



ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE

DECREE №

21 June 2016

On Accreditation of Institutional Capacities of Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute

General Information about the Institution

Full name of the Institution: Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute

Acronym: GSPI

Legal Form:

Official Address: P. Sevak 4, Gyumri 3126, Armenia

Previous Accreditation decree
and date: 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 N 978-Ն decree; by RA Government decree N 959-Ն (30 June, 2011) on “Approval of 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 21 March 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 Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute (GSPI) with the presence of the representatives of the RA Ministry of Education and Science, Chair of the Expert Panel, ANQA coordinator of the accreditation procedure as well as GSPI representatives.

Having examined the self-analysis presented by GSPI, GSPI’s remarks and suggestions on the draft version of the report, the Expert Panel report, GSPI 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 within the following periods:

Submission of the application	27 May 2015
Submission of the self-analysis of the University	8 September 2015
Site-visit	9-12 November 2015
Submission of the expert panel report	23 February 2016
Submission of action plan for the elimination of shortcomings	10 March 2016

The expertise was carried out by an expert panel formed according to the requirements of the regulation on “The Formation of expert panel at “National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance” Foundation”. The evaluation was carried out based on the 10 criteria of institutional accreditation approved by RA Government decree N 959–Ն as of June 30, 2011.

When carrying out the evaluation, it has been taken into account that GSPI, according to its mission, strives to “prepare specialists with necessary knowledge and competences which are in compliance with national labor market demands through the implementation of professional academic programs (PAPs) for BA, MA and PhD qualifications. Realizing its role in the scientific-academic, sports and cultural and socio-economic spheres of the region, as well as in the process of formation of civic society, GSPI has settled a priority of becoming a special “community center” for Gyumri city and the region of Shirak.

The Expert Panel mentions that the policy GSPI has adopted and its activity are generally in compliance with the Institute's mission. However, for the current period, there are some differences and discrepancies between the Statute and mission of the Institute which makes the development process of GSPI's activity risky. The name and the current Statute of the Institute do not reflect the full frame of GSPI's activity (the existence of non-pedagogical programs) which significantly decreases the level of recognition of the Institute. The Expert Panel has a position opinion about the fact that the Institute which has adopted a strategy of becoming a regional institution strives to change the current Statute in order to make it compliant with the mission.

There are 31 full-time and 29 part-time BA programs as well as 18 full-time MA programs in 6 faculties of GSPI. 20 research academic programs are carried out in 4 scientific directions. Both the pedagogical and non-pedagogical PAPs are generally in alignment with the Institute's mission, however, there are some PAPs which are not in line with the mission defined in the Strategic Plan (hereinafter SP). This refers to some specializations which at present are not that much demanded in the Republic of Armenia (hereinafter RA) labor market and subsequently there are only small groups which often consist of only one or two students. As far as part-time studies are concerned, there are a number of serious problems the Institute faces; in particular these refer to the insufficiency of in-class hours which leads to a non-effective realization of PAPs.

The effectiveness and the objectiveness of current assessment system implementation is low, especially in terms of part-time studies in case of which the rather low level of students' academic progress has been observed.

The Expert Panel appreciates the fact that GSPI has developed a policy and procedures on recruitment of teaching and support staffs for the implementation of PAPs. The mentioned regulation which foresees a competitive selection for many positions, stimulates the Institute to have more competent staff. The latter is also stimulated by the increase of the number of staff who have been observed in recent years due to their scientific degrees. The fact that the majority of the teaching staff is full-time, noticeably enhances the stability of the teaching staff and the sustainable implementation of academic functions. Another positive tendency is observed according to which the Institute tries to fill-in the gap of the shortage of the teaching staff by recruiting its MA and PhD alumni. Though GSPI has certain mechanisms of teacher staff promotion, the Expert Panel finds it worrisome that throughout the last three years a decrease in the number of young teachers can be traced (from 19% to 16%). This is quite a vulnerable issue from the perspective of ensuring generation change.

At present GSPI has enough infrastructures and resources to provide professional education. However, the Expert Panel finds that GSPI needs to improve and enrich its resources. Classes at GSPI are organized in two shifts. The Expert Panel mentions that in such cases both the learning process of students and the activities of the staff will become more difficult. Notwithstanding the current academic resources (laboratories, computers, projectors, etc.), there is still a need of renovating and re-equipping technical means and laboratories. This was also ascertained by the participants who had meetings with the Expert Panel. Tuition fees are the main source of financial flows of the Institute, which endanger the financial sustainability of the Institute within the light of a decreasing number of students. Grant projects are alternative sources of financial flows, which overall cover only the 1% of GSPI's financial flows.

The procedures on students' recruitment are precise and are carried out in accordance with the regulations ratified by the Ministry of Education and Science (hereinafter MoES) through corresponding events organized among future applicants, and they promote the recruitment operations. The Institute has carried out research and professional orientation activities through surveys, site-visits and discussions among potential applicants, which, according to the Expert Panel, can have a positive impact on the recruitment of applicants.

The Expert Panel thinks that the mechanisms and tools (questionnaires) aimed at revealing the needs of the students are not sufficiently holistic and reliable. In this respect, the low level of research of students' needs among the vast majority of part-time students is especially vulnerable. This hinders the raising of effectiveness of students' educational process. There are certain bodies in the Institute who strive to support the students and to enhance the process of revealing and

satisfying their academic needs. The students have the opportunity to participate in facultative courses and to get consultations.

GSPI lacks a precise strategy referring to research and its interests in the said field. This weakens the research activity. The absence of mid-term and short-term plans in this respect also hinders the process. It is foreseen that the said plans will be invested since 2017. There are certain steps with regard to the internationalization of research activities the Institute needs to take as far as de facto it can be concluded that GSPI does not implement any significant international research operation, except for some articles published in international journals. This diminishes the mobility of the teaching staff and the framework of cooperation with foreign higher education institutions.

The main priorities and objectives of internationalization and external relations are highlighted in the SP of the Institute. GSPI has set a goal to ensure comprehensive development of external relations, experience exchange, and to foster its internationalization.

GSPI has certain experience in implementing international projects, and at present it is involved in a number of TEMPUS Projects (ARARAT, HEN-GEAR, SuToMa, ARMENQA, etc.). Though the majority of the teaching staff dominates a foreign language, which might be sufficient for general communication, this is not enough for professional communication and for conducting academic courses in foreign language which is necessary from the perspective of organizing student exchange programs. With the aim of enhancing the knowledge of foreign language, the Institute organizes English language trainings for its teaching staff. There is also a Language Center, where the students can participate in foreign language courses.

The Expert Panel appreciates the fact that especially throughout the recent years certain some reforms have been undertaken in the system of governance of the Institute (QA Center, University-Market Cooperation Unit etc.), which are aimed at improvement of education quality. However, the organizational structure of the Institute is not yet fully adapted to the implementation of the mission and strategic objectives. Besides, the optimal allocation of management resources is another problem to be solved, and the management is generally not carried out in accordance with the PDCA cycle. Notwithstanding the fact that the main infrastructures of the Institute do operate, the lack of scientific infrastructure is risky for the full implementation of the GSPI mission.

In recent years the implementation and development of GSPI's QA system can create favorable conditions for the formation of quality culture and for internal and external assessments. The regulations elaborated by the QA Center serve as a base for the implementation of QA functions. The involvement of both the teachers and the students in QA processes ensures more targeted and effective activity, however, the level of their participation is still low. The Institute has an internal QA system which is still in the development process. It fosters the formation of quality culture and strives to ensure the transparency of its activity.

The Institute is suggested to implement the following recommendations within the framework of its strategy. The recommendations are directed to the solution of the problems revealed by the Expert Panel, as well as to the further development of the Institute's activity.

Mission and Goals

- 1) To determine the mission of the Institute by reflecting the peculiarities and the strengths of GSPI, as well as the needs of the stakeholders, in particular those of the staff, alumni, students as well as the population of the region.
- 2) To make the mission, name, Statute and the actual activity of the Institute in line with each other.
- 3) To develop and put into practice precise mechanisms and procedures for the qualitative and quantitative assessment of strategic goals as well as for the improvement of the SP.
- 4) To ensure the active involvement and feedback of stakeholders (especially external ones) in the process of SP implementation.

Governance and Administration

- 5) To improve the organizational structure of the Institute by adapting it to the implementation of strategic objectives.
- 6) To develop and implement a separate regulation on ethics.
- 7) To enhance the involvement of external stakeholders in the management processes of the Institute.
- 8) With the aim of risk management, to form a separate working group which will regularly make reports on SP implementation.
- 9) To develop new mechanisms for assessing the collection, analysis and application of information on the effectiveness of management processes.

Academic Programs

- 10) To improve the list of PAPs, making them in line with labor market demands.
- 11) To develop a policy and procedures aimed at selection and modernization of teaching and learning methods.
- 12) To reflect and ensure the link of teaching and learning methods and assessment forms with the learning outcomes.
- 13) To improve the implementation of PAPs for part-time studies by developing more effective curricula.
- 14) To develop and implement a policy on struggle against plagiarism and academic honesty.
- 15) To develop grounded approaches referring to the credit calculation of courses by making the credit allocation in line with the best international practice.

16) To develop a formal procedure on PAP monitoring.

Students

17) To improve the mechanisms of revealing the students' academic needs and to observe their effectiveness.

18) To develop the research activities of the students and to reinforce the link between the research and learning process.

19) To reform the functions of University-Market Cooperation Unit directing them towards assisting the students and alumni in terms of their career.

20) To develop a regulation on addressing the administrative staff.

21) To foster the students' initiative to reveal issues.

Teaching and Support Staffs

22) To elaborate professional requirements to be presented to the teaching staff in line with PAPs.

23) To develop and invest a system of professional trainings for the teaching staff.

24) To develop mechanisms of enhancing the recruitment with young teachers.

25) To develop and invest job descriptions for the teaching and support staffs.

26) To evaluate the effectiveness of activities undertaken by the support staff and to develop mechanisms for fostering the said operations.

Research and Development

27) To develop precise research priorities of the Institute taking into account the scientific experience of the Chairs and the resources available.

28) To foster international research undertakings.

29) To implement research component in the PAPs at BA level and to promote its enhancement.

30) To promote the development of scientific activities together with other higher education institutions and scientific centers of the RA through implementing joint research topics, organizing seminars /especially for MA studies/ on problematic topics conducted by invited specialists from abroad and by other means.

Infrastructure and Resources

31) With the aim of maintaining financial independence and sustainability, to ensure the diversity of external financial sources and to increase the number of grant projects.

32) To make financial planning and allocation taking into account the demands of PAPs.

33) To improve library infrastructures by developing the usage of modern technologies.

- 34) To develop the scope of IT services which will enhance the management system of the Institute, the investment of distance learning and other spheres.
- 35) To create respective conditions for students with special needs with the aim of making the academic environment accessible.

Social Responsibility

- 36) To develop the analytical component in the system of accountability of the Institute.
- 37) To specify and develop the mechanisms of feedback from society.
- 38) To develop and invest mechanisms for assessing the services provided to the society.

External Relations and Internationalization

- 39) To take certain steps towards implementing international projects on their own initiative and investment.
- 40) To enhance the level of knowledge of foreign languages among internal stakeholders with the aim of fostering external cooperation and implementation of PAPs in foreign languages.
- 41) To activate the cooperation with other RA higher education institutions and scientific centers.

Internal Quality Assurance System

- 42) To develop and implement a policy, procedures and mechanisms of encouraging the involvement of external stakeholders in the QA processes of the Institute.
- 43) To develop and implement mechanisms of monitoring and analysis of QA system operation and to ensure the continuity of professional development of the QA staff.
- 44) To improve the process of surveys and data collection carried out in the Institute by implementing mechanisms of the validity of their implementation.

Observing the presented package of documents and considering the opinions of head of the Expert Panel and GSPI representatives, the Accreditation Committee finds that GSPI sufficiently fulfills its main goal by creating respective academic environment for the implementation of main professional education.

Taking steps towards changing and improving its APs as well as investing non-pedagogical APs, GSPI continues to prepare specialists who are less demanded in the regional labor market. It is necessary to activate the participation of external stakeholders in the implementation of current programs, in the process of their monitoring together with the internal stakeholders and in the development of new programs, as well as to practice the principles of student-centered education. The non consistent implementation of the APs developed by the teaching staff especially for part-

time study are among other problems existing in the sphere of “**Academic Programs**”. The shortcomings revealed in the sphere of “**Research and Development**” mainly refer to the full implementation of MA APs and preparation of graduates having research skills. One of the mentioned shortcomings is the fact that the strategic goals and directions in the field of research are not specified, nor the internationalization of research activities is sufficient. Due to financial problems the research base is poorly developed, and although prominent scientists are involved in the educational process, the link between research and learning needs significant improvement.

Accepting some positive structural changes that have been made in the management system of the Institute in recent years aimed at education quality improvement, the organizational structure of the Institute is not still in compliance with the implementation of its mission and strategic objectives. There is a problem relating to the optimal allocation of management resources and operative management, and the lack of scientific unit can be risky for the implementation of the Institute’s whole mission. The positive experience, which has been gained due to changes which are being made in different structural units of the Institute, is slowly disseminated because of the problems existing in the sphere of “**Governance and Administration**”. It is necessary to take administrative activities in accordance to the PDCA cycle, as well as to regularly organize analyses of effectiveness of management system.

The elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report and the implementation of the suggested recommendations will ensure the student-centered and research nature of the provided educational services and the compliance with the international criteria which is in line with the Institute’s ambitions.

Having accepted the given recommendations, the Institute has developed an “**Action Plan on elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report**”. The implementation of the main part of the plan does not contain risks and is aimed at further improvement of the Institute’s activity.

Taking into consideration that GSPI can eliminate the shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report and implement the recommendations by methodically applying its internal QA mechanisms in a reasonable time period, as a result of open voting the Committee:

DECIDED

- 1. To award institutional accreditation to Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute for 4 /four/ years.**

2. After the publication of the decision on accreditation award, to submit the Action Plan for the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report and respective time schedule within two months taking into account
 - a) the necessity of giving urgent solutions primarily to the problems existing in the fields of **“Governance and Administration”**, **“Academic Programs”** and **“Research and Development”**;
 - b) the results and recommendations of the peer review from the perspective of the Institute’s ambition to get integrated into the European Higher Education Area, making precise the goals and directions of internationalization.
3. In order to improve the activity of the Institute in line with current demands it is necessary to pay special attention to the modernization of material-technical base, reinforcement of the linkage between learning and research, training of teaching staff, teaching staff and student mobility, investment of modern technologies and methods for part-time study as well as internal quality assurance.
4. According to the requirements of clause 12 of the Regulation on “State Accreditation of RA Education Institutions providing professional academic programs and their Professions” every 2 /two/ years to submit a written report to ANQA on the results of the carried out activities.

Chair of Accreditation Committee
21 June 2016
Yerevan

V. Urutyanyan