



# Overview of the Higher Education System

## Armenia



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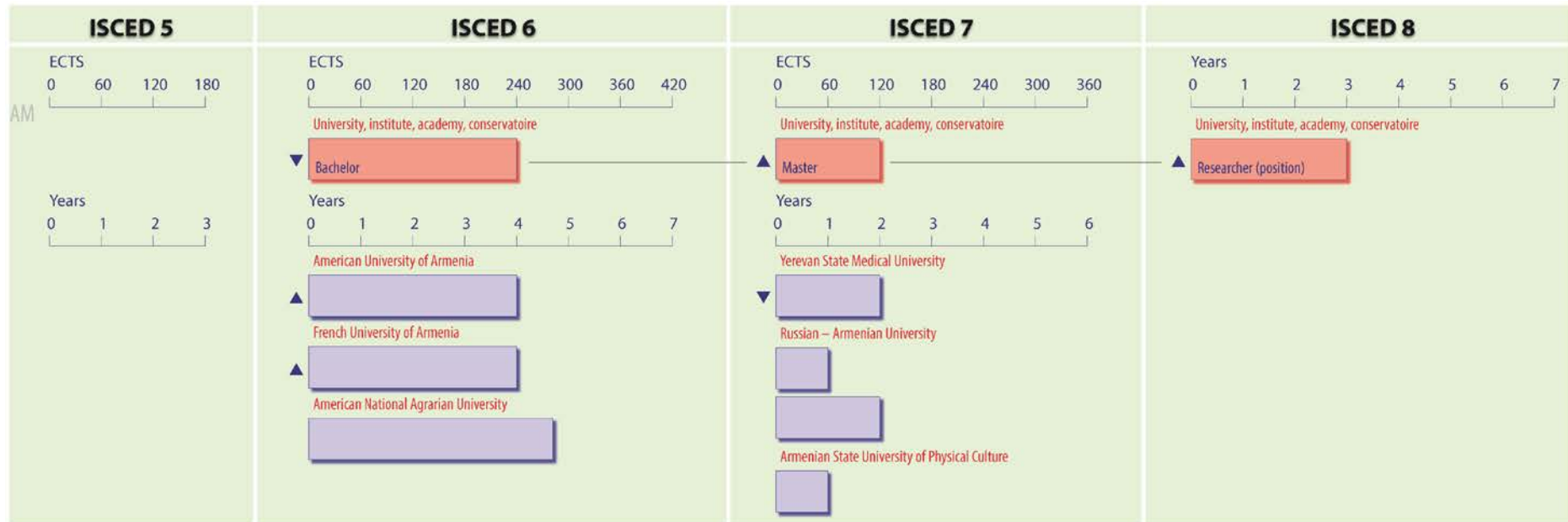
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## The higher education system in Armenia



- Most common length of a Bologna cycle
- Other length of a Bologna cycle
- Professional programme

- Programme outside the typical Bologna model
- Professional programme non Bologna

**ECTS:**  
Credits according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

|      |  | regulated at national level | decided at institutional level |
|------|--|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| All  | programmes have admission requirements | ▼                           | ▲                              |
| SOME | programmes have admission requirements | ▽                           | △                              |



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## 1 Overview

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The Republic of Armenia (RA) is located at the crossroad of Eastern Europe and Western Asia in the Southern Caucasus. The population of the country, 3,018,854, is predominantly mono-ethnic with 98% of Armenian origin. In RA the official language is Armenian. According to the last Population Census of Armenia 2011, 93% of the total population follow the Armenian Apostolic Church, an Eastern Christian denomination in communion with the other Oriental Orthodox Churches. There are other religious representations, but mostly affiliated to the Christian confessions.

Armenia has a lower middle-income economy. Armenia's GDP (PPP) per capita was 3,863 USD in 2014. In 2014 the Government spent 2,5% of its GDP on education.

### 1.1 Fundamental Principles and National Policies

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Higher education (HE) is one of the pivotal areas for the development of the Armenian economy, therefore it is included in the priorities of the Government of RA.

RA Constitution stipulates the rights of the Armenian citizens for Higher Education and in particular Article 39 states that *"All citizens shall have the right to free higher and other vocational education in state higher and other vocational educational institutions on the basis of competition as prescribed by the law"*.

Higher education in Armenia is regulated by two main laws; the Law on Education (1999) and the Law on Higher and Postgraduate Vocational Education (2004). However, in parallel with the development and reforms in Armenian HE system both laws have been amended several times. In addition to the aforementioned laws, individual areas of HE are regulated by a range of sub-legislative acts. Among other areas are: quality assurance, national qualifications framework, system of accumulation and transfer of academic credits, student mobility, etc.

Once in 5 years the Government of RA develops a five-year education development program setting the objectives for education development, priority directions, current challenges and ways to overcome them.

### 1.2 Lifelong Learning Strategy

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Lifelong learning (LLL) in RA is regulated mainly by the Law on Education (1999), the Law on Preliminary (Craftsmanship) and Middle Vocational Education (2005) and the Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education (2004), as well as a range of regulations. These Laws mainly draw on the continuous development of individual's professional qualifications through provision of additional short-term in-service training. Additional education is provided by higher education institutions (HEIs) and professional education institutions.

To promote the development of LLL, in 2006 the Government of RA adopted the "Concept of non-formal education in the Republic of Armenia", outlining the main legal and organizational aspects for non-formal education in Armenia. In 2009 the Government also approved the "Concept of lifelong learning in the Republic of Armenia" which has promoted a structured approach to LLL. The political course of integration with the international educational space is reflected in all these documents, which seem to address the key messages of the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Memorandum. Besides, there is a separate Division of Supplementary and Continuous Education at the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) of RA which coordinates LLL policy at the national level.

The Strategy on Supplementary and Continuous Education in RA in 2013-2017 and the procedures for organizing and implementing supplementary educational programmes provide information on necessary pathways and guidelines for promoting continuous development of professionals and human resources beyond formal education programmes.

Supplementary education and lifelong learning in Armenia are carried out in several modes, including trainings, professional trainings and self-education, which can be financed by various state agencies and

bodies, educational institutions, private entities, civil society organization (CSOs) as well as international and transnational donor organizations.

Armenian National Qualifications Framework adopted by the Government of RA in 2011, and further revised in 2013-2015, has also created favourable grounds for recognition of LLL outcomes.

### 1.3 Organisation of Private Education

---

HEIs in Armenia can be both publicly and privately owned. However, both types of HEIs are equally treated before the Law and have equal status. Establishment of private HEIs is monitored by the Ministry of Education and Science of RA (MoES), namely the Licensing Agency of MoES.

There are 40 private HEIs in Armenia, however, due to high competition only the best private universities are able to survive and remain their positions in the field. The National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA) monitors the quality of education in privately owned HEIs.

### 1.4 National Qualifications Framework

---

In the context of implementing broader reforms in the frames of the Bologna Process, in 2007 Armenia started elaboration of the National Qualifications Framework which was then approved by the Government of RA in 2011. In 2012 MoES formed a self-certification panel with participation of two international experts with an aim to identify the main problems and challenges of ANQF through the process of self-certification. With the purpose to develop a valid and reliable National Qualifications Framework, MoES appointed several Working Groups to work on the descriptors of all educational levels of RA.

The Working Group involved in defining descriptors for all levels of HE consisted of the representatives from HEIs and the Ministry. The first draft was ready in late 2012, however based on the needs analysis the Working Group suggested MoES to write a Project on implementation of National Qualifications Framework in RA which would introduce a holistic approach to its integration into the overall education in the country. In 2013 a project titled “Implementation of National and Sectorial Qualifications Frameworks in Armenia (ARMENQA)” was funded in the frames of the European Commission’s TEMPUS program.

TEMPUS ARMENQA project working group consisted of not only university representatives from Armenia and EU, but also Employers, Students Unions and the National Centre for Academic Recognition and Mobility as it strived to bring all the stakeholders into the process. The first draft of ANQF was widely discussed with the employers, students, Quality Assurance body representatives. Based on their feedback it was revised and followed by several rounds of discussions among the main stakeholders. The ANQF provides the links and progression paths between different levels of education including secondary and vocational education and training. The level descriptors are described in forms of learning outcomes. ECTS credits linked to learning outcomes are prescribed for HE levels only, however currently there are wide consultations on introducing ECTS credits into vocational education as well.

### 1.5 Statistics on Organisation and Governance

---

| <b>Number of students<br/>(in academic year 2014/2015)</b> |                |
|--|----------------|
| <b>228.531</b>   |                |
| <b>Public</b>  | <b>Private</b> |
| 83.209   | 10.890         |

| Number of HEIs<br>(in academic year 2014/2015) |         |
|--|---------|
| 62   |         |
| Public   | Private |
| 23   | 39      |

## 1.6 Distribution of responsibilities

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The Ministry of Education and Science of RA is responsible for overall policy making in Education. There are also several other bodies responsible for different domains.

The State Committee of Science that functions within MoES is responsible for elaboration and implementation of the state policy in the field of research and science. It coordinates the development, rational distribution and maintenance of scientific and technical potential and effective formulation of a productive system for training of scientific personnel in RA.

The National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA) is an independent body that implements quality assurance processes through institutional and programme accreditation in preliminary, vocational and higher educational institutions. The main goal of ANQA is to support tertiary level institutions in creating a quality culture in accordance with the legislation of RA.

The National Centre for Academic Recognition and Mobility (ARMENIC) is an independent body responsible for providing transparent information on the qualifications received in Armenia and abroad, recognizing qualifications received abroad and advising citizens on their rights regarding the recognition of qualifications.

## 2 Higher Education Funding

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### 2.1 Public Education

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Public educational institutions in Armenia receive an input-based state funding from the state budget via annual block grant, whereas private educational institutions do not receive any public funding. The state funding of Higher Education in RA is based on the number of the enrolled students. Government expenditures on Higher Education have increased 1,9 times – from 5,3 billion AMD (about 12.2 ml. USD) in 1996 to 10,2 billion AMD (about 21.6 ml. USD) in 2014. In 2014, HE share in the total government expenditure was 0,82 % and 7% in the total education expenditures, which formed about 0,2% of GDP. State expenditures on HE are almost entirely spent on student scholarships. Only up to 20% of all students in Armenia get state support for their tuition fee payments in forms of full or partial tuition fee waivers (through state scholarships). 15,7% of students received state scholarships in 2012-13 academic year. This is substantially less than in other OECD countries, including those which are the closest to Armenia in terms of enrolment and tuition fee size (at least 40% in the 4th group of countries<sup>1</sup>). The rest of the universities' budget is essentially made up of income proceeding from the tuition fees. The block grant is fully directed to teaching activities. The funding for research purposes is distributed on a competitive basis.

<sup>1</sup> Karine Harutyunyan and Kristina Tsurayan, Financial and Social Support to Students in Higher Education Institutions of Armenia: Analysis of the Issues and Recommendations, [http://www.eua.be/Libraries/funding-forum/K\\_Harutyunyan\\_and\\_K\\_Tsurayan.pdf?sfvrsn=0](http://www.eua.be/Libraries/funding-forum/K_Harutyunyan_and_K_Tsurayan.pdf?sfvrsn=0)

At the present moment, in line with the reforms implemented in the field of HE, the Government of RA has initiated modernization and enhancement of its financial system of tertiary education through introduction of efficient principles and mechanisms for university financing. For this purpose the Competitive Innovation Fund in Armenia (CIF) was established to serve as a hub for promoting innovation in tertiary education. CIF funds are distributed on a competitive basis in forms of HE grants targeted at the implementation of innovative and development projects as well as for the enhancement of the HEIs capabilities. All public and private accredited universities can apply for CIF funding. The amount of the grant provided to a HEI varies from 90.000 to 275.000 EUR, and in case of consortium projects, the range of funding can reach up to 275.000-550.000 EUR. At least 10% of co-financing by the applicant HEI is required for accessing CIF funding.

### **2.1.1 Financial Autonomy and Control**

---

Armenian HEIs have autonomy to set their own rate of the tuition fees. The Universities have some freedom in the financial management of their real estate, acquired by own, institutional means. However in most cases University property is owned by the State and must be exclusively used for the completion of the main goals of the University, and can be sold or leased only by the authorization of Government. All universities are allowed to undertake other economic and commercial activities according to the goals defined in their Charters provided they are not prohibited by law and are relevant to the University functions.

Each year public HEIs have to pass both an internal and an external audit. Public universities have to submit quarterly and yearly reports on their financial activities to Ministry of Education and Science of RA. In addition, these reports are published.

### **2.1.2 Public Higher Education Fees**

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In Armenia both public and private HEIs are autonomous and are free to set their own tuition fees. Around 15-20% of all student places is non-fee paying places. The tuition fees differ from institution to institution and also in specializations within the same institution. International students pay different fees than national students.

The fees are set by the universities for a whole programme and the payment is divided into semesters. In academic year 2014-2015 tuition fees in the public HEIs ranged from 510 to 1.400 EUR for a Bachelor's degree and from 930 to 1.400 EUR for Master's degree programs.

The Government introduced a cap system on the fees with an effort to keep access to HE wide. The caps are applied to all HEIs irrespective of their public or private status. They are defined by institutional accreditation results and differ per education level (Bachelor's, Master's).

## **2.2 Private Education**

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Armenia has 33 private universities functioning without government, regional or local government subsidies.

### **2.2.1 Financial Autonomy and Control**

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The financing of the private HEIs is fully independent from the State. The main sources of income for private HEIs are the tuition fees. Private universities autonomously provide funds for their educational and research activities scientific work.

### **2.2.2 Private Higher Education Fees**

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As it is the case with the public HEIs, private HEIs are independent to set their fees independently. All students at private HEIs are expected to pay tuition fees that are in general less than those at the public

universities. The largest share of income is obtained through the tuition fees, which range from 240 to 750 EUR for Bachelor's and from 380 to 750 EUR for Master's degree per academic year. Tuition fees are paid directly to the HEIs.

### **2.3 Financial Support for Learners' Families**

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There are no structural measures targeted at learners' families. All existing structural measures apply to the students directly.

### **2.4 Financial Support for Learners**

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The financial support to learners in Armenia is provided in form of allowances, scholarships and loans. The financial support can be granted to students based on the need, on the merit or on the need and merit simultaneously.

#### **Student allowances**

The state provides full compensation for the tuition fees in form of student allowances to the following categories:

- those who obtained the highest grades at examinations and tests during one academic year;
- those who belong to several disadvantaged social groups, such as students left without parental care, disabled persons, children of the deceased military servants, etc.;
- those who were admitted to the specialities of a state priority.

A partial compensation (50-100% of tuition fee) in form of student allowances is provided to those who pass the minimum threshold of average qualitative score and those who belong to vulnerable groups registered in the government system. HEIs might also partially compensate the tuition fees in forms of student allowances based on students' socio-economic conditions and high academic performance.

#### **Student scholarships**

The Government of RA awards scholarships to students with an advanced and high academic performance. Irrespective of the form of study, the state also provides yearly lump sum academic scholarships (around 23.000 EUR in total) to around 40 best students (with a range of 450-850 EUR per student).

#### **Student loans**

The Government of RA has introduced a state-supported student loan scheme to the economically disadvantaged students of public or private accredited universities or accredited programmes. Students can receive a loan based on their academic performance or socio-economic status. Students are obliged to return the loan within 10 years period with an interest rate of 12%. It is partially subsidized (2-3%) by the Government depending on the student's performance. The estimated loan per student is 3.500 EUR at maximum for the whole period of study. Students receive the loan for four consecutive years and the yearly loan instalment per student is 885 EUR at maximum.

## **3 The structure of the Higher Education system**

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In the Republic of Armenia anyone with secondary school certificate can have access to higher education (HE). The Constitution guarantees to the Armenian citizens the right to Higher Education: "All citizens shall have the right to education in state and other higher professional educational institutions on competitive basis as prescribed by the law" (Article 39).

According to the 2011 Census, 44% of 30-34 year old Armenian population has tertiary education degree and 28% has postgraduate degree.

There are two principal laws regulating Armenian HE: the Law on Education (1999) and the Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education (2004). The latter sets the structure, the main principles of the organization, funding mechanisms, and bases for the systematic reform and improvement of the HE. The

laws are supported by a range of by-laws that cover areas such as degree system, quality assurance, National Qualifications Framework, academic credits and their transfer, student mobility and etc. Higher and postgraduate education is provided by both public and private HEIs, as well as by independent research institutions: universities, institutes, academies and the Conservatory. Public and private accredited HEIs are treated equally by the law.

In 2011 the Government of RA adopted Armenian National Qualifications Framework (ANQF) for 3 levels of Higher Education. However, during the self-certification process, the compatibility of this Framework with the Qualifications Framework in the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) posed certain challenges. In 2014 ANQF was revised and widely discussed with the main stakeholders (universities, student bodies, employers and other social partners) and its adoption by the Government was planned for 2015.

The ECTS system was introduced in Armenia in 2007-2008 and is currently applied to Bachelor's and Master's academic programmes at all Armenian HEIs.

Thus, HE in Armenia has a three-tier degree system with the following qualifications issued: Bachelor's at first level, Master's at the second level and Candidate of Sciences (Postgraduate/Doctoral) at the third level. In ANQF each level is described in terms of knowledge, skills and competences, and ECTS credits are allocated accordingly.

In Armenia HE is offered on full-time and part-time basis; distance learning and externships are also available. Although most students choose full-time education, in recent years the quantity of the students studying part-time has significantly increased, especially in the area of the distance learning, reflecting the new demands of the labour market and demand of the students to combine their study with work.

Higher education in Armenia is divided into three levels:

**Level 1:** Bachelor's qualification requiring 240 ECTS: typically a 4-year full-time programme (in some cases 180 ECTS over 3 years), or 4-5 years part-time. The entrance requirements for Level 1 qualifications are completion of secondary, or initial or middle level vocational education and admission exams.

**Level 2:** Master's qualification requiring 120 ECTS (Diploma Specialist-300 ECTS), typically a 2-year full-time programme (in some cases 60 ECTS over 1 year), or 1.5-2.5 years part-time. For medical disciplines the qualification of Medical Doctor is issued at this level, which has an integrated education programme and lasts for 5-6 years. There are also two additional medical qualifications: Intern (1 year) and Resident (2-5 years). The entrance requirement for Level 2 is the Bachelor's qualification.

**Level 3:** The Candidate of Sciences programme is typically 3 years long full-time (4 years part-time) education and research. Entrance requirements for Candidate of Sciences are the Master's or Diploma Specialist qualifications and competitive admission exams. Candidate of Sciences qualification is issued on the basis of publicly defended dissertation.

HEIs organize and implement their study programmes within an academic year which starts, as a rule, on 1 September and lasts for 10 calendar months.

### 3.1 Types of Higher Education Institutions

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There are 4 types of HEIs in Armenia: **University** (Hamalsaran), **Institute** (Institut), **Academy** (Akademia) and **Conservatory** (Konservatoria).

All of the above mentioned HEIs are independent and autonomous and they are free to carry out academic and/or applied education programs at all t levels of studies based on their profile.

### 3.2 First Cycle Programmes

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First cycle studies are offered at all types of HEIs in Armenia. Bachelor's degree is issued at the first level

of Higher Education. The entrance requirements for Level 1 qualifications are completion of secondary or initial/middle level vocational education and admission exams.

There are no short-cycle programs in Armenia comparable to Level 5 of QF EHEA.

### 3.2.1 Branches of Study

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Main branches of higher education studies in Armenia are:

- Education, Humanities and Arts, Social Sciences;
- Journalism and Information Sciences;
- Entrepreneurship, Administration and Law;
- Natural Sciences;
- Mathematics and Statistics, Information and Communication Technologies;
- Engineering, Industry and Construction;
- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishery and Veterinary;
- Health and Social Work;
- Service

### 3.2.2 Admission Requirements

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The completion of a secondary education programme or initial/middle level vocational education and a relevant diploma are the general preconditions for applying to the Bachelor's programmes. In some cases individual admission criteria may be applied such as in case of admission to part-time studies or admission of foreign students, which have slightly different requirements for entry exams (though secondary school or equivalent diploma is an obligatory precondition in all the cases).

Universities can admit students based on the quota assigned by the Ministry of Education and Science in each field of specialisation. The number of entrants cannot exceed the quota.

### 3.2.3 Curriculum

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HEIs in Armenia are autonomous in setting objectives for their study programs, developing learning outcomes and curriculum contents. Previously the contents of the study programs were developed based on the state educational standard for the given discipline or professional sector.

Currently there is a transition to reviewing study programs according to the National Qualifications Framework of Armenia.

Armenian HEIs follow established procedures and guidelines on the development of study programs which specify the necessary number for compulsory and elective subjects, ECTS credit allocation issues, vacation periods, how the curriculum should be structured and so on.

### 3.2.4 Teaching Methods

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Teaching is generally conducted in large groups, except for the field of Arts and Culture and some other subject specific disciplines. Currently, Armenian HEIs strive to introduce the student-centred learning approach. The use of innovative technologies is prominent in HEIs. Teaching staff organize their lectures in compliance with the curricula of each specific discipline. Lecturers are free to select and use knowledge transfer methodologies according to the anticipated learning outcomes, which further are being approved by the discipline specific Chairs and the Faculty Councils. Teaching and learning materials are used in the study process and students have free access to them in the university libraries.

### **3.2.5 Progression of Students**

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Once completing the necessary amount of courses for the Bachelor's study programs i.e. a minimum of 180 ECTS credits, in order to obtain a degree the students have to pass a state examination. According to the regulations on the attrition and recovery of students in HEI approved by the Minister of Education and Science of RA students can progress from the first year of their studies to the final year by collecting up to 12 ECTS credits less than the total number of ECTS required to complete an academic Degree Program (BA or MA). However, in order to be eligible to participate in the final exams and get a qualification, the students should earn those missing 12 ECTS credits before the final State Exams,. This regulation does not concern male students who are entitled to military service in the RA Army.

In order to remain in the state-financed system, state funded students should have excellent academic performance. In case of decline in grading ranking can be rotated from free of charge education system into the paid one.

### **3.2.6 Employability**

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There is no structured national policy on widening cooperation between Universities and Enterprises. However, each study program delivered in Armenian HEIs includes obligatory internship in an organization which matches the profile of the given study programme. Besides, Armenian HEIs independently initiate cooperation with the labour market. In some cases industries provide funding covering student tuition fees. This is mainly practiced in the fields of IT and Agriculture. However, it doesn't have system-wide impact.

Many HEIs have now established Career Guidance Centres, which not only help students to find jobs, but also provide trainings on how to write a motivation letter, how to pass an interview and other process facilitating activities. These Centres help students to find jobs or improve their qualifications in order to increase their employability.

### **3.2.7 Student Assessment**

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Assessment of the students is carried out through the academic year by means of the mid-term and final exams at the end of each semester. In order to proceed to the next level, the student should get the lowest positive mark which varies considerably among HEIs (5, 10 or 20-point marking scales, 4 scale A-F letter grading, etc.).

### **3.2.8 Certification**

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In Armenia HEIs are responsible for the certification. Final evaluation is conducted by the State Examination Committees through a comprehensive examination. Upon the completion of studies and successful exams, students are awarded Bachelor's degree according to their specialty. Armenian universities provide graduates with a Diploma Supplement in Armenian and English languages which is compatible with the Diploma Sample of Pan-European format.

## **3.3 Short-Cycle Higher Education**

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There are no short-cycle programs in Armenia.

## **3.4 Second Cycle Programmes**

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### **3.4.1 Branches of Study**

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Master studies are delivered by all the 4 types of HEIs. Graduates with Diplomas corresponding to the first level of Higher Education system can pursue their studies at Master's level.



Main branches of the master studies are the same with branches of the Bachelor's studies. For more information, please see Branches of Study in Bachelor's degree section

### **3.4.2 Admission Requirements**

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HEIs have the right to decide on the admission requirements to this level of study and organize the admission process accordingly. Admission requirements and procedures at this level of studies are regulated by individual HEIs. A general precondition for those entering the second cycle of studies is that they must have completed the first cycle of studies and obtained a corresponding diploma. The Ministry of Education and Science sets the maximum allowed quota for the students to be admitted to a particular study program at Master's level.

The number of students is determined by HEI but it may not exceed the number of required workforce set in the work permit.

### **3.4.3 Curriculum**

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This part is the same as for the Bachelor's studies. For more information, please refer to the section 3.2.3.

### **3.4.4 Teaching Methods**

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This part is the same as for the Bachelor's studies. For more information, please refer to the section 3.2.4.

### **3.4.5 Progression of Students**

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This part is the same as for the Bachelor's studies. For more information, please refer to the section 3.2.5.

### **3.4.6 Employability**

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This part is the same as for the Bachelor's studies. For more information, please refer to the section 3.2.6.

### **3.4.7 Student Assessment**

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This part is the same as for the Bachelor's studies. For more information, please refer to the section 3.2.7.

### **3.4.8 Certification**

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In Armenia HEIs are responsible for the certification at Master's degree level. Final evaluation is done based on the publicly defended Master's thesis. Upon the completion of studies and successful exams students receive their Master's degree according to their specialty. Armenian Universities provide graduates with a free of charge Diploma Supplement in Armenian and English languages which is compatible with the Diploma Sample of Pan-European format.

## **3.5 Programmes outside the Bachelor's and Master's Structure**

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The Law on Higher and Postgraduate Education specifies supplementary and continuous education their forms and modes, including in-service trainings, professional training and self-education, which can be financed by various state agencies and entities, educational institutions, and private organizations.

Currently, the majority of public and private universities, vocational educational institutions as well as other private educational institutions offer supplementary and continuous educational courses. Such institutions

conduct professional development programmes for their administrative and teaching staff as well as for the broader public. Some of these programs allocate ECTS credits.

### **3.6 Third Cycle (PhD) Programmes**

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#### **3.6.1 Organisation of Doctoral Studies**

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The Candidate of Sciences Degree (PhD) is issued at the third level of Higher Education. The studies are organized at universities and academies, as well as research institutes. These programs last for three years (180 ECTS). In Armenia doctoral education is regulated by the Law on Higher and Postgraduate Education (2004), and the Law on Scientific and Scientific-Technological Activities (2000) and a range of other sub-legislative documents, including Regulations on Awarding Scientific Degrees, (1997, amended 2010); Regulation of Activities of Professional Councils in Awarding Scientific Degrees (1997), Procedures for Postgraduate and Doctoral Study, (2001), List of Recognized Scientific Degrees (last revised in 2014).

#### **3.6.2 Admission Requirements**

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To enrol in a doctoral programme, the student has to complete a Master's course and must have obtained at least 300 ECTS during his/her previous studies, or 360 ECTS in the case of medical studies. Admission to postgraduate degree programmes takes place on a competitive exam basis. The Ministry of Education and Science sets the number of places for full-time and part-time study. Postgraduate programmes are usually tuition-free. Full-time students receive financial support in form of fellowships or scholarships.

#### **3.6.3 Status of Doctoral Students/Candidates**

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Both employed and unemployed students are equally eligible for any program on a state-financed basis as long as they meet all the necessary admission requirements. Unemployed students are entitled to such benefits as health insurance, student subsidies for meals and public transport scholarships. Employed students exercise such rights through their employee status.

#### **3.6.4 Supervision Arrangements**

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Each postgraduate student is assigned a research supervisor who helps him/her with research and thesis preparation. Postgraduate students have full access to scientific and research resources and laboratories, and may engage in funded research projects as research fellows employed by their research institution.

#### **3.6.5 Employability**

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This part is the same as for the Bachelor's and Master's studies. For more information, please see Employability of Students in Bachelor's degree section.

#### **3.6.6 Assessment**

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Students are regularly assessed during their structured doctoral education program on the basis of examinations. Candidate's thesis defence is conducted by the Professional Councils of the universities or R&D institutes and is overseen and ratified by the Armenian Supreme Certification Commission (SCC).

#### **3.6.7 Certification**

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Once the student has passed all the necessary requirements, examinations and publicly defended thesis

he/she is awarded with the title of Candidate of Sciences which is approved by the Supreme Certifying Commission of RA.

## **4 Teachers and Education Staff**

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### **4.1 Initial Education for Academic Staff in Higher Education**

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In Armenia the initial training for academic staff in institutions is not universal, and it is not mandatory to pass a teacher's training before being confirmed to an academic position. New academic staff is not required to take any courses on staff-development before applying to teaching positions. The only exception is made for the academic staff engaged in distance learning programmes, as they have to take some preparatory courses in order to learn how to teach in distance learning mode. However, there are no unified and structured standards for teaching positions in HEIs. The only requirement refers to the qualification level - Master's degree or its equivalent is mandatory for teaching at tertiary level. Traditionally HEIs tend to recruit the best Master's degree graduates or PhD students. In such cases initial training is provided by the Chairs where the latter are employed in. It is also not obligatory to have certified pedagogical competences and skills before applying to any teaching position at the Universities. On the other hand PhDs whose curricula consist of academic components usually take courses in Pedagogy, Psychology or the Philosophy of HE. Academic staff development programmes in Armenian HEIs are offered at a later stage of career. The Law on Higher and Postgraduate Education (2004) prescribes the academic staff to take the qualification enhancement courses once in a five-year period of recruitment.

### **4.2 Conditions of Service for Academic Staff Working in Higher Education**

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According to the Law of Higher and Postgraduate Education (Article 19, chapters 11 and 12) all vacant positions for academic staff in HEIs and postgraduate professional education are occupied in compliance with the Charter and rules of HEIs and/or organizations providing postgraduate professional education. The placement of academic staff is conducted according to the service contract which is signed for up to 5-year period. Service contract is preceded by an open competition and selection. Upon completion of the service contract term, a new service contract may be signed with the academic staff for a period of 5 years, without prior competition, based on the assessment of one's scientific-pedagogical activity results during the contract term. The procedure of specified position placement must be approved by the Council of higher education institution in compliance with the legislation of RA.

In public HEIs, the hiring procedures of academic staff are strictly regulated by the Ministry of Education and Science (Law on Higher and Postgraduate Education (2004)). The number of posts available at HEIs depends on the financial prospects and national requirements for accreditation. Recruitment of academic staff usually follows a set of minimum qualification requirements on the national level, while additional criteria may be established by the universities at the institutional level. The minimum number of staff at an institution, when determined by the national authorities, is usually based on the number of students, and has to correspond to a nationally approved ratio<sup>2</sup>. In an attempt to increase transparency of the recruitment procedures, the criteria are often outlined in the institutions' statutes or regulations. In terms of the qualifications levels, in most cases a Master's degree is required for junior teaching positions and to apply for senior academic position candidates need to have a PhD or a postdoctoral degree. Additional recruitment requirements may include international publications, other international activities and teaching experience. A PhD is often a requirement for senior academic positions in Armenia.

Private HEIs have a system of recruitment and pay scale of academic staff and similar to public ones. This includes the right to /paid sick leave and maternity leave. The latter lasts 140 days. All academic staff

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<sup>2</sup> Tempus Regional Seminar on Human Resource Management on Higher Education, Eastern Europe, Chisinau, 22-23 April, 2013, <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/events/documents/moldavia-seminar/regional-report-eastern-europe-en.pdf>

members are entitled to such benefits as five weeks of vacation and public pension. Many academic staff members may combine their teaching hours with additional employment at the same institution or elsewhere. The official working week is 40 hours, and the workload differs depending of the teaching positions, as well as it varies from one institution to another. Vacant posts are usually publicly advertised. There is a salary differentiation based on the candidate's level of education and obtained qualification.

PhD students may be appointed the position of assistant lecturer and lecturer for a period of one to five years. The pay scale is similar across all institutions and disciplines, yet academic staff has higher salaries in some institutions (American University of Armenia, Yerevan State Medical University) than in others but the differences are relatively small. There are salary structures in most HEIs which foresee a bonus system for outstanding teaching engagement.

The terms and conditions of academic appointments in the private sector vary and sometimes are less favourable or attractive than in public universities. Usually the academic staff in private HEIs is paid per academic/teaching hour with no access to paid holidays during academic semester. Some private HEIs offer less attractive working conditions compared to the public universities, as they do not provide compensation for advising or other types of services.

#### 4.2.1 Planning Policy

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Armenian policy-makers point to the problem of an ageing academic workforce and the difficulties in attracting younger qualified personnel to the HE sector due to the fact that young potential teachers and researchers tend to work in other fields than HE because of higher salaries. Armenian HEIs practise non-discriminatory approaches for recruiting the teaching staff and observe gender parity and equality. Women represent 50,5% of the academic staff, and over the recent years this indicator has increased in favour of women<sup>3</sup>.

Self-evaluation reports for institutional accreditation of HEIs are based on the following criteria: relevance of professional skills of the teaching staff to academic programmes; recruitment and retirement of the academic staff; specific needs to be covered for recruiting academic staff for different academic programmes; monitoring of the policy and regulations of the HEIs for the academic staff capacities; professional development of staff competences; sustainability of the academic staff for the academic programmes and qualifications; and the relevance of the competences of the staff to the specialties and qualifications provided within the academic programmes of HEIs<sup>4</sup>.

#### 4.2.2 Entry to the Profession

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Transparent, fair and open recruitment procedures enable HEIs in Armenia to make a better selection of the targeted candidates. The HEIs in Armenia are free to set their own needs based human resource recruitment requirements. Three main models of recruitment for academic staff in public and private HEIs are used: 1) open selection or competition organised by the institutions (practised in public HEIs for permanent positions); 2) internal selection within the institutions (typical for private HEIs); 3) recruitment for temporary teaching positions. The entry to senior academic positions – Docent and Professor - is maintained according to the requirements set up at the national level.

In Armenia entry level positions in the academic hierarchy are filled by teachers with only Master's degree. Candidates with the Bachelor's degree are not allowed to teach in HEIs as outlined in the national legislation (the Law on Higher and Postgraduate Education, 2004). The academic staff in Armenian HEIs

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<sup>3</sup> National Review of the Republic of Armenia on Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000) in the context of the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 2015 [http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/59/national\\_reviews/armenia\\_review\\_beijing20.ashx?v=1&d=20140917T100717](http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/59/national_reviews/armenia_review_beijing20.ashx?v=1&d=20140917T100717)

<sup>4</sup> ANQA Accreditation Manual 2015. [http://www.anqa.am/am/Portals/0/Full\\_arm%20finally%202.pdf](http://www.anqa.am/am/Portals/0/Full_arm%20finally%202.pdf)

may be recruited by temporary contracts bypassing the system of public competition. Armenian HEIs also recruit their own successful students for temporary and permanent academic positions, and in this way younger scholars find employment in their home universities.

A visiting professor from a foreign higher education institution may be employed without undergoing any recruitment.

### 4.2.3 Professional Status

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Academic employment is defined as jobs in HEIs that require academic teaching or academic research, irrespective of the contractual terms of the job holder.

The academic sector constitutes less than 1% of the total labour workforce in Armenia, but according to the data provided by an international study<sup>5</sup>, it is around 0,5%, which is nonetheless highest percentage among all 28 countries of the study project. Full-time, part-time, permanent and temporary teachers constitute the academic staff of the universities. Academic staff members at HEIs are neither civil nor public servants and are employed by HEIs, but academics often have strong job protection during the period of the contract. Legal frameworks at the national level provide minimum standards across institutions and protect the employees and make sure that public funds are used efficiently. Decisions regarding contractual conditions and promotions are left to the institutions in Armenia as well as prescribed by the Labour Code of the RA (2004).

Patterns of appointment and contracts in Armenian HEIs vary widely, but the academic profession remains a remarkably stable career as well as one that provides considerable social prestige in the country.

### 4.2.4 Salaries

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Academic rank is the main determinant of salary level. HEIs establish universal salaries for the positions of Professor, Docent or Associate Professor, Senior Lecturer, Lecturer and Assistant Lecturer. Individual salaries for academic staff are randomly used in Armenian higher education institutions. Remuneration typically is comprised of three components: public salary, institutional salary and supplementary remuneration for degrees and titles. In private HEIs academic staff does not receive public salary and supplementary remuneration for degrees and titles. In some HEIs merit-based salary systems is also in place. In recent years researchers with different titles and degrees involved in the state-funded research projects receive the supplementary salary for their advanced degrees and titles.

Armenia doesn't have a large gap between the average salary at the entry positions and the average salary at the top positions (405 USD for entry positions, 538 USD for average positions and 665 USD for top positions)<sup>6</sup>. In case the difference between the entry salaries and top salaries is bigger, the academic careers will become more attractive. In recent years academics involved in research projects funded by the Ministry of Education and Science, get supplementary remuneration both for their research activities and academic degrees. This allows many academics to receive higher salaries which allow them not to seek extra job positions in non-academic sector or in other HEIs.

### 4.2.5 Working Time and Holidays

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According to the Labour Code of the RA normal duration of the working time for full time employees should not exceed forty hours a week, or eight hours per day. All other specific matters are determined by the employment contract. The structure and schedule of teachers' annual and weekly obligations are

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<sup>5</sup> Paying the Professoriate, A Global Comparison of Compensations and Contracts, 2012. Edited by Philip G. Altbach, Liz Reisberg, Maria Yudkevich, Gregory Androushchak, and Iván F. Pacheco  
[http://samples.sainsburysebooks.co.uk/9781136631306\\_sample\\_834308.pdf](http://samples.sainsburysebooks.co.uk/9781136631306_sample_834308.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Paying the Professoriate, A Global Comparison of Compensations and Contracts, 2012. Edited by Philip G. Altbach, Liz Reisberg, Maria Yudkevich, Gregory Androushchak, and Iván F. Pacheco  
[http://samples.sainsburysebooks.co.uk/9781136631306\\_sample\\_834308.pdf](http://samples.sainsburysebooks.co.uk/9781136631306_sample_834308.pdf)

determined by the institution. The minimum annual paid leave is for five weeks. During the first year of employment, the teaching staff of HEIs shall be granted annual leave during the summer vacations of learners and students, irrespective of the date when employment has started. Staff members may use paid absence days in situations determined by the institution (conferences, trainings, illness, maternity leave, etc.)

Academic salaries remain unchanged when the teaching staffs participate in different exchange programmes and missions.

#### **4.2.6 Promotion, Advancement**

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Promotions for non-degree academic staff are based mainly on formal criteria, such as years of service, though institutions are independent in deciding about promotions and recruitment, and they may also put in place financial incentives. Specific criteria are set up for obtaining academic and honorary degrees and titles in Armenian HEIs both by the Law on Higher and Postgraduate Education (2004) and the regulations which are adopted by the Universities for recognising and rewarding achievements of the teaching staff and promoting their career advancement. Education and research advancement are two of the many factors that often ensure career attainment. Academic staff with different degrees and titles can upgrade from the position of an assistant teacher to the position of the professor and honorary professor and doctor. Decision on the promotion to each of the above mentioned positions is taken based on the academic and scientific merit, quality of research (titles and degrees), as well as the quality of teaching (feedback from the students, the chair and so on) of their academic staff.

#### **4.2.7 Retirement and Pensions**

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Teaching staff of HEIs may retire at the age of 63 with a minimum of 25 years of work experience, however it is not mandatory to retire, if one has already reached the pension age and can continue working at the HEI. A teacher having attained the age of 63 shall be granted labour pension even if the length of service was less than 25 years, provided that he or she has at least a 10-years' length of service. After retirement, teachers are allowed to keep some of their official engagements such as membership in committees or boards. After retirement, teachers keep their respective titles.

Pensions are determined by the Law of the Republic of Armenia on State Pensions (2010). There is no special pattern in Armenian legislation for the academic staff to benefit from the pensions.

Pension may be granted one year earlier than the pension age, provided that the teacher has the length of service of at least 35 years and is unemployed (Law of the Republic of Armenia on State Pensions, 2010).

A partial pension can be granted to: 1) persons employed in the education sector reaching the age of 55 if they have at least 25 calendar years' of length of service; out of which at least 12 calendar years count for their professional length of service. A partial pension shall be calculated in proportion to the professional length of service and is granted to the beneficiary until the teacher reaches the pension age.

### **4.3 Continuing Professional Development for Academic Staff Working in Higher Education**

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#### **4.3.1 Organisational Aspects**

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Professional development of the academic staff is prescribed by the Law on Higher and Postgraduate Education (Article 6.11 and Article 19, Chapter 17) according to which HEIs can organize courses of qualification increase and training of their specialists, as well as the members of the academic staff shall undergo training or increase of qualification according to the defined order no less than once in 5 years. In recent years HEIs have started issuing ECTS credits for participation of their staff in the seminars, workshops and conferences as well as certify them. The training and qualification courses are certified, and they may positively influence the remuneration scales and provide reward offerings.

It is often the responsibility of HEIs to organize training courses for their staff. When training is offered by the institutions, it most often concentrates on the improvement of foreign language and IT skills of staff. Since 2005 in Armenia, some of the larger HEIs organise training for tenure holding professors every 3 years, unless the person has participated in international seminars and conferences, which are also considered as training<sup>7</sup>. For instance, Yerevan State University has developed a programme which includes training on different academic disciplines, languages, IT as well as pedagogical and psychological skills. Academic staff members get 30 credits per lecture or conference that they attend in Armenia or abroad and they have to accumulate 30 credits per 5 year period.

If a teacher hasn't reached the age of 63, has at least 35 years of professional experience but is not employed at the University, she or he can be entitled for pension one year earlier, than it is specified in the Law of RA on State Pensions (2010).

#### **4.3.2 Incentives for Participation in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Activities**

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For academic staff the training leave is regarded as working time and is reimbursed by the HEI. The members of academic staff may be granted ECTS credits which may result in the increase of their salaries. In recent years there are a lot of training opportunities for the academic staff offered through international projects. Due to accreditation requirements there is a stronger focus on staff training and introduction of financial incentives and reward schemes at all HEIs in Armenia. The development of training schemes for teaching staff seems to be of a high priority in most HEIs. When training courses are organised by institutions, the participation of the teachers is often taken into consideration in promotion decisions. The elaboration of reward schemes at the national level will also be implemented as these financial incentives will motivate the teaching staff to be enrolled in different continuous professional development programmes.

### **5 Management and Other Education Staff for Higher Education**

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#### **5.1 Requirements for Appointment**

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According to the Law on Higher Education of the Republic of Armenia and the Statute of the higher education institution (HEI), the management of HEI is carried out by the Board, Academic Council and Vice-Rectors and Advisers.

The Board of the HEI is a collegial management body, which is established for a period of 5 years, in accordance with the Charter of the higher education institution. The Board is formed from academic and teaching staff, student representatives of the HEI, as well as representatives of the founder and authorised body. The number of members of the Board shall be defined by the Statute of the given institution with at least 20 members included. The university board generally approves the university budget and strategic program; conducts discussion of the arising issues and annual report, hence decision making thereof, including the election of the rector.

The Scientific Council is formed in accordance with the Statute of the higher education institution. Scientific Council is an advisory body that deals with the organization, planning and governance issues of teaching and methodology, as well as R&D activities and management of the academic and scientific activities of the HEI. Students constitute at least 25% of the elective management bodies of the HEIs.

The management of the current activities is carried out by the executive body— the Rector, who is elected through an open competition, as prescribed by the legislation of the Republic of Armenia and Statute of the higher education institution for a period of 5 years. Only a professor with a pedagogical work experience possessing a doctoral degree may be elected to the position of Rector. The Rector's office is an advisory

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<sup>7</sup> Tempus Regional Seminar on Human Resource Management on Higher Education, Eastern Europe, Chisinau, 22-23 April, 2013, <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/events/documents/moldavia-seminar/regional-report-eastern-europe-en.pdf>

body adjacent to the Rector, which is formed by the procedure and powers defined in accordance with the Statute of HEI.

The Vice-Rectors are appointed upon the Rector's order, and conclude with him an employment contract. The positions of the Dean of Faculty and Head of the Chair are elective and the procedures for their elections shall be defined by the Statute of the higher education institution.

## **5.2 Conditions of Service**

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Further details on the selection of the managing bodies, their dismissal, responsibilities and other conditions of service are determined separately by each HEI.

## **6 Quality Assurance in Higher Education**

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### **6.1 Responsible Bodies**

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The National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance, Foundation (ANQA) is the body responsible for the evaluation and promotion of the quality in the higher education of RA through transparent quality review procedures, compliance of quality standards of the higher education with the criteria and requirements of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The executive body of the Foundation is its Governing Board, members of which are approved by the Government of RA.

The Board is composed of 12 members:

- one member from the staff of the Government,
- one from the department of Standing Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport of the RA Parliament,
- one from the Ministry of Education and Science of RA,
- four members from the academic staff from public and private HEIs, two of which cannot simultaneously be civil servants,
- one student from a public or private HEI,
- three members from employer representatives,
- one member from the national competitiveness counsel.

Formation of the Board is ensured by the authorised body of public administration in education.

The Accreditation Committee is the main decision-making body within ANQA designed to function as the one responsible for:

- taking the accreditation decision of an institutional and program accreditation based on the evaluation of the expert panel, and
- assuring the quality of the accreditation procedure and methodology in the Agency.

The set-up and composition of ANQA Accreditation Council are approved by ANQA Governing Board.

### **6.2 Approaches and Methods for Quality Assurance**

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According to the Armenian legislation HEIs can choose their national agency (ANQA) or any other European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) registered Quality Assurance (QA) agency (or an agency which is a full member of the ENQA) for either institutional or programme accreditation. Accreditation by EQAR-registered agencies is automatically recognized in the country.

Institutions implementing education programmes jointly with HEIs from the countries outside European Higher Education Area (EHEA), or branches of the HEIs from countries outside EHEA can choose the national agency (ANQA) or any other recognized QA agency from the list of QA agencies approved by Ministry of Education and Sciences of RA for their institutional and/or programme accreditation.

Institutional and academic programme accreditations are carried out through the following procedures:

Institutional accreditation is a cyclically implemented mandatory process for all educational institutions.



Programme accreditation is a voluntary process carried out only in case of a positive result of an institutional accreditation.

### **Institutional accreditation of an educational institution**

To undergo the process of institutional accreditation an educational institution should:

- submit an application according to the respective official standard form developed by ANQA and approved by the ANQA Governing Board,
- be licensed to provide educational services,
- be registered in ANQA online database ([web.survey.anqa.am](http://web.survey.anqa.am)).

The process of institutional accreditation is carried out in three consecutive stages: The first stage is an internal evaluation of institutional capacities by an educational institution according to the standards (self-assessment) developed by ANQA. The second stage is an external evaluation (site-visit) of the educational institution self-assessment as well as educational provisions and quality assurance processes by an expert panel. The third stage is based on the results of self-assessment and site-visits, positive or negative decision is taken by ANQA Accreditation Council. The results of institutional accreditation are registered in the State Accreditation Register.

The Accreditation Council decides:

- to grant institutional accreditation for 4 or 6 years,
- to grant conditional institutional accreditation for 2 years.
- not to grant institutional accreditation.

### **Programme accreditation**

In order to undergo the process of programme accreditation HEIs should:

- should submit an application according to the respective official standard form developed by ANQA and approved by the ANQA Governing Board,
- should be licensed to provide educational services,
- should be registered in ANQA online database ([web.survey.anqa.am](http://web.survey.anqa.am)),
- should have an institutional accreditation.

The process of programme accreditation is carried out in three consecutive stages. The first stage includes internal evaluation of academic programme and respective educational processes by the institution – self-assessment according to the respective standards developed by ANQA. The second stage is an external evaluation (site-visit) of the academic programme self-assessment and educational activities by an expert panel. The third stage is based on the results of the self-assessment and site-visit, positive or negative decision is taken by ANQA Accreditation Council. The results of programme accreditation are registered in the State Accreditation Register. The programme accreditation has five-year validity.

As a result, the Accreditation Council decides:

- to grant programme accreditation for 5 years,
- to grant conditional accreditation,
- not to grant programme accreditation.

## **7 Educational Support and Guidance**

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### **7.1 Support Measures for Learners in Higher Education**

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#### **7.1.1 Definition of the Target Group(s)**

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The following target groups are entitled to get support from the State or the HEIs:

- orphans, individuals with special needs;
- children of single parent;
- students from borderline or highland settlement;
- students from poor-socio-economic background;
- students left without parental care after the age of 18 — until they attain the age of 23;

- students deprived of one parents and under the age of 23;
- students with the children under the age of one year;
- students from the large families (having several student dependents);
- students with a parent who has disability;
- students who have passed a mandatory military service;
- students holding other status, which is defined by the higher education institution.

### 7.1.2 Specific Support Measures

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There is a wide range of the support measures on the national and institutional levels:

#### **On the national level**

- The state financial support (educational allowances, refund (full or partial (discount) of the tuition fees, educational grants, loans) to the disadvantaged groups of students (orphans, individuals with disabilities, children of the single parents, student coming from poor socio-economic background, students from borderline or highland settlements) and students released from the military service.
- State scholarships provided on the grounds of academic merit.

#### **On the institutional level**

According to the Law on Higher and Post Graduate Education, HEIs partially waive (at least 10 %) the tuition fees to the following categories of the students:

- poor-socio-economic background
- students left without parental care after attaining the age of 18 — until they attain the age of 23;
- students deprived of one parents and under the age of 23;
- students with the children under the age of one year;
- students from the large families (having several student dependents);
- students with a parent who has disability;
- students who have passed a mandatory military service ;
- students holding other status, which is defined by the higher education institution

In addition, every year Armenians of the diaspora, including Syrian Armenian refugees, may apply to be admitted to the preparatory department of any faculty of the Armenian higher educational establishments with the purpose of studying the Armenian language and professional subjects. At the end of the academic year, upon successful completion of the examinations they can either continue their studies or, by passing an interview on the subjects foreseen for admission and displaying satisfactory knowledge, immediately be admitted to the first year of the relevant faculty. As all Armenians of the diaspora, Syrian Armenian applicants can benefit from the state funded education (free of charge) provided that:

- he/she receives high scores at the admissions exams,
- the admission commission implements a state order within the framework of foreign students' admission procedures.

## 7.2 Guidance and Counselling in Higher Education

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### 7.2.1 Academic Guidance

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Each HEI has its own policy and provisions for the academic guidance based on their particular needs. However, there is Student Scientific Council (SSC), which is a student government structure that brings together undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate students. The goal of the SSC's is to support the academic, creative and spiritual development of the students. For that purpose the SSC organises scientific conferences, seminars, lectures, and publishes the scientific articles of young scientists and students. In

addition, some universities have Vice-Rector for Students, Alumni and Public Affairs and Student Affairs Division. These activities are coordinated according to HEI's regulations.

### **7.2.2 Psychological Counselling**

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N/A

### **7.2.3 Career Guidance**

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At the university level, career guidance is provided through University Career Centres. Almost all Armenian HEIs have Career Centres, which organize career workshops, provide counselling and offer internships. The mission of such Centre is to ensure competitive position of the University graduate in the labour market.

## **8 Mobility and Internalization in Higher Education**

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Currently there is no internationalization strategy at the national level. However internationalization and mobility in HE is regulated by the Law on Higher and Postgraduate Education of RA and "Procedures on Academic Mobility of Higher Educational Institution Students" adopted by the Government in 2011.

During the last years on going processed of internationalization in RA have widened access of students and staff to academic mobility opportunities, mainly in the frames of EU funded TEMPUS, ERASMUS MUNDUS and Erasmus+ projects, but also thanks to the promotion and the awareness-raising activities conducted at the national level. These projects and mobilities have also motivated the universities to widen their bilateral and multilateral cooperation with HEIs situated in Europe and in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and less with the HEIs in Asia and USA. The cooperation mainly focuses on the capacity building of the university's staff, short term and long term mobility of students and staff, study visits, curriculum development and structural changes.

Armenia has institutionalized support for student academic mobility and mutual recognition of the qualifications within the European and international communities through the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), Diploma Supplement, and the establishment of the National Information Centre on Academic Recognition and Mobility (ARMENIC).

Each year Armenian HEIs engage more and more actively in various international cooperation programs. Over the last five years this type of participation has grown by around 3,5 times. There is a visible increase in the number of the European inter-university cooperation programs, financed by TEMPUS, Erasmus Mundus and Erasmus+, German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), British Council, Open Society Foundation and so forth.

### **8.1 Student Mobility**

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Since 2004 Armenian HEIs and individual students have been involved in the European Union Erasmus Mundus mobility programmes. Thus, from 2004 to 2013 through Erasmus Mundus Action 1 "Joint Degree Programmes" in total 83 students have pursued their Joint Master's and Doctoral programmes in various European Universities, and from 2007 to 2013 under the Action 2 "Partnership" programme 644 students and faculty members of Armenian universities participated in Bachelor's, Master's, PhD and postdoctoral/research level academic mobility programmes at European Universities. For 2015-2016 8 students received scholarships to study in Joint Master Degree programs.

As of the introduction of Erasmus+ Programme (2014-2020), Armenian HEIs have been involved in preparation of International Credit Mobility Projects together with their European counterparts. The number of Armenian students studying abroad has increased almost fourfold in the past 5 years. This growth is mostly due to the increase of the number of students enrolling in the European universities. There has also

been a large increase in the number of the Armenian students studying abroad through different long-term programmes, which has grown twice over the past 5 years. “Outbound” long-term mobility is mainly organized in the framework of the inter-governmental agreements with a number of countries such as Russia, China, Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia and fellowship programmes such as UK, US, Italy, Germany, etc. There is also a Government initiative financed through the Luys Foundation which supports Armenian students (by covering 50% of their programme costs) to pursue their studies in the world’s highly ranked top universities. In 2013/2014 academic year 48 students were funded by the above mentioned Foundation to continue their studies abroad. Overall, as of 2009, 303 students with Luys Foundation scholarship, 381 students from DAAD supported programs and about 732 students from inter-governmentally agreed exchange programs benefited from short term or full academic mobility.

Though the possibility of distance learning is envisaged by the Law on Higher and Postgraduate education it is not a common practice in Armenia. There are separate initiatives at University level for distance learning courses, but not full study programmes in distance mode.

## **8.2 Academic Staff Mobility**

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There are EU projects, DAAD and EU Embassies in Armenia supporting also the academic staff mobility. Over the past decade Armenia has actively participated in and benefited from TEMPUS and Erasmus Mundus programmes. These programmes, now replaced by Erasmus+ programme, are the main financial instruments to fund the academic staff mobility. The statistical information shows that over the last five years the international academic mobility of Armenian HEIs has increased roughly 25% having the main destinations to Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Eastern European countries.

The responsibility of academic staff mobility lies with HEIs which have their internal procedures and guidelines for mobility.

## **8.3 Other Dimensions of Internationalisation in Higher Education**

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### **8.3.1 European, Global and Intercultural Dimension in Curriculum Development**

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Armenia joined the Bologna Process in 2005 and since then started the harmonization of its HE System for the integration to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Particularly, as already mentioned above, several initiatives have been undertaken to implement three-tier qualification system, transition to ECTS, introduction of National Qualifications Framework consistent with the Overarching Framework for Qualifications in EHEA, introduction of procedures for recognition of qualifications as stipulated by the Lisbon Recognition Convention, introduction of free of charge Diploma Supplement in both Armenian and English languages. These processes have had high impact on the global and international dimension of HE in Armenia. Furthermore, several TEMPUS projects have possible the review or creation of new degree programs with the support of EU partners.

There are several academic programs which are delivered in foreign languages jointly with the foreign Universities. Currently, there are 5 joint programmes delivered in foreign language at Bachelor’s level and 31 at Master’s level which are implemented either with Russian or European universities.

### **8.3.2 Partnerships and Networks**

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Several HEIs in Armenia have joined international associations such as European University Association, Eurasian association of Universities, Association of Rectors of Pedagogical Universities in Europe. In the frame of these partnerships the HEIs administration is widely involved in policy making issues, discussion of upcoming reforms, adjusting institutional strategies to the global ones.

Several HEIs are also part of the “Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie” (Francophone University

Association) which creates additional opportunity for HEIs students and staff not only for mobility in frame of different projects, but also organization of scientific and capacity building activities bilaterally.

## **8.4 Bilateral Agreements and Worldwide Cooperation**

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### **8.4.1 Bilateral Agreements**

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Nowadays internationalization is deemed to be crucial part of HEI strategies. Almost all HEIs in Armenia have bilateral and multilateral cooperation agreements with European and CIS countries. The cooperation aims at capacity building projects, especially in the frame of previous TEMPUS and current Erasmus+ projects, research activities, student and staff exchange, sometimes delivery of joint or double degree programmes.

Armenia has also signed 7 bilateral agreements for student exchange with China, Bulgaria, Romania, Russian Federation, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Egypt. In the frames of above mentioned bilateral agreements students receive scholarships on competitive basis to study in HEIs of the countries concerned.

### **8.4.2 Cooperation and Participation in Worldwide Programmes and Organisations**

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Armenian HE cooperates with many international and transnational organizations such as the World Bank, German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Open Society Institute – Armenian Assistance, the British Council, etc. HE sector cooperates with the World Bank through the programme "Education Quality and Relevance" which is targeted to help the Universities to develop and implement strategic programs which stimulate scientific research and innovations, improve the management of HEIs as well as carry out structural and functional reforms in Armenian HE. EU funded Erasmus+ Programme fosters quality improvement in all sectors of HE in Armenia through institutional capacity building, staff mobility and strategic partnerships within various Actions of the programme. The Support of German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) is in the area of teaching, research and management and it mainly focuses on strengthening the relationship between German and Armenian universities. In the field of education Armenia also cooperates with China. In 2008 Confucius Institute was established in Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences in order to promote Chinese language and culture programmes in Armenian HE institutions. The programme also allowed opening Chinese classrooms at Armenian schools.

## **9 On-going Reforms and Policy developments**

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### **9.1 Overall national education strategy and key objectives**

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In 2011, the Government of RA ratified the "Education Development 2011-2015 State Programme of the RA" (the Law of the Republic of Armenia No HO-246-N of 19 July 2011 "On Ratifying the Education Development 2011-2015 State Programme of the Republic of Armenia"). In 2015 a new state programme for 2016-2025 was developed covering goals, objectives and scope of activities of education reforms in all levels of education in RA.

The most important goals of the new programme are:

- Need-oriented planning - curricula, forms and methods of organizing the educational process, possible ways of obtaining education shall be diversified.
- Flexibility of educational programmes, opportunities of adjusting them to the needs of students, their families, community and economy, school classes guaranteed with a compulsory component and application of individual learning plans for children with special educational needs, expanded modular programmes and specialized teaching.

- Simultaneously, proposition of the new ways of organization of education: distance learning opportunities shall be expanded, mechanism of recognition of non-formal education results shall be introduced, links between formal and non-formal education shall be created, which will enable choosing a more suitable way relevant to one's capabilities to achieve the desired educational outcomes. Modern methods of organizing training sessions shall be introduced allowing for the use of extracurricular institutions such as cultural centres, etc. Diversification of the educational system shall also relate to the legal forms of educational establishments. Several institutions have already been restructured into foundations. Expansion of opportunities for the joint establishment of educational institutions and participation of social partners in the management system shall be promoted.
- Social dialogue - In order to effectively respond to the needs, the social dialogue mechanisms shall be strengthened: public opinion polls shall be regularly conducted, public discussion platforms shall be created and participatory decision-making mechanisms shall be improved.
- Collaboration with partners - Collaboration with the private sector and civil society shall be strengthened. Performance of some functions and provision of supplemental educational services shall be transferred to professional organizations of the industry which enjoy public trust, and state support shall be provided to programmes initiated by international and local organizations corresponding to the priorities and principles of education development which will be incorporated into the education development programme package as per results of professional expertise.
- Transparency and accountability - With the purpose of ensuring the effectiveness of programmes their transparency and accountability shall be a mandatory requirement. Close supervision and monitoring shall be carried out with the engagement of both governmental and non-governmental institutions. Improvement and comprehensive introduction of knowledge assessment and quality assurance systems shall continue.

The main goals of educational development in the country are:

- To ensure accessible, equal and quality secondary (including short-cycle vocational) education with effective outcome for all children,
- To ensure accessible and quality pre-school education for all children aged 3-6 and at least 80% of their enrolment by 2025,
- To ensure affordable and equal opportunities for all to obtain professional education,
- To increase the number of young people and adults with professional skills by 50 per cent by 2025 with the purpose of finding decent jobs for them, decreasing unemployment and boosting businesses.
- To ensure equal participation opportunity of all vulnerable groups, including persons with special educational needs, in all the levels of education by 2025,
- To equip all students with knowledge and capabilities contributing to sustainable development of the society via civil, democracy and human rights and ecological education.

In order to achieve the education goals, specific strategic policies, activities and measures will be defined separately for each level of education.

## **9.2 Overview of the education reform process and drivers**

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The authorized body of state governance in education is the Ministry of Education and Science which is the main body in charge of managing all education-related activities, as well as one of the main drivers in the education reform process.

The Ministry participates in the creation of the Armenian Government's policies by preparing draft legislative documents and proposals for the development strategies and activities to the Government; it initiates the reforms and new legal acts and participates and contributes to the designing of new bills in the field of education; also oversees and evaluates the status of the current education system, determines its consequences and acts in line with them or proposes reforms to the Government.

The Government is responsible for final preparation and proposal of new bills, while the National Assembly approves the bills so they can come into force.

### **9.3 National reforms in Higher Education**

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The major reforms for the period 2011-2015 are:

#### **9.3.1 2015**

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New tertiary education management information system was introduced.

#### **9.3.2 2014**

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A system of lifelong learning was outlined and partially institutionalized.

#### **9.3.3 2013**

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- A national system of university ranking was introduced.
- HEIs were restructured passing from state not profit organizations to foundations. This new organisational status will contribute to enhancing university autonomy, notably by opening possibilities to create legal entities and carry out commercial activities independently.

#### **9.3.4 2012**

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- Mechanisms for funding and governance of HEIs were improved.
- Targeted public policy aimed at social and financial support to students was implemented.
- Transition to student-cantered learning took place, promoting students' critical, analytical, creative and autonomous learning.

#### **9.3.5 2011**

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- Reforms in teacher education took place.
- A consistent and internationally compatible three-tier qualification system was introduced.
- Transition to ECTS happened.
- Standards and procedures for Quality Assurance, as well as for institutional and programme accreditation were developed and approved in consistence with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance.
- A National Qualifications Framework was developed and approved in consistence consistent with Overarching Framework for Qualifications in EHEA.

## **10 Legislation**

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- The Law on Education, 1999, Adopted on 14 April 1999.
- The Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education, 2004, adopted on 14 December 2004.
- Government Decision No. 1183, Dated July 27 2006 (On Adopting the Regulation for Providing Student Allowances and State Scholarships at the Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Armenia and on Revocation of the Republic of Armenia Government Decisions No 1986 dated as September 8, 2005 and No 2114 dated as September 15, 2005).

- Order No. 1193-N, of December 6 2007 (On Adopting the Procedure on Admission and Instruction in Master's Programmes at Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Armenia).
- Order No. N-1194 of 06.12.2007 (On Adopting the Procedure of Part time Enrolment at Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Armenia).
- Decision N 1240-N of 25 August 2011 (On Approving The Procedure Of Academic Mobility of Students at Higher Education Institutions And Revoking Government of The Republic of Armenia Decision No. 938-N From July 16 2009).
- Order N 1197-N of 31 October 2011 (Adopting The Procedure For Final Certification Of Graduates at Higher Education Institutions Of The Republic of Armenia And On Revocation Of Order No. 13-QN Of THE RA Minister Of Education And Science As Of March 3, 1997).
- Order N 1242-N of 17 November 2011 (On Adopting the Procedure of Dismissal [Withdrawal] and Reinstating the Students at Higher Education Institutions Of The Republic Of Armenia).
- Decision 597-N of 26 April 2012 (On Adopting the Procedure of Admission to State and Non-State Higher Education Institutions [Bachelor's Program] Of the Republic of Armenia And On Revoking Decision 686-N of The Government of The Republic of Armenia, As Of April 28, 2011).
- Decision N 978-N of 30 June 2011 (Statute on State Accreditation of Tertiary Level Institutions and Academic Programmes in the Republic of Armenia).



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