

GUIDE

TO DEVELOPMENT AND REVISION OF THE ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES AT STATE ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS OF ARMENIA

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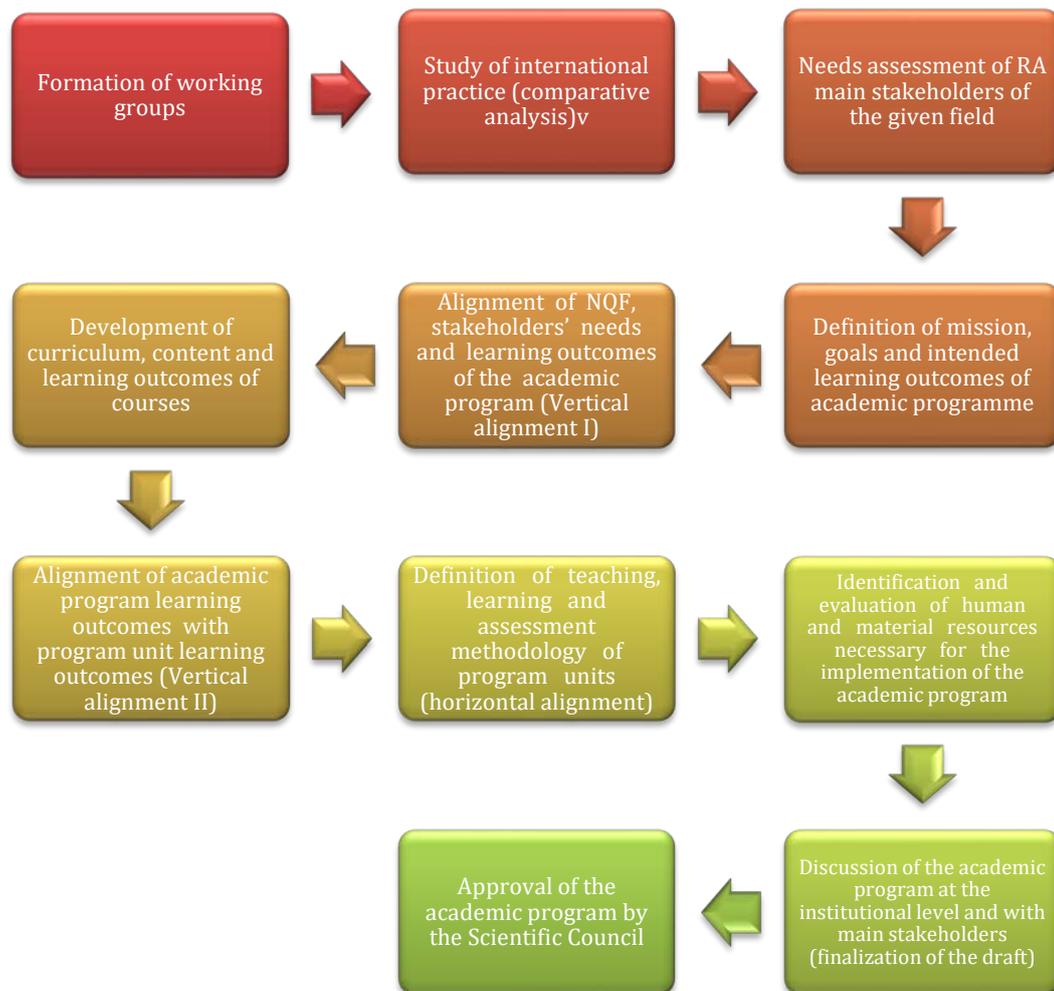
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

FOREWORD

This Guide is developed within the framework of TEMPUS ALIGN project (“Achieving and checking the alignment between the academic programmes and qualification frameworks”). The Guide is designed for the professional groups and individual lecturers who develop academic programmes and separate courses or modules at State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia (SAFAA). Together with the “Guideline for Aligning Academic Programmes to the Armenian National Qualifications Framework (NQF)” and SAFAA students’ assessment system, the current Guide aims to coordinate the process of alignment of academic programmes with NQF as well as with the requirements of external stakeholders. The Guide is also aimed to foster internationalization and enhancement of quality of SAFAA current and newly developed academic programmes through alignment.

The Guide involves tools for the alignment of academic programmes with RA NQF and the requirements of main stakeholders of the professional sphere as well as the procedure on development of new and revision of current academic programmes at SAFAA.

The main phases of the process of development or revision of academic programmes at SAFAA are as follows:



“Guideline for Aligning Academic Programmes to the Armenian National Qualifications Framework” is the basis for the process of development and revision of academic program² and the developed academic programmes should be formulated according to the forms “Academic Programme Handbook” and “Course/module Description” (see **Appendix 1 and Appendix 2**) approved by SAFAA Scientific Council on December 28, 2015.

² “Guideline for Aligning Academic Programs to the Armenian National Qualifications Framework” was developed by the national group formulated within the framework of TEMPUS ALIGN project including representatives from RA partner institutions: Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences, Yerevan Mkhitar Heratsi State Medical University, State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia, National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation, grant project management team particularly: the president of INQAAHE president Susanna Karakhanyan and the head of YSLULS chair of pedagogy and language teaching methodology Luiza Militosyan. The “Guideline for guidelines” developed by European partner institutions is the basis for the Guideline development, where the general provisions of alignment and best experience is presented. The National Guideline is translated, published and is available to stakeholders. Additional information on ALIGN project can be here: www.align.brusov.am

I. ESTABLISHMENT OF WORKING GROUPS

In the process of development or revision of academic programmes much importance is given not only to the subject-specific professional skills, experience and dedication to work of the specialists implementing that process but also to their awareness of tendencies of modern education system and education management. Thus, specialists of the given sphere (teaching staff members of qualification awarding and related chairs) and specialists aware of modern trends in the sphere of education (administrative staff members) are involved in the working groups for the development and/or revision of academic programmes and one of the specialists is chosen as the Head of the group and coordinator of activities.

In the working groups for the development and/or revision of academic programmes at SAFAA 4-5 leading specialists of the given sphere from qualification awarding and related chairs are involved. The candidacy of those specialists is suggested by the head of the chair, one specialist from Academic Affairs is also involved in the working group and the candidacy of this specialist is suggested by the Head of Academic Affairs. 1-2 students are also involved in the working group and the candidacy of students is suggested by Students' Council from SAFAA students.

The working group develops the time schedule of the activities of academic programme development/revision. The composition of the working group and the time schedule are approved in SAFAA Rectorate Session and as a result the group is given a formal status and is provided with necessary authorities and material resources.

II. STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE

While developing new academic programmes or reviewing the current ones it is important to pay attention to the requirements set by the stakeholders for the graduates of the given profession as well as to the best experience of similar international universities. The study of the effective experience of leading foreign education institutions assures the competitiveness of the academic programme being developed and revised. While studying of international practice, a comparative analysis is conducted and to ensure its effectiveness SAFAA has developed a template **(see Appendix 3)**.

In the comparative analysis the data, similarities and differences as compared to the academic programme being implemented in the give institution are mentioned separately, besides the units that can be borrowed (goals of the academic programme, LOs, courses, modules) or teaching, learning and

assessment methods should also be mentioned (**see Appendix 4**). As a result of analysis suggestions can be made for the revision of academic programme.

III. ASSESSMENT OF MAIN STAKEHOLDERS OF THE FIELD

In order to reveal needs of main stakeholders of the field the working group cooperating with SAFAA Career Center and QA Center establishes links with professional associations/unions of the given field (if available) and after consulting with them makes the list of main stakeholders of the field. Apart from the organizations mentioned by professional associations, employers and other professional organization actively cooperating with SAFAA are also involved in the list of stakeholders. Professional associations/unions for SAFAA can be considered associations of painters, designers, architectures, employers unions as well as RA Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs. Meetings, focus groups and surveys are organized among employers during which the main requirements for the graduates of given academic programme are identified. The conduction of surveys, focus groups and meetings as well as summarization and analysis of the gathered results are carried out together with SAFAA QA Center. The guideline for the conduction of focus groups and the sample of questionnaire for needs assessment of alumni are presented in **Appendices 5 and 6**.

IV. DEFINITION OF MISSION, GOALS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMME

Mission, goals, objectives and learning outcomes of academic programme can serve as useful guide for stakeholders and can ensure the alignment of intended learning outcomes with NQF, professional fields and courses. While defining mission, goals, objectives and especially intended learning outcomes of academic programme the working group takes into account the results of comparative analysis and needs assessment of main stakeholders.

While defining the **mission, the working group takes into account the** full vision of values and philosophy of the institution or faculty/department. The **goals** are defined as general statements about graduates' knowledge, competences, attitudes and values. The **objectives** are defined clear and short statements which promote to reach to the defined goals.

While defining objectives the working group takes into account that they:

- focus on what the students will learn rather than what volume of material will be provided by the lecturers
- describe how the students should demonstrate the acquisition of

defined knowledge, competences and values.

- serve as a basis for the development of academic goals of courses and modules.
- promote students to become intentional learners who direct and monitor their own learning.
- promote lecturers to be intentional teachers who by cooperating with other lecturers and support staff ensure coherent education of students.

After defining the mission, goals and objectives the working group sets the intended learning outcomes of the academic programme. The intended learning outcomes (LOs) define what a student should know, understand and be able to do after successful completion of academic programme. They are tangible achievements and are defined as achievements of students. The learning outcomes should define the minimum level of student achievement. The working group should define such intended learning outcomes that help students to understand what is expected from them and the teaching staff- to focus on what they should bring the students to. Examples of mission, goals, objectives and Los of academic programmes are presented in **Appendix 7** and specifications of development of LOs are precisely presented in “Guideline for Aligning Academic Programmes to the Armenian National Qualifications Framework (NQF)”/ **see SAFAA website/**.

After defining mission, goals, objectives as well as LOs the working group presents them to internal and external stakeholders through different dissemination means of information (SAFAA official website, Student Handbook, meetings etc.)

V. ALIGNMENT OF RA NQF, STAKEHOLDERS’ NEEDS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES OF THE ACADEMIC PROGRAMME (VERTICAL ALIGNMENT I)

NQF is a common reference framework that links different levels of qualifications with hierarchic approach-from the lowest to the highest level. NQF suggests a new approach to the concept “qualification”, attaching primary importance to the learning outcomes and highlighting what knowledge, skills and competences a graduate should have for being awarded the respective qualification. RA NQF defines general LOs descriptors for each level of education (**see Appendix 8**).

While developing or reviewing academic programme the LOs should be in line with NQF descriptors for the given level as well as the results of comparative analysis and needs assessment of main stakeholders should be taken into account.

In order to develop LOs in line with NQF descriptors the working group should use the table for the alignment of NQF and programme LOs (**see Appendix 9**). On the one side of the table there are requirements brought out from NQF and in the above line there are programme LOs and the level of their alignment is identified. This phase of the procedure is accompanied with discussions among wider range of internal and external stakeholders and as a result LOs are finalized. Programme LOs should include requirements of NQF and stakeholders and results of international practice.

VI. DEVELOPMENT OF CURRICULUM, CONTENT AND LEARNING OUTCOMES OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMME

The content and road map of academic programme are defined in the phase of development or revision of academic programme. Taking into account RA national and institutional requirement for the content of academic programmes (obligatory courses) working group defines the courses, modules and other units that are necessary to achieve programme intended learning outcomes. The sequence of courses and other units of program, the credits allocated to them are also defined and as a result curriculum of academic programme is formed. Examples of curriculum for BA and MA studies are presented in **Appendices 10 and 11**.

During the whole process of developing or revising curriculum working group discusses the results of its work with the teaching staff of the chair providing the academic program.

After the development of curriculum working group launches the first phase of the development of programme units involved in curriculum. For the development of each course a group of 2-4 specialists from the given chair is formed. This group cooperates with the working group for the academic programme and organizes meetings with students alumni and other teaching staff members to discuss and clarify content and learning outcomes of courses. While developing course learning outcomes programme learning outcomes are taken into consideration. The group developing course should ensure and obviously show the link of course learning outcomes with the programme learning outcomes.

VII. VERTICAL ALIGNMENT OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMME LEARNING OUTCOMES WITH PROGRAMME UNIT LEARNING OUTCOMES

In order to compare programme LOs with unit LOs the working group should use the table for programme/unit alignment (**see Appendix 12**). On the one side of the table there are programme LOs and on the other side there are

courses and the contribution of each course in the formation of this or that programme LOs is identified. For the implementation of this process academic programme working group organizes open meetings where groups developing programme units and other teaching staff members from chairs and students are present, as well as other interested stakeholders can also be present at the meeting. Each group developing programme units presents the goal of their course, its LOs and the involvement of LOs in the formation of programme LOs. In this phase of the process LOs of different units of program can be changed as well as suggestions can be made to skip some units and/or to add new ones. In case there is a necessity to add new units new working groups are established for the development of those new units. Based on the reasonable suggestions the working groups for the development of programme units finalize each LO of each programme unit. At the end of this phase the working group for the development of the academic programme and the stakeholders involved in the meetings should make sure that the intended programme units (courses, modules) will ensure the acquisition of programme LOs by the students.

VIII. DEFINITION OF TEACHING, LEARNING ASSESSMENT METHODS OF PROGRAMME UNITS (HORIZONTAL ALIGNMENT)

In this phase of development/revision of academic programme the teaching, learning and assessment methodology of the academic programme and the alignment of those methods with learning outcomes are defined.

The working group for the development of the academic programme defines:

- Conditions and requirements for the involvement (admission) in the academic programme;
- Teaching and learning policy;
- Assessment methodology;
- Assessment criteria of final works of students;

The above mentioned points are discussed with internal stakeholders and taking into account the gathered opinions and suggestions these points are finalized.

After defining teaching and assessment methodology the working group launches the second phase of development of programme units (courses, modules) in the chairs. The working groups for the development of programme units define teaching methods, tasks for students and assessment modes and criteria in line with learning outcomes defined for the programme units. In this phase relevant human and material resources are defined (specialists, laboratory and equipment, necessary materials) for the implementation of those

programme units. As a result all the descriptions of programme units forming the academic programme are finalized according to the format **(see Appendix 2)**. The developed courses/modules are discussed in the chair session and in case they are approved they are involved in the academic program.

Summing up the results of processes described in parts 4-8 of the current guideline the working group finalizes the draft academic programme having a full package of the academic programme as an outcome. SAFAA academic programme format is presented in **Appendix 1** and programme unit format in **Appendix 2**.

IX. IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION OF HUMAN AND MATERIAL RESOURCES NECESSARY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACADEMIC PROGRAMME

After preparation of the full package of draft academic programme, working group for the development of academic program brings out the list of human, material and other resources for the implementation of academic programme. The working group also examines the resources available at SAFAA and their usage and makes the list of those resources that are necessary to obtain for the implementation of newly developed or revised academic programme. Necessary resources and the opportunity for their acquisition are discussed with the Vice-Rector for Education and Science and Vice-Rector for Financial-economic Affairs. If significant investments are needed for the implementation of the academic programme the Department on Financial-economic affairs makes draft budget for their acquisition.

X. DISCUSSION OF THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL AND WITH MAIN STAKEHOLDERS (FINALIZATION OF THE DRAFT)

In order to present the draft academic programme to internal and external stakeholders and to get their final feedback, the working group that developed the academic programme organizes an open conference. Announcement about the conference is put on SAFAA official web-site and all the interested parties can take part. Internal stakeholders and representatives of organization that are SAFAA's stakeholders in the given field are invited to the conference. The modernity, goals, objectives, learning outcomes and their link to labor market requirements are presented to the participants of the conference.

XI. APPROVAL OF THE ACADEMIC PROGRAMME BY THE SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL

The academic programme is presented to the Scientific Council for discussion and approval. The members of Scientific Council are given the package of the academic programme and the amount of investments needed for the implementation of the academic programme. The approval procedure of the academic programme is organized according to the regulation of Scientific Council.

In case the academic programme is approved the estimate of investments for its implementation is included in the estimate of financial expenses of SAFAA.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Academic Programme Handbook (template)

Appendix 2: Course/module Description (template)

Appendix 3: Comparative analysis template

Appendix 4: Main phases for the comparative analysis

Appendix 5: Information gathering methods during internal and external expertise

Appendix 6: Tool description

Appendix 7: Samples of academic programme mission, goals, objectives and learning outcomes

Appendix 8: RA national qualifications framework

Appendix 9: Table on the alignment of NQF and programme LOs

Appendix 10: Curriculum template (for BA and MA programmes)

Appendix 11: Curriculum template (filled for SAFAA BA and MA programmes)

Appendix 12: Table on the alignment of Courses with the Academic Programme LOs



ACADEMIC PROGRAMME HANDBOOK

(format)

(is presented separately for BA and MA programmes)

Content

INTRODUCTION

ACADEMIC PROGRAMME MISSION AND RATIONALE

- Market demand
- Alignment with SAFAA mission
- Demand among students

ACADEMIC PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

- Goal
- Objectives
- Qualification- education level
- Mode of study- full time
- Duration- 4 or 2 years
- Number of credits-accordingly 240 or 120

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Maximum 15 learning outcomes in line with National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

Table on the alignment of NQF and programme LOs

ASSESSMENT METHODS

- Assessment methods –final attestation
- Grading scale

CURRICULUM

TABLE ON ALIGNMENT OF COURSES WITH ACADEMIC PROGRAMME LEARNING OUTCOMES

TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS

ADMISSION

- Requirements
- Assessment
- Criteria

LIST OF RESOURCES NECESSARY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION FO THE ACADEMIC PROGRAMME

TEACHING STAFF OF THE CHAIR AWARDING QUALIFICATION



COURSE DESCRIPTION

(template)

(is presented for each course/module)

Academic programme	<i>Mention which academic programme the course serves for</i>
--------------------	---

Status	<i>Mention whether it is an obligatory or selective course</i>
--------	--

Initial requirements	<i>Mention what prior courses the student should have taken for the given course</i>
----------------------	--

Year, term	<i>Mention what year and what term the course is taught in</i>
------------	--

Workload (credit)	<i>Mention the number of credits allocated for the course</i>
-------------------	---

Distribution of hours		
a. Number of total hours		
b. Curricular hours		
	Lecture	<i>Number of hours</i>
	Practical	<i>Number of hours</i>
	Studio	<i>Number of hours</i>
	Laboratory	<i>Number of hours</i>
	Formative assessment	<i>Number of hours</i>
	Final assessment	<i>Number of hours</i>
	Other	<i>Number of hours</i>
c. Individual hours		
	Laboratory	<i>Number of hours</i>
	Studio	<i>Number of hours</i>
	Literature observation	<i>Number of hours</i>
	Tasks	<i>Number of hours</i>
	Other	<i>Number of hours</i>

VII. AIM OF THE COURSE

Mention the main aim of the course which should foster the accomplishment of general goal of the academic programme.

VIII. COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Enumerate course learning outcomes which the student should achieve upon successful completion of the course and which should be derived from course aim and should be in line with academic programme learning outcomes.

Upon successful completion of the course the student should:

(enumerate maximum 6 learning outcomes)

IX. COURSE TOPICS

Mention **topics** of the course

Present **daily plan** for the curricular hours

WEEK	TOPIC	TASKS
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		

X. NECESSARY RESOURCES

Mention means necessary for the implementation of the course

Mention list of literature necessary for the course

XI. ASSESSMENT

Present *assessment policy*

Assessment criteria

	Component	Criterion	Mark expressed in %
1	Generic and professional knowledge and understanding	<p>General theoretical and professional knowledge and understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ability to express knowledge and understanding gathered due to the work done and presented• Clarity of methodology and approaches to the implementation of the work and research deeply• awareness of current ideas, adopted values, leading opinions and discussions of the given filed• ability to understand contextual and critical ideas concerning the academic programme and the course• demonstration of critical thinking about ideas and applies means (methods)• ability to analyze facts and tasks• ability to combine facts and ideas• ability to bring together the most important components of an argument• ability to apply knowledge and practice while making decisions and formulating objectives	%
2	Professional applied and transferable skills	<p>Professional applied transferrable integrated skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• competences shown in the work done, appropriate use of techniques and technologies• combination of thinking and work done• application of gathered knowledge and understanding• organization of individual learning• communication skills• use of information technologies (IT)• problem solving skills• autonomy and initiation• ability to work in teams• time management• adequate feedback to others' observation	%

Present *grading scale*

XII. COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

In case of suggestions, comments and questions turn to the chair. The chair is ready to assist and ensure your progress.



COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

Name of the institution that is benchmarked _____

Title of the academic programme that is benchmarked _____

Level (BA/MA): _____

Date submitted _____

Programme aim
Mention the aim of the programme that is benchmarked

Programme Learning Outcomes Assessment

Outcomes	Course/Module	Assessment Measures	Additional Data	Teaching methods	Learning Methods
Measurable statements that show student knowledge, behaviour, actions, and skills demonstrate that learning has taken place by the time a student upon successful completion of the programme	The courses where the learning outcomes can be achieved by the student	How is the achievement of learning outcomes assessed	Results of course evaluations by students and teachers, results of class observations and curriculum evaluation, number of graduates, percentage of job entry, companies that hired graduates, alumni survey, etc.	Methods that guide students' learning	Methods used by students to learn
1					
2					
3					

Student Learning Outcomes

Learning outcome

Resources/laboratories

Learning outcome	Assessment or Performance Indicator (thesis paper, final project, portfolio, project, examination)	Criteria for Passing	Where Are the Learning Outcomes Assessed (curricular work, internship, projects,)
-------------------------	--	-----------------------------	--

d. evaluation, review and revision of academic programme

4.2 How is the programme funded?

4.3 Programme timeline (frequency)

5. Programme content

Academic programme components include:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a. learning | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. teaching | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. curriculum | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. assessment | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. feedback | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. resources | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g. skills development | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h. use of technology | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i. other (please describe) | | |

6. Programme structure (describe how the programme is delivered)	
6.1 Number of contact hours	
6.2 number of curricular hours	
6.3 curricular hours (e.g. days in a week, hours a day)	
6.4 extracurricular (out-of-class) activities (describe if available)	

7. Process of involvement (describe how the academic programme fosters involvement)	
Teaching methods and tools include:	
a. workshops	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
b. seminars (invited lecturers...)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
c. lectures	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
d. application of audiovisual technologies	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
e. other (please describe)	
8. Assessment of Programme Outcomes (how is it assessed that stated learning outcomes have been achieved)	
In relation to the programme learning outcomes	
8.1 The programme assesses learning outcomes	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

8.2 The programme uses formative assessment Yes No

8.3 The programme uses summative assessment Yes No

8.4 Participants assess themselves Yes No

8.5 the assessment of the programme focuses on the short-term learning outcomes Yes No

8.6 the assessment of the programme focuses on the long-term learning outcomes Yes No

8.8 What is the evidence of effective learning and how is it assessed? (brief outline)

9. The extent to which the programme relates to other programmes

9.1 programme relates to units of other programmes Yes No

9.2 programme relates to MA programme Yes No

10.3. other (please describe)

11. Evaluation of the programme (to what extent the programme is effective)

While evaluating the effectiveness of academic programme attention is paid to:

10.1 organization of the academic programme Yes No

10.2 curriculum of the academic programme Yes No

10.3 learning outcomes Yes No

10.4 other (please describe)

To identify the impact of academic programme on practice, attention is paid to:

10.5 individual practice Yes No

10.6 other (please describe)

Main phases of the implementation of comparative analysis

1st phase. Preparation of project/draft

- Establishment of working group from the leading specialists of professional chairs for the implementation of comparative analysis
- Development of plan and time schedule

2nd phase. Data collection

- Search in the internet for leading education institutions providing similar academic programmes
- Examination of academic programme and their courses
- Study of learning outcomes and assessment methods (at the academic programme level)
- Study of learning outcomes, teaching, learning and assessment methods (at the course level)
- Study of resources ensuring the implementation of education process

3rd phase. Data analysis

- Coordination of gathered data
- Identification of similarities and differences
- Bringing out aspects that are worth adopting
- Making suggestions for making additions in the programme and course learning outcomes
- Discussions in the chairs, involvement of more staff members in the process

4th phase. Investment of changes

- Making changes in the list of programme and course learning outcomes
- Updating course descriptions according to new learning outcomes and teaching and learning methods

5th phase. Improvement

- Gathering new data to control the results
- Double comparative analysis after the investments/changes



**INFORMATION GATHERING METHODS DURING INTERNAL
AND EXTERNAL EXPERTISE**

**Application of the method of focus group discussion during
internal and external expertise**

Planning focus group research

Conduction of focus group discussion requires clear planning. During the process of planning the researcher should make some decisions concerning the subject of research and its implementation. Those decisions include:

- Definition of research aims
- Objectives
- Number of groups
- Qualifications for each group
- Number of participants
- Venue, time and duration of the discussion

Definition of the number of groups and the techniques of participant selection

When defining **number of groups** the following principles can be applied:

- At least two groups for the discussion of each variable and factor of the topic of discussion
- Conduct discussion as much as the already gathered information is not repeated.

Identification of the composition of focus groups

From 6 to 12 participants should be involved in each discussion: homogeneous i.e. carriers of the same factor which is important for the research, for example if clarification of an issue is important for the research/observation among first year and four year students, it means that discussions should be organized separately for first year and separately for four year students. This promotes the participants to feel free and comfortable among the insiders.

Development of guideline/questionnaire for focus group discussion

- Questionnaire is developed based on the goals and objectives of research
- Concrete topics and questions are asked however it is not effective to involve many topics
- The questionnaire can be changed after discussion with each focus group
- The guideline should be developed with logical coherence of topics: from general to specific

Within the framework of the same research it is necessary to develop different guidelines for different group discussions. For example: to develop different guidelines or guidelines with some questions differing from each other for BA and MA students.

Technical assurance of focus groups

The conditions for focus group discussion are as follows:

- Separate comfortable place
- A place free from interruptions and other disturbing factors
- A place with recording opportunities

- Semicircle arrangement of moderator and participants is more appropriate
- A place suitable for recording

Observers can be present at the discussion without interference.

Handouts

The roles of a moderator and an assistant

Techniques applied by the moderator in different stages of focus group discussion

The art of active listening

The art of active listening assumes listening to the answers of the participants, comprehend them, paraphrase and repeat it to the participants.

The art of asking “Why?”

During focus group discussion the culture of asking “why” should be developed, i.e. in order to understand opinion of each participant after hearing each opinion question “why” should be asked.

Some key actions and principles of a moderator include:

1. Moderator should know when to pass from general topic of discussion to a more specific one.
2. Moderator should provide the information or opinion discussed in the previous phase of discussion in the current phase, this fosters the continuation of a discussion, otherwise the discussion will be fragmented.
3. The moderator should be able to facilitate the discussion based on all the topics of the guideline at the same time being flexible and taking into account the logic of participants in terms of making a discussion.
4. The moderator should have control over the problems raised during the discussion such as conflicts between the participants, disagreements or lack of motivation by the participants to actively participate and answer the questions as well as passive involvement in the discussion.

Techniques of an assistant in different phases of focus group discussion

Usually it is advised to conduct focus group discussions with two people: moderator and assistant. Moderator leads the discussion, asks questions, follows the answers, controls the discussion and the assistant has the role of a supporter.

The assistant can help the moderator to:

- prevent the influence of factors that divert the attention of the participants
- follow the process of recording
- observe and write down non verbal communication of the participants
- make the minutes of the meeting

Handout 6

The phases of focus group discussion

- preparation
- introductory part of preface
- large discussion
- summery

Preparation

Before starting the main discussion the following activities should be carried out:

- to arrange the chairs in a form of a semicircle
- to turn on the recording device
- to prevent possible disorders and mess. To prevent possible interruptions, to keep the door of the discussion room close or to have a person responsible for preventing unexpected people to enter the discussion room
- to prevent unexpected participants of observers from entering the room

The assistant is usually responsible for these activities

Part one: preparation (*duration is approximately 15 minutes*)

The aim of preparation is to transform the group of individuals to a cooperation group within 15 minutes.

Part one: preparation (*duration is 15 minutes*)

During this part the participants are asked questions that should give only general information about the subject of discussion. For instance, if the participants are students, they are asked to tell a little about themselves, what year they are studying in, how old they are. The assistant should make notes about each participant so that the moderator can use that data during the next phases of discussion and the analysis as well. For example the assistant should enumerate the participants, should mention position if they are student- their year of study or any other information about them should be mentioned which can be useful for the moderator during the discussion.

However it is important to remember that:

1. the question that can create limits for the respondent should not be asked
2. the questions through which the differences in terms of the positions of respondents can be revealed should not be asked

Part two: expanded discussion, focus group discussion (*duration is approximately 60 minutes*)

This part of group discussion involves:

- gradual transition from general topics to more specific issues
- transition from specific, concrete discussions (such as number of students in a group of study) to more abstract issues, that is from factual discussions to the discussion of relationships, emotions and beliefs

The aim of the discussion is;

- to have the insight of real issues concerning the topic of discussion
- to fully identify the dynamics of positions relating to the behavior of respondents and to observe speech and emotions of the respondent concerning the topic of discussion

During the discussion positions of respondents concerning the topic of discussion should not be assessed or valued.

Summary (*duration is approximately 15 minutes*)

This part should be mostly directed to:

- wrap up and review of discussed topics
- mentioning the main disagreements and differences of opinions among the participants of the discussion (*some of you think this way but some have other opinions*) and their clarification
- comprehension of everything that happened during the discussion
- clarification of approaches and conclusions of the participants

In this phase the moderator should just summarize and **without any judgments** should specify disagreements that arose among the participants and should make conclusions from the group discussion.

Handout 8

<i>Assessment field and criteria</i>	Yes	No	Comment
<i>Aim and fields of focus group discussion method</i>			
<i>Topic of discussion was in line with the aim of discussion</i>			
<i>The aim of discussion was derived from the issues of observation</i>			
<i>The application of focus group discussion method was justified for the given topic</i>			
<i>Organization and implementation of focus group discussion</i>			
<i>The number of participants was appropriate</i>			
<i>The selection of participants was derived from the specification of the topic of discussion</i>			
<i>The participants were provided with necessary conditions for the discussion</i>			
<i>The scope of the questions for discussion was clear</i>			
<i>The scope of the questions for discussion was in line with the topic of discussion</i>			

<i>Necessary information about the topic was gathered during the discussion.</i>			
<i>The role of moderator and assistant of focus group discussion</i>			
<i>The moderator was prepared for the discussion</i>			
<i>The moderator presented the topic clearly</i>			
<i>The moderator presented the rules for discussion</i>			
<i>The moderator used the technique of active listening</i>			
<i>The moderator promoted involvement of all the participants in the discussion</i>			
<i>The moderator managed the discussion</i>			
<i>The moderator didn't express his opinion about the issues for discussion</i>			
<i>The moderator fostered discussion within the group</i>			
<i>The questions of the moderator were in concord with the topic of discussion</i>			
<i>The questions of the moderator were clear</i>			
<i>The moderator was attentive to all the opinions expressed</i>			
<i>The assistant supported the moderator</i>			
<i>The moderator was cooperating with the assistant</i>			
<i>During the wrap-up all the expressed opinions were taken into consideration</i>			
<i>The moderator kept the logical sequence of all the phases</i>			

TOOL DESCRIPTION

1	Tool	Questionnaire
2	Responsible units	QA Center, Career Center
3	Aim of the survey	Evaluation of SAFAA academic programmes, resources and services as well as effectiveness of administration by the alumni
4	Alignment with SAFAA strategic goals	The survey serves for the improvement of SAFAA academic environment and modernization of academic programmes
5	Institutional accreditation criteria	2, 3, 7
6	Target group	Alumni
7	Aim of applying questionnaire	Get feedback from alumni expressing the level of their satisfaction from SAFAA which is needed for further development
8	Objective of the survey	To reveal issues that arose during and after their course of study
9	Method of conducting survey	Survey is anonymous and the questionnaire is filled in on a paper
10	Selection	30% of alumni of each academic programme for the last 5 years
11	Description of questions	Filling in the questionnaire will take 15-20 minutes. The questionnaire comprises close and open end questions, comments and suggestions can be written in the questionnaire. Some close questions give an opportunity to choose more than one answer.
12	Frequency of conducting the survey	Survey is conducted once each 4 years
13	Frequency of reports	Once each 4 years

Dear graduate,

Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts (hereinafter SAFAA) is conducting a survey among its alumni. SAFAA gives much importance to your opinion in terms of preparing graduates that will mostly meet the requirements of labor market.

Please answer the questions as frankly as possible by choosing the relevant answer (V) and leaving comments and suggestions.

12. When did you graduate from SAFAA? _____

13. What profession did you get in SAFAA?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art history and theory | <input type="checkbox"/> Clothing modeling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Painting | <input type="checkbox"/> Design |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | <input type="checkbox"/> Graphics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ceramics | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer design | |

14. What degree of education did you get?

- At SAFAA _____
- In other RA institutions _____
/mention name of the institution/
- In foreign institutions _____
/mention the country and name of the institution/

15. Do you think your profession is demanded in labor market?

- Yes
- No
- Difficult to answer

16. How long did it take you to find a job?

- Up to 3 months
- Up to 6 months
- other _____

17. Do you work currently?

- Yes according to my profession
Mention the position and the institution _____
- Yes, in other related profession
Mention the position and the institution _____
- Yes, in quite a different field
Mention the position and the institution _____
- No
- Other _____

18. Do you think the education you got at SAFAA is satisfactory for your work?

- more than satisfactory
- fully satisfactory
- partly satisfactory
- does not satisfy
- other _____

Please assess yourself

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Difficult to answer
Knowledge got at SAFAA					
Competences					
Skills					
Comprehension of a task					
Implementation of a task					
Comprehension of innovations					
Application of innovations					
Responsibility					

Time management					
Communication skills					
Team work					

19. Enumerate strong and weak points derived from the education got at SAFAA that were identified during your work

Weak points

Strong points

20. What competences do you think are necessary for work the formation of which

was promoted through the education got at SAFAA
got at SAFAA _____

was not promoted through the education

21. Have you studied in any foreign country? /including short-term trainings/

- Yes. What things have you notices that are worth adapting and that are missing at SAFAA?

- No

22. Do you think you need training?

- Yes
- No

22.1 In what sphere would you like to be trained?

- Art history and theory
- Painting
- Sculpture
- Ceramics
- Computer design
- Clothing modeling
- Design
- Graphics
- Other _____

11.2 In what institution would you like to be trained?

No

12. Please evaluate SAFAA's

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Difficult to answer
Teaching methods					
Assessment methods					
Sanitary conditions					
Medical center					
Classrooms					
Laboratories					
Studios					
Objects for still lifes					
Composition of posers					
Literature in the library					
Work of the library					
Professional consultancy					
Administrative consultancy					
Consultancy in finding a job					

15. Would you like to cooperate with SAFAA?

- Yes: Mention desirable modes of cooperation
- Exchange of information about the labor market
- Joints exhibitions
- Other _____

No

Date: _____

Email address: _____

Thank you for cooperation



SAMPLES OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMME MISSION, GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Example 1

Mission of academic programme

“To provide students with education practice and academic environment that promote career development of students in product design or related professional spheres and the formation of competences for civil liabilities”

Programme goals

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| Knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students know key biological principles and concepts• Students understand main theoretical approaches of explaining economical phenomena |
| Skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students can use appropriate technological tools• Students have effective personal and leadership skills |
| Values | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students respect professional ethical norms• Students value scientific approaches of identifying natural phenomena |

Programme objectives

- Students can analyze research results and make reasonable conclusions
- Students can provide consultancy services to individuals differing from them by sex, age, nationality, culture, sexual orientation and other features
- Students can find relevant sources of information using both electronic and traditional databases
- While providing medical care to the patients students follow standards of professional ethics
- Students can analyze the quality of justification provided as a support to the given approach
- Students can identify the main factors as a result of which the country can declare a war
- Students can differentiate science from fake science

Example 2

Mission of academic programme

Fashion Design is one of the largest programmes offered at the Fashion Institute of Technology. It serves as a dynamic educational force that prepares future industry leaders. The programme is designed to benefit, support, and sustain the evolving domestic and global apparel marketplace. The mission of the department is to instill in its graduates the skills and knowledge needed to excel and flourish in the fashion industry. FIT's mission emphasizes the development of "*students' aesthetic, intellectual, analytical and technological abilities through programmes that integrate theory and practice,*" in keeping with FIT's strategic plan. The fashion design programme advances the consistent development of design aesthetics and requisite hands-on knowledge within the business of fashion.

The vital inclusion of technology, critical thinking, active listening, verbal presentation, and written communication within the programme facilitates students' future success and enables them to lead the industry forward. Graduates have explored and deepened these abilities and will be able to adapt as career professionals and lifelong learners. (Mission Statement, *2020 Fashion Design Strategic Plan*, 2009)

Goals and Objectives

The overarching goals of the Fashion Design programme are to:

6. Utilize ability, critical thinking and problem-solving skills in the development of design ideas, as per industry standards.
7. Develop individual student design abilities with a strong emphasis on professionalism.
8. Exhibit analytical, creative, and intellectual competencies through rigorous coursework and training in all areas of the curriculum.
9. Identify, explain and apply skills and abilities to career opportunities in the evolving global marketplace.
10. Deepen and broaden a fashion design student's education through a strong core of liberal arts courses.

Learning Outcomes

The Fashion Design degree programme lays the foundation of students' design knowledge, enabling them to move on to the BFA programme or seek employment. **Graduates** are expected to achieve the following learning outcomes:

7. Identify, explain, and apply individual foundation skills developed through hands-on and digital methodology.
8. Examine and implement practical and conceptual design solutions through two-dimensional and three-dimensional techniques in projects and assignments.
9. Apply analytical, creative, and intellectual competencies when developing solutions for design projects and assignments.

10. Develop an understanding of international marketplaces gained through study abroad and domestic programmes.
11. Identify and apply the aesthetics, critical thinking and problem-solving skills required for entry level career positions.
12. Demonstrate requisite creative abilities and critical design skills that prepare students academically and professionally for entry into the upper division.

**National Qualification Framework for Higher Education in Armenia
(levels of Higher Education)**

Level	Qualification	Educational Program	Knowledge	Skills			Competence
				Knowledge use skills	Communication, information communication technologies (ICT) and work with data	Summative cognitive skills	Independence and responsibility
6	Bachelor (Bachelor's Diploma)	Bachelor's educational programme Duration: at least 3 years (Credit transmission and accumulation system, from now on: ECTS) (180-240 ECTS)	Advanced knowledge of professional work or modern and principal concepts, theories and methods of learning area.	Skills which show contemporary and advanced approaches and are necessary to use the acquired knowledge to solve unpredictable problems during professional work or learning process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills of presenting and explaining the information, arguments, ideas, problems and their solutions about given area to professional and non-professional community. • Skills of using ICTs in solving problems in professional area and facilitating the work. • Skills of collecting, operating, analyzing and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data related to professional area to make well-grounded judgments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills of analyzing and concluding displaying critical thinking. • Skills that require creative approach to reveal professional problems of the area and to propose different solutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escalate full professional activity. • Manage professional functions and programmes in unpredictable working or learning environment, take responsibility for professional development of separate individuals or the team. • Decide further learning or working paths depending on own needs. • Realize personal responsibility for the nation and the government, sleuth to realization of democratic principles, spread of national and universal values.

7	Master (Master's Diploma) Certificated specialist (Certificated specialist's diploma)	Master's educational programme Duration: at least 1 year (60-120 ECTS) Certificated specialist's educational programme Duration: at least 5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep specialized knowledge, including the latest achievements of given area which are used during learning, research and work. • Knowledge of theories, advanced principles and methods of given professional and inter-professional areas. 	Axial professional skills which are necessary for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • combining knowledge of different areas and creating a new knowledge in research and contemporary activity • to solve theoretical and practical problems in new and unfamiliar situations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills to present and explain own conclusions, appropriate propositions and results of investigation precisely and systematically to professional and non-professional community. • Skills to swift-handedly use ICTs in solving complex problems in professional and (or) non-professional areas and doing a research. • Skills which are necessary to deeply analyze and assess quantitative and qualitative data related to professional and (or) inter-professional areas to come up with conclusions and decisions in situations with not complete or limited information 	Skills which are necessary to investigate problems in professional area, to propose modern ideas and approaches, as well as, to suggest contemporary and creative solutions intended to expand knowledge and practice of the area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escalate an activity in professional or learning area which requires new strategic approaches of management and redesign of complex and unknown working situations. • Promote development of professional knowledge. • Take the responsibility for supervision of realization of strategic goals. • Assess his/her own needs of continuous education and professional development in context of modern technological developments` to be able to continue learning in rapid changing environments. • Promote development of civil society. • Act combining Armenian national system of values and historic-cultural experience with universal values.
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TABLE ON THE ALIGNMENT OF NQF AND PROGRAMME LOs

Descriptors of RA NQF (Bachelor's level)

NQF	Learning Outcomes							Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
5.1.								
5.2.								
4.1.								
4.2.								
3.1.								
3.2.								
3.3.								
2								
1								
Total								

5. Autonomy and responsibility (including learning skills)

5.1. Can undertake activities and fulfill tasks in the study or professional field under appropriate guidance, make decisions in limited autonomy conditions and take responsibility in a team

5.2. Under some guidance can identify his/her own educational needs, make decisions on continuing further education in different environments.

4. Generic cognitive skills (including making judgments)

4.1. Can apply critical thinking, analysis and judgment

4.2 Can demonstrate some creative approach to identify and provide different solutions to the problems of the field

3. Communication, ICT and numeracy skills

3.1. Can explain and communicate information, ideas, problems, arguments and solutions that are related to the given field to the professional and non-professional audiences

3.2. Can apply ICTs to support and intensify work and solve problems in the respective field

3.3. Can collect, process and interpret relevant quantitative and qualitative data within the field to make reasonable judgments

2. Applying knowledge and understanding

Can apply basic principles and methods of the field for solving problems in familiar situations that are typical to profession

1. Knowledge and understanding

Demonstrates general knowledge and understanding of basic and state-of-the-art concepts, theories and methods within the field

CURRICULUM TEMPLATE

Academic programme title (for MA AP)

N	Subject names	Attestations by semesters						Student's academic workload													
		Examination	Unmqupp/Testing	Observation	Project presentation	Portfolio project	Paper, essay	Research work	Hours			Credit	By semesters								
									Student's whole workload	Classroom trainings	Individual work		1 st		2 nd		3 rd		4 th		
Weekly classroom workload	Credit	Weekly classroom workload	Credit	Weekly classroom workload	Credit	Weekly classroom workload	Credit	Weekly classroom workload	Credit												
	Obligatory courses																				
1																					
2																					
3																					
4																					
5																					
6																					
7																					
8																					

	Elective courses																			
9																				
10																				
11	<i>Research work</i>																			
12	<i>Preparation of master thesis and project</i>																			
13	<i>Defense of diploma work</i>																			
	<i>Total</i>																			

CURRICULUM TEMPLATE

DESIGN

(filled in for MA programme)

N	Subject names	Attestations by semesters						Student's academic workload												
		Examination	Unniqupp/Testing	Observation	Project presentation	Portfolio project	Paper, essay	Research work	Hours				By semesters							
									Student's whole workload	Classroom trainings	Individual work	Credit	1 st		2 nd		3 rd		4 th	
													Weekly classroom workload	Credit						
	Obligatory courses																			
1	Aesthetics		1					60	32	28	2	2	2							
2	Research methods	2	1					180	64	11 6	6	2	4	2	2					
3	Design technical drawing			1				180	64	11 6	6	4	6							
4	Design analysis	2	1					180	64	11 6	6	2	4	2	2					
5	3D computer modeling			1- 3				450	22 4	22 6	15	6	7	4	4	4	4			
6	Design			1- 3				510	25 6	25 4	17	4	5	6	6	4	4			
7	Portfolio project		3					60	32		28	2				2	2			
8	Design modeling with material			2										2	2					
	Elective courses																			

9	Arts management		1						60	32	28	2	2	2																		
	English for specific purposes																															
	Decorative painting																															
10	Landscape design								60	32	28	2			2	2																
	Interior, exterior design																															
	English for specific purposes																															
	Technology for the production of newest organic materials																															
11	Research work						2,3	960				32				12		20														
12	Preparation of master thesis and project							840				28									28											
13	Defense of diploma work							60				2									2											
	Total							3600				120	22	30	18	30	10	30	0	30												

TABLE ON THE ALIGNMENT OF COURSES WITH ACADEMIC PROGRAMME LOs

Learning Outcomes Courses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							
13							
14							
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18							
19							
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21							
22							
23							
24							
25							
26							
27							
28							

Table for the evaluation of the course alignment with the programme LOs

Mark	Description
4	The course fully covers the achievement of the learning outcome
3	The course mainly covers the achievement of the learning outcome
2	The course partly covers achievement of the learning outcome
1	The course covers achievement of the learning outcome
0	The course does not cover the achievement of the learning outcome

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Հայաստանի գեղարվեստի պետական ակադեմիան ALIGN դրամաշնորհային ծրագրի գործընկեր հաստատություններից է, որի աշխատանքային խումբը ներգրաված է եղել ծրագրի շրջանակներում մասնագիտության կրթական ծրագրերի ՀՀ որակավորումների շրջանակի հետ համադրելիության ապահովման և ստոիզման մեխանիզմների, գործիքների մշակման աշխատանքներում, ինչի արդյունքում էլ իրականացվել է սույն փաստաթղթի մշակումը:

State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia is among 26 partner institutions involved in ALIGN project. The working group of SAFAA has been engaged in the activities within the project and contributed a lot to the development of tools and mechanisms for aligning academic programmes with National Qualifications Framework. As a result this guide was developed.

ALIGN

ՏԵՄՊՈՒՍ ALIGN-ը (Մասնագիտության կրթական ծրագրերի և որակավորումների ազգային շրջանակների միջև համադրելիության ապահովում և ստուգում - №: 543901-TEMPUS-1-2013-1-AM-TEMPUS-JPGR) քառամյա դրամաշնորհային ծրագիր է, որի նպատակն է բարձրացնել որակավորումների ըմբռնելիությունը, կայունությունն ու փոխանցելիությունը՝ բուհերի համար մշակելով կրթական ծրագրերը ՈԱՇ-ի համապատասխանեցնելու/համադրելու մեխանիզմներ:

TEMPUS ALIGN PROJECT (Achieving and Checking the Alignment between the Academic Programmes and Qualification Frameworks - №: 543901-TEMPUS-1-2013-1-AM-TEMPUS-JPGR) is a four-year project aiming at contributing to the enhancement of the intelligibility, consistency and transferability of qualifications through establishment of mechanisms for HEIs to achieve alignment of academic programmes with NQFs and for QA agencies to check such alignment.



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Այս նախագիծը ֆինանսավորվել է Եվրոպական հանձնաժողովի աջակցությամբ:

Սույն հրապարակումը արտացոլում է միայն հեղինակների տեսակետերը, և Հանձնաժողովը չի կրում որևէ պատասխանատվություն դրանում պարունակող տեղեկատվության համար:

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This publication reflects the views only of the author and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



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