



CONCLUSION

On Accreditation of Institutional Capacities of Yerevan Gladzor University

General Information about the Institution

Full name of the Institution	Yerevan Gladzor University
Acronym	YGU
Official address	7/1 Grigor Lusavorich, Yerevan, 0015, 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 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 Yerevan Gladzor University (hereinafter: YGU) on the basis of self-analysis presented by YGU, Expert Panel report, YGU action plan for the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report as well as Expert panel opinion based on the YGU 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	5 March 2012
Submission of self-evaluation report	2 October 2012
Site-visit	3-7 December 2012
Submission of expert panel report	1 March 2013
Submission of action plan for elimination of shortcomings	14 February 2014

RESULTS OF PEER REVIEW

The expertise of YGU 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 Panel¹. The evaluation has been made according to 10 criteria of institutional accreditation approved by N 959-Ն Decree of the RA Government, 30 June 2011².

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While carrying out the evaluation the Committee has taken into consideration the fact that YGU was established in 1990 as an educational-industrial cooperative, as well as its activity carried out in humanities and socio-economic science. Currently the University is authorized to prepare specialists in the 5 professions for Bachelor's degree (Law, Finance, International Relations, Journalism, Foreign Language) as well as to implement academic programs at MA and PhD levels.

Within its activity the YGU has not undergone accreditation according to the European Standards and Guidelines; the current process of accreditation of institutional capacities is the University's first experience. In 2010 YGU carried out pilot program accreditation of the "Armenian Language and Literature" profession. In 2011 the Quality Assurance Center (QAC) was established in YGU, and in 2012 it received World Bank Grant was aimed at the investment of internal quality assurance system. The above mentioned factors have fostered the investment of a number of education QA mechanisms and the acquisition of specific experience in self-assessment of internal QA related activities.

The learning outcomes (LOs) of YGU professional academic programs (APs) are mainly in compliance with the requirements referring to the professional skills and competences for BA level set by RA NQF, and APs are aimed at provision of competitive specialists. The majority of the programs have been reviewed for several times in recent years. While processing benchmarking course descriptions together with LOs (knowledge, skills, competences) have been elaborated.

The outcomes of the research carried out in the University are of no practical significance, and the linkage between teaching and research is weak. The current mechanisms of integrating learners in scientific-research activities are less effective. The cardinal solution to this problem is currently less probable because of the scarcity of financial resources of the University. The expenditure of financial resources basically formed through tuition fees is mainly directed to the salaries and those resources do not serve for the promotion of scientific-research activities, professional development of the young teaching staff or qualification enhancement of the teaching staff. Respective means for international cooperation are hardly allocated either which endangers the sustainability of the field and the international mobility of students and teaching staff.

The infrastructures and human resources of the University are mainly sufficient for the implementation of the mission and strategic goals. However, in the competition with the state universities in recent years, YGU has gradually lost its attractiveness; the functioning mechanisms of

¹ APPENDIX 1: EXPERT PANEL COMPOSITION AND ANQA SUPPORT STAFF

² APPENDIX 2` SUMMATIVE EVALUATION

student recruitment, selection and admission have not ensured sustainable flow of applicants especially for the full-time BA education.

YGU has made an attempt to compensate the reduction of the number of BA students with the enlargement of part-time education and MA programs. The University currently does not have the possibility to comprehensively assess the effectiveness of the QA mechanisms on educational, consultancy, administrative and other services as far as no stable mechanisms of internal and external stakeholders' feedback have not been formed yet.

YGU teaching staff mainly comprises proficient teachers who have necessary professional potential for the fulfillment of the AP goals. In 2011-2012 66 teaching staff members carried out teaching activity at the University, and 38 of them (58%) are main staff members, 43 of them (65%) have scientific degree. The age of the 40% of staff members is above 65. In recent years the number of teaching staff has been reduced conditioned by the decreasing number of students. The low salary and the lack of motivation make the involvement of young and proficient specialists difficult, and this factor can bring about serious risks.

The vast majority of the teaching staff is involved in scientific-research activities, however, the number of peer-reviewed publications in international periodicals. Very few of the teachers have international experience. The University aims to ensure high level of proficiency in foreign languages and computer skills of the teaching and administrative staffs. If the University succeeds, this initiative is encouraging and it can be an important means for ensuring progress.

With the aim to ensure transparency and availability of its activity, the University tries to apply a number of mechanisms, however, it does not have necessary grounds and tools for external stakeholders' needs assessment yet, neither it has officially approved policy and procedures ensuring accountability to society. This has indirectly led to the formation of a non-effective feedback practice.

The University strives to implement some programs towards enrooting processes regulating external relations and internationalization. Nevertheless, the planned steps are mainly conceptual and they are not fixed by respective work plans. Besides, material and financial resources are still insufficient for ensuring proper level of international mobility of learners and teachers.

The University gives importance to the quality of education and quality assurance which is currently mostly conditioned by external requirements. Human, material and financial resources are provided for the organization of QA processes. The internal QA system is still at a formation stage; respective units responsible for QA have been established, and some procedures have been developed but the involvement of stakeholders in the system is weak, and the basic mechanisms still need to be developed.

STRENGTHS

1. The University has a clearly defined mission, goals and objectives fixed in the strategic plans, which are accepted and fulfilled by the stakeholders of the University.
2. The University has a regulated system of management as well as functional units serving for the fulfilment of the issues referring to the implementation of the existing APs.
3. The curricula and the subject programs which are components of APs are in compliance with the RA state educational standards. ECTS as well as multifunctional new systems of assessment have been invested.

4. The University has a successful practice of involving proficient specialists and it sets clear requirements for the recruitment of the teaching staff as well as their professional qualities.
5. There are comparatively favourable building settings for carrying out educational process, particularly: classrooms, laboratories, academic units, halls, library.

WEAKNESSES

1. The mechanisms and tools for the study of factors influencing the activity of the University are not sufficient.
2. The policy and procedures managing financial resources as well as monitoring mechanisms are missing.
3. The level of involvement of external stakeholders in the assessment and review processes of APs is low.
4. The number of BA students has been decreased during the last 5 years.
5. The opportunities for the development of professional qualities of the teaching staff are limited.
6. The involvement of the University in international scientific-research projects is poor.
7. The budget inflows of the University are ensured through tuition fees. The diversification of income is missing.
8. The mechanisms ensuring social responsibility and accountability of the University are missing.
9. The policy on and separate programs of external relations and internationalization are missing.
10. The level of involvement of internal and external stakeholders in QA processes is low.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mission and Purpose

1. To specify the University mission, strategic goals and objectives as much as possible, to activate the activities of the Quality Assurance Center and Career Center in the direction of full identification of internal and external stakeholders' needs.

Governance and Administration

2. To increase the transparency of the decision-making process, to develop a clear policy and procedures which will enable more effective involvement of students and teachers in the decision-making process.
3. To involve all the stakeholders and subdivisions in the environmental scanning of the University through developing clear procedures for revealing, researching, analyzing and evaluating all the factors.
4. To appoint external stakeholders as supervisors of master's theses and research papers and involve them in the development of the topic.
5. To establish financial allocation procedure and its accountability mechanisms.

Academic Programmes

6. To plan and organize selective and facultative courses irrespective of the number of students.
7. To develop a regulation on examinations and respective checkings ensuring clear mechanisms of appeal and examination retaking.
8. To carry out benchmarking within the scope of all the professions and processes at all levels of education.
9. To regulate monitoring, assessment of effectiveness and regular review of APs.
10. To ensure participation of all the stakeholders while developing APs and describing their LOs.

Students

11. To review the student recruitment, selection and admission policy and procedures taking into consideration the University's ability to increase its attractiveness and the number of potential applicants.
12. To regulate the organization processes of extra-curricular activities for providing academic support and guidance to the students, in particular, envisage facultative courses for students with poor academic progress by raising their level.
13. To develop procedure and time schedule on applying for the administrative staff.
14. To activate the Career Center activity by fostering the establishment of the link between students and employers. To keep students updated about vacancies.
15. To establish a unit responsible for the coordination of research activities at the University which will be managed by the vice-rector on scientific affairs and which will also include the activists from the Student Scientific Association.

Teaching and Support Staffs

16. To develop clear procedures of attestation, peer-review, performance analysis which will enable to more clearly evaluate the compliance of faculty professional competences to the AP goals and intended LOs.
17. Besides indicating directions of faculty professional development, to develop targeted procedures for the allocation of financial and other resources.
18. Develop regulation on competition for the staff selection. Pay special attention to the young and future teachers by preparing them for teaching activity.
19. To establish multifunctional scheme for the evaluation of faculty professional growth.

Research and Development

20. To specify the University's research interests and research strategy. To develop unified research directions for the University and/or chairs.
21. To develop procedures promoting young staff, academic honesty and struggle against plagiarism.
22. To ensure the link between research activities and education processes.

Infrastructure and Resources

23. To activate cooperation with other universities in order to accumulate additional resources and to improve the learning environment.
24. To develop criteria for the evaluation of the effectiveness of resource usage based on the result analysis of educational processes.
25. To make the allocation of the budget for the research development and innovation more transparent and publically available, to plan optimal structural scheme of budget expenditure and follow it.

Social Responsibility

26. To develop appropriate mechanisms /accountability regulation/ which will ensure that the accountability system set for the internal and external stakeholders is effective enough.
27. To develop long-term and sustainable cooperation projects with the state and public organizations which will foster the enhancement of public relations.
28. To invest efficient means of service provision and transfer of knowledge by the University to the society.

External Relations and Internationalization

29. In addition to the development of strategy on external relations and internationalization, to set up clear action plan for the next few years.
30. To coordinate foreign language courses for the staff. Set up effective mechanisms which will identify the foreign language proficiency among students and teachers.
31. To create an environment at the University which will foster experience exchange, internationalization and development, as well as to improve the functioning of the infrastructure ensuring external relations and internationalization.

Internal Quality Assurance System

32. To develop procedures in accordance with the YGU policy on education quality assurance, and a QA handbook. To publish all the documents on the University website.
33. To develop and approve internal QA structure and clearly differentiate the role, functions, responsibilities and authorities of separate units.
34. To evaluate the satisfaction with human, material and financial resources which the University provides for the management of internal QA processes as well as to take into consideration the results in planning.

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

Yerevan Gladzor University 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 and time schedule on the elimination of shortcomings (hereinafter: Action Plan).

Having examined the University's action plan on the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in Expert Panel report, **it can be concluded** that according to the Action Plan, YGU undertakes the commitment to implement all the recommendations presented by Expert Panel within the scope of all the 10 criteria. The Expert Panel finds that all the recommendations requiring urgent changes are involved in the Action Plan, and necessary resources will be provided for the implementation of those activities according to the time schedule within the upcoming two years, till the end of 2016.

However, the Expert Panel differentiates a number of recommendations about the actions which do not sufficiently reflect the picture of steps for improvement set by the University. In particular:

a) In the Criterion on "*Governance and Administration*" it has been recommended to increase the level of transparency of decision-making process, to involve students and teachers in decision making process. However, as it is mentioned in the Action Plan, the University only plans to increase the level of awareness of internal stakeholders on ways of their participation in the University's management, as well as to conduct surveys for the identification of effectiveness of the policy on integration of internal stakeholders /point 4.3.1. and point 4.3.2./.

b) In the Criterion on "*Students*" it has been recommended to regulate the organization processes of facultative courses aimed at the provision of support and guidance to students. The University has partially given importance to this urgent recommendation as far as it plans to develop a regulation on organization and implementation of facultative courses only in September 2015 and only for MA students who have no basic professional education /point 18.2.1./.

c) The assessment of teachers' performance is also planned to make rather late – in December 2015 without clarifying the assessment results. Besides, the responsible bodies are not the chairs but the Rectorate and the Education Department /point 22.5.1./.

d) The following recommendations have been actually bypassed: "to make the allocation of the budget for the research development and innovation more transparent and publically available" and "to plan optimal structural scheme of budget expenditure and follow it". As a financial resource, the budget for research is still planned to be used for publishing issues /point 27.4.2./.

From the perspective of assurance of financial resources, the Action Plan overall has a comparatively poor substantiation; only in 52 cases among 170 steps human resources /YGU staff/ is mentioned, and only in 12 cases - YGU budget.

e) in the presented Action Plan the University has given more importance to the management of documentation of processes, i.e. to the development of policies, procedures and regulations and not to their implementation and impact analysis through specific indicators measuring their effectiveness. In many cases the outcomes are formulated in such a way that they do not show what qualitative changes can be expected at the end of the given activity.

Generally taken, it can be concluded that the sequence of actions and time schedule of the activities mentioned in the Action plan of Yerevan Gladzor University are logical; there are respective activities and steps in all the fields, responsible person or working group and allocated resources are mentioned for all the steps, and most of the steps are feasible within realistic deadlines. It is clearly described how each step should be taken, and the responsible people and deadlines are mentioned. As the Action Plan has shown, YGU has apprehended and accepted the majority of the recommendations of the Expert Panel.

Conclusion: In case of more concrete implementation of the steps mentioned in the Action Plan within the upcoming two years YGU will have an opportunity to improve the normative framework regulating

the University's processes, as well as the implementation of the main activities after which the evaluation of their impact and effectiveness can be addressed.

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 Programmes, Infrastructure and Resources, Social Responsibility, External Relations and Internationalization, 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.

Prof. Harutyun Marzpanyan,
Head of Expert Panel

Anna Karapetyan,
ANQA Coordinator

EXPERT PANEL COMPOSITION

- **Prof. Harutyun Marzpanyan** – Doctor in Economics, Vice-rector of University of Economy and Law after Av. Mkrtchyan, Head of the General Economics Chair at the Ijevan branch of YSU, Head of the Expert Panel
- **Fabrice Henard** – Project Manager of OECD Higher Education Management, Expert Panel member, France
- **Gurgen Hovhannisyan** – Associate Professor, PHD in Geography, Head of Bachelor Programs at YSU
- **Samvel Mkhitaryan** – Associate Professor, PhD in Technical Sciences, “Technopark” Economic Development Foundation, Lecturer at Russian-Armenian (Slavonic) University, Expert Panel member
- **Arpine Mkrtchyan** – 2nd year MA student of Yerevan State Linguistic University after V. Brusov, Expert Panel member

ANQA support staff

- **Anna Karapetyan** – Senior Specialist of the Department of Institutional and Program Accreditation at ANQA, coordinator of Expert Panel activities
- **Alina Khachikyan** – Specialist of the Department of Institutional and Program Accreditation at ANQA, translator of YGU institutional accreditation process
- **Lilit Ghazaryan** – Specialist at ANQA Secretariat, Secretary-Stenographer of YGU institutional accreditation process

SUMMATIVE EVALUATION ³

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>	UNSATISFACTORY
<i>9. External Relations and Internationalization</i>	UNSATISFACTORY
<i>10. Internal Quality Assurance System</i>	PARTIALLY SATISFACTORY

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”, “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: