



ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE

DECREE N 15

10 October, 2015

On Awarding Institutional Accreditation To ARMENIAN STATE PEDAGOGICAL UNIVERSTIY AFTER KH. ABOVYAN

General Information on the Institution

Full name of the Institution: **Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan**

Acronym: **ASPU**

Official address: **17 Tigran Mets street, Yerevan, 375010, RA**

Decree and date of Previous Accreditation: **Not available**

Guided by the regulation on “State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Educational Programs” approved by the RA Government on 30 June, 2011 N978 decree; by N959-Ն (30 June, 2011) decree on approving RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation; by the Procedure on the Formation and Functioning of Accreditation Committee of “National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance” foundation (ANQA) as well as by ANQA Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel, in the open session held on 10 October, 2015 the Accreditation Committee of “National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance” foundation (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) discussed the issue of state institutional accreditation of Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan (ASPU) with the presence of the MoES representatives, Chair of the expert panel, ANQA coordinator of the accreditation procedure and ASPU representatives.

Having examined the self-analysis presented by ASPU; the comments presented by the University on the draft version of the expert panel report; the final expert panel report; ASPU’s action plan for the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the expert panel report as well as ANQA conclusion, the Committee stated the following:

The main phases of the accreditation process were carried out following the below-given time-frame:

Submission of the Application	02 April, 2015
Submission of the Self-assessment report	04 May, 2015
Site-visit	25-29 May, 2015

Submission of the Expert panel report 09 September, 2015

Submission of Follow-up plan 11 September, 2015

The expertise was carried out by an Expert Panel formed in compliance with the requirements set forth by the ANQA regulation on the composition of expert panel. The assessment was carried out based in line with 10 criteria of institutional accreditation established by N959-6 (30 June, 2011) decree on approving RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation.

While conducting the evaluation the expert panel took into consideration that the University considers its priority the preparation and training of pedagogos who are professionally compatible, comprehensively developed and endowed with profound knowledge.

In 2011-2015 Strategic Plan of the University the mission and goals of the University are clearly defined and they are mostly consistent with the activities of the University. Though the current situation, challenges, expected outcomes and indicators of progress assessment are described for each goal they are not measurable and do not reflect the achievement of strategic goals and they need further clarification.

Currently the University is authorized to perform educational activities in 10 faculties with 71 professions 35 of which are in the bachelor, 36 master and 7 PhD levels. The professions are grouped in three main spheres: pedagogy, sociology and culture which is derived from the University's mission. It should be mentioned that the University's academic programs are mainly in line with the University's mission. The academic programs are in the process of modernization now to make the requirements for students, defined learning outcomes and student centered approach more transparent. However the reforms which are being carried out now are not on the institutional level, they were piloted in terms of a few academic programs without needs assessment and analysis of individual chairs. It should also be mentioned that the level of involvement and role of employers in the development and review processes of academic programs is very low.

The University has adopted student-centered approach which is still in the transition period. The experience in student-centered learning from the perspective of organization of more independent education activities of the students needs to be improved. Though the University has developed procedure on preventing plagiarism and promoting academic honesty the mechanism preventing plagiarism are not operating and the awareness of academic honesty is not fully implemented.

University administration gives much importance to the creation of environment promoting the exchange of practice, development and internationalization. During the recent years the University implements active policy on the establishment and development of international relations being involved in a number of international projects fostering the mobility of staff and students and implementing joint projects, etc. However the mechanisms promoting the mobility

of teaching staff and students are weak. The mobility is mainly ensured within the framework of some projects and the number of students is not sufficient.

ASPU's research activities are rather limited in terms of implementation of international research as well as the level of involvement of teaching staff and students in research activities. Clear mechanisms of linking research activities with education process are not developed at ASPU yet. Some steps are taken in this respect and they are mainly expressed in the choice of topics for master and PhD thesis papers and in the selective courses of master level where the results of scientific works of the teachers are directly expressed. Though the research directions of the University are mainly in pedagogical and psychological spheres the research carried out on the problems at schools are not systematic, are limited and the results of the research are not applied in the education process.

The University has some success in terms of internationalization of research but because of the absence of unified and comprehensive policy it is fragmented. The funding for research is limited.

The University has recourses for the creation of learning environment and effective accomplishment of strategic goals and objectives. The main problems concerning recourses are the lack of modern equipment and materials in laboratories and scientific research centers. The University needs to obtain modern equipment and materials as it will improve education process as well as will foster increase in motivation of the teaching staff to be engaged in research activities. It should be mentioned that though the University allocates sufficient financial recourses for the accomplishment of its mission and goals financial management system does not imply allocation of recourses according to strategic priorities. The University provides appropriate recourses for the provision of necessary facilities and equipment. The allocation of main budget is carried out according to the salaries and infrastructure recourses and improvement of education technical base.

ASPU has necessary teaching and support staffs for the accomplishment of the University's mission and the goals of academic programs. Though the University has clear requirements and procedures for the selection of the staff there are no such regulations for separate academic programs. Works directed to the enhancement of qualifications of teaching and support staffs are implemented at ASPU but the lack of clear mechanisms of needs assessment as well as not formal nature of teaching staff's needs assessment can be a danger for the identification and solution of main problems. Analysis of the effectiveness of trainings has not been conducted.

The recruitment, selection and admission of students at ASPU are carried out based on relevant regulations on admission according to the set list of professions and allocated places. ASPU students get appropriate support from the University. The system of organizing additional lessons and providing consultancy operates at the University as well as different events and seminars are organized for the students.

The expert panel positively assesses the fact that students can directly turn to the administrative staff for support and guidance and they get appropriate feedback. But from the perspective of elective courses professional orientation is lacking. Sufficient attention is not paid to the students' needs assessment and the imperfection of existing mechanisms lowers the opportunities of evaluating the University's activities.

The organizational structure of the University is not flexible; there is a lack of cooperation among structural units in different levels. Standard hierarchic links are obvious but the horizontal links are fragmented.

Though in 2011-2014 ASPU has made structural changes and new departments were established the functions are not clearly differentiated and often some functions are repeated in different departments/units. The absence of mechanisms ensuring transparency and effectiveness of decision making procedures as well as the lack of qualitative and quantitative data evaluating the effectiveness undermines the efficiency of management system and the targeted accomplishment of strategic goals.

Currently the main mechanism applied for the identification of factors affecting the general and educational activities of ASPU is survey but the aim, frequency, methodology as well as the scope of respondents do not allow considering these surveys as effective tools for needs assessment. The whole governance of management system is not carried out based on the principles of quality management. Though planning is in place in different levels of the University no reference was made to the evaluation of its effectiveness.

The expert panel positively evaluates the steps that ASPU have taken with the aim to invest internal QA system, however, the latter is not systematic, there is no general approach and understanding to it. Though ASPU has developed internal QA policy and procedures, there is a need to clarify them from the perspective of planning the activities. The lack of evaluation of the effectiveness of mechanisms and tools coordinating different activities does not give an opportunity to evaluate the impact of QA processes on the improvement processes of academic programs and the University's activities.

The University is advised to follow the below mentioned recommendations within the framework of its strategy. The recommendations are meant to assist the University in coping with the issues and problems revealed by the expert panel during the accreditation procedures and foster the further development of the University's activities.

Mission and Goals

1. To develop and invest clear mechanisms for qualitative and quantitative evaluation and improvement of strategic plan ensuring the latter's tangibility, the evaluation of achieved results and opportunities for further development

2. To clarify University's scientific research directions and strategic advantage in national and regional levels demarcating the development of the University's key competences and their continuous improvement.
3. To enlarge the involvement of stakeholders (especially external) in the process of implementation of strategic plan and regularly analyze the effectiveness of involvement mechanisms
4. To improve mechanisms of external stakeholders' needs assessment.
5. To make the indicators of assessment more tangible and reliable.

Governance and Administration

6. To review the organizational structure of the University ensuring the consistency of strategic goals and management system.
7. To clarify and coordinate the distribution of functions of all structural units and ensure their effective cooperation /horizontal links/.
8. To invest mechanisms of disseminating interchair and interfaculty best practices.
9. To develop and apply clear mechanisms and tools of monitoring short term, mid term and long term plans.
10. To regularly study and analyze the external factors affecting the activities of the University, including statistics and other data.
11. To improve the mechanisms of involvement of internal and external stakeholders in decision making procedures.
12. To create transparent system of internal documentation.
13. To improve the system of data collection, analysis and application.
14. To clarify the policy of financial resource allocation according to strategic priorities.

Academic Programs

15. To enlarge the involvement of external stakeholders in the development and review processes of academic programs.
16. To ensure systematic monitoring and evaluation of academic programs, improve the mechanisms of evaluating the effectiveness.
17. To review credit calculation, allocation and accumulation processes.
18. To develop general methodology of carrying out (national and international) benchmarking and mechanisms of effectively applying the results.
19. To carry out needs assessment of the chairs and analysis to enhance the effectiveness of revision of academic programs.
20. To clearly define learning outcomes on the academic program level (for the Bachelor and Master qualifications) and ensure their alignment to NQF.

21. To develop mechanisms through which learning outcomes of separate courses will be matched with the learning outcomes of the whole academic program.
22. To ensure the logical sequence of providing academic program (interconnection of courses).
23. To ensure the relations of teaching methods with learning outcomes and assessment.
24. To disseminate the University's best practice of developing, modernizing and improving academic programs.

Students

25. To improve procedures and mechanisms of students' needs assessment (ensure the frequency, evaluate their effectiveness).
26. To regulate the processes of students' guidance and support.
27. To enlarge students' involvement in scientific research activities of the University creating necessary conditions and environment.
28. To develop students' handbook where students rights and duties and all the information about their education will be provided
29. To fully integrate University-employer cooperation center in the education processes making the processes of students' learning and career guidance more purposeful and directed.
30. To create learning environment for the students with special needs ensuring availability of education.

Teaching and Support Staffs

31. To develop plan and regulation on the professional development of the teaching staff revealing the qualification which are necessary for the implementation of strategic plan.
32. To develop requirements for the teaching staff per academic program taking into account the peculiarities of certain academic programs, carry out needs assessment of the teaching staff, plan capacity building and trainings.
33. To promote professional development of young teaching staff drawing on the potential of the teaching staff, create system and mechanisms of transferring leading educational practice.
34. To support and provide the teaching staff with the opportunities of professional development. Encourage the development of professional and pedagogical skills to prevent staff turnover.

Research and Development

35. To state ASPU's research priorities in the strategic plan.
36. To enlarge and coordinate the scope of scientific research related to the problems of secondary school.

37. To create preconditions and promoting mechanisms to increase the volume of research and enlarge the enrollment of teaching staff and students in research activities.
38. To plan scientific research activities of chairs according to research priorities and carry out monitoring and discussions.
39. To develop and apply tools evaluating the effectiveness and relevance of research works as well as mechanisms of measuring progress.
40. To create precise mechanisms ensuring the link between research activities and education process, develop policy on research-oriented education /make scientific research activities an inseparable part of education process/.
41. To allocate sufficient financial resources to develop the mechanisms of effectiveness of research activities at ASPU creating necessary conditions for doing scientific research works.
42. To develop clear policy on the internationalization of research activities, promote interdisciplinary observations enlarging the opportunities of internationalization.
43. To develop and apply clear mechanisms for commercialization of innovations and research analyzing the results annually
44. To diversify research works within the frames of cooperation with employers.

Infrastructure and Recourses

45. To improve the infrastructure of the University directing funds to the laboratory equipment, purchase of new equipment and related materials.
46. To carry out needs assessment per academic program for the effective allocation of financial recourses.
47. To evaluate the effectiveness of the use of financial recourses carrying out monitoring of the allocation and usage of financial recourses and evaluation of the effectiveness.
48. To apply fully electronic system of internal documentation that will correspond to the policy and procedures of data management at the University.
49. To improve the infrastructure of the University providing students with special needs with necessary conditions for their education.

Social Responsibility

50. To improve the mechanisms of ensuring accountability and regularly evaluate the effectiveness of processes.
51. To improve the feedback mechanisms from a wider scope of society.
52. To ensure the continuity and accountability of the communication with society.
53. To enhance the influence of the University on the implementation and problem solving processes concerning school reforms, to use the potential of the University for developing and implementing policy on the improvement of education processes at schools.

External Relations and Internationalization

54. To carry out needs assessment/analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of the activities directed to the internationalization and development of external relations of the University and to raise the awareness.
55. To review the mechanisms of mobility of students and teaching staff enlarging the number of participants in different projects.
56. To promote the enhancement of knowing a foreign language among the internal stakeholders /students, teaching and administrative staffs/ for raising the effectiveness of internationalization.
57. To analyze the impact of international cooperation on the implementation of University's strategic goals.
58. To promote the mobility of students and teaching staff.

Internal Quality Assurance System

59. To improve QA mechanisms with the help of which the University will be able to evaluate and continuously review internal QA system.
60. To ensure the operation of PDCA cycle in all levels
61. To enlarge the involvement of stakeholders (especially external stakeholders) in QA processes and evaluate its effectiveness.
62. To ensure the independence of QA centre.
63. To regulate data management processes and clarify the mechanisms of data dissemination and management among the structural units.
64. To carry out needs assessment, evaluation of performance of QA staff and QA responsible people and based on the results enlarge the opportunities of professional development.

Having examined the presented package of documents, having heard the opinions of the head of the expert panel and the representatives of the University, the Committee finds that Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan adequately accomplishes the primary goals set before the institution i.e. "... the preparation and training of professionally compatible pedagogs", there are some achievements in terms of provision of necessary resources and teaching staff for the implementation of the academic programs.

The shortcomings identified in the field of "**Research and development**" hinder the full implementation of MA academic programs and preparation of such MA alumni with research competences who will be ready to further identify and solve the problems in the sphere of secondary education. It's a result of the fact that the University does not sufficiently give importance to the study of issues existing in the sphere of secondary education, to the involvement of students in such studies and to the investment of the results in the practice of preparing the professionals.

Along with valuing the achievements of the University in the field of “**Internal quality assurance system**” it should be mentioned that this system does not yet have noticeable influence on the academic programs and other processes carried out at the University.

In case of continuing the monitoring of processes, evaluation of their effectiveness and collection of information in such conditions the University can quickly lose the pace of improvements in regard to the involvement of financial investments and professional teaching staff. The positive experience formed as a result of the changes implemented at the University is slowly disseminating because of the problems existing in the field of “Governance and administration”.

By clarifying the University’s strategic priorities, correlating the policy on financial, material and human resource allocation to those priorities as well as by paying proper attention to the development of QA system the management of the University can greatly influence on the effectiveness of the University activities. Otherwise the problems existing in these fields may be at a risk for the University.

The elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report and the implementation of the proposed recommendations will ensure the student-centered and research nature of provided education services as well as the comparability with international standards which is in line with the University’s ambitions.

Accepting all the recommendations mentioned in all 10 criteria, the University has developed an Action Plan for the elimination of the shortcomings mentioned in the expert panel report. The implementation of main part of the action plan does not contain any risks and is aimed at the further development of the University.

Taking into consideration that methodically using its internal QA mechanisms the University will manage to eliminate the shortcomings mentioned in the expert panel report as well as implement the recommendations, as a result of voting the Committee

DECIDED

1. To award Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan an **Institutional Accreditation with a 4 /four/ year period.**
2. Within two months after the publication of the Decree on Awarding Institutional Accreditation to submit a reviewed action plan and corresponding time-schedule to ANQA taking into account:
 - a. the necessity of finding solutions primarily to the problems existing in the fields of “Governance and Administration”, “Research and Development” and “Internal quality assurance system”;
 - b. the results and recommendations of the peer-review according to international standards.

3. In order to improve the activities of the University in line with current demands it is necessary to pay special attention to the modernization of appropriate technical resource base required for the implementation of the academic programs, the strengthening of the link between teaching and research, the formation of research and analytical skills among students, training of the teaching staff as well as the mobility of teaching staff and students.
4. According to the requirements of clause 12 of the Regulation on “State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Educational Programs” every two year to submit a written report to ANQA on the results of the carried out activities

Chairman of the Accreditation Committee

V. Urutyan

October 10, 2015
Yerevan