development of effective cooperation, which will increase the attractiveness of the University at the local and international levels, stimulate student mobility and activate the involvement of foreign students, ensuring continuous improvement of processes promoting internationalization, exchange of experience, and capacity building.

Quality Assurance: Attaching importance to the responsibility of the University towards the state and the society, State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia sought to create an effective quality assurance system that would promote public confidence in the University's core areas of activity (teaching and learning, research and development, service to the public), as well as awarded qualifications. The aim of the quality assurance system of the University is to develop and increase the quality and efficiency of education, research and management processes at SAFAA.

Source: *The source of evidence in the above areas is the documents provided by the TLI (e.g. self-evaluation, strategic plan, schedule, plans of subdivisions, concepts, etc.).*

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

I. MISSION AND PURPOSES

CRITERION. The policies and procedures of the Tertiary Level institution (hereinafter TLI) are in accordance with the institution's mission which is in line with the Armenian National Qualifications Framework (ANQF)

Findings

1.1. The TLI has a well-articulated mission that represents the Institution's purposes and goals and is in accordance with National Qualifications Framework (hereinafter NQF).

The mission of SAFAA is recorded in the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan of the Academy, according to which the mission of the Academy is as follows:

- To provide higher education by implementing Bachelor's, Master's and Research Degree programmes in the fields of Art Studies, Fine Arts, Decorative and Applied Arts, and Design, through the application of academic and modern approaches, as well as adapting creative and educational processes to public needs;
- To contribute to the development of the national culture and economy by training nationally and internationally competitive and highly qualified specialists, as well as citizens ready for lifelong learning;
- To develop art research by contributing to the dissemination of scientific thought and national culture;
- To contribute to the consolidation of the society and the increase of aesthetic taste through the formation of national values.

According to the self-evaluation, in line with the first point of SAFAA mission, Bachelor's, Master's and Research academic programmes are implemented in the higher-education institution, which correspond to the 6th, 7th and 8th levels of ANQF. Compliance of academic programmes with ANQF is ensured by the compliance methodology, tools and procedures included in the "SAFAA Manual for the Development and Review of Academic Programmes".

The component of the mission of SAFAA, which is related to the creation, preservation and dissemination of national culture, is included in academic programmes. The Armenian and national themes are present in the works of students specializing not only in Art Studies and Fine Arts, but also in Design, Fashion Design, and Decorative Applied Arts.

Attached to the Strategic Plan is a schedule-plan for its implementation, which defines key performance indicators, responsible people and terms. It should be noted that even though the annual reports submitted to the University Board of Trustees are prepared according to the fields of strategic goals, the work done is not presented and analyzed according to those indicators to make the performance level and effectiveness clear for the internal and external stakeholders.

It is necessary to state that the previous cycle of strategic planning ended in December 2021, and the new strategic plan is still being developed and has not been approved. The meeting with the management during the site visit made clear that in the new Strategic Plan, the mission and main goals of the University will remain the same, and mainly the issues arising from the strategic goals will be changed. It should be noted that institutionally the number one stakeholder body in having a Strategic Plan for the development of the University - the Board of Trustees, was not deeply involved in the reasons for the Strategic Plan not being approved yet. It should be noted that SAFAA has developed guidelines for the development of a Strategic Plan, which include questions contributing to the definition of the mission, goals and objectives.

Taking into account the fact that SAFAA implements academic programmes, most of which are not offered by any other public university in the Republic of Armenia, the mission of SAFAA clearly contains the specificity of the University in terms of professional directions and positioning in the labor market.

There are also separate strategic plans in some directions, which are: the 2016-2020 SAFAA Internationalization Strategy, the 2019-2022 SAFAA Research Strategy, and the SAFAA Policy on Inclusive Education.

The characteristics of the Gyumri branch are not reflected in the 2017-2021 SAFAA Strategic Development Plan. According to the approach of SAFAA, the goals and actions of the SP have a broad content and refer to all subdivisions of the University, including the Gyumri branch.[5]

1.2. The mission statement, goals and objectives of the TLI reflect the needs of the internal and external stakeholders.

The study of the previous accreditation expert panel report and improvement plan revealed that the involvement of external stakeholders in the development of the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan was a problematic circumstance. The University realized this problem and in the elaboration of the new 2022-2026 Strategic Development Plan, thoroughly dealt with the issue of involving internal and external stakeholders, to that end compiling the "List of Internal and External Stakeholders for the Development of 2022-2026 SAFAA Strategic Plan" document as a methodological basis. Moreover, the

[5] The opinion was rewritten as a result of the discussion on the institution's observations.

University Administration attributed the reason for the delay of the development of a new Strategic Plan to the fact that it takes a long time to properly discuss and define the principles and performance indicators of the Plan with external stakeholders. In this regard, the most problematic are the meetings with the representatives of the partner organizations and the RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports. According to the mentioned document, the internal stakeholders of SAFAA are the students, the teaching staff, the administrative staff and the support staff. The main external stakeholders are the state, represented by the RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, state organizations in the field of culture and educational institutions, representatives of the private sector and employers.

Focus group meetings have been held recently, during which the provisions of the new Strategic Plan have been discussed. However, the self-evaluation and the attached documents (mainly the "List of Internal and External Stakeholders for the Development of 2022-2026 SAFAA Strategic Plan") indicate that the list of external stakeholders does not include community-based educational or cultural organizations (such as art schools). Yerevan State University, which implements "Art Studies" and "Cultural Studies" academic programmes, has also not been included in the list of external stakeholder organizations. Individual creators, highly qualified specialists in the field are also not considered as external stakeholders.

There is no study or analysis that will testify about connecting the strategic planning with the international educational, scientific, cultural tendencies related to the state priorities or the University specialties.

1.3 The TLI has set mechanisms and procedures to evaluate the achievement of its mission and goals and further improve them.

According to the self-evaluation, the processes of development, implementation and evaluation of the SP take place according to the logic of the PDCA cycle. In the previous improvement plan, at the end of each year, SAFAA planned to review the established KPIs, but the annual reports did not include the work done in that direction.

It should be noted that a summary of the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan, was conducted by SAFAA, which presents in detail the strategic objectives and performance indicators. It should also be noted that the annual reports to the Board of Trustees, however, are not compiled according to the KPIs.

In the previous accreditation expert report, it was mentioned that it was problematic to evaluate the degree of achievement of strategic goals by the KPI set of the 2017-2021 SP. As SAFAA summed up the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan with that very set, the expert panel notes that the average efficiency of the strategic goals in the evaluation table of the achievement of goals of the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan of the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia amounts to 85% (the average efficiency of the achievement of goal "Expansion of External Relations and Promotion of Mobility" was graded the

lowest - 68.20%, and the average efficiency of the achievement of goal "Improvement of Governance System" was graded the highest - 95.22%).

Nevertheless, it should be noted that such a perception of strategic management, the organization and evaluation of processes based on it have problematic aspects, out of which the expert panel distinguishes the following:

1. There are semantic-logical gaps between many strategic issues and the performance indicators of activities ensuring their implementation. For example, the third strategic goal ("Implementation of Research and Connecting It to Teaching") set an objective to stimulate the research/creative activity of the teaching staff, with the following performance indicator envisaged to evaluate the activity ensuring its solution: "Existence of Conditions Contributing to the Scientific, Methodical and Creative Activity of Lecturers." The University planned six conditions for the success of this activity (judging by the SP and its schedule of activities, these conditions were not identified during the planning), out of which, according to the evaluation table, 5 were provided (inclusion of scientific articles in the workload of lecturers, an opportunity to publish articles free of charge (SAFAA Yearbook), an opportunity to publish articles free of charge (Ural Federal University Journal), an opportunity to organize free exhibitions (SAFAA Exhibition Hall), an opportunity to organize free exhibitions (Exhibition Hall of the Artists' Union of Armenia)) and, accordingly, the efficiency of the mentioned activity was graded 75%. Nonetheless, the reports and other documents do not explain in any way why, how and to what extent the above-mentioned circumstances are contributing factors to the creative activity of the lecturers. Maybe it would be possible to provide higher conditions accessible to the University (for example, financial incentives: as a matter of fact, only the lecturers in the specialty of Art Studies are given additional fees for publishing the research outcome). And if the lecturers were provided with an opportunity to print an article in the two other partner universities of SAFAA, based on the concluded agreements, would it mean that the efficiency of the activity registered with the indicator "Existence of Conditions Contributing to the Scientific, Methodical and Creative Activity of Lecturers" would amount to 117%?
2. Performance indicators in planning processes are not substantiated (although some of them seem rational), which does not allow to understand the relationship between the potential of the institution and what it has planned. For example, does the publication of 10 works by students in 5 years reflect the potential of the University or not?
3. Performance Indicators and the reports submitted in their direction are mostly quantitative, which does not provide an opportunity to evaluate the quality and efficiency of the implemented processes. For example, the performance indicator of "Promoting Stakeholder Involvement in the Governance Process" is defined as the availability of revised and elaborated internal regulatory documents ensuring that involvement. Thus, from the beginning it was planned to elaborate 4 documents, but 5 were elaborated, and upon the University's evaluation, the performance indicator of "Promoting Stakeholder Involvement in the Governance Process"

was considered 125%. Meanwhile, it is clear that the promotion of stakeholders' involvement in the governance process is not only done through a document, and it is not clear to what extent the stakeholders' involvement has been promoted and what has improved in the governance as a result of that involvement.

4. The annual reports submitted to the Board of Trustees are based on the methodology of the University's strategic goals, however, the reports are highly descriptive, non-analytical, which does not allow to evaluate the degree of the achievement of results compared to what is planned and the potential, in order to understand the reasons for non-performance or underperformance of some activities.

During the site visit, the panel was informed that SAFAA is making efforts to establish a more effective, integrated and realistic KPI set for the evaluation of strategic goals.

Considerations: The expert panel positively evaluated the fact that the mission of the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia unequivocally expresses the content of its academic programmes and directions of activity. The connection between the mission, professional profile, and activity is not only provided by formal formulations, but is also visible in academic programmes, research and their outcomes. The existence of the necessary methodical tools for the alignment of academic programmes with the National Qualifications Framework is also a positive aspect, which is a necessary condition for the credibility of the awarded qualifications. At the same time, the strategic planning of SAFAA is not visibly and in a documented way linked to the international educational, scientific, and cultural trends related to state priorities or University specialties, which makes it risky for the University to derive its strategic activities from a broader context.

SAFAA has completed the second cycle of its strategic planning and is now in the final stage of developing a new Strategic Plan. The expert panel positively evaluates the fact that from cycle to cycle the University improves its strategic planning with its development and evaluation tools. Thus, the second cycle of strategic planning differed favorably from the first by the fact that there was a set of KPIs for the evaluation of strategic goals, and that the second cycle was summarized on the basis of that set. And the third cycle differs favorably from the second one by the fact that at this stage the participation of internal and external stakeholders in compiling the Strategic Plan, in particular, in the discussion and definition of the KPI set, has increased.

The expert panel understands the reasons for the new Plan not being approved yet after the completion of the previous Strategic Plan, however, the formal non-existence of the new SP deprives the expert panel of the opportunity to evaluate the evolution of strategic planning in SAFAA, to make a comparative analysis, to identify the problematic aspects, and to discuss the credibility of performance indicators. The non-clarification of provisions of the new SP and, in particular, the ambitions of the University, do not allow to evaluate the efficiency of governance (which will be discussed in the text on Criterion 2), as well as to assess the opportunities and tendencies within the context of human, material, financial resources and managerial capacities of the University.

Although the use of existing KPIs has led to a less credible evaluation of the degree to which strategic goals have been achieved in summarizing the previous cycle, the expert panel evaluates positively such a culture of Strategic Plan summary itself and hopes that in the third cycle SAFAA will have a more reliable set of evaluation.

Summary: Given that the mission of SAFAA is clearly defined, reflects the professional profile of the University and the main directions of its activities, that the mission is visible in the academic programmes and the research contents and outcomes, that from cycle to cycle the strategic planning toolkit is visibly improving, that there are tendencies in defining more credible indicators of evaluating the University strategic goals and that the strategic planning incorporates the approaches, needs, and opinions of a wide range of stakeholders, the expert panel concludes that SAFAA institutional capacities comply with the requirements of Criterion 1.

Conclusion: The expert panel evaluates the compliance of SAFAA institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 1 as **satisfactory**.

II. GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

CRITERION: The TLI's system of governance, administrative structures and their activities are efficient and are aimed at the accomplishment of mission and goals of the institution preserving ethical norms of governance.

Findings

2.1 The TLI's system of governance ensures structured decision-making process, in accordance with defined ethical rules and has efficient provision of human, material and financial resources to accomplish its educational and other purposes.

According to the RA Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education, the RA Law on Foundations, the University Charter and other legal acts, the governance of SAFAA is carried out by a combination of collegial and sole forms of governance. The highest collegial governing body of the Academy is the University Board of Trustees. The other body of high-level collegial governance is the Scientific Council, which plans, coordinates and regulates the educational, methodical, scientific-research activities of the University. The executive body of sole governance is the Rector. The collegial governing bodies of the middle level are the faculty councils and chairs, which are headed by the deans and the heads of the chairs, respectively. The academic programmes of the University are implemented in the Gyumri branch and the Dilijan subdivision. Educational, research, public involvement and other functions are carried out by the organization of administrative subdivisions. The procedure, competencies, functions, work schedule and responsibilities of all the above-mentioned bodies are described both in the normative-legal documents defining and regulating the RA higher education system, and in the internal legal acts of the University.

The previous accreditation expert report stated that the organizational structure of the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia does not provide the appropriate governance hierarchy, that the faculties and chairs in the organizational structure "are only in the field of cooperation with superior departments and are not subject to acting upon the superior's decisions". According to the Improvement Plan, SAFAA intended to clarify the functions of the governance units, as well as to review the subordination and communication links according to the strategic goals. In this context, the University attached importance to increasing the level of participation and initiative of stakeholders involved in the field of governance.

Improving the system of governance was the number one goal in the 2017-2021 Strategic Development Plan of the University. In the mentioned strategic plan in that direction SAFAA set the following objectives:

- To introduce an e-governance system and develop information management;
- To improve the cooperation between subdivisions;
- To develop human resource management processes;
- To increase the efficiency of financial and material resources management.

It should be noted that in the implementation schedule of the Strategic Plan for the above-mentioned problems, key performance indicators have been included, the annual reports submitted to the Board of Trustees are compiled based on the methodology of taking into account the strategic goals, and at the end of the plan a complete evaluation of the plan has been carried out based on the mentioned indicators. Nevertheless, the combination of such key performance indicators does not provide sufficient grounds for the expert panel to understand to what extent the problems in the field of governance have been solved. First of all, it should be noted that the University itself has not analyzed the impact of the activities defined by the Strategic Plan on the development of the system of governance, indicating the concrete achievements in this direction. Secondly, the expert panel, observing the work done by the University in the mentioned problems from the position of the result, records the following facts:

- **To Introduce an E-Governance System and Develop Information Management**: Electronic management of administrative-educational processes, information and data generation and transfer are incomplete. Thus, the Mulberry electronic document management system has been introduced, the employees using the system have undergone relevant trainings, however, the system has not been put into operation yet, in particular, the chairs are not yet part of the system. Student enrollment and personal record data, graduation roasters and diploma supplements are generated electronically, lecturer data is entered, but on the other hand there are no electronic learning platforms (Moodle, Google classroom, etc.), the calculation of lecturers' educational-methodical workload has not been automatized yet, students and lecturers do not have University e-mail addresses, etc.
- **To Improve the Cooperation between Subdivisions**: After the previous accreditation, SAFAA aims to increase the efficiency of the system of governance, turning it into a single organism. In this context, not only the normative-legal documents regulating the activities of different

governing bodies and structural units were developed and reviewed, but also structural and functional changes were made, in particular, due to the emergence of new functions in the University. Thus, on the basis of the Career Center, the Student Support and Graduates Cooperation Center was established, and instead of the position of Public Relations Officer, three new positions with wider functions were created: "Manager of Mass Media Communications and Social Media", "Official Website Administrator", "Journalist". The position of "Manager for Commercialization of Creative and Design Products" has also been created, the Department of Education has dissolved and "Department of Educational-Methodological Development and Academic Registrar" and "Department of Academic Programme Development" have been established, etc. At the same time, it became clear from the site visit that there are problems of communication and harmonious activity between the different governing bodies and circles of SAFAA. Thus, the real functions of the initiative of the University's large-scale procedures, strategic planning, ongoing monitoring, as well as evaluation are concentrated in the hands of a group of administrative officials. The process of modularization of academic programmes is one of the vivd proofs of what has been said, where the process from the generation of the idea to its implementation, as well as the current preliminary evaluation chain go through them (of course, the issue was discussed in the chairs as well). The group, of course, includes people who are initiating, motivated, committed, prepared, knowledgeable about the problems of the University, with modern approaches, whose analysis of activities makes visible the achievements of the University, especially after the previous accreditation period (improvement and development of the document base of the University activity, some improvement in the culture of quality, governance process, infrastructure, etc.). Nonetheless, it is typical of the University system of governance that the development signals are not (or not so much) transmitted from educational subdivisions or higher management to this group (which, in fact, is responsible for the implementation of development signals), but are transmitted upward and downward from this group. In this regard, the other issue was the one of communication between the educational subdivisions and the External Relations Department, which was reflected in the fact that, firstly, there was no agreement between the top management and the External Relations Department on the urgency of some issues (for example, providing a separate line of budget for the department); secondly, the department is cut off from coordinating the programs and initiatives of different administrative-educational subdivisions containing external cooperation, does not possess necessary amount of information about them, and does not have sufficient opportunity or influence to initiate external cooperation processes for those subdivisions.

- To Develop Human Resource Management Processes: After the previous accreditation process, during the reporting period of the 2017-2021 Strategic Development Plan, SAFAA regulated the activities of its administrative subdivisions, as well as administrative and scientific-pedagogical staff, defining their functions, competencies and responsibilities. Nevertheless, there is no complex and systematized policy of human resource involvement, preservation,

progress and motivation at the University. Low salaries and the absence of human-professional resources to implement such a policy (the Staff Recruitment Department is mainly engaged in documentation) are among the possible reasons of the aforementioned. The long-standing vacancy of the position of the Head of the Research Center, in general, the fact that the center does not solve the potential problems defined by the research strategy of the University is in fact a consequence of the mentioned problem in the field of governance (a circumstance that was also observed during the previous accreditation).

- **To Increase the Efficiency of Financial and Material Resources Management**: In order to solve this strategic issue, SAFAA has developed a property management procedure, reviewed the procedures of planning, monitoring, evaluation and improvement of the annual activities of the subdivisions, however, the expert panel has identified three possible gaps in terms of this issue. Firstly, the University has not made an analysis of the effectiveness of financial and material resources management. Secondly, the University does not have a strategic budget to plan the necessary funds for strategic activities. Thirdly, the activity of the Manager for Commercialization of Creative and Design Products has not yet produced visible results (which, according to the acceptable justification presented to the expert panel, is also due to objective circumstances, in particular, the imperfection of the legal framework on copyright).

The expert panel, as a result of the observation of the documents and the site visit, records some noticeable successes and strengths of the University in the field of governance, among which are the following:

- **Improvement of Strategic Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit:** The culture of plan-do-check-act of the quality management of the policies and processes is being rooted at SAFAA, especially in the administrative subdivisions. Particularly the planning of the activities of the administrative subdivisions is connected with the Strategic Plan of the University. Accountability and evaluation are carried out using a methodology based on strategic goals, defined performance indicators and their interpretation. The Rectorate PDCA Committee, which includes the Rector, Vice-Rectors, Quality Assurance Officer, two lecturers and one student, reviews the quarterly reports of the subdivisions, requests clarification for underperformance, etc.
- **Due to the small number of administrative and scientific-pedagogical staff and students of the University, directness of contacts and ease of communications.**
- **Ability to Respond to External Challenges:** The educational process was not disrupted during the Covid-19 pandemic. Theoretical lessons were conducted via Zoom platform, and practical lessons were organized through the reduction of groups and two shifts.
- **Positive Progress of the Results of the Gyumri Branch:** The branch independently applies for grant programs and often achieves success. Since 2019, they have implemented three major grant programs. In contrast to the headquarters, where salaries make up 80% of expenses, in the branch salaries make up 60% of expenses.

The expert panel, as a result of the observation of the documents and the site visit, also identified a number of realities, which testify to the operation of the system of governance with low efficiency. The following are singled out among those facts:

- At the time of the observation of documents and site visit, SAFAA did not have a Strategic Development Plan.
- The highest collegial governing body of SAFAA, the Board of Trustees, is largely unaware of the University's problems and internal important processes. The site visit showed that this body has a very symbolic participation in the strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation of processes, it does not clearly understand its role either in setting objectives before the University management, or in solving the challenges facing the University. For example, the trustees did not envision their role opportunities in diversification and increase of the University's income, the acquisition of additional necessary educational infrastructure to ensure the normal functioning of the Faculty of Decorative and Applied Arts, the improvement of accountability, the legislative improvements related to some of the specialties (e.g. painter-restorer), and other issues. The trustees did not delve into the creation of the Strategic Development Plan of SAFAA (What vision should the University have? What will the most important strategic issues be? Why is the new program not ready yet? etc.) or in the process of institutional accreditation (To what extent did they participate in the development of self-evaluation? What problems did they identify? etc.). The Board of Trustees does not promote active interaction with state bodies (the expert panel does not rule out that the passivity of state bodies plays a role in this issue). Meetings of the Board of Trustees (apart from the annual report meeting) are rarely convened, and only on the initiative of the University.
- The site visit gave the impression that the representatives of the middle and lower levels of governance (heads of faculties and chairs) do not have clear and definite ideas about the strategic priorities of the University. They are either not faced with strategic issues by the upper levels of governance, or there is a problem of communication to make those issues clear and comprehensible.
- Quality assurance functions mostly refer to academic programmes and educational activities. The effectiveness of identifying issues related to administrative processes and the activities of the administrative staff has not been observed yet. Strategic planning is not yet done on the basis of data generated by quality assurance. Quality Assurance Officer is under the subordination of the Rector (which, despite the low functionality of the Governing Board, is in fact justified).
- Problems related to the managerial capacities of the middle level of governance are noticeable.
- Judging by the diagram of the structure of SAFAA and by the regulations of some subdivisions, there is a system of dual or triple subordination of administrative subdivisions. Thus, the Department of Educational-Methodological Development and Academic Registrar, the Department of Academic Programme Development, the Research Center, and the Student Support and Graduates Cooperation Center are accountable to the Rector and the Vice-Rector

for Education and Research. The External Relations Department, the Staff Recruitment and General Department, the Special Department, the Library, the Exhibition Hall, the First Medical Aid Center, the Official Website Administrator, the Journalist, the Manager of Mass Media Communications and Social Media, and the Manager for Commercialization of Creative and Design Products are accountable to the Rector, the Vice-Rector for Education and Research, as well as the Vice-Rector for Finance and Logistics.

- Although the Ethics Codes are posted and available on the University's website, the stakeholders' awareness about them is not high.[6]
- Salaries, especially for scientific-pedagogical staff, are low. In the conditions of low salaries and low incomes, the measures of professional orientation in schools taken by the University, which are aimed at increasing the number of students in the University, are not a systematic and planned process.

2.2 The TLI's system of governance gives an opportunity to students and the teaching staff to take part in decision making procedures.

The participation of SAFAA lecturers, students, and other internal stakeholders in making decisions related to them is formally regulated by the RA Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education, the RA Law on Foundations, the University Charter, the Scientific Council Regulation, Charters of the Faculties, and other legal acts.

According to the aforementioned, 5 out of 20 members of the Governing Board (Board of Trustees) are students, and another 5 are representatives of scientific-pedagogical and administrative staff of the University. Some of the external members of the Board involved by the MoESCS quota also teach at the University by outside concurrent employment. 8 out of 29 members of the Scientific Council are students, the rest are representatives of scientific-pedagogical and administrative staff of the University, as well as invited members.[7] Students make 1/4 of the members of faculty councils. Deans, their deputies, heads of chairs, and lecturers are included in the faculty councils.

It became clear from the site visit that the initiation of changes in the University is mostly carried out by a narrow circle of the administrative staff. Nevertheless, the University attaches importance to the participation of internal stakeholders in these processes. The change in the principle of organization and structure of academic programmes was initiated by the administrative staff, which, however, was discussed for a long time with the heads of chairs and lecturers. Participation in student surveys can also be considered a form of student participation in decisions related to them, as the survey forms contain a section of suggestions. However, the site visit revealed that student participation in surveys is weak. Lecturers and students also have some involvement in the elaboration of a new Strategic Development Plan of the University. SAFAA made a list of internal and external stakeholders

[6] The opinion was rewritten as a result of the discussion on the institution's observations.
[7] The opinion was rewritten as a result of the discussion on the institution's observations.

involved in the elaboration of the 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, where it classified students (Student Council members, students involved in governing bodies, students registered by announcement) and lecturers (heads of chairs, lecturers involved in governing bodies, lecturers registered by announcement).

From the observation of the documents and the site visit, it became clear that there are still problems at SAFAA, either in organizing the participation in the decisions related to them, or in making its possibilities clear to the internal stakeholders. Thus, the results of the survey conducted among administrative employees in June, 2021 show that half of the administrative staff get acquainted with the documents after their approval. At the same time, 72% of the surveyed administrative staff said that their opinions and the opinions of their colleagues influence decision-making. Half of the surveyed lecturers think that their opinion influences decision-making, and 1/3 thinks that it does not. In the previous accreditation expert report, the participation of internal stakeholders in decision-making was considered problematic. Recent surveys, on the other hand, show that 3/4 of the administrative staff and 1/2 of the teaching staff are satisfied with their participation in decision-making. However, it is not clear what circumstances this level of satisfaction is conditioned by: how, by what measures, compared to the previous cycle of accreditation, in this cycle did SAFAA increase the participation of lecturers and administrative staff in decision-making?

2.3 The TLI formulates and carries out short-term, mid-term and long-term planning consistent with its mission and goals, as well as has appropriate mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of those plans.

Long-term planning at the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia is implemented through the five-year Strategic Development Plan of the University. As we have already mentioned, the cycle of the previous Strategic Plan of the University has ended in 2021, the elaboration of a new plan is in progress. In order to monitor long-term planning, the University has set performance indicators, the issues of which, in line with the strategic goals, are identified in the text on Criterion 1. 3. It is noteworthy that the expert panel of the previous accreditation also noticed this problem and noted that the performance indicators of strategic objectives have no substantiation, that it is not possible to assess whether the strategic goals have been achieved or not. During the site visit it became clear that the management of SAFAA pays considerable attention to this issue. It became clear that the development of a new Strategic Plan was delayed because, especially through sound discussions with external stakeholders, the University seeks to improve performance indicators.

SAFAA also implements long-term sectoral planning. During the previous cycle, however, a documented strategy for research and internationalization was developed for only 2 of the 6 strategic goals. The internationalization strategy covers the years 2016-2020, the connection of the goals and objectives of which with 2017-2021 SAFAA Strategic Development Plan is weak and unclear, essentially taking into account the fact that SAFAA Strategic Plan was developed later than the strategy of internationalization. The sphere of internationalization, in fact, after the end of the cycle (2020), is

not yet subject to strategic planning. As for SAFAA research strategy (2019-2022), the strategic objectives set in it are in sync with the objectives of SAFAA Strategic Development Plan. The problem of long-term research planning is related to its coordination. The inefficient activity of the Research Center was also observed during the previous accreditation. In the previous cycle as well, the Research Center did not in fact carry out strategic activities, but simply recorded the scientific-research outcome, documented the researcher's educational process and carried out other operational activities, which was also due to the vacancy of the Head of the Center.

According to the self-evaluation and the observed documents, the long-term planning of SAFAA is done by identifying the needs of internal and external stakeholders, taking into account their opinions and approaches. As we have mentioned, SAFAA has listed internal and external stakeholders for the development of its 2022-2026 Strategic Plan. The guidelines for designing and elaborating the Strategic Plan of SAFAA guide the University to identify the needs of the stakeholders before the elaboration of the Strategic Plan, and after the elaboration, to submit the preliminary version of the Plan to the stakeholder discussion.

The main mechanism for monitoring and controlling long-term planning is the annual reports submitted by the Rector to the Board of Trustees. The reports are compiled according to the goals of the Strategic Plan. Although accountability is facilitated in this way, the reports present the results of some, not all, activities envisaged by the Strategic Plan. Firstly, the reports are not based on an assessment of the performance of all activities planned in the Strategic Plan, and secondly, the reasons for non-performance or under-performance of some actions are not presented. According to the self-evaluation, the Strategic Development Plan of the University, as well as the annual reports on its activities are approved by the Board of Trustees. The site visit showed that this approval is a mostly formal process. Trustees do not delve into the essential elements and mechanisms of either strategic planning or accountability. Failure of the trustees to touch upon the activities planned but not implemented or under-implemented (for example, it was planned to “diversify incomes”, “introduce a foreign language academic programme”, “implement a joint academic programme”, which was not done) (these are missing in the protocols) is one of the pieces of evidence of what was said. The reports do not clearly show whether the results envisaged by the defined quantitative and qualitative indicators have been achieved or not.

According to the self-evaluation, the medium-term planning at SAFAA is reflected in the action plan of the Strategic Development Plan of the University, which includes the actions aimed at achieving the goals, those responsible for their implementation, success indicators, the supervisory body, and deadlines for the implementation. Observation of the documents, however, shows that the University is not yet implementing medium-term planning. There is no opening-plan that makes the implementation of the provisions of the Strategic Development Plan of SAFAA more detailed. In this respect, it may be possible to refer to the Research Strategy of the University.[8]

[8] The opinion was rewritten as a result of the discussion on the institution's observations.

Short-term planning is carried out in the form of the annual plans of the administrative subdivisions. An annual planning format is set, with the help of which the subdivisions, based on the goals and objectives of the Strategic Development Plan of the University, compile the annual plan of their own activity. Short-term planning evaluation mechanisms are quarterly and annual reports. Quarterly reports are submitted by the subdivisions to the Report Evaluation Committee (PDCA Group), and the annual reports to the Scientific Council. According to the results of the survey conducted among the administrative staff in 2021, all the administrative employees participate in the preparation of the annual action plans of the subdivision.

2.4 The TLI carries out examination of facts affecting its activities and draws on reliable findings during the decision-making process.

The fact that SAFAA attaches importance to the study of factors affecting its activities is reflected in some methodical documents related to the planning of University processes. The guidelines for designing and developing a new Strategic Development Plan of the University attach importance to having clear data collection and analysis mechanisms.

The self-evaluation describes superficially and in a general way how the study of the factors affecting its activity takes place in the case of SAFAA. Thus, in the self-evaluation it is mentioned that when developing the Strategic Plan, SAFAA draws on the needs of internal and external stakeholders, as well as on the current requirements and tendencies of the European Higher Education Area and the Republic of Armenia in the field of education. Observation of the documents shows that the University uses, among others, the following mechanisms to identify the needs and opinions of its internal and external stakeholders:

- Meetings with employers within the framework of reviewing the APs (employers here assess any skills and knowledge of graduates of the academic programme from the point of view of labor market demands);
- Meetings with graduates and students within the framework of reviewing the APs;
- Surveys among employers related to the professional profile of the APs;
- Focus group meetings with students from different APs;
- Informal meetings with employers to discuss the preliminary version of strategic planning.

During the site visit it became clear that due to the application of the mentioned mechanisms some needs were identified, decisions were made, from which we can distinguish the facts that:

- Problems with art models and props were identified through student surveys;
- As a result of face-to-face contacts with students and graduates, it was decided to increase the number of foreign languages taught, to conduct portfolio and CV writing trainings;
- As a result of meetings with employers, a decision was made to include educational components in the academic programmes that assume group work and business design skills.

It should be noted that most of the above-mentioned mechanisms are regulated, the results of meetings and surveys are being analyzed. Both from the observation of the documents and from the

site visit, it becomes clear that the results of the mentioned meetings and surveys are used in the process of reviewing the APs, but as long as it is the first year, when the basic methodological review of the Bachelor's degree programmes has taken place, it is impossible to come up with considerations on the purposefulness of the changes made as a result of the identified needs. It should be noted, however, that the results of the mentioned surveys and meetings are not brought together by the University in a single document to serve as a methodological basis for the development of the SP. The study of the current requirements and tendencies of the European Higher Education Area and in the Republic of Armenia in the field of education is not documented either. The observation of the documents and the site visit did not make it clear how that study takes place. When considering the 2017-2021 SAFAA Strategic Development Plan, we do not find there any analysis of the identified needs of internal and external stakeholders or the tendencies of the outside world and the Armenian educational reality as a methodological basis for the Strategy. From this point of view, it should be noted that there is no analysis or information on whether the University has studied the state priorities (which, for example, are enshrined in government programs, governmental or departmental concepts, etc.), which are to some extent consistent with its mission and goals, as well as the educational profile (cultural policy, service, light industry, information technologies, etc.).

Until now, the University has not had the opportunity to use the platform of the Board of Trustees to study the factors affecting its activities.

The publications of the mass media, the contacts with the cultural centers of the Republic are considered by SAFAA as an opportunity to study the factors affecting its activity. As much as possible, SAFAA studies the experience of partner universities that have achieved success in some areas. For example, the successful experience of the American University of Armenia in the field of alumni relations was studied. It should be noted, however, that such studies are not orderly.

2.5 The administration of the policies and the processes is based on the quality management principle (plan-do-check-act /PDCA/).

In the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia, the PDCA principle of quality management of the administration of policies and procedures is introduced at the level of strategic management. The targeting of the improvement directions of management processes, which is reflected in the Strategic Development Plan of the University, was largely based on previous accreditation expert evaluations, observations and consultations, which proves that the University initiated the improvement on the basis of evaluation. Thus, the expert evaluation of the previous accreditation showed weak connection between management and strategic goals, weak involvement of external stakeholders in the decision-making process, lack of analyses of the external environment, inefficient distribution of organizational structures, etc. And in 2017-2021 SAFAA Strategic Development Plan, generally deriving from the above-mentioned observations, actions like the following ones were planned and to some extent implemented:

- Ensuring interconnection of different levels of governance, clarification of responsibilities and competencies;
- Promoting stakeholder involvement in the management process;
- Improving the strategic plan implementation monitoring system.

As already mentioned, strategic planning in SAFAA is carried out as much as possible by identifying the needs of internal stakeholders, graduates, and employers, as well as expressing opinions. The annual plans of the faculties, chairs, as well as the administrative subdivisions are made based on the Strategic Development Plan of the University. Both in the SP development of the University, and in the plans of the lower levels, there are indicators for the evaluation of the result, which give a methodical opportunity to evaluate the implemented activities. The annual reports of the Rector submitted to the Board of Trustees, the annual reports of the administrative and educational subdivisions submitted to the Scientific Council, as well as the quarterly reports submitted to the PDCA Committee are mechanisms for evaluating the results. The expert panel cannot fully evaluate the level of incorporation of the PDCA principle at the strategic level of SAFAA because of the absence of 2022-2026 Strategic Development Plan of the University, the KPIs of which, according to the University management, are significantly different from the KPIs of the previous plan in a positive way.

The self-evaluation describes the general principles for the implementation of PDCA long-term, medium-term and short-term cycles, without focusing on any practical case or example. And the expert panel, which had the opportunity to observe only the "major" processes taking place at the University, states that these processes are either still being implemented or are being evaluated. The transitions from evaluation to improvement are not visible yet. For example, in 2017, SAFAA planned to provide modern and competitive academic programmes (planning). To have modern and competitive academic programmes, a number of important activities were carried out in 2017-2021, such as training, benchmarking, introduction of regulations, etc., which led to the introduction (implementation) of new modular academic programmes. As the modular academic programmes have been operating since the 2021-2022 academic year, it takes three more years to evaluate their effectiveness. And if we evaluate the separate action of the mentioned strategic goal according to the logic of the PDCA principle, for example, the revision of the descriptions of the academic programmes ("small process"), then here, of course, we can witness the closing of the PDCA cycle.

The expert panel finds that due to the introduction of quality assurance mechanisms and tools in particular, SAFAA is in the phase of active evaluation of academic programmes and other processes. It is noteworthy that the University is going to revise and improve the quality assurance mechanisms based on the new KPIs of the Strategic Plan.

2.6 The TLI has evaluation mechanisms in place ensuring data collection, analysis and application of the data on the effectiveness of the academic programmes and other processes

The data collection and analysis on the effectiveness of the academic programmes at the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia is provided, among others, through the following tools:

- Surveys on evaluating the effectiveness of courses, class observations,
- Focus group meetings with students on the effectiveness of the academic programmes,
- Evaluation of APs by the employers,
- Evaluation of APs by the graduates.

The data collection and analysis on the effectiveness of administrative and other processes at SAFAA is done, among others, through the following tools:

- Evaluation of the effectiveness of the administration among the teaching staff,
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of the administration among the administrative staff,
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of a SAFAA employee by the supervisor,
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of the head of a SAFAA subdivision by the employee of the subdivision,
- Surveys of foreign students hosted by SAFAA through exchange programs,
- Surveys on the knowledge of a foreign language,
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of information about the admission process by applicants,
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of the admission process by first-year students,
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of resources and services among students,
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of resources and services among the teaching staff.

It is noteworthy that evaluating the effectiveness of such mechanisms of data collection and analysis regarding the effectiveness of academic programmes and other processes is not an easy task. Judging by the fact that in the summary document of 2017-2021 SAFAA Strategic Development Plan, it is mentioned that 18 quality assurance tools have been reviewed, it becomes clear that these tools have been evaluated in one way or another. However, there is no analysis as to why they were reviewed. In this sense, the self-evaluation of the institutional accreditation of SAFAA also does not provide information, in fact not indicating any mechanism for evaluating the data collection, analysis and application on the effectiveness of the academic programmes and other processes.

2.7 There are updated, objective and unbiased mechanisms in place evaluating the quality of quantitative and qualitative information on the academic programmes and qualifications awarded.

The academic programmes of the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia are available on the website of the University. The academic programme sections of the website describe the mission, main content, and learning outcomes of the academic programmes, educational environment, educational trajectory (what results are achieved in each academic year), curriculum, teaching staff (partially), career opportunities, etc.. The assessment system is also described in detail on the website, along with approaches, principles, criteria and descriptors. Course programs are not posted on the website. Defenses of bachelor's graduation works and master's theses are public at SAFAA, so employers and

representatives of the art-loving public are usually present at them, taking into account the public interest due to the special nature of the profession.

SAFAA uses some quality assurance tools to evaluate the quality of academic programmes and awarded qualifications. One of those tools is, for example, meetings with employers within the framework of the revision of the APs, the results of which are documented. Meetings with graduates can also be mentioned from the same point of view. However, the monitoring of academic programmes in the University is not a planned and procedural process, in which the subjects of academic programme monitoring, the schedule, etc., would be described, which would make it possible to evaluate the quality of academic programmes and awarded qualifications in a more regulated manner. At the same time, the results of the evaluation of the quality of academic programmes and awarded qualifications are not published, and there is no mention of the mechanisms that evaluate these publications in the self-evaluation. In any case, the University's "Manual for the Development and Review of Academic Programmes" as well as the "Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Academic Programmes" documents provide grounds for monitoring and review, and processes have been initiated in that direction.[9]

Considerations: Considering the fact that during the period of document observation and the site visit, the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia did not have a Strategic Development Plan (the validity period of the previous plan ended in 2021), the expert panel essentially did not have the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the system of governance in terms of consistency with the mission and goals of the institution. Neither the self-evaluation nor the site visit gave the opportunity to clearly and unequivocally identify the ambitions of the University in the perspective of the next five years, which is why it is significantly difficult to evaluate, in accordance with the requirements of this standard, the extent to which the SAFAA system of governance, administrative structures and their operation are effective and aimed at the realization of its mission and goals. And although during the site visit, the expert panel was informed that the mission and goal-setting areas in the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan (system of governance, academic programmes, etc.) have remained unchanged, however, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of governance, the expert panel considers that the formulation of the goals is important, which naturally cannot be the same as in the previous plan (because that would mean that the University does not develop at all).

The expert panel positively evaluates the fact that based on the expert observations of the previous accreditation, recommendations and its own self-evaluation, SAFAA took on improving the system of governance, making the following achievements:

1. The documentation base of the system of governance has been improved;
2. There are growing tendencies to implement the administration according to the PDCA principle of quality management;
3. The participation of internal and external stakeholders in the processes of strategic planning and improvement of academic programmes of the University has increased;

[9] The opinion was rewritten as a result of the discussion on the institution's observations.

4. The accountability process has been improved, especially introducing internal accountability mechanisms.

These improvements recorded in the system of governance certainly have a positive impact on some processes implemented in the University, among which we would single out the slow, gradual increase in the quality of academic programmes, as well as the slow, gradual improvement of the infrastructure and resources. Thus, under the conditions of such a system of governance at the University, it is ensured that the qualifications awarded by SAFAA are credible.

However, the most comprehensive observation of all areas of the University's activity shows that the system of governance does not contribute to the smooth and balanced development of the University and the full achievement of some strategic goals.

Although the qualification of the academic programmes is credible, it is still early to define the academic programmes as modern and competitive (which has been intended by the Strategic Development Plan of the previous cycle in 2017-2021), because the modernization of these programmes is in the stage of implementation: the modular system was launched from 2021-2022.

The other strategic goal - research, is still not being developed as a systematic and planned process at SAFAA. Unfortunately, the University failed to resolve the commitment to carry out and evaluate the research according to strategic planning, therefore even the small budget for the research (8 million drams) was not used according to the purpose. Although the expert panel accepts the University's approach regarding the uniqueness of the content and organization of the research, it notes that the methodology, techniques, documentation and standardization of research in other specialties, apart from the specialty of Art Studies, are so unclearly measured for the lecturers and students of the University that the financial incentive mechanisms to conduct research are valid only for lecturers of Art Studies (subsidies for scientific publications).

The University was not able to provide the most important indicators aimed at the development of the other strategic sphere - external relations and internationalization, which are to implement a complete joint academic programme or to implement a complete foreign language academic programme. It is noteworthy that the University has not yet managed to provide the necessary conditions for the implementation of the mentioned indicators, among which the expert panel attaches importance to the knowledge of foreign languages.

SAFAA has not yet managed to provide motivational mechanisms for the excellent performance of human resources. The motivation of the teaching staff derives primarily from the moral considerations of the vocation and mission of the artist. The University is still not able to raise funds for material encouragement, so the potential of human resources is still not being sufficiently utilized.

Although infrastructure and resources are generally sufficient to ensure the learning outcomes of academic programmes, the pace of their improvement is not promising in terms of implementing modern and competitive academic programmes.

The above-mentioned facts are mainly the result of governance problems, among which we single out the following:

- The asynchronous process of governance between different circles and levels leads to very low rates of progress. The Board of Trustees, due to its purely formal existence and functionality, is unable to set clear objectives before the University and define development vectors. This reduces the University's ability to organize its strategic activities according to the socio-cultural context of the Republic. The initiative, implementation, control and evaluation of development and progress is carried out by the upper administrative circle, who, although endowed with managerial abilities and being a carrier of quality assurance culture, still lacks sufficient human, financial and time resources to effectively communicate development impulses in all directions of strategic goals and to localize them in all the circles.
- The set of KPIs of strategic goals evaluation that SAFAA has and summarizing the previous cycle of the project with such KPIs does not provide methodological grounds for objective and well-grounded identification of the degree of achievement of strategic goals.
- Low and undiversified incomes, low salaries clearly affect the motivation of the middle and lower levels of governance to direct and localize the impulses coming from the upper levels of governance in a proportional way. The absence of measures aimed at developing the managerial abilities of middle and lower governance level officials are also conditioned by low incomes and salaries.
- The quality assurance center's lack of effective tools to raise problems related to administrative processes and administrative staff's activities deprives the University of the opportunity to address governance issues.
- The descriptive, non-analytical nature of the reports does not allow to focus on shortcomings, failures and mistakes, which can lead to their repetition.

Summary: Given that the problems of the system of governance (asynchronous process of governance between different links and levels, weakness of managerial abilities at the middle and lower levels of governance, low and undiversified incomes, low salaries, methodologically incompletely justified set of KPIs for evaluating strategic goals, non-analytical nature of reports, etc.) hinder the balanced development of SAFAA, the development potential of the University is not fully realized, the strategic goals are underachieved, which is manifested, in particular, in the low process and pace of development in the direction of research and internationalization, the expert panel concludes that the University still does not comply with the requirements of Criterion 2.

Conclusion: The expert panel evaluates the compliance of SAFAA institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 2 as **unsatisfactory**.

III. ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES

CRITERION: The programmes are in concord with the TLI's mission, form part of institutional planning and promote mobility and internationalization.

Findings

3.1 The academic programmes are in line with TLI's mission, they correspond to the state academic standards and are thoroughly described according to the intended learning outcomes of the qualifications awarded.

SAFAA implements academic programmes in 4 specialties of the 6th and 7th level of the Armenian National Qualifications Framework (including 9 Bachelor's academic programmes, 8 Master's academic programmes) and 1 academic programme of the 8th level in the specialty "Fine Arts, Decorative and Applied Arts and Design".

Bachelor's and Master's degree academic programmes are: Design, Fashion Design, Computer Graphics, and Interior Design in the specialty "Design", Painting, Graphics, and Sculpture in the specialty "Fine Arts", Decorative Applied Arts in the specialty "Applied Arts", and Art Studies in the specialty "Art Theory and History".

The academic programmes implemented in the Academy are in line with the University's mission defined by the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan, which envisages: "to provide higher education by implementing Bachelor's, Master's and Research Degree academic programmes in the fields of Art Theory, Fine Arts, Decorative and Applied Arts and Design through the application of academic and modern approaches, as well as adapting creative and educational processes to public needs, and to contribute to the development of national culture and economy by training nationally and internationally competitive and highly qualified specialists, as well as citizens ready for lifelong learning..."

From the site visit it became clear that even the emphasized practical, application-oriented academic programmes are placed on academic foundations at SAFAA. For example, the students of the "Fashion Design" academic programme have practical courses based on the academic approach to the perception of colors and compositions.

In 2017, the Academy planned and undertook the process of revising the Bachelor's academic programmes, considering as a priority the development and implementation of academic programmes defined by the learning outcomes and in accordance with Armenian National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Both internal and external stakeholders were involved in the process. During the site visit, it was revealed that the external stakeholders were mostly University graduates, who were currently representatives of the labor market, as well as other employers and individual creators.

It should be noted that the review process, launched in 2017, came to an end in 2021; only 8 Bachelor's programmes were reviewed, 8 Master's and 1 Bachelor's programmes were not reviewed, which was planned to be completed according to the schedule of 2017-2021 SP of Development. A module description format has been developed and approved at SAFAA, which is derived from the learning outcome-related, methodical and other requirements of the new, revised academic programmes: according to this new format, only the courses (modules) of the 1st year of study were redeveloped. According to the information received during the site visit, the syllabi for the 2nd, 3rd and

4th years of study are being developed. And there are shortcomings and problems in the current descriptions of those courses. Let us mention a few:

- The goals set in some syllabi are identical to each other (for example, Color Painting 1 and Composition 1 courses);
- Some course goals, learning outcomes, required resources and/or assessment policies are not presented (for example, Drawing 1, 2, 3, Color Painting 1, 2 courses);
- Assignments for some courses are not presented (Plastic Anatomy, Color Painting);
- Assessments of many courses are not described, the learning outcomes of some are identical to the learning outcomes of the academic programme itself.

A benchmarking has been carried out within the framework of the process of revising the academic programmes at SAFAA, according to the format established by the University (summaries of the results of the analyses are available). For the benchmarking, the selection of TLIs was mainly made taking into account the following provisions: institutions of high international rating in art and design (for example, Royal College of Art (UK), University of the Arts London (UK), Parsons School of Design (USA), and others), institutions with years of cooperation with the Academy (for example, Saint Petersburg State Art and Industrial Academy named after A. L. Stieglitz (Russia), and others), and universities representing traditional art trends that have similarities with the academic programmes offered by the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia (for example, Vilnius Academy of Arts (Lithuania), Dresden Academy of Fine Arts (Germany), Moscow State Academic Art Institute named after V.I. Surikov (Russia), Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan, Yerevan State University).

The revised Bachelor's academic programmes, in particular, Art Studies, Painting, Computer Graphics submitted for examination, are advantageously different from the academic programmes approved in 2016 and still in operation. Each revised academic programme presents the mission of the given academic programme, which is in line with the mission of the University, the goals and objectives of the APs are outlined, and clear learning outcomes are defined. The learning outcomes and the curriculum per academic years are also presented in the AP description. The revised academic programmes contain a description of teaching, learning, and assessment methods; in addition, their alignment with the learning outcomes of the academic programme is presented. There is a table of alignment of the courses (modules) with the learning outcomes of the academic programme, as well as a table of alignment of the learning outcomes of the academic programme with the ANQF. Interdisciplinary projects are planned (for example, collaboration between painters and psychologists, painters and doctors).

The issue of compliance with the learning outcomes and labor market requirements of the revised APs was discussed during the meeting with the employers. Employers have expressed the opinion that the learning outcomes of the revised APs meet the requirements of the labor market, they are up-to-date, and generally compatible with similar APs of other universities.

The Academy attaches importance to the fact that the revised curricula have been formed on a modular principle, which will give an opportunity to make them more compatible with similar

academic programmes abroad. During the site visit, it became clear that the new modular approach to the organization of the educational process has not yet been equivocally accepted by the teaching staff. As a result of the observation of the documents, it was found that the descriptions of the modules built in the new format do not always reflect the requirements defined by the description of the academic programme, there are inconsistencies and gaps in them. For example, there are inaccuracies in the descriptions of the modules prepared for the "Art Studies" academic programme, regarding the name of the academic programme, the specification of the component courses of the module, the brief description of the module, the incomplete compliance of the objectives of the component courses with the learning outcomes of the module, and the compliance of the learning outcomes specified in the modules with the learning outcomes defined by the AP description. There are inconsistencies between the evaluation criteria and the assignment contents, the assigned literature and the assignment contents, as well as the prerequisites and the assignment contents in the descriptions of the "Painting" AP modules.

The expert panel states that the revision of Master's academic programmes is still in progress: the start is planned for the 2022-2023 academic year. In the Gyumri branch, it is planned to implement the revised Bachelor's academic programme in the 2022-2023 academic year.

3.2 The TLI has a policy that promotes alignment between teaching and learning approaches and the intended learning outcomes of academic programmes, which ensures student-centred learning.

The revised academic programme descriptions introduced at SAFAA in the 2021-2022 academic year present the goals and objectives of the AP, the learning outcomes, the description of teaching, learning, and assessment methods and their compliance with the learning outcomes of the academic programme. Thus, while the teaching and learning methods offered in the "Art Studies" academic programme are mainly for understanding, learning and interpreting theoretical materials (for example, different types of lectures, student research works, student presentations and other materials and their discussion, group projects, educational debate, work with the necessary literature and other sources, flipped classroom method, etc.), then in the case of "Painting" academic programme, the teaching and learning methods are aimed primarily at the development of practical skills (for example, work in the studio, performance of individual tasks, exhibitions, discussions, exercises, case studies, literature studies, etc.). The teaching and learning methods offered in the "Computer Graphics" academic programme are aimed at achieving the outcomes of the given AP (for example, interactive lectures with the use of IT and demonstration of didactic materials, practical work, elaboration of sketches, participation in discussions, presentation of sketches and works for current viewing, observation of literature and Internet materials, watching videos, developing presentations, etc.). The lecturer, or in the case of a module, the group of lecturers, has the opportunity to choose the teaching and learning methods described and recommended in the AP, based on the nature and characteristics of the course. Teaching and learning methods are reflected in the module descriptions.

The descriptions of the modules also provide a list of assignments, which makes it possible to observe the student's professional progress. For example, in the "Fundamentals of Painting" module (first year, first semester), the logic of the sequence of tasks is visible, through which it is possible to record the degree of professional development (Task 1. Students are required to place the oval of the head in the correct position with the neck and shoulder heads, paying attention to their symmetry. Before moving on to the task, the students make sketches of the head from different positions. Task 2: The students are required to obtain the general large volumes of all parts of the head using light and shadows. Later, through the middle line, proceed to the construction of the symmetry between the frontal lobes of the frontal part and the inner jaw. To place the forehead, nose, lips and eyes, paying attention to the geometric volumes and the anatomical structure of the skull. Task 3: Students are required to gradually move to the development of large and small details in the general volume of the head using light and shadows. Subsequently, to strive for emphasizing the material being and the expression of the art model's psychological world).

The compliance of teaching, learning and evaluation methods to the learning outcomes of the academic programme is also schematically envisaged in the APs.

Appropriate mappings are available in the Academy to represent the relationship between the learning outcomes and teaching and learning methods for Bachelor's and Master's programmes. However, they are not reflected in the course descriptions.

3.3 The TLI has policy on students' assessment according to the learning outcomes and promotes academic integrity.

In 2021, the "Student Assessment and Academic Integrity Policy" was revised, approved and launched at SAFAA, defining the main principles of accounting students' academic performance and academic integrity, as well as the main components of student assessment, the assessment scale, the procedure for appealing exam results, and the methodology for calculating the GPA. Information on student assessment and academic integrity policy is available on the University's official website.

The following main principles are the basis of the academic integrity policy at SAFA: exclusion of any manifestation of dishonest behavior, exclusion of all manifestations of plagiarism, protection of intellectual property, provision of an honest, fair and cooperative academic environment. In particular, the main manifestations of academic dishonesty are defined: dishonest behavior, copying, plagiarism (direct or verbatim plagiarism, direct copying from online sources, paraphrasing, secret consent, incorrect or inappropriate reference, self-plagiarism, mosaic plagiarism, conscious or intentional and unconscious plagiarism), etc.. Regularly organized and conducted class observations are mentioned as a way of checking the effectiveness of the principles of academic integrity.

According to the learning outcomes, the approaches to student assessment are expressed in the APs. Although it is stated in the self-evaluation that "the revised new academic programmes and modules enable assessment according to the learning outcomes, contributing more to student-centered learning", the expert panel, after studying the submitted documents and the results of the visit, states

that in the descriptions of the modules of the revised APs there are no evaluation principles, the weight and proportion of component courses or works and other factors in forming the assessment are not specified.

The assessment policy of SAFAA defines the evaluation criteria, through which it is intended to check the level of achievement of the learning outcomes. Those criteria are: 1. general and professional knowledge and understanding, 2. professionally applicable, as well as transferable and interoperable skills. The contents of these two criteria are defined. It should be noted, however, that there were no assignments evaluated by the lecturers according to these criteria. Guidelines (rubrics) are defined for each unit of the up to 10-point evaluation system. However, it became clear from the expert meetings that these guidelines are hardly applied during the assessment, at least the students are still not presented with their assessment according to the mentioned guidelines.

SAFAA has also defined evaluation principles (compliance, feedback, balance), which are mostly not implemented yet, as they have not yet been made public. The assessment policy distinguishes diagnostic, formative and summative forms of assessment.

In 2019, the "SAFAA Final Attestation Procedure" was approved at SAFAA, in which relations related to the final attestation of graduates, formation of final attestation commissions, organization and implementation of the final attestation, peer review, and the appeal of the results are presented. The procedure defines that the final attestation is the verification of the knowledge, capacities and skills of the graduate, which is carried out through the defense of the Bachelor's graduation work or Master's thesis. A supervisor is appointed for the completion of the graduation work and Master's thesis. Graduation works and Master's theses are subject to peer review. Templates are defined for filling in by the supervisor, as well as formulating the reviewer's opinion; moreover, they are differentiated according to the APs. The preparation and assessment of graduation work or Master's thesis of the graduate is carried out according to the "SAFAA Evaluation System" and "Guideline for the Preparation of SAFAA Bachelor's Graduation Work and/or Master's Thesis". A procedure for appealing the result of the final attestation is also envisaged.

3.4 The academic programmes of the TLI are contextually coherent with other relevant programmes and promote mobility of students and teaching staff, internationalization.

In order to ensure the compatibility of SAFAA academic programmes with similar academic programmes, the University has conducted a benchmarking with similar academic programmes of both local and international universities. For the study of international experience, SAFAA has established a benchmarking format.

The benchmarking of the "Painting" AP was conducted on the basis of the examples of the APs of Vilnius Academy of Arts, the University of the Arts London and Dresden Academy of Fine Arts. However, in the summary of benchmarking, the specifics of the APs of the mentioned universities are not presented, there are no references to which components from which university were highlighted and localized. Benchmarked universities are not mentioned in the AP package. As a result of the

benchmarking, revised academic programmes were formed with a modular principle and learning outcomes.

The main obstacle to the mobility of students and lecturers is the low level of knowledge of a foreign language, particularly English. The Academy is trying to solve the problem through optional courses, but the effectiveness of the measure has not been evaluated. During the site visit, the expert panel, according to feedback, noticed the ineffectiveness of optional foreign language classes.

Given that the 8 Bachelor's academic programmes, formed as a result of the benchmarking, have been introduced since 2021 and are actually undergoing a trial period at this stage, their efficiency and compatibility with the academic programmes of other popular specialties has not yet been evaluated by the Academy.

Since 2016, the procedure for the SAFAA students' mobility has been in effect at SAFAA, which regulates the documentation processes of accepting documents of students participating in exchange programs, preliminary selection of participants, and admission of students from partner foreign universities. Thus, according to the self-evaluation, from 2017-2018 to 2021-2022 academic year included, 12 foreign students from the Russian Federation and the Czech Republic studied at the Academy on the basis of existing agreements that ensure the exchange and mobility of students. Based on the existing agreements ensuring the exchange and mobility of Academy students, an outflow of 29 students was organized to 6 countries: Russia, Czech Republic, Romania, Italy, France, and Poland. In the case of the teaching staff, SAFAA hosted 3 and sent 6 lecturers in the same period.

3.5 The TLI adopts policies in place ensuring academic programme monitoring, evaluation of effectiveness and enhancement.

In 2021, the Academy approved “Tools and Mechanisms for Evaluating the Effectiveness of Academic Programmes”, which defines the application and procedure of various mechanisms, as well as identifies the responsible bodies that should pursue the evaluation of the effectiveness of academic programmes.

SAFAA has established mechanisms for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the effectiveness of the APs: class observations, student and faculty surveys, meetings/focus groups with internal and external stakeholders, and more. Relevant protocols (for example, of class observations) are available. The expert panel states that during the meeting with the employers, the latter expressed their satisfaction with the learning outcomes of the revised APs. The involvement of internal and external stakeholders is visible, but is not systematic. The University does not specify how the information is analyzed and reflected in the further steps of the University.

External stakeholders report that they are satisfied with the skills and technical abilities of SAFAA graduates, prioritizing them in terms of employment. However, they, particularly representatives of museums, express concern about the lack of skilled graduates in the field of restoration/conservation. The possibility of introducing a special Bachelor's programme is being

discussed at SAFAA. The demand for painters and illustrators has also been voiced in the publishing industry.

Considerations: The expert panel positively evaluates the steps taken by the University, the initiation of the process of improvement of the academic programmes according to SAFAA strategy, the successful implementation of which will contribute to increasing the competitiveness of academic programmes. It is positive that the academic programmes implemented in the Academy are in line with the mission of the University, which contributes to the training of specialists in line with the needs of the labor market.

The expert panel positively evaluates the implementation of the process of revising the Bachelor's academic programmes, especially attaching importance to the reflection of the results of the conducted benchmarking, meetings with representatives of the labor market, and surveys among graduates in the revised academic programmes. The revised academic programmes present the mission of the given academic programme, outline the goals and objectives of the AP, and define clear learning outcomes. Academic programmes built on the modular principle reflect the student's progress over the years and, if successfully implemented, can promote mobility. At the same time, the expert panel stated that the descriptions of the modules built in the new format do not always reflect the requirements set by the description of the academic programme, the principle used to evaluate the student is unclear, which can be an obstacle to documenting the necessary data for organizing the mobility of students. Furthermore, although the the management of the University is aware that the lack of links between learning outcomes and teaching and learning methods in many course descriptions for 2nd to 4th years of the Bachelor's degree program and many courses in the Master's degree program, many other problems with course goals, learning outcomes, assignments and other components are a problem, they did not receive an adequate response in the chairs, and the fact is that in case of students admitted to BA in 2018, 2019 and 2020 and admitted to MA in 2020 and 2021, learning, teaching and evaluation cannot be characterized as a clearly planned process. Although the expert panel positively evaluates the fundamental revisions of the academic programmes, it states that they are taking place very slowly (revisions of the content of the academic programmes were only done at the level of the 1st year Bachelor's courses over a period of 5 years), attributing this to communication problems between the upper and middle levels of governance.

Although the established system of assessment at SAFAA corresponds to the logic of the revised academic programmes, is outcome-based and progressive, it is still not widely implemented, due to the fact that it is not publicized or widely understood and accepted. The perspective of the full application of the evaluation system, in particular, is related to the issues of lecturers' workload and motivation, which require solutions in the near future, otherwise the evaluation will not become part of the educational reform and thus the achievement of the learning outcomes will be jeopardized.

Although the low level of knowledge of a foreign language is considered the main obstacle to the mobility of students and lecturers, and in order to solve the problem, optional courses are organized at the Academy, their effectiveness is not high. In fact, the management of the University fails to solve the problem in this way.

It is commendable that since 2016, the procedure for the mobility of SAFAA students has been in effect, which regulates the acceptance of documents of students participating in exchange programs, the preliminary selection of participants and other processes. The current procedure creates favorable conditions for the organization of mobility, ensuring the transparency of the process and accountability.

It is important that SAFAA has established mechanisms for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the effectiveness of the APs: class observations, student and faculty surveys, meetings/focus groups with internal and external stakeholder groups, etc. The involvement of internal and external stakeholders is visible, but not systematic. It is not specified how the information is analyzed and reflected in the further steps of the University.

It should be noted that the changes made to the academic programmes can contribute to their competitiveness in the labor market, to the improvement of mobility indicators, and to internationalization.

Summary: Given that based on the results of the previous accreditation process, in accordance with the SAFAA SP schedule of implementation, by the results of the benchmarking, the Bachelor's academic programmes were revised, both internal and external stakeholders of the Academy were included in the process, there are clear descriptions of teaching, learning, and evaluation methods in the revised academic programmes, their compliance with the learning outcomes of the academic programme is presented, there are tables of compliance of the courses (modules) with the learning outcomes of the academic programme, compliance of the learning outcomes of the academic programme with the ANQF, the policy of choosing teaching and learning methods is visible, mechanisms for monitoring academic programmes, evaluating their effectiveness and reviewing are used, the expert panel concludes that SAFAA complies with the requirements of Criterion 3.

Conclusion: The expert panel evaluates the compliance of SAFAA institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 3 as **satisfactory**.

IV. STUDENTS

CRITERION: The TLI provides support services to students ensuring productive learning environment

Findings

4.1 The TLI has set mechanisms for promoting students' recruitment, selection and admission procedures.

SAFAA has several clear mechanisms for recruitment, selection and admission of students. According to the self-evaluation, in the "Admission" section of its official website, according to APs SAFAA provides information on the admission to the existing academic programmes: assignments, evaluation criteria, etc. Within the framework of the student recruitment process, the University also

makes visits to schools and secondary vocational education institutions. During the visits, pupils and students are introduced to the conditions of studying at the University. It became clear from the site visit that there is a large flow of applicants from Terlemezyan State College of Fine Arts. As a result of the contracts signed with the Terlemezyan State College of Fine Arts and several other colleges, the graduates with high academic performance can continue their education in the 2nd year of the relevant specialty at SAFAA. Open-door days are also organized at SAFAA, where applicants get to know the educational environment, teaching staff, etc. According to the SAFAA self-evaluation, the most effective mechanism is the information provided by the official website of the University.

The admission of SAFAA students to the Bachelor's academic programme is carried out according to the "Procedure for Conducting Internal Examinations for Admission to the Bachelor's Study Program". For each year's entrance examinations, an admission committee (coordinating the process) and professional examination committees (for evaluation) are formed, which evaluate the examination works of the applicants. The entrance exams for professional subjects are held at SAFAA, and non-competitively, the high school "Armenian Language" test score (level A) is required. Admission to the Master's degree program is carried out by the admission and professional committees in accordance with the "Procedure for Conducting Entrance Exams for the SAFAA Master's Study Program". Admission of foreign applicants is carried out in accordance with the "Procedure for Admission of Foreign Citizens to SAFAA". From the observation of documents and expert meetings, it became clear that at the beginning of the academic year, the QA Center conducts surveys on the effectiveness of the admission process among first-year students.

4.2 The TLI has policies and procedures for assessing student educational needs.

SAFAA attaches importance to the use of mechanisms aimed at identifying the needs of students by applying various mechanisms. It becomes clear from the study of self-evaluation that one of the important mechanisms is the inclusion of students in the governance circles of the Academy. Nevertheless, it became clear from the site visit that the students consider turning to the chairs as a more effective mechanism for raising their educational needs. At SAFAA, the chairs, the QA Center and the Student Council conduct focus group meetings where students are also involved; during these meetings students are able to raise their educational and resource needs. One of the mechanisms for identifying the educational needs of students at SAFAA is also the surveys conducted by the QA Center among students in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the resources and services, as well as the course and other processes at SAFAA. It became clear from the site visit that the discussions allow the students to raise their problems regarding the educational environment. Thus, the problems raised by the students during the surveys on the effectiveness of SAFAA resources conducted by the QA Center have received solutions: equipment and property were acquired to make the teaching process more effective, and as a result of surveys, the library was replenished with professional literature.

4.3 The TLI provides opportunities for extra-curricular activities and advising services aimed at supporting student effective learning.

According to SAFAA self-evaluation, students are mainly advised by the lecturers as well as the head of the course during the learning process. While conducting the graduation work, the lecturer or the head of the course also supports the student through individual meetings and discussions with the latter. It became clear from the site visit that the lecturers are willing to provide counseling to students outside of the class as well.

In order to develop the skills and abilities of the students, SAFAA also organizes additional classes. The University organizes five additional foreign language classes, and also organizes additional Armenian language classes for foreign students. The University attaches importance to the implementation of additional foreign language classes, as they should promote mobility and other international programs. Nevertheless, the participation of students in these classes is still low. During the 2021-2022 academic year, 190 students took part in the optional courses, which amounts to 27% of SAFAA students.

4.4. There are precise regulation and schedule set in the TLI for students to turn to the administrative staff for additional support and guidance.

In order to provide assistance and guidance to the students, SAFAA has developed a Student Handbook, which provides information on the academic programmes and services provided by the institution. For the 2021-2022 academic year, SAFAA Student Handbook was developed and published, which is available on the SAFAA website.

Various subdivisions provide support to students: dean's offices, chairs, etc. Students also apply to the dean's office and chairs for appeals of exam grades, immediately after being informed about the grade. The committee assessing the exam reviews the work of the appealing student once again and makes a decision: either the grade is increased or it remains the same.

SAFAA does not have a clear schedule for applying to the administrative staff, but as the expert meetings showed, students can apply to the administrative staff at any time with their concerns and get answers to their questions.

4.5 The TLI has student career support services.

In 2020, as a result of a structural change, the Career Center at the University was reorganized into the Student Support and Graduates Cooperation Center in order to increase the efficiency of the services supporting students' careers. The Center performs a number of functions to support students' careers. To help students present themselves to the employer correctly, the Center organizes trainings to prepare competent CVs and portfolios. The Student Support Center cooperates with sectoral

organizations and implements volunteer projects. The students gets the opportunity to work on real projects, which will further help them to find their place in the labor market easily.

In order to strengthen the connection with graduates and study their employment issues, in 2018-2020 a telephone survey was conducted with graduates to find out their employment rate within the framework of the cooperation between the Student Support Center and the QA Center. According to those surveys, 59.39% of graduates have profession-related jobs.

4.6 The TLI promotes student involvement in research activities.

According to the 2017-2021 SAFAA Strategic Plan, the implementation of research/creative activities and their correlation with teaching have been defined as a strategic goal. The research at SAFAA is divided into two directions: practical-applied research and scientific-theoretical research.

Research/creative works in the practical-applied direction are more practical; in this case the student's work is considered the object of research, and the completed works are shown in the exhibitions organized by the University. Students conducting scientific-theoretical research conduct research of a theoretical nature, for example, articles, monographs, etc. These works are published in the SAFAA scientific collection "Yearbook: Research in Art Studies and Humanities".

In order to make research activities more systematic, students are given a guideline developed by the Research Center, which gives students an opportunity to be guided by clear points when writing a graduation paper or a Master's thesis. These guidelines are also available on the University website. In order to develop the research skills of students, the "Introduction to Research" and "Creation Analysis" courses are taught in the BA of Art Studies academic programme at SAFAA, and the "Research Methods" course is taught in all MA academic programmes. However, the site visit shows that the University still does not use its full potential and resource base to involve students of all APs in research works.

4.7 The TLI has a special body, which is responsible for the protection of students' rights.

The mechanisms for the protection of the SAFAA student rights are presented in the Charter of the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia, the Student Handbook, contracts signed with students and other intra-university procedures. According to the University self-evaluation, the student learns about his/her rights and responsibilities at the beginning of the first year of studies, during the meeting with the first-year students.

The main body for the protection of students' rights is the Student Council. During the site visit, it became clear that the students raise issues related to resources mainly through the SC. The Student Council also lobbies for a partial discount on underprivileged students' fees, organizes exhibitions, award ceremonies, etc. Nevertheless, it became clear from the site visit that students most often apply to administrative structures with questions about their rights, and the SC is not perceived by the students as a rights protection body. The observation of the documents of the Student Council also proves that students have no complaints about the work of the SC, but they suggest the Student

Council not to limit itself to involving only active students, but to expand the participation of the student body in the SC activities.

4.8 The TLI has set mechanisms for the evaluating and ensuring the quality of educational, consultancy and other services provided to students.

The evaluation of educational, counseling and other services provided to the students is facilitated by the regular focus group discussions and surveys conducted by the SAFAA QA Center.

The site visit showed that the University supports the issues raised by the students. Adopted regulations and procedures regarding educational, counseling and other support services for students provide an opportunity to respond directly to problems raised by students and provide solutions to them. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of the applied mechanisms has not yet been comprehensively evaluated by the institution.

Considerations: The expert panel finds that, in general, the University provides adequate support to students in order to ensure the effectiveness of the educational environment.

It is positive that the University has clear mechanisms for the recruitment, selection and admission of students, which contributes to the stable number of applicants to the University.

It is positive that the University has mechanisms for the identification of students' needs, which allow raising various problems. It is a positive fact that students, guided by the demand for modern resources, raise problems related to resources and get appropriate solutions from the University, but in matters related to academic programmes, there is not the same activity on the part of students, which can endanger the continuous improvement of academic programmes.

The expert panel considers it positive that the lecturer-student relationship at SAFAA is so individual and that students have the opportunity to receive advice at any time. In order to ensure the most effective studies for the students, SAFAA organizes additional courses. At the same time, the expert panel notes that increasing the effectiveness of additional classes will contribute to the progress of students, as well as increase the level of knowledge of foreign languages.

It is positive that students have the opportunity to apply to both the representatives of the administrative staff and their lecturers at any time and get solutions on various issues, which contributes to the formation of a student-centered environment.

The expert panel considers it positive that the Student Support and Graduates Cooperation Center, which was reorganized in 2020, is continuously improving the services that support students' careers and is active. Involvement of a wider range of students in the work of the center will contribute to the strengthening of the university-labour market-student connection.

It became clear from the site visit that the scientific-research works at SAFAA have a special feature: they are more research/creative in nature. It is commendable that the “Introduction to Research” and “Creation Analysis” courses are taught in the “Art Studies” BA academic programme at the University, and the “Research Methods” course is taught in all the MA academic programmes,

which can contribute to the formation of research and analytical abilities. Due to the peculiarity of the University, students carry out applied research in the performance of their assignments, which gives an opportunity to form an analytical mind.

The expert panel welcomes the existence of the Student Guide, which provides a means for students to get acquainted with their rights. There is also a Student Council at SAFAA, which also contributes to the protection of students' rights. At the same time, the expert panel notes that clarifying the direction of the SC activities will contribute to the involvement of more students in the SC activities.

It is positive that through various surveys and focus group discussions in the University, issues about the quality of educational and other services are raised, the more targeted, periodic implementation of which and the expansion of participation will contribute to the continuous improvement of the services provided to students in the University.

Summary: Given that the University has clear mechanisms for the recruitment, selection and admission of students, in order to contribute to the effective studies of students in the University, counseling is given to students on an individual level, students do not face problems in matters of rights protection, students receive appropriate support, the University takes measures in the direction of improvement of supporting services for students' careers, the expert panel concludes that SAFAA complies with the requirements of Criterion 4.

Conclusion: The expert panel evaluates the compliance of SAFAA institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 4 as **satisfactory**.

V. FACULTY AND STAFF

CRITERION: The TLI has a highly qualified teaching and support staffs to achieve the set goals for academic programmes and institution's mission.

Findings

5.1 The TLI has policies and procedures promoting recruitment of a highly qualified teaching and supporting staff for the provision of academic programmes.

In 2021, the Academy approved the "Regulation on the Categories of Lecturers", which defines the criteria for the formation of the teaching staff, the selection procedure and other rules. The process of formation of teaching and support staff is carried out in accordance with the RA Labor Code and the SAFAA Charter. In 2021, the "Regulation on Divisions and Work Placement Categories of State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia" was approved, and since 2019, ethics codes for teaching and administrative staffs have been in force. Since 2016, there has also been the "Internal Disciplinary

Regulation of State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia", which defines the work rules, the conditions of employee encouragement and responsibility, ethics rules, as well as general educational rules.

According to the self-evaluation, the number of lecturers working in 8 chairs of the Academy full time and concurrently is 189, including 2 Corresponding Members of NAS RA, 30 Professors, out of which 2 Doctors of Sciences and 1 PhD, 40 Associate Professors, out of which 16 PhDs, and 11 PhDs without an academic rank.

SAFAA applies clear staff recruitment procedures to ensure staff stability. Recruitment of teaching staff is carried out on a competitive basis and/or upon invitation. According to the "Regulation on the Categories of Lecturers", invited lecturers, consultant lecturers, specialists, support staff - academic master, laboratory head, chair assistant, etc., are involved in the work of the Chair, if necessary. In order to implement academic programmes, the Academy engages renowned specialists in relevant fields who have the necessary professional knowledge and skills and can ensure the process deriving from the goals of academic programmes.

SAFAA also tries to ensure the generational shift in the teaching staff by involving young specialists in the educational process. Based on the specifics of the field, the teaching staff is often replenished with graduates of the Academy; in addition, lecturer-employers form a large number. In this context, a certain University-graduate and University-employer connection is visible. Leading specialists in the field, as well as reputable and renowned artists in the professional community teach in the Academy.

5.2 The requirements for qualifications of teaching staff per academic programme are comprehensively stated.

The "Regulation on the Categories of Lecturers" of State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia defines the teaching categories, according to the categories, the functions, as well as the requirements for occupying the categories of Professor, Associate Professor, Senior Lecturer (Assistant), Lecturer, also Honorary Professor and Invited Lecturer (Associate Professor, Professor), regarding education, scientific degree/academic rank, etc.

Given that teaching in Painting and Sculpture academic programmes is carried out on a studio basis, the head of the studio is the lecturer holding the position of Professor, who supervises the work of other lecturers teaching the students of the given studio.

The teaching staff of the Academy is mainly formed by the involvement of the best specialists who are renowned and famous in Armenia.

It should be noted that there are no differentiated requirements in the Regulation for lecturers according to academic programmes or educational level.

5.3 The TLI has well established policies and procedures for the periodic evaluation of the teaching staff.

According to the self-evaluation, SAFAA implements a policy of periodic evaluation of the teaching staff, the procedure and methodology of which is defined in the SAFAA Quality Assurance Manual published in 2021. Thus, a two-section questionnaire was developed for the evaluation of the courses. In the first section of the questionnaire, questions about the course are included, in the second section, students evaluate the skills of the lecturer conducting the given course. According to the head of the QA Center, the center analyzes the received data and presents it to the head of the relevant chair, who discusses it with the lecturer.

Another tool for evaluating the teaching staff is the implementation of class observations (by the QA Center or the head of the chair). The recorded data are presented to the lecturer by the head of the relevant chair and discussed with him/her.

Peer evaluation is also carried out at SAFAA: feedback on the work done by students during the collegial evaluation. Peer evaluation during midterm and final observations of students is one of the informal evaluation mechanisms of the lecturer's work.

Exhibitions of creative works, participation in exhibitions, as well as publications of research works and participation in conferences are considered to be among the most important indicators of professional development of teaching staff in the Academy.

5.4 The TLI promotes professional development for the teaching staff in accordance to the needs outlined during regular evaluations (both internal and external).

One of the SAFAA strategic goals of 2017-2021 is the capacity building of lecturers. To this end, the University created a Capacity Building Program for the Teaching Staff (2019-2021), the main directions (topics) of which were the provision of inclusive education, revision/review of academic programmes, and implementation of academic programmes. In the self-evaluation, it is noted that the necessary directions for the capacity building of the teaching staff were determined taking into account the evaluation of the work of the lecturers by students and heads of chairs, as well as the results of the meetings held with external partners. Accordingly, professional trainings of the teaching staff were not planned and carried out in the Academy.

Although free foreign language courses are organized for lecturers, it became clear from the meetings with the lecturers that there are problems with the dissemination of information.

5.5 The TLI ensures that there is a permanent staff for the stable provision of the academic programmes.

During the previous accreditation, it was recorded that the average age of the teaching staff is quite high. In order to ensure this, as well as the stability of the teaching staff, the Academy tries to rejuvenate the staff by attracting young personnel and offering them teaching jobs on a concurrent or hourly basis. As a result, the average age of the teaching staff decreased, reaching 49.1 years. In addition, compared to the 2017-2018 academic year, in the 2021-2022 academic year, the number of lecturers

under the age of 30 decreased by 1.1%, the number of lecturers over the age of 51 decreased by 6.4%, and the number of lecturers aged 31-50 increased by 7.5%.

There is a different picture in the Gyumri branch, where compared to the 2017-2018 academic year, in the 2021-2022 academic year, the number of lecturers under the age of 30 decreased by 8.0%, the number of lecturers aged 31-50 increased by 1.0%, and the number of lecturers over the age of 51 increased by 7.0%.

During the site visit, it became clear that especially young staff, who are mostly graduates of the Academy, taking into account the low salary of a lecturer at the University, take on the teaching job first of all because of dedication and not for remuneration.

The ratio of the number of full-time and concurrent lecturers indicates the stability of the provision of the teaching staff. Thus, in the 2017-2018 academic year and the following four academic years, the number of full-time and concurrent lecturers has been 76 and 75, 84 and 68, 77 and 77, 89 and 71, 84 and 70, respectively.

5.6 There are set policies and procedures for the staff promotion.

The Academy promotes the professional growth of employees by creating an opportunity for creative lecturers to organize free exhibitions in the University Exhibition Hall, and for theorists to publish articles on a free basis in the "Yearbook" collection of scientific articles. According to the self-evaluation, the mentioned measures contribute to the development of creative/research work of lecturers. "The Regulation on the Categories of Lecturers of State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia", mentioned in this context, does not contain provisions regarding the policy of ensuring the professional advancement of the teaching staff.

5.7 The TLI has necessary administrative and support staffs to achieve the strategic goals.

According to the structural diagram of SAFAA, in addition to two faculties and eight chairs, the Academy has other subdivisions with defined functions, the activities of which are aimed at the implementation of strategic goals.

Educational processes are coordinated and organized by dean's offices, chairs, Department for Educational-Methodological Development and Academic Registrar, and Department of Academic Programme Development. Other subdivisions of SAFAA: the Research Center, the Student Support and Graduates Cooperation Center, the Quality Assurance Department, the External Relations Department, the Library, the Exhibition Hall, as well as those responsible for various processes (SAFAA Official Website Administrator, Manager of Mass Media Communications and Social Media, Manager for Commercialization of Creative and Design Products), contributing to the implementation of educational processes, guided by the University Charter and based on the Strategic Plan of the Academy, contribute to the implementation of strategic goals through their activities.

The structural subdivisions of the University, having a relatively small number of students and teaching staff, with their goals and functions correspond to the framework of the Academy's strategic goals, namely: implementation of modern and competitive academic programmes, implementation of research/creative activities and correlation with teaching, expansion of external relations and promotion of mobility, development of services provided to the society, improvement of quality assurance system, and formation of quality culture.

Considerations: The expert panel, as a result of its analysis, notes that the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia has teaching and support staffs with the necessary professional qualities to achieve its mission and implement the goals of the academic programmes. After the previous accreditation process, the "Regulation on the Categories of Lecturers" and the "Regulation on Divisions and Work Placement Categories" approved in 2021 provide an opportunity to select such specialists on a competitive basis, who are able to contribute to the implementation of the University's strategic goals. As a result of meetings with heads, employees, as well as responsible persons of different subdivisions of the Academy, the expert panel notes that the administrative and support staff of the University is mainly formed by employees with high professional and human qualities and characteristics.

It is noteworthy that the Academy carries out the formation of the teaching staff both on a competitive basis and with the involvement of invited specialists. As a result, the teaching staff of SAFAA is mainly made up of the best specialists who are recognized and have a good reputation in Armenia. It is also noteworthy that there are many representatives of the labor market, employers, in the teaching staff, which in its turn creates a direct connection in the University-employer-labor market chain.

It is noteworthy that an attempt is being made to rejuvenate the teaching staff. If the management of the University succeeds in doing this in Yerevan, then the picture is different in the Gyumri branch. Considering that it is logical that especially the young personnel are mostly graduates of the Academy, the expert panel finds that there are no clear mechanisms that will promote generational shift in the teaching staff (for example, setting a competitive salary). Nevertheless, the Academy is able to ensure the stability of the relevant teaching staff of the academic programmes, which is evidenced by the ratio of the number of full-time and concurrent lecturers. Although the conditions for holding teaching categories are specified, there are no established requirements for the teaching staff based on the academic programme and educational degree.

It is important that SAFAA conducts evaluation of the teaching staff, the procedure and methodology of which is defined in the SAFAA Quality Assurance Manual. The Academy, defining the capacity building of lecturers as a strategic goal, has created a Capacity Building Program for the teaching staff, which, however, does not include a component of professional training of the teaching staff. Regarding the conducted trainings, the expert panel notes that the evaluation of the effectiveness of the conducted trainings will contribute to solving problems and increasing the effectiveness of the trainings.

Summary: Given that there is a policy for the selection of the teaching staff and employees of different subdivisions in the Academy, the leading and reputable specialists of the field teach at the Academy, steps are being taken to ensure stability, the expert panel concludes that the Academy has the teaching and support staffs with the necessary professional qualities to achieve its mission and to realize the goals of the academic programmes, and complies with the requirements of Criterion 5.

Conclusion: The expert panel evaluates the compliance of SAFAA institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 5 as **satisfactory**.

VI. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

CRITERION: The TLI ensures the implementation of research activity and the link of the research with teaching and learning.

Findings

6.1 The TLI has a clear strategy promoting its research interests and ambitions.

According to the 2017-2021 SAFAA Strategic Plan, the implementation of research/creative activities and their correlation with teaching is defined as a strategic goal. The Academy stated in the plan-schedule for elimination of deficiencies of the previous accreditation that it realizes the importance of increasing the role of the Research Center in terms of linking its results with research and learning, attaching importance to the strengthening of cooperation between the Research Center and the chairs as scientific units.

During the visit, it became clear that in order to solve the problem recorded during the previous accreditation, in 2019, the 2019-2022 SAFAA Research Strategy was approved, according to which the development of the research field in the Academy is defined as a priority.

The State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia defines research in Art Studies, Fine Arts, Applied Arts and Design as creative study that leads to the generation of new ideas and concepts. In the mentioned fields, SAFAA is distinguished by practical-applied research (the aim is to deepen the knowledge of materials and tools, perfect professional skills, master and develop artistic and design tools, stimulate creative imagination and study all this in the context of artistic and design processes) and scientific-theoretical research (the aim is to study artworks and develop art studies and humanities thought in the historical process, which implies the research of artistic facts, the content, stylistic and formal patterns of their creation, as well as art schools, their interactions and their contribution to the artistic process, according to eras, civilizational-cultural units, individual artists and art critics. The study of Armenian art and art studies is emphasized, considering it in the context of regional and world art and culture).

The SAFAA Research Center was established in 2014. In 2020, the "Regulation of the Research Center" were approved, which defines the goal, objectives and functions of the subdivision. According to the Regulation, the Center has 2 positions: the Head of the Center and the Senior Specialist of the

Center. During the visit, it became clear that the Research Center has not had a leader for a long time. The University has several times announced a competition to fill the vacant position, but the competition was never held due to the absence of candidates or non-compliance with the presented requirements. The duties of the Center's Senior Specialist are performed by the Scientific Secretary of the University.

Although 8 million AMD of funding is allocated to research in the estimate of the University, it does not serve its purpose (is saved) for various reasons, not being used appropriately.

6.2 The TLI has a long-term strategy and med term and short-term programs that address its research interests and ambitions.

In the context of long-term planning, the research interests of SAFAA are represented in the objectives of the SP Goal 3 (Implementation of research/creative activities and correlation with teaching). The Academy considers the planned activities of the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan implementation schedule, as well as the action plan defined in Appendix 1 of the Research Strategy as a medium-term activity plan.

The short-term activity plan is expressed in the annual action plan of the Research Center. However, after studying the Regulation of the Research Center, as well as the Center's 2021 action plan, for example, the expert panel states that they do not express the scope of the goals provided by the Research Strategy.

6.3. The TLI ensures the implementation of research and its development through sound policies and procedures.

SAFAA chairs, acting as the main structural subdivisions of the organization of the research/creative process, ensure the implementation of creative and scientific research. According to the types of research defined in the Academy, the self-evaluation stated that the Chair of Art Studies and Humanities mainly carries out scientific-theoretical research (scientific, educational, scientific-methodical activities: articles, monographs, historical and art studies textbooks, etc.), the other 7 chairs conduct practical-applied research (exhibitions, professional projects, installations, performances and others products ensuring the availability of an artifact as a result of creative activity, as well as scientific-methodical works).

In 2017-2021, the representatives of the teaching staff of the Academy published 12 monographs. 129 articles were published in peer-reviewed professional journals of RA, almost half of which were published in the SAFAA Yearbook. Out of 129 articles, 17 are in Russian and 4 in English. The lecturers of the Academy have also published articles in foreign (The Russian Federation, USA, UK, Italy, Croatia, Lebanon) peer-reviewed periodicals: the number of publications is 20 articles. In 2017-2021, 35 exhibitions were held with the participation of University lecturers in the “Albert and

Tove Boyajyan" Exhibition Hall of the Academy and other platforms, including individual exhibitions, republican, reporting exhibition-festivals, etc.

In 2017-2021, 866 Bachelor's graduation works and 172 Master's theses were defended in the direction of practical-applied research. Within the framework of the research interests of the Chair of Art Studies and Humanities, 31 research works were carried out, out of which 17 were Bachelor's graduation works, 11 were Master's theses, and 3 were PhD theses.

In order to promote the scientific-methodical activity among lecturers and students, SAFAA publishes "Yearbook of the Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia: Research in Art Studies and Humanities" collection of scientific-methodical works.

Although SAFAA is trying to introduce an internal research grant system and a "Draft Statement of Internal Grant Programs" has been developed for this purpose, it has not been launched in practice.

6.4. The TLI emphasizes internationalization of its research.

In order to internationalize the research activities, the Academy has embarked on the study of international experience. It became clear from the site visit that the study of the experience summarized in the Handbook for Artistic Research Education published by the European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA) has made a significant change to the previously accepted concepts of research activity. The new approach was reflected in the 2019-2022 Research Strategy, that is, the equalization of creative activity and scientific-theoretical research activity in art universities. Based on the mentioned reasoning, the Academy separated the practical-applied and scientific-theoretical types of research. In 2019, the SAFAA Rector presented a corresponding proposal to the RA SCC regarding making changes to the list of specialties. The proposal has still remained unanswered.

According to the University's vision, "SAFAA strives to become a leading and internationally competitive art university and a center for the development and dissemination of national culture". At the same time, among other provisions, the University's mission is to "develop art research, contributing to the dissemination of scientific thought and national culture". In this context, the expert panel considers the scope of research interests of the Chair of Art Studies and Humanities to be substantiated, which includes: history of the ancient world art, history of Armenian medieval art, history of Armenian art of the XIX-XX centuries, history of institutionalization of Armenian art, history of world art, history of art studies and art theory, art studies and cooperation of related fields, etc. The articles of the Academy's lecturers published in foreign periodicals are mainly devoted to the topics of Armenian historical-cultural heritage.

During the site visit, the representatives of the University mentioned that in order to ensure the internationalization of research activities in the field of art, the changes implemented by SAFAA should be combined with the implementation of changes in the normative documents operating at the state level.

Attaching importance to the internationalization of research activities and trying to build on international experience, the Academy has not yet succeeded in initiating or joining or implementing any international research programs.

6.5 The TLI has well established mechanisms for linking research with teaching.

In order to ensure the link between teaching and research/creative activities, one of the measures operating at SAFAA is, for example, the allocation of credits for research works in the Bachelor's and Master's academic programmes. It became clear from the study of the 2016 Bachelor's degree programmes that 4 credits are planned for the defense of the diploma work in the final semester, and there is also a pre-diploma internship - 26 credits. The approach is different in the revised APs. It is consistent with the Research Strategy adopted by the University, which differentiates between theoretical and practical research. In this case, a 30-credit volume of work is provided for the Bachelor's graduation work, which envisages scientific-theoretical research in the case of the academic programme of Art Studies, and practical-applied research in the case of the other academic programmes of the Academy.

It is a different picture in Master's academic programmes, where 28 credits are envisaged for the preparation of the Master's thesis (Art Studies) or the preparation of the Master's thesis and project (for example, Computer Graphics) and 2 credits for the defense of the thesis. In the first and second semesters of the Master's studies, there is a Research Methods course (6 credits according to semesters 4+2) and in the second and third semesters a Research Work course (32 credits according to semesters 12+20).

In order to ensure the link between teaching and research/creative activities, the series of special courses “Professional Thematic Course” in the Art Studies academic programme is one of the mechanisms operating at SAFAA, within the framework of which students are presented with the outcomes of research conducted at SAFAA. These courses change frequently and are designed to present through teaching the outcomes of the current research work of the lecturers conducting research.

In the “Yearbook of the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia” the graduation works of students/graduates with a theoretical specialty are published in the form of articles: in 2017-2021, 11 articles were published. This gives an opportunity to publicize students' research works. The exhibition of student works of a practical-applied (creative) nature in the SAFAA Exhibition Hall pursues the same goal. In 2017-2022, 56 exhibitions of student works were organized in the “Albert and Tove Boyajyan” Exhibition Hall of the Academy and on other platforms, as well as online exhibitions.

Considerations: The expert panel positively evaluates that the Academy has a strategy expressing its interests and ambitions in the research field with long-term, medium-term and short-term planning. According to the 2019-2022 SAFAA Research Strategy, based on the study of international experience, the concepts of practical-applied research and scientific-theoretical research

are distinguished. The expert panel notes that the research approaches formed on the basis of the study of international experience in the field of art and the clarification of the concept of research in the field of art can become a stimulus for the implementation of applied research and the dissemination of research outcomes both at the national and international level.

The expert panel positively evaluates the existence of a strategy for the field of research, which is adjusted by medium-term and short-term programs, contributing to the regulation of research processes. It is positive that a Research Center has been created, which should coordinate the processes implemented in the University. At the same time, the expert panel notes that clarification of the role and mission of the Research Center, as well as replenishment with human and financial resources need an urgent solution by the University, which will contribute to the realization of the goals adopted by the University in the field.

It is positive that the University has taken steps to launch internal grant programs, but they have not yet been implemented due to the lack of human resources of the Research Center. The activation of internal grant programs will contribute to increasing the motivation of lecturers and students to engage in research.

It is positive that the representatives of the teaching staff are engaged in research work, publishing articles mainly in RA scientific periodicals and authoring monographs. The expert panel notes that the developments taking place in the field of research greatly contribute to teaching, which also promote the improvement of University teaching and the effective implementation of academic programmes. At the same time, the expert panel notes that the organization of University conferences and summer schools will contribute to the involvement of more lecturers and students in research/creative works.

It is positive that the SAFAA publishes the "Yearbook of the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia: Research in Art Studies and Humanities" collection of scientific-methodical works, which was included in the list of acceptable scientific periodicals by the RA SCC. In the context of publicizing the research/creative activities of the lecturers and students of the Academy, the regularly organized exhibitions in the "Albert and Tove Boyajyan" Exhibition Hall of the University are also important.

Summary: Given that the teaching staff and students carry out research corresponding to the field - in art studies and of applied nature, the interests and ambitions of the Academy in the field of research are documented: they are reflected in the SAFAA Research Strategy, and the basis for the interconnection of research activities and the educational process has been created, the expert panel concludes that the Academy complies with the requirements of Criterion 6.

Conclusion: The expert panel evaluates the compliance of SAFAA institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 6 as **satisfactory.**

VII. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

CRITERION: The TLI has necessary resources to create learning environment and to effectively support the implementation of its stated mission and goals.

Findings

7.1 The TLI has an appropriate learning environment for the implementation of current academic programmes.

The State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia carries out its activities in two buildings in Yerevan, Gyumri branch and Dilijan subdivision, with areas of 3511.1 square meters, 2996.8 square meters, 1618.9 square meters and 1297.2 square meters, respectively. The academic programmes of SAFAA have specific features, for the implementation of which there is an appropriate educational environment. The University has auditoriums, painting and sculpture studios, graphics, fashion design and graphic design laboratories, a library, workshops for the preparation of necessary materials, exhibition halls, conference halls, offices arising from the needs of administrative processes, etc.

The previous accreditation expert report of SAFAA mentioned the problem of re-equipment of studios and laboratories with technical means in relation to the learning environment. Both in the Improvement Plan and in the 2017-2021 SAFAA Strategic Development Plan attention is paid to this circumstance: the improvement of the educational environment in SP is stated as a strategic issue. Accordingly, the University has implemented some important infrastructure and resource improvement measures, including:

- The graphics laboratory was renovated and a new machine was purchased;
- The computer laboratory was re-equipped: computers and tablets were purchased;
- The design laboratory of the Gyumri branch was renovated and re-equipped;
- The sculpture studio was re-equipped, its area was renovated;
- The design laboratory was equipped with computers and 3D printers;
- Computer equipment was acquired for the needs of the administrative staff and educational subdivisions;
- The conditions of the library's reading hall were improved, electronic literature was acquired, and trainings aimed at the professional development of librarians were conducted.

In the direction of resource improvement, the above-mentioned achievements of SAFAA were realized within the framework of own funds, especially within the framework of capacity building and other grant programs (ERASMUS + Inclusion, C3QA, etc.). During the site visit, it became clear that although the University has a general idea of the needs of its academic programmes, it has not made a comprehensive analysis and has not yet developed a plan for the development of infrastructure and acquisition of resources corresponding to these needs. Apart from ensuring the normal activities of the University, the managing administrative staff of SAFAA, being mainly engaged in the strategic issue of developing academic programmes, did not yet have certain plans and intentions in relation to applying for new development grant programs.

Given that the areas of goal setting in the new SAFAA Strategic Development Plan will remain the same compared to the previous one and taking into account that in the 2017-2021 SP the development of the infrastructure and the improvement of resources was not raised to the level of a strategic goal, so far it is not clear what kind of priority the development of the mentioned sector is considered by the University. It became clear from the site visit that, in particular, in the building located at 1 Jrashati Street, Yerevan, where the SAFAA Faculty of Design and Decorative Applied Arts is located, there are urgent problems of expanding and improving the educational environment (the auditorium-laboratory space is not of sufficient capacity), which although have the potential to be solved (there are unused spaces in that building, which are on the balance sheet of the RA State Property Management Committee), the University has not been able to solve these problems for a long time. The site visit gave the impression that, in particular, the opportunities of the Board of Trustees of the University are not being exercised in this matter.

The University has a library which also includes an e-library and is mostly provided with necessary literature. Despite this, the library is in need of updating the literature, and replenishment for the specialties using IT tools. Very few lecturers use the library. During the site visit, it became clear that replenishment of the library is considered as a priority in the focus of attention in the next SP.

The University has an exhibition hall where students and lecturers have the opportunity to display their works for free.

It became clear from the site visit that there is a need for a physical environment for extracurricular communication among students.

In the Improvement Plan of the previous accreditation process, SAFAA made certain positive predictions regarding the fact that changing the legal structure of the University from a SNCO to a foundation creates an opportunity to conduct a flexible financial policy and diversify incomes. The post of Manager for Commercialization of Creative and Design Products was created at SAFAA. The work done in the direction of commercialization has so far been limited to the study of opportunities and as a result the document “Policy for Commercialization of Creative and Design Results of SAFAA” was compiled, where the steps promoting commercialization are outlined. Within the framework of the stated policy, as well as the Strategic Plan or the Improvement Plan of the previous accreditation, there are no designated persons responsible for income diversification and acquisition of sponsors.

7.2 The TLI provides appropriate financial resources with necessary equipment and facilities as needed to achieve its mission and goals.

According to the annual report of 2021, 26.8% of the University's financial resources are formed from student fees, 3.8% from preparatory courses, 54.0% from state budget allocations, about 0.9% from other sources, and 14.2% was the balance of the previous year. Moreover, among the public universities of art, SAFAA is the university that receives the least amount of money from the state.

University funds are spent according to the following areas: salary - about 80%, scholarships - about 2.9%, travel expenses - about 0.1%, etc.

The Academy's funds are allocated based on the needs of the various subdivisions. Before each fiscal year, the subdivisions present their needs to the management, which prepares the financial estimate. The performance of the budget of the previous fiscal year is presented to the Board of Trustees. The financial estimates of the two branches of SAFAA are prepared separately.

The University has increased the annual amount allocated to the Research Center, but the allocations of this amount are generally not presented and there are no facts to show these expenses or to evaluate the improvement of the Center's budget.

It should be noted that over the last two years, the percentage allocated to the salaries has decreased.

Along with drawing up a strategic plan, SAFAA does not set aside funds for measures in strategic directions, that is, it does not carry out strategic budgeting. Accordingly, there are no mechanisms for the use of financial resources, monitoring, efficiency evaluation and improvement according to the strategic directions. This problem was also noted in the previous accreditation expert report, which did not receive adequate attention in the Improvement Plan. During meetings with University representatives, the expert panel found that, for example, the planning of financial resources aimed at improving the teaching staff is still problematic.

SAFAA has made significant investments from financial resources from international grant programs to furnish educational laboratories with new equipment. For example, the University has the latest 3D printers, acquired within the framework of the Erasmus + Inclusion program. Staff are looking for ways to incorporate them into creative work.

The installation of solar energy panels in the Gyumri branch was carried out through a grant, as a result of which the savings in electricity costs are directed to the implementation of other budgeted activities.

7.3 The TLI has policy on financial distribution and capacity to sustain and ensure the integrity and continuity of the programmes offered at the Institution.

The main resource for the realization of the goals of the academic programmes is the work of the teaching staff. Most of the expenses of SAFAA are directed to the payment of salaries. As we have mentioned, the University does not carry out complex planning of financial means for the development of professional (educational-methodical, research), linguistic, and IT skills of lecturers, which is also an essential circumstance for the implementation and continuity of academic programmes: financial resources are of course allocated for some components (optional foreign language courses). Another essential circumstance that ensures the implementation and continuity of the goals of academic programmes is the expenditure on resources and infrastructure, part of which (for example, acquisition of equipment) is carried out within the framework of grant programs, the other part (acquisition of materials, renovation, etc.) is allocated by the University. It should be noted that the descriptions of

the revised academic programmes present the necessary logistics for the implementation of these programs, on the basis of which the necessary planning should take place. The necessary literature is presented in the course descriptions.

In general, the allocation of financial resources that ensure the implementation and continuity of the goals of academic programmes is done in the following way: the applications submitted by the chairs are agreed upon with the Vice-Rectors, based on the priorities of the University, taking into account the revenues calculated in advance and the total expenses to be incurred, a draft budget is drawn up, which is discussed in the Scientific Council, and then submitted to the approval of the Board of Trustees of the University.

7.4 The TLI's resource base supports the implementation of TLI's academic programmes and strategic plan, which promotes sustainability and continuous improvement of quality.

During the site visit, it became clear that the infrastructural capacities of the University, mainly in terms of territory, in some cases do not allow students to implement the given academic programme in comfortable conditions in accordance with educational requirements: first of all, we mean the infrastructure of the Faculty of Design and Decorative Applied Arts, where the narrowness of the educational-laboratory space was evident.

As a positive fact, the increase in the number of students and the modernization of equipment in some studios can be noted. For example, the use and furnishing of the basement floor in the Printing Studio has greatly increased the possibilities of the implementation of the AP. However, the same cannot be said especially for the Fashion Design Studio, which is quite small. It became clear from the site visit that there is a need for the latest equipment in the studios. Students also emphasize the need to update the composition of art models.

The library receives some donations, including from embassies. It is also worth noting that, for example, there is a lot of literature required for the academic programmes of Painting and Sculpture, but there is a lack of literature related to the academic programmes of Design. The Academy has financial problems with joining library digital platforms and journal databases. Students are generally directed to open source materials.

Students acquire necessary materials for some academic programmes. For example, students of the "Painting" academic programme purchase the paints themselves (with small discounts). The existence of the Exhibition Hall provides an opportunity for the demonstration and assessment of creative activities of students and lecturers.

The budget does not envisage funds for the External Relations Department to spend outside of grant programs aimed at the internationalization of the University. There is no unified e-mail system at SAFAA.

7.5 The TLI has a sound policy and procedure to manage information and documentation.

The incoming documents are entered in the Staff Recruitment and General Department of SAFAA, from where they are transferred to the Rector, who manages the further course of work related to the documents. Internal written communication is regulated by internal legal acts. According to the defined cases, applications and reports of lecturers, students, and other internal stakeholders are addressed to the Rector, Vice-Rectors, Deans, who manage the further course of work related to them.

After the previous accreditation, the creation of an electronic system for document management and information collection was one of the priorities of SAFAA. The implementation of the electronic management system and the development of information management was one of the objectives of the 2017-2021 Strategic Development Plan of the University. In this regard, we should note that the UMS system of data entry, storage and use has been launched at the University, which is still accessed by the Department of Educational-Methodical Development and Academic Registrar and the deans' offices of the two faculties. SAFAA has undertaken the implementation of the Mulberry system of document management, for which phased trainings have been held at the University. According to the self-evaluation report, the full operation of the system is planned for 2022.

Given that there are different existing document management systems, there is a problem of student assessment, GPA compilation, document distribution, and data synchronization, because they are not connected and do not work in a system with a single common database.

Since the previous accreditation, the SAFAA official website has been significantly improved. It contains considerable information and provides access to external stakeholders on reports, regulations and APs. During the meetings of the expert panel, it became clear that internal stakeholders also often use the information on the website. Currently, there is no University e-mail system at SAFAA.

7.6 The TLI creates safe and secure environment through health and safety mechanisms taking into account the students with special needs.

For health reasons, the University operates a First Medical Aid Center. The latter is regularly supplied with medicine necessary for first aid. The workload of the First Medical Aid Center worker is close to part-time. It should be noted that students are satisfied with the service provided. There is no service of a psychologist, and students turn to the Dean or the Head of the Chair for such support.

For security, there is a patrol unit and a checkpoint in the University. The have adequate fire fighting means. In some laboratories, the ventilation system is not sufficient. It became clear from the site visit that the safety rules are presented to the students while working in the laboratories.

There is no separate area for providing food services in the University. In order to provide effective education for students with special needs, material resources have been acquired, and a strategy has been developed in order to continuously ensure an inclusive environment in the University. The latter were carried out within the framework of the Erasmus Plus INCLUSION program.

There are 37 students with special educational needs studying at SAFAA. However, the infrastructure of the Academy is still not adapted for students with mobility problems, there are no adequate ramps.

7.7 The TLI has special mechanisms in place for the evaluation of the effectiveness, applicability and availability of resources given to the teaching staff and learners.

In order to evaluate the applicability, accessibility and effectiveness of the resources provided to students and lecturers, the Quality Assurance Department of SAFAA regularly conducts surveys of students and faculty. Besides, focus group meetings are organized with internal stakeholders. Based on the received data, the sanitary and hygienic conditions have been improved, laboratories have been re-equipped, and laptops have been purchased through the increase in demand for academic programmes, as well as through grant programs. As a result of the 2021 surveys, the sanitary and hygienic conditions improved compared to 2018-2019.

It should be noted that the periodicity of surveys is not regulated.

Considerations: The expert panel considers that, in general, the available resources of the University allow to implement the academic programmes and ensure the stable operation of the University. Nevertheless, despite the existing educational resources, in order to ensure the continuity of the processes as well as the modern requirements, some studios and laboratories still need to be re-equipped with technical means. Replenishment and re-equipment of studios and laboratories will contribute to the continuous improvement of the quality of APs.

The expert panel finds that the Exhibition Hall has a great role in the implementation of the academic programmes of SAFAA, because it provides an opportunity to show the learning outcomes to the students.

As a result of expert analysis, it became clear that the library resources and the composition of the art models need replenishment. The aforementioned have an important role in terms of effective implementation of academic programmes and ensuring the learning outcomes.

The creation of a physical environment for extracurricular communication for students will contribute to the further improvement of the moral and psychological atmosphere in the University and, why not, to the generation of new creative ideas.

The indicator that more than 90 percent of the income comes from state allocations and tuition fees shows the high dependence of SAFAA on state allocations and tuition fees and emphasizes the need to pay more attention to the processes of income diversification. Further steps to diversify the sources of financial inflow and increase the share of external sources, as well as copyright and commercialization of student projects, graduation works and Master's theses, will strengthen the University's financial stability.

The indicator of allocating 80 percent of expenses to salaries also shows the severe shortage of funds of the University from the point of view of implementing development-oriented programs, as the possibility of investing in other key areas may be limited.

The expert panel considers the participation in the international grant programs as a positive circumstance, through which a significant replenishment of resources was made to the University. But the current lack of such programs makes the prospect of a much-needed technological re-equipment risky.

SAFAA has undertaken the implementation of the Mulberry system, the full operation of which will contribute to increasing the efficiency of the document management process, as well as strengthening communication links between subdivisions. The further addition of UMS system interfaces for data collection and use will enable a larger number of stakeholders to make use of data access.

The SAFAA official website provides sufficient access to information on reports, regulations, and APs. The absence of a University e-mail system at SAFAA (which would allow for individual accounts for students) can be an obstacle to registering as a student and using some services outside of SAFAA.

Summary: Given that after the previous accreditation, some laboratories were modernized at SAFAA, the resource base is updated as much as possible according to the identified needs, in general there is a necessary environment for the implementation of academic programmes, the implementation of the electronic management system is ongoing, including the systematic documentation of more processes, there is a safe and secure environment for students and staff, the expert panel concludes that SAFAA complies with the requirements of Criterion 7.

Conclusion: The expert panel evaluates the compliance of SAFAA institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 7 as **satisfactory.**

VIII. SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY

CRITERION: The TLI is accountable to the government and society for the education it offers and the resources it uses as well as for the research it conducts.

Findings

8.1 The TLI has clear policy on accountability.

The provisions related to the transparency and accountability of the activities of SAFAA are fixed in Objective 5.3 of Goal 5 of the 2017-2021 SP. The goal is to activate public relations and ensure transparency of activities. Accordingly, information about the activity of the Academy is published through the official website and other sources of information dissemination.

According to the self-evaluation, the accountability of the Academy's activities to the RA government is ensured by SAFAA through the provision of reports and other information in the prescribed formats to the RA MoESCS, as well as the Rector's annual reports submitted to the approval of the SAFAA Board of Trustees.

Preserving compliance with the SP, the subdivisions submit quarterly reports. The information about the activities and events implemented or to be implemented by all subdivisions is disseminated through the official website and social media of SAFAA.

The reports from the chairs are sent to the Faculty Council, Vice-Rector, Scientific Council, Rector, and the latter, in turn, submits an annual report to the Board of Trustees and MoESCS. The Rector's annual report is published on the SAFAA official website. However, the expert panel's observations show that these reports are mostly descriptive in nature and do not always address the causes of underperformed processes and subsequent re-planning.

8.2 The TLI ensures transparency of its procedures and processes and makes them publicly available.

SAFAA makes available the institution's procedures, manuals and informational materials on its activities through its official website. In addition to the website, the Academy has other tools for spreading information, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube social networks and mass media. Recently, the publication of information about the events of the subdivisions on the website and Facebook page of SAFAA has become quite active.

Solo and group exhibitions of students and lecturers of the Academy, open defenses of Bachelor's graduation works and Master's theses, organization of exhibitions, etc. are considered as mechanisms of accountability. It became clear from the expert meetings that these events are attended by a large number of audience, and employers are also invited. However, it should also be noted that a comprehensive assessment of the mechanisms used by the University has not yet been carried out.

8.3 The TLI has sustainable feedback mechanisms for establishing contacts with society.

According to the self-evaluation of SAFAA, the official website and Facebook page are considered the main mechanism for forming feedback with the public, through which the institution tries to ensure the continuity of communication with the public by responding to the letters and inquiries received.

There is a position of Manager of Mass Media Communications and Social Media in the Academy. During the site visit, it became clear that the feedback and requests received from the public are responded by the Manager of Mass Media Communications or, if necessary, the request is sent to another subdivision.

During the site visit, it became clear that the “Albert and Tove Boyajyan” Exhibition Hall attached to the Academy is also perceived by the TLI as a feedback mechanism. Feedback with visitors is provided through the visitor book of the Exhibition Hall.

8.4 The TLI has mechanisms that ensure knowledge /value/ transfer to the society.

As educational, informational and consulting services to the society, exhibitions are organized at SAFAA, as well as optional and paid preparatory courses are implemented.

Preparatory courses are organized on a paid basis for all applied specialties. The main purpose of the courses is to contribute to the acquisition of the necessary knowledge and abilities of potential applicants. It is noteworthy that the number of students in preparatory groups is increasing year by year, and the flow of BA applicants from there to SAFAA has reached 87% in 2021.

According to the self-evaluation, optional courses (English, French, Russian, Italian, Spanish) and Armenian courses for foreign students are conducted at SAFAA on a free basis, aimed at increasing the level of knowledge of foreign languages of SAFAA students, lecturers and administrative staff.

For the previous strategic cycle, SAFAA made a commitment to hold an international exhibition, which did not take place. It also became clear from the site visit that the educational and cultural events aimed at the popularization of national culture in the RA marzes by the Academy are few.

According to the decision of the Scientific Council of the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia, the Yearbook is published, which is also considered as a mechanism for transferring knowledge to society. The Yearbook is the official peer-reviewed journal of the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia, the purpose of which is to circulate high-quality academic studies on the history and theory of Armenian and universal art, the history of art studies, fine arts, design and decorative-applied arts, Armenian studies and humanities, in the form of articles, reports, translations and bibliographic information. It aims to promote the research activities of the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia, promote the professional growth of students and young researchers, publish and disseminate the results of the Academy's research activities.

Considerations: The expert panel positively evaluates the system of internal and external accountability operating in the University, through which reports are prepared at all levels, which identify the positive and improvement-oriented directions in the University. Although the reports reflect the current situation in the University, the expert panel notes that the more analytical nature of the reports will contribute to continuous quality improvement by identifying problems related to various processes in the University.

It is positive that transparency of activities and procedures is ensured through the University's website and Facebook page. From that point of view, due to improving the website, it contains enough information to be used by external and internal stakeholders. The expert panel also notes that the establishment of a PR strategy by the institution will clarify the targets of the applied mechanisms and define the areas of further activity.

The expert panel positively evaluates the fact that the institution continuously implements mechanisms to provide the ability to transfer cultural values to the public through demonstrations and

exhibitions, which are open to the public. This process contributes to the transfer of values to the society, as well as increasing the visibility of the University. The expert panel also considers that a more comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of the tools used by the institution will contribute to their modification according to modern requirements and increase transparency regarding the processes of SAFAA.

Summary: Given that there is an accountability system at SAFAA, the Academy tries to make the processes transparent to the public through relevant platforms, feedback mechanisms are in place, there are mechanisms for transferring knowledge and values to the society, the expert panel concludes that the Academy complies with the requirements of Criterion 8.

Conclusion: The expert panel evaluates the compliance of SAFAA institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 8 as **satisfactory.**

IX. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

CRITERION: The TLI promotes experience exchange and enhancement through its sound external relations practices, thus promoting internationalization of the Institution.

Findings

9.1 The TLI promotes its external relations through sound policies and procedures aimed at creating an environment conducive to experience exchange and enhancement and internationalization.

One of the goals of the 2017-2021 SAFAA Strategic Plan refers to the internationalization of the University and the development of external relations. In 2016-2020, Internationalization Strategy was developed. A new one was not developed after the expiration of the previous strategy. During the site visit, it became clear that the new Internationalization Strategy will derive from the new SAFAA Strategic Development Plan. In the 2017-2021 SAFAA Strategic Development Plan, the comparative analysis of the objectives and planned actions set in the Internationalization Strategy and the annual reports of SAFAA shows that the major objectives set have not been solved to a significant extent, some of the planned actions have either not been implemented or have been underperformed.

Thus, SAFAA estimated the average effectiveness of the implementation of the goal of the 2017-2021 Strategic Development Plan "Expansion of foreign relations and promotion of mobility" at 68.20%. In the text on the 1st and 2nd criteria of the present report, the questions related to the comparability of such formulations of performance indicators and their weights were addressed. There are also problematic aspects related to the indicators for evaluating the result of the goal of internationalization and their application. For example:

For 2017-2021, under the action "Involvement of External Resources", 10 external grant programs were planned and 11 were implemented, so the performance of the mentioned action was

estimated at 113%, and this 113% was included in the averaged calculation of the overall goal evaluation. It is noteworthy that among the 11 grant programs, SAFAA calculated not only the 2 ERASMUS+ capacity building programs (Inclusion, coordinated by SAFAA and launched in 2016 and C3QA, which SAFAA joined as a partner), but also all 9 ERASMUS+ mobility programs, within the framework of which SAFAA sent and accepted students and lecturers.

- The above-mentioned 9 mobility programs - the same indicator that was calculated in the performance of the "Involvement of External Resources" action, was also calculated in the performance evaluation of the "Development of Conditions for the Integration of Foreign Students into the Environment and Effective Learning" action, according to which it was found that outgoing student mobility plan was fulfilled by 90%, the outgoing teaching mobility plan by 120%, the incoming student mobility by 80%, the incoming teaching mobility by 100%. In fact, the same fact was evaluated more than once.
- The qualitative characteristic of the performance calculated with some quantitative indicators was not presented, analyzed, and this goal was not evaluated with any qualitative indicators, that is, it was not evaluated, for example, what the University gained from mobility. For example, the plan to implement optional foreign language courses in order to increase knowledge of foreign languages was implemented by 94% (706 participants against 750 planned), while the effectiveness and the impact of the courses on the quality of education were not evaluated, and it became clear from the site visit that the internal stakeholders considered the teaching of foreign language at the University problematic. The plan for signing cooperation agreements and memoranda with foreign universities was fulfilled by 120% (32 agreements or memoranda against the planned 30), while the qualitative components of those transactions are partially reflected in the reports, so there are many universities with which the agreements reached are still on paper.
- The values of some quantitative indicators are minimalistic. For example, for an entire strategic cycle, SAFAA planned only 5 outgoing and 3 incoming teaching mobilities.

Some "major" actions leading to the goal of internationalization have not been carried out. For example, SAFAA did not implement any joint academic programme or any foreign language academic programme. It became clear from the site visit that the probability of doing a joint or foreign language academic programme in the near future is low, which is due, among other circumstances, to the low level of knowledge of foreign languages of the teaching staff. The same applies to international conferences and exhibitions: none of the 5 planned events took place, and the possibilities for the near future were still highly uncertain. It became clear from the site visit that SAFAA still has no definite plans or intentions to apply for a capacity building grant program (as a coordinator).

No actions have been planned for 2017, 2018 and 2019 in the Internationalization Strategy. According to the University's approach, the action plan of this Strategy does not specify the dates of actions, but the deadlines for their implementation. Nevertheless, in this way, the progress and

continuity of the goals are not reflected, which makes the current evaluation of the Strategy difficult.[10] Here sometimes there are some indicators of the result evaluation (increase in the number of students who participated in the exchange by at least 40% for 2020 compared to 2016), the bases of the evaluation of which are missing.

In order to improve external relations, the regulation of SAFAA External Relations Department, as well as the procedures for the academic mobility of students and the admission of foreign citizens, were specified and revised.

International benchmarking of the existing academic programmes was performed. As a result, starting from the 2021-2022 academic year, 8 revised Bachelor's academic programmes were introduced. But since these programmes refer to the 1st year of the Bachelor's studies, there is still no mobility in their direction.

As a result of the analysis of the expert panel, it became clear that the University does not have a vision of internationalization. There are no clearly planned steps, the implementation of which will result in an environment contributing to internationalization.

9.2 The TLI's external relations infrastructure ensures regulated process.

The activities of development and internationalization of SAFAA external relations is coordinated and carried out by the External Relations Department with three positions: Head of the Department and 2 employees: a Senior Specialist and a Specialist. The activity of the External Relations Department is coordinated by the regulation, according to which the department is accountable to the Rector and the Vice-Rector for Education and Research. The regulation defines the goal, objectives and functions of the department, as well as the functions of the department's employees. The long-term activity of the department is based on the SAFAA Strategic Development Plan and the Internationalization Strategy, both of which have expired. The site visit gave the impression that the new Internationalization Strategy will be drawn up on the basis of the University's new Strategic Plan. Short-term activities are organized on the basis of annual plans. The External Relations Department, in accordance with the University's PDCA policy, submits annual and half-yearly (quarterly) reports. Reports are prepared according to strategic goals and actions. It should be noted, however, that the department's reports have very little analytical component. Sometimes the reason for the incompleteness of any planned action is indicated, and sometimes it is not clear how far the planned action has been completed. Sometimes there are substantive inconsistencies between the strategic goal and the implemented actions presented in the reports.

Information about the capacity building projects carried out with the participation and coordination of the University within the framework of the TEMPUS and ERASMUS+ programs of the European Union is posted on the SAFAA official website. The website also includes links to the

[10] The opinion was rewritten as a result of the discussion on the institution's observations.

websites of the partner universities of SAFAA, the procedures for the admission of foreign citizens and the mobility of students.

Although, according to the self-evaluation, the External Relations Department is the main responsible for ensuring external relations and internationalization at SAFAA, different subdivisions of SAFAA are responsible for ensuring the internationalization and cooperation of their activities. But it should be noted that the External Relations Department is not fully included in the internationalization processes, mainly in grant programs. It became clear from the site visit that there were or are problems with the participation of the External Relations Department in some grant programs. It became clear from the site visit that although the External Relations Department cooperates with the chairs, especially in the organization of mobility programs, it does not have the functional capabilities and/or potential to coordinate the internationalization activities of the chairs and advance the direction of internationalization with this coordination. There are no incentive mechanisms to motivate the teaching staff and students to engage in internationalization processes. There are also no clearly formulated visions for the internationalization of research activities, although, according to the regulation of the External Relations Department, one of the goals of the department is to internationalize the work of the Research Center.

From the study of the reports of the External Relations Department and the site visit, it became clear that for a long time there have been differences in approaches between some upper and middle management levels of the University regarding whether to consider certain activities in the direction of internationalization as a priority or not (the issue of membership in the International League of Art Schools, ELIA Association, the issue of allocating a separate budget for the department, etc.).

According to the self-evaluation, the External Relations Department evaluates the effectiveness of its activities through surveys and meetings among students.

9.3 The TLI effectively collaborates with local and international counterparts.

The cooperation of SAFAA with local institutions mainly refers to the following areas:

- Cooperation with local universities within the framework of capacity building projects (Inclusion, C3QA, etc.),
- Cooperation with some local universities in matters of joint initiatives of student organizations,
- Cooperation with art colleges and general educational institutions on issues of professional orientation of applicants,
- Cooperation with state and private cultural institutions and employer organizations aimed at organizing student internships,
- Institutional relations and interaction with state bodies, first of all, with MoESCS,
- Cooperation with the above-mentioned organizations, institutions, creative unions, public and other organizations in matters of discussing the structure and content of the university's strategic plans and academic programmes.

A significant number of employers teach at SAFAA.

The website and Facebook page are important tools for communication with local and international institutions. The website contains information on academic programmes, meetings, exhibitions in Armenian and English (work is underway to make the website trilingual by adding Russian).

Compared to the previous one, in this strategic cycle, the mobility of incoming SAFAA students has become more active. If in the previous cycle only 2 students visited SAFAA, then in this cycle the number of incoming students of the State Academy of Fine Arts was 12. The mobility of lecturers has also increased. If the previous accreditation report recorded the lack of mobility of lecturers, then in recent years, SAFAA sent 6 lecturers and hosted 3 lecturers. The results of mobility of students and especially lecturers have not been analyzed. In 2017-2021, 20 students benefited from St. Petersburg's mobility programs. Students from different places like the Czech Republic, Romania, Poland and other places come to SAFAA through various mobility programs. Lecturers have also come with short-term mobility programs, for example from Ireland. One of the most important challenges of internationalization - COVID-19, has affected mobility figures in recent years. Despite this, mostly the planned amount of mobility has been achieved. SAFAA cooperates with educational institutions in Poland, Switzerland and other countries for the mobility of students and teaching staff. However, the expert panel notes that the pandemic has not been used as an opportunity to collaborate with international organizations using IT tools without providing financial resources.

Recently, SAFAA signed new contracts, it became clear during the meetings of the expert panel that an evaluation of the effectiveness of the contracts was also carried out. As a result, it was found that not all contracts were effective.

It should be noted that some contracts are quite general in content and do not include clear steps to achieve results. According to the information posted on the University's website and reports, SAFAA cooperates with 30 foreign universities.

According to the self-evaluation and reports, SAFAA carries out events of yearly frequency with the Moscow State Museum “Bourganov's House”, the Ministry of Culture, Information, Sports and Youth Policy of the Kyrgyz Republic, Embassy of the Italian Republic in Armenia, as well as has organized exhibitions, summer schools with the University of Warsaw, University of Perugia, and Iranian institutions.

As mentioned, the External Relations Department has repeatedly raised the issue of membership in international associations, which, according to it, will provide wide opportunities for the internationalization of various processes, but the issue has not been resolved.

The issue of implementing joint diploma programmes with other institutions has been discussed, but as is known, there are no joint academic programmes. There are also no joint research projects.

9.4 The TLI ensures internal stakeholders' appropriate level of a foreign language to enhance efficiency of internationalization.

In 2017, SAFAA conducted a study, according to which the low level of foreign language knowledge of the University staff was considered to be the main challenge of its external relations and internationalization. Therefore, in the Improvement Plan of the previous accreditation process, SAFAA planned to organize foreign language courses for lecturers, administrative and support staff. It was also planned to introduce mandatory foreign language courses into academic programmes.

Looking at the descriptions of the academic programmes, it became clear that foreign language courses were generally not mandatory till the current academic year (exceptions include, for example, a 10-credit module "Professional Translation", which is planned in the 3rd year of the "Art Studies" Bachelor's academic programme), although some learning outcomes of the academic programmes imply deep knowledge of a foreign language. It should be noted that until now foreign language teaching at SAFAA was carried out in an optional manner and only in the new, revised academic programmes starting from the 2021-2022 academic year, the foreign language is mandatory, being included in the "Communication" module (two semesters)[11]. According to self-evaluation, optional foreign language courses are open to both lecturers and students. SAFAA offers optional courses in Russian, English, French, Spanish and Italian languages. From the observation of the documents and the meetings during the site visit, it becomes clear that optional foreign language courses are still not effective: especially among lecturers, there are no problems with communication in Russian (knowledge among lecturers is 97%), while the knowledge of English among teaching staff is 58%, but the level of in-depth knowledge is much lower. The self-evaluation itself states that the poor command of a foreign language at the University hinders the development of international cooperation. The University has not yet considered, first of all, the issue of teaching foreign languages, especially English, in accordance with international assessment standards (CEFR, IELTS, etc.).

A case of an accompanying interpreter was recorded in short-term outgoing mobility. There are no academic programmes in a foreign language at SAFAA. Armenian language courses are organized for incoming students. It became clear from the site visit that the level of knowledge of Armenian among the foreign students admitted to SAFAA is also low.[12]

In general, the students and teaching staff lack the necessary level of English which would enable the implementation of mobility on a semester or annual basis.:

Considerations: The expert panel considers positive the fact that after the previous accreditation, SAFAA realized its problems and some reasons for low performance in the field of external relations and internationalization and took steps to develop some directions.

The documentation base of the internationalization processes has been significantly improved (plans, reports, improved regulations). At the same time, the problems related to the key performance indicators in the planning, as well as the reporting forms, which were recorded in the statement of the

[11] The opinion was rewritten as a result of the discussion on the institution's observations.
[12] The opinion was rewritten as a result of the discussion on the institution's observations.

Criterion 9.1, may jeopardize the objective planning, implementation and evaluation of the internationalization processes.

Although, compared to the previous strategic cycle, the international mobility of SAFAA has increased, it obviously does not correspond to the University's potential and opportunities. The expert panel considers positive the fact that University chairs have implemented benchmarking of Bachelor's academic programmes in comparison with the programmes of leading universities. At the same time, the low level of command of foreign languages (English), the lack of mobility experience does not allow the continuous exchange of experience in teaching, learning, assessment, approaches and methods of ensuring the research component during the implementation of the revised academic programmes.

The absence of joint academic programmes, foreign language academic programmes, international research programs and the low probability of their existence in the near future deprive SAFAA of the opportunity to be visible on the international platform, which reduces the opportunities for international cooperation in the direction of improving the quality of studies and research at the University.

Problems of management in planning, implementation and evaluation of the internationalization processes at SAFAA, differences in approaches, lack of functional capabilities and/or potential of the External Relations Department to coordinate the internationalization activities of the departments and advance the direction of internationalization with that coordination, as well as absence of mechanisms of encouragement to motivate the involvement of lecturers and students in the internationalization processes make the vision of University internationalization blurry. The bluriness and vagueness of that vision is manifested, in particular, in the fact that SAFAA does not have specific plans regarding international research programs, international grant programs for capacity building, joint academic programmes, and foreign language academic programmes.

The expert panel believes that there is a need for a much clearer and comprehensive strategy that will promote internationalization, covering all sectors. The teaching and administrative staff are aware of the importance of external and international partnerships and their development, and some progress has been made, but it has been piece by piece and lacks systematic planning at the inter-institutional and cross-programme level. The definition of clear and qualitative indicators for internationalization will contribute to orderly development in all directions, not only mobility.

Summary: Given that the methodological bases of the planning and evaluation of the internationalization process of SAFAA are problematic, that the implementation of the function of the development and internationalization of external relations faces deep problems of an administrative-organizational nature, international academic, research, and foreign language programmes are not implemented and there are no specific visions regarding them, the level of English proficiency in the University is low, financial resources are not provided by the University to plan and implement the direction of internationalization with a strategic approach, the future paths of development of the sector are not defined, the opportunities of the University in the direction of internationalization are not evaluated, there are very few mechanisms to encourage the involvement of administrative,

teaching staffs and students in internationalization processes, the expert panel concludes that SAFAA does not comply with the requirements of Criterion 9.

Conclusion: The expert panel evaluates the compliance of SAFAA institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 9 as **unsatisfactory.**

X. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

CRITERION: The TLI has an internal quality assurance system, which promotes establishment of a quality culture and continuous improvement of all the processes of the Institution.

Findings

10.1 The TLI has quality assurance policies and procedures.

According to the expert evaluations of the previous cycle of institutional accreditation, SAFAA had the following problems related to the quality assurance system:

- Lack of widespread quality culture in the University,
- Issues of optimization and implementation of documents related to quality assurance,
- Scarcity and passivity of quality assurance mechanisms,
- Little involvement of external stakeholders in the quality assurance system.

The development of the quality assurance system has been a strategic goal for SAFAA, reflected in the 2017-2021 Strategic Development Plan of the University. Judging by the results of the expert meetings with the University management, the development of the quality assurance system will also be a strategic goal in the SP under development.

According to the Improvement Plan of the previous accreditation, SAFAA intended to solve the problems of spreading the culture of quality assurance and increasing the participation of internal and external stakeholders on the basis of implementing human resource development processes, which would lead to each employee of the University recognizing his/her role in quality assurance processes and understanding his/her function. It became clear from the site visit that the mentioned outcome is not ensured (at least the achievement of that outcome is not evaluated). Thus, it became clear that the Quality Assurance Department of the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia works with lecturers, so that they evaluate the effectiveness of their own courses, offering its methodological support in this matter, but very few lecturers have undertaken this work. Nevertheless, it also became clear that due to frequent surveys and focus group discussions, necessary data is obtained to improve academic programmes and other processes.

According to the self-evaluation, the policy of quality assurance at SAFAA is aimed at the implementation of the mission of the University and the goals defined by the Strategic Plan. This policy implies: definition of quality issues, effective implementation of University processes and ensuring their continuous improvement, implementation of improvements based on feedback from internal and

external stakeholders. However, the University still lacks the evaluation mechanisms of the given policy toolkit.

According to the self-evaluation, the basis of the University's quality assurance processes is the dual quality management system of SAFAA, which shows the quality assurance and management of various processes implemented in the University, their interrelation, evaluation, responsible administrative circles and involved internal stakeholders, etc.

After the previous accreditation, the previously introduced QA tools and mechanisms were reviewed.

According to SAFAA QA Manual, among the main quality assurance tools used in the Academy are surveys, focus group discussions, individual interviews, and monitorings. Quality assurance processes are spread in the following directions: admission, academic programmes and courses, research, material resources and provided services, system of governance, administration, and internationalization. Each tool has its own description and rules of application.

The following quality assurance tools apply to the evaluation of the system of governance and processes at SAFAA:

- Evaluation of the effectiveness of the administration among the teaching staff,
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of the administration among administrative employees,
- Evaluation of the employee's work efficiency by the supervisor,
- Evaluation of the work efficiency of the head of department by the department employee.

It should be noted that quality assurance in research implies the use of the following tools:

- Evaluation of the supervisor of the research work by the researcher,
- Evaluation of scientific supervisors by tertiary level students,
- Evaluation of research students by scientific supervisors at tertiary level.
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of resources and services (this tool includes questions related to the research process).

The mentioned tools are used mostly in the case of post-graduate studies or PhD application in the Art Studies academic programme.[13] Therefore, the scientific-research activity of lecturers and the research component in learning are left out of the scope of evaluation with the quality assurance toolkit.

The tools for evaluation of the internationalization of SAFAA are surveys of foreign students hosted by exchange programs and surveys of foreign language proficiency. Outgoing mobility is evaluated by the External Relations Department, other directions of development and internationalization of external relations (joint academic programmes, international research grants, foreign language academic programmes, grant programs for capacity building, etc.) are excluded from the scope of evaluation with the QA toolkit.[14] Quality assurance, for example, with a professional toolkit, does not reveal the answer to the question of why a joint academic programme failed to be

[13] The opinion was rewritten as a result of the discussion on the institution's observations.

[14] The opinion was rewritten as a result of the discussion on the institution's observations.

implemented in the previous cycle of strategic planning: a circumstance that has a significant impact on the weight of the strategic goal of internationalization.

Although the results of the said surveys have been summarized and brought together, there is no information in the reports and elsewhere about what conclusions were reached as a result of them, what decisions were made, how and where the identified data, information and analysis were used. SAFAA has not yet considered the issue of using in-depth interviews, brainstorming and other effective mechanisms to identify deep issues in the fields of governance, research and internationalization.

In the description of Criterion 2, a fleeting reference was made to the fact that strategic planning at SAFAA still does not take place on the basis of data collected by quality assurance. In different sections of the present report, the problem that some strategic actions were not implemented due to not being properly planned or not being set up for the correct indicators for evaluating the results was addressed. Thus, some of the intentions of the University's management have turned into decisions or plans without the necessary amount of data that should have been generated by the quality assurance system or its active support. Thus, even in the previous cycle, these data were not used as the basis for the creation of the Research Center, and the Research Center does not actually fulfill its strategic functions. It was planned to create a joint academic programme in the 2017-2021 SP. This intention was introduced into the SP without examining in detail to what extent the University is ready for it. Relevant data were not retrieved, the potential of the chairs was not evaluated, etc..

10.2 The TLI allocates sufficient material, human and financial resources to manage internal quality assurance processes.

The SAFAA Quality Assurance Department has been operating since 2011. The Quality Assurance Department has 2 posts: the Head of the Department and a Department Specialist, whose functions are regulated by the Regulation of the Quality Assurance Department. During the site visit, as well as from the self-evaluation, it became clear that the implementation of the QA processes is supported by QA volunteer-officers, dean's office staff and chair assistants.

After the previous accreditation, the post of Quality Assurance Officer was created in the Gyumri branch. Although the processes are carried out by a separate department, the main governance is carried out by the alma mater.

The planning of the material and financial resources of the QA Department is regulated by the “Procedure for Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Improvement of the Annual Activities of SAFAA Subdivisions”, according to which the list of material and financial resources necessary for the QA processes is also attached to the annual plan of the QA Department. After approval of the annual plan, the budget allocated to QA processes is calculated based on the list of resources attached to the plan.

From the observation of the documents and the site visit, the expert panel got the impression that there is a need to be equipped with sociological professional skills in the development and application of quality assurance tools. It mainly refers to the development and implementation of

inquiries with the appropriate content of focus groups, brainstorms, and in-depth interviews in order to identify issues in the fields of academic programmes, governance, research and internationalization, as well as evaluate their effectiveness.

10.3 The internal and external stakeholders are involved in quality assurance processes.

In quality assurance processes, the involvement of internal and external stakeholders of SAFAA is ensured according to the SAFAA Charter. In particular, internal and external stakeholders are actively involved in the process of revising academic programmes. In this process, the most active work was carried out by the representatives of the teaching staff, some of whom, being also an employer, made their recommendations regarding the academic programmes as an external stakeholder. During the introduction of the modular system, 40% of the teaching staff participated in the review of academic programmes, according to self-evaluation.

The involvement of students in the process of ensuring the quality of learning and teaching at SAFAA is ensured through surveys and meetings/discussions. Surveys are conducted on the effectiveness of academic programme courses and relevant resources. However, during the site visit, it became clear that the surveys are mostly related to individual courses, and often the purposefulness of the surveys is not clear to the students, although the goals of the surveys are presented by the University to students both verbally when conducting the survey and in written form in the text inserted at the beginning of each questionnaire.[15] Graduates, as external stakeholders, are rarely involved in the process. Apart from surveys, focus group meetings are also conducted among the stakeholders, the results of which are summarized in the annual report. During the site visit, it became clear that the focus group meetings were largely related to the review of academic programmes, as well as during the meetings, the key issues related to the new Strategic Plan were discussed.

During the site visit, it became clear that a new toolkit for quality assurance is planned to be developed for the KPIs related to the new Strategic Plan, which will include other quality assurance mechanisms in addition to surveys and focus group meetings.

In the context of their functions, the representatives of the administrative, teaching staffs and students of SAFAA are also involved in the process of self-evaluation: providing data, assisting in conducting surveys, preparing a self-evaluation report, etc. There is a questionnaire evaluating the administration at SAFAA, the evaluation of which is carried out by the teaching staff, as well as the administrative employees[16].

10.4 The internal quality assurance system is periodically reviewed.

[15] The opinion was rewritten as a result of the discussion on the institution's observations.
[16] The opinion was rewritten as a result of the discussion on the institution's observations

SAFAA also undertook to develop mechanisms for monitoring, evaluating and improving the quality assurance system. Although after the previous cycle of accreditation, a number of QA tools were reviewed, new ones were added, in the reports and other documents, as well as in the self-evaluation (except for one or two cases), it is not described or analyzed when, under what conditions, and why these tools are reviewed. Although, according to the SAFAA self-evaluation, the IQA system is regularly reviewed according to the current Strategic Plan, the needs and demands of internal and external stakeholders, the requirements and trends recorded at the state and international level, there are still no analyses that would indicate the connection between the above-mentioned circumstances on the one hand, and tool reviews on the other. As we showed in the description of Criterion 10.1, there are areas of strategic goal-setting of SAFAA, QA tools related to which often do not provide an opportunity to determine the degree of realization of the set goals, to find out the effectiveness of the University's activities in those directions.

After the previous accreditation, as a result of participating in a number of international programs, SAFAA has carried out a number of reviews related to the QA system. The main reviews were related to capacity building of employees involved in institutional self-evaluation processes and the involvement of students in the self-evaluation process. During reviews, the Academy tries to take into account both local and international requirements. During the site visit, it became clear that they have started to apply the PDCA cycle at SAFAA, but almost all “major” processes are still in the implementation stage.

During the site visit, it became clear that after the transition to the modular system, the employees of the Quality Assurance Department, Student Support and Graduates Cooperation Center, Department for Educational-Methodological Development and Academic Registar, and Deparmtnet of Academic Programme Development together with the heads of chairs, conduct class observations in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the modular system, but the results have not yet been summarized, because the system was launched during the current academic year.[17]

10.5 The internal quality assurance system provides valid and sufficient grounds for the external quality assurance processes.

The State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia is in the second cycle of institutional accreditation and therefore this self-evaluation is the second one, which is compiled according to the criteria and standards of institutional accreditation. However, the self-evaluation of the second cycle of accreditation of SAFAA is advantageously different from the self-evaluation of the first cycle. Quantitative data prevails in the description of processes.

As a mechanism of data collection, surveys and focus groups are used at SAFAA, but they are not conducted on a systematic basis, and are mainly related to academic programmes (surveys related to other processes, according to the expert panel, have been conducted once).

[17] The opinion was rewritten as a result of the discussion on the institution's observations.

For the external evaluation of quality assurance, it is important to analyze what data was revealed by means of QA tools, what problems were identified, how they were introduced into the basis of further improvements, etc.. It is obvious that SAFAA uses a lot of data collected by QA mechanisms, but it does not actually perform analyses in this regard.

10.6 The internal quality assurance system ensures the transparency of the processes at the Institution providing valid and up to date information on their quality to the internal and external stakeholders.

According to the self-evaluation, one of the main goals of the internal quality assurance system of SAFAA is to ensure the transparency of the University's activities. As a result of the previous accreditation, all the subdivisions of the Academy provide information about their processes for the website of the Academy.

In order to ensure transparency, constantly updated information on the activities of the University and the main processes implemented are posted on the website of SAFAA. The Rector's annual reports summarizing the University's annual activities are also posted on the website of SAFAA. The Academy carries out an evaluation of the effectiveness of information about the University and the means of its dissemination.

On the website of the Academy, there is a section related to QA processes, where the goals and objectives of quality assurance, QA policy, QA mechanisms and conducted surveys are presented, but the analyses of the given surveys are not available for the stakeholders. Stakeholders also do not have the opportunity to evaluate the applicability and effectiveness of QA tools, because, as mentioned, the University does not conduct appropriate analyses.

Considerations: The expert panel notes that after the previous cycle of accreditation, the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia has done significant work and made progress in the development of the quality assurance policy, increasing the tools and improving the existing ones, increasing the involvement of stakeholders in the quality assurance system, internal evaluation and review of the quality assurance system, and other directions. If, according to the expert assessment of the previous accreditation, certain favorable conditions were created for the formation of a quality culture at SAFAA, then at present, it can be said that the quality culture has already passed the formation stage and is taking place. The basis of this assessment, in particular, are the following facts:

- Quality assurance tools have contributed to the organization of revision of academic programmes; in particular, through them, the needs and opinions of employers were identified, the results of which were integrated into the process of revising academic programmes;
- Some “small” processes, which, after improvement, have entered the implementation phase (for example, the courses of the revised academic programmes), are being currently evaluated with quality assurance tools during the implementation phase;

- Although the processes of quality assurance mainly refer to academic programmes, an attempt is made to put quality assurance mechanisms at the basis of improvement of other processes (internationalization, administration, acquisition of resources, etc.).

Along with the improvement of various processes at SAFAA, new objectives must be put in front of the quality assurance system. The quality assurance system should now focus on identifying the internal problems of the University in the areas of governance, research and internationalization. Decision-making or strategic planning without data revealed by the quality assurance system leads to some failure (as noted in the statement of Criterion 10.1). Therefore, when making important decisions and carrying out strategic planning, SAFAA should set an objective in front of the quality assurance system to provide the necessary data. And quality assurance tools should be reviewed in such a way that it is possible to evaluate the degree of realization of strategic goals. Therefore, the University has an objective to first evaluate how well its QA tools cover the effectiveness of strategic goals, and then to address the choice of tools and/or the definition of their content and form. There is a need to use in-depth interviews, discussions, brainstorming and other tools in terms of raising deep issues. It is often not possible to collect qualitative data with questionnaires, particularly because the respondents do not tend to write long and detailed comments.

In Armenian universities in general, in SAFAA in particular, the non-accomplishment of the highest level of governance (in this case, the Board of Trustees) leads to the fact that quality assurance officers are not faced with the objectives of evaluating the system of governance from top to bottom, and identifying problems.

SAFAA needs to carry out self-evaluations in a more analytical, more self-critical way, which will first of all give experts and stakeholders committed to the development of the University an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the processes and existing challenges in the University in a more comprehensive way.

The absence of analysis of the effectiveness and general applicability of QA mechanisms in University reports can create problems for internal and external stakeholders' trust in those mechanisms and reduce their motivation to fully and sincerely engage in surveys, discussions or interviews.

The existence of administrative evaluation mechanisms at SAFAA is one of the reasons why SAFAA is unable to identify the problems related to organizing the research as a planned and documented process.:

Summary: Given that after the previous accreditation, SAFAA has done significant work aimed at improving the tools of the quality assurance system, the quality assurance system supports the improvement of academic programmes, the institution has taken steps towards the implementation of the PDCA cycle of quality management, the expert panel concludes that SAFAA complies with the requirements of Criterion 10.

Conclusion: The expert panel evaluates the compliance of SAFAA institutional capacities to the requirements of Criterion 10 as **satisfactory.**

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

CRITERION	CONCLUSION
I. Mission and Purposes	Satisfactory
II. Governance and Administration	Unsatisfactory
III. Academic Programmes	Satisfactory
IV. Students	Satisfactory
V. Faculty and Staff	Satisfactory
VI.Research and Development	Satisfactory
VII. Infrastructure and Resources	Satisfactory
VIII. Societal Responsibility	Satisfactory
IX. External Relations and Internationalization	Unsatisfactory
X. Internal Quality Assurance System	Satisfactory

_____

Menua Soghomonyan
Head of the Expert Panel

20 July, 2022

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. CVS OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

Menua Soghomonyan: In 2004, graduated from Yerevan State University, obtaining Master's degree of the Faculty of International Relations. In 2007, he was awarded with the scientific degree of PhD in History. In 2007-2008, lectured at the Chair of History of Yerevan State Medical University. Since 2008, he has been teaching at the Faculty of International Relations of Yerevan State University. In 2008-2011, he was the Deputy Dean of the Faculty of International Relations of YSU, in 2011-2019, the Scientific Secretary of YSU, in 2019, he was the Vice-Rector for YSU academic affairs. Since 2015, he is an Associate Professor at YSU Chair of Political Science. He is an author and co-author of a number of scientific and educational-methodical publications.

Michael Connerty: Graduated from Dublin City University in 2003 with an MA degree in Film and Television. In 2018, he was awarded with a scientific degree of PhD in Arts at the University of the Arts, London. Since 2006 he has been teaching at the National Film School, Dublin/Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology. He has received awards for his activities and research in the field of animation. He is an author and co-author of a number of books and articles.

Armen Harutyunyan: Graduated from Yerevan State Institute of Theater and Cinematography in 2000, Department of Theater Studies. In 2003, he was awarded with the scientific degree of PhD in Arts. In 2004-2011, worked as Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Theater and Cinema, in 2011-2013, as the Head of the Educational Department. Since 2002, has been a lecturer of Sociology of Art and History of Theater at Yerevan State Institute of Theater and Cinematography. Since 2014, Dean of the Faculty of Art History, Theory and Management. He is an author and co-author of a number of articles.

Vahram Soghomonyan: Graduated from the Department of Mathematical and Software Provision of Computational Devices at the State Engineering University of Armenia. In 2004, he was awarded with the scientific degree of PhD in Technical Sciences. In 2008-2013, worked at the European Regional Educational Academy as a Head of the Chair. In 2015-2017, worked as a Deputy Dean at National Polytechnic University of Armenia. Currently, works at the European University of Armenia as the Vice-Rector for External Relations and Internationalization. He is an author and co-author of a number of books and articles.

Klara Margaryan: In 2016-2020, studied at National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia in the “Graphic Design” specialty and received a Bachelor's degree. She is

currently a Master's student in the "Graphic Design" specialty of the same university. Worked at "Computex", "Shatverian" fashion house, as well as "Oculus", and "Urban" organizations.

APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE OF SITE VISIT

25.04.22 – 28.04.22

	25.04.2022	***Launch***	***End***	***Duration***
1	Meeting with SAFAA Rector	09:30	10:10	40 minutes
2	Meeting with Vice-Rectors	10:20	11:20	60 minutes
3	Meeting with the self-evaluation working group	11:30	12:10	40 minutes
4	Observation of resources	12:20	14:00	100 minutes
5	Break, discussions of the expert panel	14:10	15:10	60 minutes
6	Meeting with employers	15:20	16:20	60 minutes
7	Meeting with alumni	16:30	17:30	60 minutes
8	Observation of documents, close meeting of	17:40	18:40	60 minutes
	26.04.2022	***Launch***	***End***	***Duration***
1	Meeting with members of SAFAA Board of Trustees	9:30	10:10	40 minutes
2	Meeting with the Deans, heads of the subdivisions of Gyumri and Dilijan	10:20	11:20	60 minutes
3	Meeting with the Heads of Chairs and academic programme responsibles	11:30	12:30	60 minutes
4	Break, discussions of the expert panel	12:40	13:40	60 minutes
5	Meeting with the teaching staff members (8-10 representatives)	13:50	14:50	60 minutes
6	Meeting with students (8-10 representatives)	15:00	16:10	70 minutes
7	Meeting with the members of Students' Council	16:20	17:00	40 minutes
8	Observation of documents, close meeting of the panel	17:15	19:00	105 minutes

	27.04.2022			*Launch*	*End*	*Duration*
1	Parallel meeting with the responsible/s/ of "Art Studies" academic programme	Parallel meeting with the responsible/s/ of "Painting" academic programme	Parallel meeting with the responsible/s/ of "Computer Graphics" academic programme	09:30	10:20	50 minutes
2	Parallel meeting with the teaching staff of "Art Studies" academic programme	Parallel meeting with the teaching staff of "Painting" academic programme	Parallel meeting with the teaching staff of "Computer Graphics" academic programme	10:35	11:35	60 minutes
3	Parallel meeting with the students of "Art Studies" academic programme	Parallel meeting with the students of "Painting" academic programme	Parallel meeting with the students of "Computer Graphics" academic programme	11:50	12:50	60 minutes
4	Break, discussions of the expert panel			13:00	14:00	60 minutes
5	Meeting with the Heads of structural units/departments/centers: (Department for Educational-Methodological Development and Academic Registrar, Department for Academic Programme Development, External Relations Department, Student Support and Graduates Cooperation Center, Accounting Department, Manager of Mass Media Communications and Social Media, SAFAA Official Website Administrator)			14:10	15:10	60 minutes
6	Open meeting			15:20	16:20	60 minutes
7	Observation of documents, close meeting of the panel			16:30	18:30	120 minutes

	28.04.2022	*Launch*	*End*	*Duration*
1	Meeting with the staff of QA Department	09:30	10:30	60 minutes
2	Observation of documents, close meeting of the panel	10:40	12:40	120minutes
3	Break, discussions of the expert panel	13:10	14:10	60 minutes
4	Meeting with the members selected by the expert panel	14:20	15:20	60 minutes
5	Observation of documents, close meeting of the panel	15:30	17:30	120minutes
6	Final meeting with the Management	17:40	18:00	20 minutes

APPENDIX 3. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

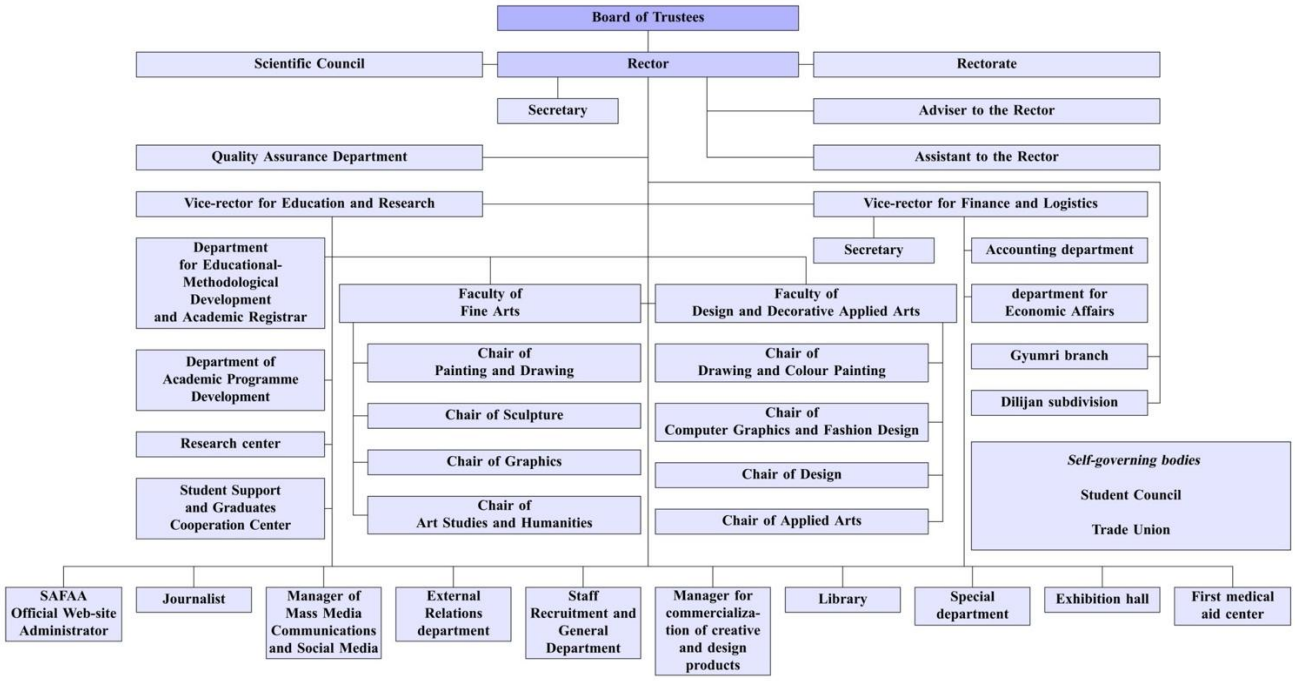
N	Name of the Document	Criterion
1.	Minutes of meetings held with internal and external stakeholders in the development of the 2022-26 SP	1
2.	Short-term, medium-term, and long-term plans and reports of chairs	2
3.	Policy on Inclusive Education at State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia	2
4.	Short-term, medium-term, and long-term plans and reports of subdivisions	2
5.	Minutes of the sessions /for the last three years/	2
6.	Minutes of the sessions of the Scientific Council	2
7.	Job descriptions	2
8.	Training plan for administrative staff	2
9.	Composition of the Scientific Council	2
10.	Staff List	2
11.	Composition of the Ethics Committee	2
12.	Documented bases for implemented monitoring	2
13.	Analyses of surveys conducted among external stakeholders	2
14.	Grounds for application of PDCA cycle	2
15.	Annual financial plans, budget opening	2
16.	Registers, internship registers /one from each year of studies/	3
17.	Graduation works / two for each academic programme for the last three years/	3
18.	Class observation books / one from each chair /	3
19.	Lecturer's portfolio	3
20.	Internship diary form	3
21.	Bachelor's course descriptions related to 3 APs approved in 2021	3
22.	Forms for comparative analysis of benchmarked APs (if different than the Benchmarking of Painting APs given in Appendix 51)	3
23.	Example of self-evaluation of academic programmes (Computer Graphics)	3

24.	Module descriptions	3
25.	Samples of exam cards, exam questionnaires related to 3 APs	3
26.	Minutes of meetings held with leading market representatives, as well as individual creative university graduates	3
27.	Examples of lecturer-graded written assignments	3
28.	Minutes of Student Council meetings	4
29.	Results and analyses of focus group discussions	4
30.	Analyses of student surveys related to resources and services	4
31.	Grounds testifying about approximately 15 collaborations established since 2020	4
32.	Examples and analyses of surveys conducted among students to evaluate the teaching staff	5
33.	Reports of class observations	5
34.	Forms filled in by heads of chairs	5
35.	Documents related to the competition process	5
36.	Reports related to professional trainings of the teaching staff	5
37.	Examples and analyses of conducted surveys about resources	7
38.	Policy of Commercialization	7
39.	Documents summarizing and analyzing the results of surveys and meetings aimed at identifying needs related to internationalization	9
40.	Trilateral student mobility agreements	9
41.	Annual reports of the External Relations Department for 2019, 2020, 2021	9
42.	Grounds for applying cooperation with local and international institutions and structures	9
43.	Examples and analyses of surveys conducted among external stakeholders	10

APPENDIX 4. RESOURCES OBSERVED

- Studios
- Laboratories
- Chairs and Subdivisions
- Auditoriums
- Library
- Reading Hall
- Library Stack
- First Medical Aid Center
- Conference Hall
- “Albert and Tove Boyajyan” Exhibition Hall

APPENDIX 5. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE TLI



APPENDIX 6. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EHEA- European Higher Education Area

KPI- Key Performance Indicators

SAFAA- State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia

AP- Academic programme

TLI- Tertiary Level Institution

QA- Quality Assurance

ANQA – National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation

NQF- National Qualifications Framework

SP- Strategic Plan

SC- Student Council