



## CONCLUSION

### On Accreditation of Institutional Capacities of Armenian National Agrarian University

#### General Information about the Institution

Full name of the Institution	<b>Armenian National Agrarian University</b>
Acronym	<b>ANAU</b>
Official address	<b>74 Teryan str., 0009, Yerevan, Armenia</b>
Previous accreditation decree and date	<b>Not available</b>

#### LEGAL BASIS

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” as well as by the Procedure on the Formation and Functioning of Accreditation Committee of “National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance” foundation (ANQA), the Accreditation Committee of “National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance” foundation (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) discussed the ANQA draft conclusion on the institutional capacities of Armenian National Agrarian University (hereinafter: ANAU) on the basis of self-analysis presented by ANAU, Expert Panel report, ANAU action plan for the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report as well as Expert panel opinion based on the ANAU action plan with the presence of the ANQA representatives, the Expert Panel, and ANQA coordinator of the accreditation procedure.

#### **As a result of discussion the following was registered:**

The main phases of accreditation procedure were carried out within the following periods:

Submission of application	<b>5 March 2012</b>
Submission of self-evaluation report	<b>2 October 2012</b>
Site-visit	<b>3-7 December 2012</b>
Submission of expert panel report	<b>1 March 2013</b>
Submission of action plan for elimination of shortcomings	<b>14 February 2014</b>

## RESULTS OF PEER REVIEW

The expertise has been carried out by an independent expert panel formed in compliance with the requirements set forth by the ANQA Regulation on the Formation of Expert Panel<sup>1</sup>: The evaluation has been made according to 10 criteria of institutional accreditation approved by N 959-Ն Decree of the RA Government, 30 June 2011<sup>2</sup>:

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While carrying out the evaluation the Committee has taken into consideration the fact that ANAU is the only higher education institution with perennial experience in the agrarian sphere in the Republic which strives to become a “leading center playing significant role in the region, providing education, scientific-research and consultancy services”. Giving importance to the practical aspect of education in the agrarian sphere, the RA Government has defined the 4 years and 8 months duration of education for Bachelor’s degree for all the professions of the University.

Within its activity the University has not undergone accreditation; the education quality assurance was carried out by applying some mechanisms of quality control. The current process of accreditation of institutional capacities is the University’s first experience which is aimed at self-assessment of satisfaction of educational environment, efficiency of academic programs, social responsibility as well as functioning of invested internal quality assurance system. The University has an experience of external evaluation of the “Agribusiness and Marketing” academic program delivered by the Agribusiness teaching Department. The external evaluation was carried out by the international Expert Panel with the initiation of US Department of Agriculture in 2011.

The University is authorized to prepare specialists in 37 professions within the three-level education system, and some of them are exceptional among higher education institutions in the agrarian sphere not only at regional but also at CIS level. According to its mission, the University should provide academic programs that meet “the demands of labor market in the agrarian sphere as well as take into account their dynamic changes”. The majority of the academic programs have been recently reviewed for many times. The course description with respective learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences) is currently in process.

The University strives to meet the requirements of up-to-date programs by interlinking research and education processes. By participating in TEMPUS activities the University makes benchmarking of its academic programs and develops up-to-date programs.

The application of the University’s research outcomes in teaching as well as MA students’ involvement in research activities states that there is an interlinkage between teaching and research.

Currently the University’s infrastructures and resources are partially satisfactory for the provision of professional education. The probability of drastic improvement in the nearest future is not much because of financial scarcity of the University. The University’s financial resources basically

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<sup>1</sup> APPENDIX 1: EXPERT PANEL COMPOSITION AND ANQA SUPPORT STAFF

<sup>2</sup> APPENDIX 2` SUMMATIVE EVALUATION

generated from the students' tuition fees are mainly spent for the provision of salaries, and they are not enough to equip educational and scientific structural units with necessary facilities.

No means are provided for the international collaboration either, and in case of termination of external financing the sustainability of the sphere may falter, and the teaching staff mobility which is not at a high level for the current moment may face a risk as well.

Currently the University has competent teaching staff with great experience due to which the main objectives of academic programs are reached. The age average of the teaching staff is 65. The student/teacher average ratio is 16,6/1. The low salaries and lack of motivation hinder the involvement of young and qualified specialists, and this factor put the University's activity under risk. The existing opportunities for the recruitment, improvement of staff, PhD education as well as regular trainings of teaching staff and Interns' Institute are not fully taken by the University.

ANAU teaching staff is involved in research activities but there are few research activities carried out at international level. Only some members of the teaching staff have international experience due to implemented projects within the cooperation with international organizations.

The University is concerned about the students' education and their opinion about student-centered approach and provided education. The current mechanisms of students' recruitment, selection and admission ensure sustainable flow of applicants for this period of time, however, but together with the increase of number of applicants, the number of dismissed students is great. Students mentioned about some steps for improvement (new teaching and assessment methods, infrastructure and library resources). They appreciate the practical education and support which the University provides, but they find that their needs are not always met in terms of factual participation in the University's governance, implementation of research activities as well as provision of opportunities for career development.

The University's management system served well to the aim of the University. However, it currently faces new internal and external challenges which require more substantiated and student-centered approaches, more accountable decision-making processes, additional resources and good information system. The University is in the process of making structural changes, and the effectiveness of the new system can be judged only after the analysis of results gained at one cycle of the processes implemented in accordance with the principle of quality management.

At all levels of the University education quality and quality assurance are given importance to although it is currently more conditioned by external demands. Human, material and financial resources have been provided for the organization of the processes. The internal quality assurance system is under implementation process; although some processes are put into action, the level of stakeholders' participation is low, and the basic mechanisms still need to be developed.

### **STRENGTHS**

1. The University has regulated management system, and representatives of teaching staff and students are involved at its different levels.
2. The components of academic programs, i.e. curricula and courses which have been elaborated by the University' specialists, are in line with the RA state education standards. The credit transfer and accumulation system has been invested, and multifactor system of assessment has been defined. The Agribusiness Teaching Department has a good experience of monitoring and external evaluation of academic programs and courses.

3. The University has a proficient and experienced teaching staff, and students are overall satisfied with their quality.
4. The Agribusiness Department is the only educational regional center in the sphere of agribusiness economy which provides education in English.
5. The University has a good experience in transferring knowledge and providing services to society (trainings for civil servants, organization of consultancy courses on farm economy through “Agrogitaspur” department).
6. ANAU has a structural unit for quality assurance, proficient staff who have been trained and gained experience in that sphere, quality assurance procedures which are partially coordinated, as well as some evaluation tools which are developed and piloted.

### **WEAKNESSES**

1. The University does not evaluate the results of accomplishment of mission and goals, does not make a full annual planning of action either. Besides, there aren't any policy and procedures, and monitoring mechanisms of financial management. Because of the absence of clear policy on allocation of resources the University neither defines priorities nor makes respective planning according to priorities. In addition, the equipment with materials of the University's educational and scientific structural units is at low level.
2. The revision of academic programs has been made without making benchmarking, expertise, studies of the level of stakeholders' participation and labor market demands and professional and technological progress derived from external requirements (Bologna process, piloting of accreditation) rather than from the policy of the University.
3. The application of teaching and learning methods is not coordinated.
4. There isn't any visible progress in terms of internationalization of programs which reflects in the low level of teaching staff and student mobility.
5. The number of teacher staff's up-to-date research activities which are in line with international standards and are involved in revised programs is limited.
6. The main teaching staff members are aged, and there are serious problems in terms of rejuvenation of the staff. The mechanisms and procedures evaluating and supporting the recruitment, assessment and attestation of the teaching staff, as well as their professional development and effectiveness of their activities are not clear and transparent.

**The University is suggested to do the following:**

#### ***Mission and Purpose***

1. To ensure the factual reflection of all the stakeholders' needs in the mission, goals and objectives of the University as well as stakeholders' participation in processes of evaluation and improvement of results.

#### ***Governance and Administration***

2. To be led by the principle of quality management (Plan-Do-Check-Act) in the organization of the University's administration and evaluation of results.

3. To regulate the financial management of the University, studies of factors which have an impact of the University's activity, as well as collection, analysis and application of information on the effectiveness of governance related processes.
4. To expand practical involvement of the teaching staff and students at all levels of the University's governance.

#### ***Academic Programmes***

5. To enlarge the academic programs, to publicize learning outcomes of all the academic programs, to regulate their monitoring, evaluation of effectiveness and periodically review them.
6. To ensure stakeholders' participation in the development of academic programs and their intended learning outcomes, and to make those outcomes as a basis for the selection of methods of teaching, learning and assessment. To develop mechanisms of academic honesty assurance for the assessment of students as well as to regulate the process of assessment appeal.
7. To take steps towards implementation of targeted benchmarking of the academic programs with other known professional academic programs and to ensure their content compliance.

#### ***Students***

8. To make the process of student recruitment targeted taking into consideration the demands set for the field specialists of the Republic.
9. To take concrete steps towards formation of student-centered environment; to make students' needs assessment
10. To take specific steps towards formation of student-centered environment; to make students' needs assessment, to take into consideration those needs in the organization of education processes, to provide consultancy and organize facultative courses, to review the activities of the body responsible for the protection of student rights.
11. To enlarge the frame of activities of the Career Center directing them to the assurance of sustainable feedback from alumni and their employability.
12. To regulate the process of integrating learners in scientific-research activities and direct them to the development of students' research skills.

#### ***Teaching and Support Staffs***

13. To take steps towards rejuvenation of the teaching staff.
14. To develop clear requirements set for the professional qualities of the teaching staff in compliance with each academic program.
15. To develop policy and procedures of regular evaluation of the teaching staff, to improve the tools of evaluation of the teaching and support staffs' activities.
16. To develop a system of teaching staff's needs assessment and to carry out more targeted activities aimed at their improvement in accordance with those needs.

#### ***Research and Development***

17. To clarify the research interests and ambitions of the University, to plan research activities, as well as respective policy and procedures ensuring that vision.
18. To carry out activities which will foster internationalization of research activities.
19. To strengthen the linkage between research activities and education processes carried out at the University.

#### ***Infrastructure and Resources***

20. To carry out regular assessments on the application, availability and efficiency of resources provided to the teaching staff and students.
21. To develop a financial policy which will foster investments.
22. To improve ANAU educational scientific basis and the equipment of laboratories to improve the academic environment necessary for the implementation of academic programs and to ensure compliance with international standards.
23. To regulate information management and documentation processes.

#### ***Social Responsibility***

24. To improve forms of accountability and transparency of internal processes for internal and external stakeholders.
25. To develop policy and procedures defining feedback which fosters the formation of public relations (PR). To share PR experience of Agribusiness Teaching Department and its mechanisms among other ANAU structural units.

#### ***External Relations and Internationalization***

26. To form an environment fostering the experience sharing, internationalization and development of the University, to improve activities of the Unit ensuring PR and internationalization.

#### ***Internal Quality Assurance System***

27. To develop procedures respective to the policy which ensures education quality at ANAU, to develop QA Manual. To publicize all the documents on the ANAU website.
28. To assess the level of satisfaction with human, material and financial resources provided by the University for internal QA processes, as well as to take the results into account for resource planning.
29. To apply QA mechanisms in processes ensuring implementation of professional academic programs.
30. To enlarge involvement of external and internal stakeholders (especially students) in internal QA processes.
31. To assess the transparency of institutional processes and the objectiveness of the information on their quality which is disseminated among internal and external stakeholders.
32. To separate such an amount of information and to operate such mechanisms of information collection which will form necessary bases for QA internal and external assessments.

## ANAU ACTION PLAN ON THE ELIMINATION OF SHORTCOMINGS MENTIONED IN EXPERT PANEL REPORT

ANAU accepts that the recommendations presented by the Expert Panel are within the scope of the University's strategy, and it has submitted for the action plan on the elimination of shortcomings, approved by the Scientific Council (7.02.2014)

Having examined the University's action plan on the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in Expert Panel report, it can be concluded that:

1. According to the action plan, the University undertakes the commitment to implement the Expert Panel's recommendations on more than thirty problems. The Expert Panel finds that all the recommendations requiring urgent changes are involved in the plan, and necessary resources will be provided for the implementation of those activities within the upcoming two years, till the end of 2015.

However, a number of problems requiring urgent solution have not been given much importance to, in particular:

- a) Revised and improved new academic programs which will be defined with learning outcomes and will be benchmarked against other known similar professional academic programs, will be invested in ANAU since 2016, and the recommendation on enlargement of academic programs has been omitted.
  - b) The University finds the issue of rejuvenation of the teaching staff to be urgent while it plans to develop respective policy in 2015. Moreover, the analysis of teaching staff's professional qualities in terms of their compliance with the requirements set by the academic programs will be initiated later, in 2016.
  - c) Other recommendations which require urgent solution relate to the improvement of academic environment necessary for the implementation of professional academic programs – development of educational-material basis and more equipment of research laboratories. The assurance of technical equipment of educational laboratories and chairs has been left out of attention, and the University will elaborate a plan on modernization of research equipments only in 2017.
  - d) It seems that the University should have prioritized the Expert Panel's recommendation on the formation of financial means and coordination of allocation processes as well, however, the University plans to have a policy on budget allocation only in November 2015.
  - e) The University still considers the publication of reports of the Rector and structural units in the field of social responsibility to be the only mechanism of ensuring transparency, meanwhile it was expected that they would be diversified, and the requirement of publication would relate to all the processes.
2. The University has presented its actions and steps towards their implementation the way it was not expected. The University gives more importance to the documentary regulation of processes, in particular to the development of different policies, procedures and mechanisms, than to their implementation and study of the impact in line with the defined objectives. Moreover, in some cases the sequence of elaboration of regulating documents and the logic of

the deadlines set for their implementation need additional clarification. Particularly, the implementation of academic programs was planned to initiate since 2014, and the development of policy on their revision – only in 2015. It is worrisome that the monitoring and assessment of actions and respective steps as well as the development of procedures and indicators are planned to be carried out later than the processes are launched.

3. The University has clearly defined responsible staff member, working group and provided resources for all the activities. The majority of the activities include realistic deadlines although in case of some urgent problems, such as students' involvement in scientific research activities, no phases and final deadlines are differentiated.
4. The outcomes mentioned in the plan mostly do not show the qualitative results brought out from improvement, besides it is unclear what kind of qualitative changes can be expected at the end of the given activity. The University has planned to develop several policies, procedures and mechanisms regulating basic spheres of the University's activity. It is not announced but supposed that those documents will be put into action immediately after the development.

**Conclusion:** The implementation of the major part of the plan does not contain risks. As a result of successful implementation of the plan the University will develop the normative field regulating the University's actions in the main spheres within two years, and the main QA processes will be launched after which the University can make assessment of their impact and effectiveness.

Taking into consideration the above mentioned, ANQA suggests the Accreditation Committee to pay special attention to the implementation of the following activities while making decision:

- 1) To give urgent solution to the problems existing in the spheres of **Professional Academic Programs, Teaching and Support Staff, Research and Development, Infrastructure and Resources, Internal Quality Assurance System.**
- 2) According to the requirements of clause 12 of the Regulation on "State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Educational Programs" or according to the deadlines set by the Accreditation Committee, regularly present a written report to ANQA on the results of the carried out activities
- 3) To take into consideration the remarks about the action plan mentioned in the current conclusion while reviewing the action plan for the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report.

ANQA finds that the presented improvements will foster the fulfillment of the University's ambitions mentioned in the SER and will serve as a basis for the next evaluation.

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Head of Expert Panel

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ANQA Coordinator

Appendix 1

#### Expert Panel Composition:

- Prof. **Marinka Baghdasaryan** – Doctor of technical sciences, Head of the Chair of “Electrical Machines and apparatus”, Faculty on Electrical Engineering, Armenian State Engineering University, RA (Chair)
- Prof. **Maria-Jose Lemaitre** – PhD in Education, Executive director, CINDA, Chile
- Prof. **Samvel Pipoyan** – Doctor in Biological Sciences, Department of Biology and its Teaching Methods, Faculty of Biology, Chemistry and Geography, Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan, RA
- **Meri Badalyan** – Associate Professor, PhD in Economics, Deputy Dean, Department of Management, Armenian State University of Economics, RA
- **Syuzanna Azizyan** - 4<sup>th</sup> year student, Faculty of Finances, Yerevan “Gladzor” University, RA

#### ANQA Support Staff:

- **Anushavan Makaryan** – Associate Professor, PhD in Physical and Mathematical Sciences, Head of the Department on Institutional and Program Accreditation and coordinator of expert panel activities
- **Ani Mkrtchyan**- MA student of Education Management, Responsible for internal quality assurance at ANQA, translator
- **Anna Margaryan** – 2<sup>nd</sup> year MA student at Armenian State University of Economics, secretary-stenographer

SUMMATIVE EVALUATION<sup>3</sup>

The expert panel presented its evaluation per accreditation criteria in the following table:

CRITERION	EVALUATION
<i>1. Mission and Goals</i>	PARTIALLY SATISFACTORY
<i>2. Governance and Administration</i>	PARTIALLY SATISFACTORY
<i>3. Academic programs</i>	PARTIALLY SATISFACTORY
<i>4. Students</i>	PARTIALLY SATISFACTORY
<i>5. Teaching and Support Staff</i>	PARTIALLY SATISFACTORY
<i>6. Research and Development</i>	PARTIALLY SATISFACTORY
<i>7. Infrastructure and Resources</i>	PARTIALLY SATISFACTORY
<i>8. Social Responsibility</i>	PARTIALLY SATISFACTORY
<i>9. External Relations and Internationalization</i>	PARTIALLY SATISFACTORY
<i>10. Internal Quality Assurance System</i>	PARTIALLY SATISFACTORY

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<sup>3</sup> While carrying out the evaluation the expert panel followed the Regulation on “State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Educational Programs” and the procedure described in the ANQA Accreditation Manual carrying out firstly evaluation per standards and then per criteria. “Satisfactory”, “Partially Satisfactory” and “Unsatisfactory” evaluation scale was applied.

The expert panel followed the below mentioned principles while carrying out the evaluation:

- unsatisfactory**: if the University does not meet the demands of the criterion and it is not allowed to continue the activities that way and urgent improvements are needed
- **partially satisfactory**: if the University does not meet all the demands of the criterion but it is realistic that the University can make necessary improvements within reasonable period of time and meet the demands of the criterion
- satisfactory**: if the University meets the demands of the criterion yet there might be need for improvements as well