

inclusion

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INTRODUCTION

State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia (hereinafter Academy) is committed to providing equal opportunities for students to access higher professional education. Strongly supporting the inclusion of students into learning and teaching processes, Academy stated the importance of developing inclusion policy for students having special education needs in the Strategy 2017-2021 (*see Action Plan for Strategy 2017-2021, Goal 2, Activity 7*).

The specific objective of the Policy on Inclusion Higher Education (hereinafter Policy) is to provide equal, accessible, supportive and inclusive environment for learning and teaching. Academy is obliged to undertake steps to eliminate discrimination based on social, ethnic, religious, economic, sexual, health backgrounds.

The establishment of inclusive culture at Academy should be done through:

- ✓ capacity building of Academy staff, faculty and respective governing bodies,
- ✓ development of institutional support mechanisms,
- ✓ development of inclusive approaches to teaching, learning and assessment,
- ✓ promoting access to higher education for persons from vulnerable groups,
- ✓ constantly analyzing the situation, respective developments and impact of activities.

The Policy is in accordance with the legislation of RA connected to the inclusiveness and inclusive higher education (see Useful Links, Legislative background) and applies to all the members of Academy, including the staff, faculty, students, volunteers, visitors and other.

Vulnerable groups at Academy

Identifying the main vulnerable groups of students studying at Academy, Policy aims at making the learning environment as inclusive as possible. Academy conducted study to figure out the main vulnerable groups studying at the institution. These are;

- ✓ impairment students,

- ✓ disabled students,
- ✓ national and religious minorities,
- ✓ students from socially disadvantaged families,
- ✓ students from marginalized areas,
- ✓ international students,
- ✓ students, having children,
- ✓ parentless students,
- ✓ students, having one parent,
- ✓ student, who is a child of a died soldier,
- ✓ students, who completed contractual military service,
- ✓ LGBGT

Current State

It should be noted that Academy has undertaken steps towards the establishment of inclusive environment for learning and teaching. Particularly, Academy financially supports its students by providing discounts on tuition fees; 3.5% of the whole budget of Academy goes to the financial support of the students. Moreover, Academy welcomes international students from different countries, such as China, Persia, Syria, Lebanon, Georgia, Ukraine, Russia, Romania and so on, who cannot communicate or study in Armenian. For such students, Academy organizes courses of Armenian language which are free of charge. In order to ensure the quality of the activities done, Academy conducted focus group discussions. The results show that the main stakeholders are satisfied with the quality of education and services provided by Academy.

1. INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT & MANAGEMENT OF INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

Staff, faculty and students of Academy understand the importance of inclusive higher professional education and all the departments are responsible for inclusiveness in their everyday work. However, to further foster the idea of inclusiveness, Academy plans:

- ✓ To enlarge Career Center and its responsibilities making it Student Support Center. Along with the responsibility of providing employment opportunities for students, Student Support Center should be responsible for helping students from vulnerable groups, in particular, being included in the educational process. The center should collect data about students from vulnerable groups starting from the admission process, organize meetings and conduct surveys to reveal main issues.
- ✓ To organize trainings for the staff. The responsible person for inclusive education in cooperation with QA and HR specialists should conduct a series of trainings for faculty and staff. The trainings should be mandatory.
- ✓ To allocate budget for redesigning the building, including lecture rooms, laboratories, library, making it inclusive for disabled students.
- ✓ To enrich Academy with the appropriate facilities and technologies, especially for impairment students.

2. THE PRINCIPAL APPROACHES TO LEARNING, TEACHING & ASSESSMENT

Today, the Academy's approaches to learning, teaching and assessment are reflected in different institutional regulations and policies, particularly in SAFAA assessment system, Handbook on the development and revision of academic programmes, Academic programme and more detailed in each course descriptions. Highlighting the adoption and application of inclusive approaches in different departments and levels of the institution, the Academy assumed a commitment for developing and comprehensively spreading learning, teaching and assessment methods.

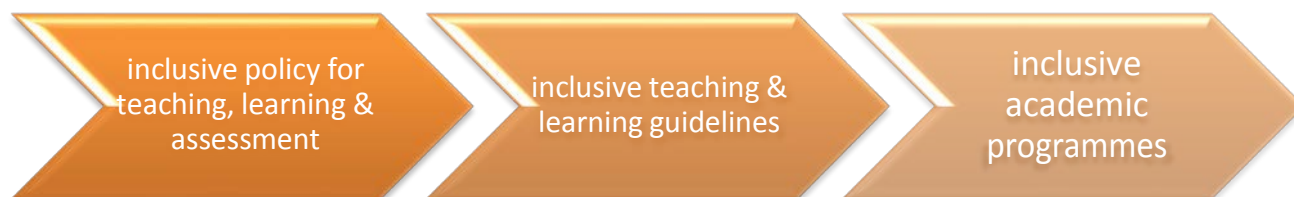
The vision for this is the following:

To provide such a learning environment, where regardless of students background (social, political, economic, religious, sexual etc.), the students are fully involved in learning process and have the opportunity to develop their competences.

The goals of Academy to strengthen the inclusive Approaches in Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods

1. To revise learning, teaching and assessment policies taking into account the international approaches for inclusive education.
2. To develop the capacity of teaching and support staff and their awareness on inclusive teaching, learning and assessment methods.
3. To improve development and revision approaches of academic programmes taking into account the provision of inclusive approaches in the academic programmes' implementation process.
4. To ensure diversity and inclusion of assessment approaches and methods in the course level.
5. To develop tools for monitoring the level of inclusiveness in the learning.

Expected outcomes



3. Quality assurance

Having a short history of quality assurance the Academy throughout these years could develop a well-coordinated and designed quality management system. The fundamental steps done for the development of Academy's quality life so far promoted to establish an organizational culture at the institutional level thus creating elements for further improvement of inclusive culture.

The idea of inclusiveness has always been in the center of Academy's operation and for that reason its internal and external stakeholders have always been included in all key processes such as management, decision-making, development and revision of different fundamental documents like academic programmes, regulations, procedures on existing processes etc. To involve more effectively its stakeholders in all those processes, the Academy has clearly defined and measurable quality assurance tools and mechanisms, which currently provide stakeholders' inclusion in key processes and make their voice heard. But now taking into account the time imperative of "Inclusive education" and "Inclusiveness" in general at the universities life in the modern higher education systems, the Academy tries to build an inclusive culture in all operational levels. To build an inclusive culture the Academy defined quality objectives in terms of inclusiveness:

- to integrate effectively and mainstream diversity and equality in Academy's all strategies, polices, academic curriculum, teaching, assessment methods, management practice,
- to create inclusive working and learning environment where stakeholders' differences are celebrated and valued.

For the effective implementation of these objectives the Academy should also use newly developed quality assurance tools. These tools enable to evaluate the Academy's operation in terms of inclusiveness and to ensure the continuous improvement and development of its activities aimed at "Inclusive education" and "Inclusiveness" at all. Below are described newly developed quality assurance tools that contribute to the full-fledged implementation of above defined quality objectives and establishment of inclusive culture at Academy:

1. **Automatically data collection** on disabled students starting from the admission process for further institutional support. A new information sheet should be developed to reveal applicants' disabilities for further institutional support like discount, psychological consultancy etc.
2. **Lesson observations.** Lesson observations should be done based on different components such as inclusive teaching methodology, assessment, lesson conduction etc. For the lesson observations a professional committee should be established including professionals from Quality assurance center and Teaching and learning methodological unit. After observations the committee should give a conclusion on the lesson observed based on the defined criteria.
3. **Evaluation on Academy's inclusiveness in general.** The questionnaire filters the involvement of stakeholders in Academy's different operational levels such as decision making, leadership, students' full participation in lessons etc.
4. **Monitoring system.** Quality assurance center should organize an institutional monitoring every three years, where the Academy's human, material and financial investments aimed at effective and better organization of inclusive education and inclusiveness at all are to be evaluated. The quality of activities done for inclusive education such as staff trainings also should be evaluated. For instance, it should be monitored whether those trainings conducted touched upon inclusive teaching methods, assessment and also application of relevant equipment or not etc.

4. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Useful links

- ✓ *Legislative background*
 1. <http://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docID=1>
 2. <http://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docid=73261>
 3. <http://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=90419>
 4. <http://www.parliament.am/legislation.php?sel=show&ID=5937>
 5. <http://www.arlis.am/documentview.aspx?docid=94972>
 6. https://www.e-gov.am/u_files/file/decrees/arc_voroshum/2012/11/MAR45-9.pdf

- ✓ *Links to important organizations*
 1. <http://edu.am/>
 2. <http://www.mlsa.am/>
 3. <http://unison.am/am/faq>
 4. <http://bridgeofhope.am/tag/huysi-kamurj/>
 5. <http://www.disability.am/>

APPENDIX 1

Time plan

2018-2019

Activity	Deadline	Outcome/Output
Reorganization of the Career center to Students' Support Center through redefining and enlarging its functions.	September 2018	New regulation of Students support center
Setting roles and responsibilities and recruitment of relevant staff for the newly reorganized unit – Students' Support Center.	September 2018	Job description and staff
Development of the training kit for capacity building of SAFAA staff on inclusive education	November 2018	Training kit
Training on inclusive teaching, learning and assessment methods for teaching and support staff	November 2018 October 2019	Minutes of the trainings
Fact-finding on the Academy's currently existing system in terms of student financial, service and material support	December 2018	Monitoring report
Budget reallocation for better and effective organization of inclusive learning	January 2019	Reallocated budget
Benchmarking of teaching and learning inclusive approaches and international practice	October 2018	Report on benchmarking implemented
Development of the draft of teaching, learning and assessment policy	October 2018	Developed draft policy
Development of a handbook/guidelines on inclusive teaching and learning for teaching and support staff	December 2018	Developed handbook/guidelines
Organization of discussions/round tables on the drafts among the stakeholders	February 2019	Minutes of the meetings
Approval of the policy	March 2019	Developed and approved policy
Development of mechanisms and involvement of the approaches defined by the teaching, learning and assessment policy in the Handbook on the	May 2019	Revised academic programmes, curriculum and assessment system

development and revision of academic programmes		
Implementation of new approaches and a monitoring in separate level of courses	September 2019	Minutes of lesson observations
Development of an information sheet to gather data on disabled applicants	June 2018	Gathered data on disabled applicants
Collecting data on disabled applicants during admission process	July 2018	
Development of criteria for lesson observations	September 2018	Defined criteria
Development of a procedure on the conduction of lesson observations	September 2018	Approved procedure/document
Establishment of a committee for the conduction of observations	September 2018	
Pilot of the lesson observation in all academic programmes	October 2018	Minutes
Development of a questionnaire on inclusive education for staff and students	January 2019	Data analysis
Survey among SAFAA staff and students	January 2019	
Regular monitoring of processes on inclusive education	Annually	Monitoring reports