



CONCLUSION

ON THE ACCREDITATION OF THE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES OF ARMENIAN STATE PEDAGOGICAL UNIVERSITY AFTER KH. ABOVYAN

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT 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

Previous Accreditation decree and date: Not available

LEGAL BASIS

Guided by the regulation on “State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Educational Programs” approved by RA Government decree as of 30 June, 2011 N978-Ն; by N959-Ն (30 June, 2011) decree on approving RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation as well as by ANQA Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel, ANQA representatives together with the expert panel and ANQA coordinator of the accreditation procedure discussed ASPU self-evaluation report, expert panel report, the action plan presented by ASPU on the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the expert panel report, and the expert panel opinion about that action plan after which draft conclusion of the ANQA about the institutional capacities of ASPU was developed.

As a result of discussion **ANQA registered the following:**

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

Submission of application	02 April, 2015
Submission of self-evaluation report	04 May, 2015
Site-visit	25-29 May, 2015
Submission of expert panel report	09 September, 2015
Submission of action plan for elimination of shortcomings	11 September, 2015

RESULTS OF PEER-REVIEW

The expertise was carried out by an expert panel¹ formed according to the requirements of ANQA regulation on the Formation of Expert Panel. The evaluation was carried out based on the 10 criteria² of institutional accreditation approved by RA Government decree N 959-Ն as of June 30, 2011.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While conducting the evaluation the expert panel took into consideration that the University considers its priority the preparation and training of pedagogs 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

¹ **Appendix 1** ` Expert panel composition and ANQA support staff

² **Appendix 2** ` Summative evaluation

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.

STRENGTHS

1. Strategic plans per faculty and chair has been developed in line with the University mission and goals.
2. Internal stakeholders are involved in the strategic planning processes and much importance was given to their comments and suggestions and the latter are reflected in the new Strategic plan of the University.
3. Within the framework of cooperation with Oulu University a number of academic programs were reviewed with the aim of modernizing them.
4. In order to integrate freshmen in education processes informative meetings are organized with the Rector, deans and heads of chairs.
5. The establishment of University-employer cooperation center is an important step in terms of preparing students for labor market and conducting market analysis.

6. ASPU has necessary teaching and support staffs for the accomplishment of the University's mission and the goals of academic programs.
7. Recently teaching staff has been replenished by members of RA National Academy of Sciences and associate members, certain increase for the last three years has been recorded in percentage indicators of doctors and candidates of science among the teaching staff at the University.
8. The University has recourses for the creation of learning environment and effective accomplishment of strategic goals and objectives.
9. The University has official web-site, radio and official newspaper ensuring the accountability and transparency of implemented activities.

WEAKNESSES

1. The mechanisms of needs assessment of external stakeholders are not effective and the involvement of external stakeholders in the process of strategic planning is in a low level.
2. The functions of newly established structural units are not clearly differentiated and often some functions are repeated in different departments/units.
3. There are no general and clear mechanisms of implementing reforms of academic programs and it was noticed that needs assessment of the chair and its analysis was not given much importance to.
4. The involvement of external stakeholders in the development or revision processes of academic programs is not sufficient.
5. University does not have general approach to carrying out benchmarking, methodology on the policy of benchmarking as well as the mechanisms and goals are not clearly defined.
6. 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.
7. Equipment and materials in laboratories and scientific research centers are old.
8. The level of knowing a foreign language among ASPU teaching staff and students is very low.
9. ASPU internal QA system is not fully integrated in the University's activities.
10. PCDA cycle is not fully implemented.

The University is advised to:

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 clarify needs assessment mechanisms of external stakeholders.
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.

PEER-REVIEW ACCORDING TO INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

The international expert has conducted a peer review according to the international standards which is aimed at the enhancement of the University's compatibility on the international level as well as ASPU's ambition to enter the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

Comments

1. The University is in the phase of continuous development. The expert panel noticed some shortcomings between the strategic plan and the activities directed to its implementation. Though it is acknowledged that staff are working tirelessly to achieve the university's mission.
2. Generally the academic programs are in the process of modernization to make the requirements for students, defined learning outcomes and student centered approach more transparent based on the valuable research carried out within the framework of cooperation with Oulu University as well as other international projects. Steps should be taken at the University to develop criteria of academic honesty yet this does not mean that cases of academic dishonesty have been noticed. Faculties and chairs take the notion of academic honesty seriously however the University does not yet ensure that there is such an experience in all faculties and on the level of all academic programs. Due to the operation of set criteria and a number of summative and formative assessment strategy, assessment procedures are becoming more transparent. The students are satisfied with feedback mechanisms but the awareness of the appealing procedure should be enhanced.
3. 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. However it is very important that relevant units of the University realize the ways due to which they can support the staff to record continuous improvement in terms of international research. It is clear that finding funding is difficult however the University should be able to allocate additional financial resources to promote research activities.
4. The Department of international cooperation operates at ASPU and it has relevant staff. The students are aware of chances of international mobility and the international value of the University. Indeed, senior students welcome this procedure and see considerable development during the last five years. Teaching staff and students positively speak about the importance of cultural change, recognition of other cultural values, integration in international and global systems. They understand that such processes are important for all students in terms of enhancing competitive advantage of ASPU alumni. Of course more can be done to motivate the whole staff, to integrate them in international collaborations and to bring curriculum of each chair/academic program into international platform.

5. There are agreements with some international partners for the exchange of data and experience. The expert panel didn't see any evidence of comprehensive and systematic international benchmarking. Some chairs carry out benchmarking but it is not systematically carried out on the institutional level. The University has potential to draw on experience and knowledge of the staff to continue this process.
6. There are mechanisms of data collection but they are not fully developed and integrated yet. The internal unit providing information on the quality of academic programs works fragmented. More systematic approach could be more useful.
7. The expert panel noticed sufficient evidence of the involvement of internal stakeholders in different committees/boards but the representativeness of external stakeholders seems to be limited. Internship department has established strong and effective cooperation with local stakeholders and employers /some of which are ASPU alumni/. If this department cooperates more closely with University-employer cooperation center in terms of involvement of stakeholders and students' employability the results will be more effective.

Recommendations

1. In order that University planning is consistent with its mission and purpose, and with reference to the University's goal (GOAL 3) to introduce the provisions of inclusive education organization to the academic process, the university further should develop its reputation as a fully inclusive institution. It should ensure that the rights and needs all students, irrespective of ability or disability, should be upheld. The University should consider ways in which it can better meet the needs of disabled students and enable more disabled students to access tertiary education. There is expertise within the Chair of Special Education that may be able to contribute to this goal.
2. The university needs to ensure key performance indicators that are quantified and measurable are identified through a process of inter-departmental collaboration so that all internal and external stakeholders both contribute to and take responsibility for their realization.
3. The university should begin to develop a virtual learning environment (VLE) to complement its physical resources. A VLE that provides students with online access to course materials, program information and university regulations will create efficient and effective channels of communication with students and enhance the student experience. ASPU is in a good position to develop a pilot VLE project, drawing on the considerable pedagogic expertise of staff and the information technology skills of staff and students to create a new 'blended' learning approach that is usually found in European universities nowadays.
4. The panel wants to urge the university to extend its research activities in a systematic and targeted way.

5. This could be done by focusing its efforts primarily on a limited number of carefully chosen centers of excellence, such as the Chess Research Centre. ASPU is ideally positioned to develop research centers in the field of tertiary education andragogy alongside pedagogical research. These centers can stimulate innovation and generate new knowledge and inform teaching and learning within the university. This approach has the potential to stimulate more interdisciplinary research. The university should also consider implementing mechanisms for a systematic appraisal of staffs' potential and actual research output so that defined quantitative targets can be set, including those related to research of international quality.
6. In order to deepen the already existing quality culture the panel emphasizes that staff and students should profit from the quality assurance rather than considering it a burden. QA has a significant role in ensuring the rights of both staff and students are protected. In particular, the university should develop clear guidelines for assessment practices to ensure academic integrity and honesty. These might include a handbook for students explaining academic honesty and unfair practice; how it is to be avoided; the likely sanctions for transgressing agreed regulations. Regulated and consistent processes of cross checking or peer-to-peer moderation of assessment practices will ensure there is protection for staff against their academic judgments being questioned by students.
7. The university has a significant human resource and it is recommended that it seeks ways to further invest in the development of staff through systematic and target professional development. Targets may include the improved language skills of staff (so that they can fully participate in international activities) and the improved knowledge and skills of administrative staff in educational management and quality assurance so that they build a sustainable workforce which has the capacity to achieve the long term plans of internationalization.

UNIVERSITY'S COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS ON THE DRAFT EXPERT PANEL REPORT

The expert panel has examined the comments and suggestions presented by the University concerning the draft expert panel report. ANQA also organized a meeting of expert panel and ASPU representatives during which the response of the expert panel was presented and the expert panel report was finalized. Based on the comments and suggestions the expert panel made editorial and technical changes in the report and in the final report there are notes about those changes. However evaluations per criteria were not changed.

ASPU'S ACTION PLAN ON THE ELIMINATION OF THE SHORTCOMINGS MENTIONED IN THE EXPERT PANEL REPORT

Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan admits that the recommendations presented by the Expert Panel are within the framework of the University's strategy and the University has presented action plan and time schedule for the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report. This action plan and time schedule were approved by the Rector on 11.09.2015.

Having examined the University's action plan based on the recommendations presented in the final Expert Panel report, the Expert Panel comes to a conclusion that:

The University has taken up the activities in all its spheres towards improvement in order to solve the identified problems taking into account the recommendations presented by the expert panel. Action plans were developed for the effective implementation of the strategies in all the spheres. However it should be mentioned that some problems have not been properly given importance to, particularly:

- The sequence of activities is mainly logical however in some cases activities and steps for their implementation are not separated which makes the evaluation of the effectiveness of the steps difficult.
- The sequence of most of the steps in the time-schedule is logical and most of the outputs of different steps are directed to the accomplishment of the goals of activities.
- In the action plan often only responsible units are mentioned and not the responsible person.
- The deadlines for the implementation of the activities are mainly realistic. AT the same time deadlines for the implementation of separate steps are mostly missing.
- The outputs of the activities and indicators evaluating the outputs are sometimes combined or are repeated, the definitions are not clear. The evaluation of the implementation of the activities is planned to be carried out through different indicators, however indicators evaluating the influence are mainly missing.
- The information about material and financial resources needed for the implementation of the activities is very generic (sometimes is missing).

CRITERION 1. MISSION AND GOALS

The University plans continuous activities towards the development and improvement of clear mechanisms, tools and key performance indicators (KPIs) for the evaluation of effectiveness of outputs in the accomplishment of mission and goals. Studying

the practice of leading universities and adapting it the University plans to carry out evaluation of the effectiveness of its structural units taking into account the University's directions, especially the peculiarities of the cultural sphere and avoiding generic approaches. Mainly accepting the logic of the presented activities it should be mentioned that the clarification of separate steps will ensure the effective implementation and evaluation of the activity. The University has also given importance to the recommendation of the expert panel to enlarge the involvement of external stakeholders in the development and implementation of Strategic Plan by presenting some activities directed to their active involvement and by developing clear mechanisms for involvement.

CRITERION 2. GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Admitting the recommendation of the expert panel and realizing the necessity of reviewing the structure of the University according to ASPU Rector's order N2-750 as of 08 July, 2015 a committee was formed at the University to carry out necessary structural changes at ASPU. A new administrative structure is planned to be formed which will ensure the compliance of management system with the strategic goals, the effective and targeted accomplishment of strategic goals of management system, the cooperation of different structural units as well as the opportunities of evaluating the transparency and efficiency of decision making procedures. In order to realize all the above mentioned plans the University gives much importance to the investment of clear and transparent mechanisms and toolkit for monitoring, evaluation and improvement of different activities which will ensure the implementation of management according to PDCA principle of quality management.

CRITERION 3. ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

The University has planned to review the mechanisms of monitoring and evaluating the academic programs, different activities have been put forward for the continuous evaluation and revision of those mechanisms directed to the improvement of the academic programs taking into account the opinions of internal and external stakeholders. Activities for ensuring unified understanding and approach on credit calculation, allocation and accumulation have been planned. However the absence of steps for different activities makes it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of the activity. The expert panel advised to develop general approaches for conducting benchmarking clearly defining the mechanisms and goals of the latter however this was not involved in the action plan submitted by the University. The activities directed to the solution of problems concerning academic honesty, particularly the activities towards raising the awareness have not been included in the action plan either.

CRITERION 4. STUDENTS

The University plans to review the mechanisms of student's needs assessment by developing special regulations and conducting regular assessment and analysis of the effectiveness of respective activities. The functions of University-employer cooperation

center are planned to be clarified and fully integrated in the educational processes of the University organizing different activities, providing support in different processes: professional orientation, targeted guidance, etc. Conditions are planned to be created for students with special needs however separate steps are not planned in this respect. The expert panel has given importance to the involvement of students in research activities but in the action plan developed by the University it is not what ASPU is going to do in this respect.

CRITERION 5. TEACHING AND SUPPORT STAFFS

Analyzing the recommendations concerning this criterion the University plans to review the policy on the selection, attestation, training and promotion of the teaching staff which will ensure the formation of outcomes of the academic programs. The issues concerning the generation change were also highlighted. Success can possibly be registered in case of the implementation of all the planned activities. However the deadlines for the implementation of some steps are not clarified and the deadlines for some urgent activities need to be reviewed (e.g. elaboration of development plan and regulation for teaching staff's training).

CRITERION 6. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

The University plans to develop new "improved" strategic plan for research which will enlarge the possibilities of further planning and development of research activities. It is planned "to align the research topics with issues related to theoretical and applied scientific research in the sphere of secondary schools". We think that the investment of research outputs related to the solution of problems existing at secondary schools should be highlighted. It should be mentioned that significant increase in the number and quality of targeted research will form a basis for the development of special policy which will enlarge the influence of the University on the implementation of reforms and giving urgent solutions to the problems at secondary schools using the University's expertise and potential.

Though the University following the expert panel's advice plans to link research activities with education process, is not reflected in the action plan how the University plans to ensure that. Deadlines for most of the activities need to be clarified. Implementation periods and deadlines for each step are not defined but for some activities steps are mentioned.

CRITERION 7. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

The expert panel especially highlighted the necessity of improving material technical base and laboratories in order to ensure the proper environment for the implementation of academic programs as well as the development of mechanisms directed to the needs assessment for the implementation of academic programs. The University has already carried out some activities in this respect, the volume of the implemented activities was evaluated,

the priorities of their implementation was identified. However not all the steps are mentioned which will result in the improvement of resource base and will ensure the provision of necessary resources for laboratories.

CRITERION 8. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

In order to raise the awareness among the society as well as to ensure effective links with public the University plans to have a new web-site will the end of the year. Through new web-site problems concerning feedback and inetractive tools will be solved. The activities and steps directed to the effective planning and implementation of activities with public as well as improvement of evaluation mechanisms are mentioned in the action plan.

CRITERION 9. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

The University has presented a number of short-term and long-term plans for internationalization which are aimed at the creation of “international collaborative environment”. The sequence of the presented activities and steps is logical. At the same time it should be mentioned that they can be put into action in other spheres of the University as well in case of some progress (award of joint degrees only in case the academic programs are in proper level).

CRITERION 10. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

The University has properly analyzed the comments concerning this sphere and following the recommendations ASPU has given importance to the issue of making internal QA unit independent. Some changes have already been made directed to the development of QA culture at the University. Respective steps, responsible people and units, deadline as well as outputs have been set. However in some cases the indicators for the evaluation of the outputs are not in logical links with the outputs set for the internal QA.

Thus the examination of the action plan on the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the expert panel report showed that the University has mainly taken into account the recommendations of the expert panel and is willing to eliminate the shortcomings. The activities directed to the improvement and the relevant steps for the implementation of those activities are mainly in line with the recommendations presented by the expert panel.

Attention is paid to both the documentary regulation of the activities and the development of the concrete actions aimed at the solution of the current problems. The deadlines for the implementation of the activities are mainly clearly defined and realistic except some cases. The responsibility of the actions is put on certain working groups and people.

Conclusion: The expert panel finds that implementation of the main part of the action plan is realistic and does not contain any risks. The implementation of the planned activities and steps will form a basis for the improvement of University's activities in all spheres. The University has necessary human and financial resources for putting the plan into action.

Based on the aforementioned, ANQA suggests the Accreditation Committee to draw ASPU's attention especially to the implementation of the following activities while making decision:

- 1) To give urgent solution to the problems existing in the spheres of **Academic Programs, Research and Development, Governance and Administration, 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 review the action plan for the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report taking into account the remarks about the action plan mentioned in the current conclusion.

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.

**Head of ANQA department
of expertise**

Head of the Expert Panel

ANQA Coordinator

EXPERT PANEL COMPOSITION

The external evaluation of VSU institutional capacities was conducted by the following expert panel:

- **Yelena Yerznkryan**- Doctor of philology, professor, head of the Chair of English language at the Faculty of Romance-Germanic philology at Yerevan State University
- **Alan Howe**- Head of Department and Program Leader for Education and Childhood Studies, Bath Spa University
- **Robert Khachatryan**- PhD, head of the Center for Quality Assurance, Head of the Chair on Education Management and Planning at Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences
- **Sargis Galoyan**- PhD, Head of the scientific research department of pedagogy at National Institute of Education, MoES
- **Mariam Hovhannisyan**- MA student at the Chair on Education Management and Planning at Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences

ANQA support staff

- **Ani Mkrtchyan**- Specialist at ANQA department of institutional and program accreditation, Coordinator of ASPU Institutional accreditation procedure
- **Varduhi Gyulazyan**- Senior specialist at ANQA department of institutional and program accreditation, Coordinator of ASPU Institutional accreditation procedure
- **Ani Mazmanyanyan**- Coordinator at the Center for Quality Assurance at Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences, translator of ASPU Institutional accreditation procedure

SUMMATIVE EVALUATION³

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

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

³ 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” 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

-satisfactory: if the University meets the demands of the criterion yet there might be need for improvements as well