



CONCLUSION

ON THE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES OF YEREVAN STATE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY AFTER M. HERATSI

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSTITUTION

Full name of the Institution: **Yerevan State Medical University after M.
Heratsi**
Acronym: **YSMU**
Legal form: **State Non-Commercial Organization**
Official address: **2 Koryun str., Yerevan, 0025, 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 YSMU self-evaluation report, expert panel report, the action plan presented by YSMU 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 ANQA about the institutional capacities of YSMU 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

01 March, 2012

Submission of self-evaluation report	2 April, 2013
Site-visit	09-12 June, 2013
Submission of expert panel report	21 October, 2013
Submission of action plan for elimination of shortcomings	20 February, 2014

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 carrying out the evaluation it was taken into account that during its 90-year activities Yerevan State Medical University has provided higher medical education as an educational and scientific state higher education institution (HEI). YSMU's activity is aimed at the organization of medical, pharmacological, sociological, humanities, basic scientific research and educational activities. During its activity the University has not undergone accreditation process thus the current self-assessment procedure based on 10 criteria of institutional capacities was the first attempt of the University. In accordance with RA on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education approved in 2006, two-tier higher education system was approved at YSMU. As it is defined in the mission the University should “prepare up-to-date and competitive specialists having knowledge, skills and competences in line with Armenian National Qualifications Framework (ANQF)”. All the BA and MA academic programs have been revised and approved since 2006 to align with the requirements of two-tier education. The policy on integrating research within the methodology of the academic program is not completely developed yet. The University has a good practice of teaching foreign students in Armenian, Russian and English languages.

YSMU has taken actions aimed at improving its infrastructure and bringing it in line with the academic programs. The strategic plan gives importance to the infrastructure including lecture-rooms, building conditions, logistics base, reconstruction and re-equipment of clinics, library and other components of the learning environment. The student scholarships, funds from trainings of doctors and nurses, thematic scientific funding as well as the funds for the medical services constitute the main part of state budgetary entries. The extra-budgetary entries are mainly generated from tuition

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

² **Appendix 2** `Summative evaluation

fees of students. However the University still has the lack of financial means for obtaining necessary resources and equipment aimed at the fulfilment of mission and goals. YSMU has motivated and devoted teaching staff which fosters tight cooperation and group discussions. There are 1100 staff members involved in teaching, scientific and clinical activities, 162 DR/SC of which and 80 are Professors in Medicine. In accordance with the strategic goals the teaching staff has been recruited. However there is a need to recruit more teachers from other universities as well as to carry out processes aimed at the enhancement of their qualifications and professional development.

Students YSMU are involved in different structural units of the University which fosters their active participation in educational process. Currently, there are about 5.500 students enrolled in the studies at seven faculties of the University, 1140 of them are foreign students. The admission of students is carried out in accordance with the regulation approved by RA Government. The University carries out activities which are aimed at the organization of additional courses for students and provision of consultancy by the teaching staff as well as student support services. YSMU develops plans for career planning of students. The structure of governance of the University is multilayer which ensure regulated decision making process. The internal structure of collecting information on academic programs and other processes is not yet coordinated at institutional level. The management system of the University gives opportunity to the teaching staff and students to be enrolled in different Councils of University management however there is still a need to ensure the cooperation with external stakeholders.

To ensure education quality at YSMU the Department for Reforms and Integration functioned during 2006-2011. The aim of the Department was to study the practices of European and American medical schools and to make suggestions on making changes in education process, derived from the requirements of Bologna system. In 2012 the Centre for Quality evaluation and assurance as well as Steering committee and respective faculty committees were established. Policy and strategy of the Centre as well as corresponding regulations and procedures have been developed which are aimed at quality evaluation of activities carried out by different units of the University.

STRENGTHS

- 1) YSMU has a clear and well-articulated **mission** which is fulfilled due to motivated teaching staff. The staff works closely together, and that they discuss issues in a collegial manner.
- 2) Committed **teaching staff** is involved in the processes of development of academic programs and guidance of the students.
- 3) Especially the **students' involvement** at all levels is something to cherish. Students' voice is heard and it has an influence on the decision making.
- 4) The **programs** have a well-detailed and very structured curriculum based on disciplines. For all programs intended learning outcomes have been defined.
- 5) The **teaching and learning methods** are traditional, and thus they comply with the traditional discipline and teacher based curriculum.

- 6) The students' **assessment** also is rather traditional, and as such in alignment with the curriculum.
- 7) Within the limited budget the University was able to build a **learning environment** including a library and IT-facilities. These are sufficient given the present situation.

WEAKNESSES

- 1) **Research** activities are too limited both in terms of output and in the number of staff and students involved in research. Also less than 5% of the **budget** is allocated to research.
- 2) The University lacks a clear **educational concept**.
- 3) The relation between the intended learning outcomes and the **assessment** is not made explicit. Especially the assessment of clinical skills needs further attention.
- 4) Only a limited number of students and staff participate in international activities. International mobility of both students and staff members is poor. In this respect clinicians are at an advantage here as compared to the teaching staff.
- 5) The panel has seen no evidence of international **benchmarking**. Some chairs are involved in benchmarking but it is not done at institutional level.
- 6) Limited **IT system** for staff and students.
- 7) The influence of **external stakeholders** is limited.
- 8) The University's **focus** is mainly on the MD programmes, while it offers other programmes of equal importance.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXPERT PANEL

Mission and Goals

1. To ensure compliance among the University's stated ambitions, policy and performance taking into account the current strategy which is directed towards the integration into the European Higher Education Area;
2. To pay attention to the establishment of effective cooperation with external organizations with the aim to ensure compliance between the learning outcomes of the academic programs and the labour market demands;
3. To develop mechanisms for efficient involvement of stakeholders in the education processes;
4. To expand opportunities for external stakeholders' involvement and impact;
5. To define a more structural approach to the evaluation of the University's mission and goals, to identify indicators and to appoint staff members responsible for the evaluation and follow-up.

Governance and Administration

6. To enhance the efficiency of the management system through set mechanisms;

7. To elaborate or improve the mechanisms for short-term and mid-term planning and monitoring in accordance with the University's mission and goals;
8. To develop indicators which permit the "diagnosis" and follow up of the factors that impact all the spheres of the University's performance, actively involving external stakeholders and taking into account their feedback in decision-making processes;
9. To apply the principle of quality management in the development of mechanisms for policy and procedure management;
10. To improve the mechanisms for assessing data collection on the effectiveness of the University's academic programmes and other processes, their analyses and application, using integrated digital system.

Academic programs

11. To consider a multidisciplinary thematic approach for the programs;
12. To implement a clearly defined policy on the selection of teaching and learning methods promoting student-centred learning taking into account the importance of students' interactive participation and learning in small groups;
13. To improve the policy on the assessment of program effectiveness;
14. To strengthen the link between education and research.

Students

15. To establish a career centre which will strengthen the link between the labour market and the programmes, and will help the students to find their way after graduating;
16. To develop the mechanisms and tools for quality assurance, so as to evaluate and improve the efficiency of student consultancy and support services;
17. To focus more on research and research activities in all programs (for more details see criterion 6)
18. To drastically increase efforts in internationalisation for students.

Teaching and Support Staffs

19. To ensure active participation of the teaching staff in research activities;
20. To develop a clearly defined policy and procedures for the professional development of the teaching staff, and to identify the specific needs for further improvement;
21. To organize professional training for young teachers;
22. To engage teachers from abroad;
23. To give the teaching staff an opportunity to implement trainings outside YSMU.

Research and Development

24. To redevelop the policy that reflects the University's interests and ambitions in research; teachers and students should be actively involved in research and leaders in research programs need to adhere to international standards;

25. To focus on specific research areas in accordance with the University's strategy;
26. To give research a more central role and structure in the organisation and the academic programs;
27. To ensure more active contribution of the teaching staff in terms of internationalization of scientific activity and to evaluate the effectiveness of those activities;
28. To clarify more the mechanisms for linking research and educational process by evaluating their efficiency;
29. To promote international cooperation and actively establish scientific relations with leading foreign medical centres and universities;
30. To reconsider the budget allocated for research and deploy strategies to attract external financial resources for research programs.

Infrastructure and Resources

31. To increase the financial resources for acquiring necessary resources and equipment;
32. To consider investing in IT-facilities;
33. To take the evaluation of the needs of subdivisions as a basis for the allocation of financial resources;
34. To develop procedures, tools and schedule for the assessment of efficiency, applicability and availability of educational resources;
35. To implement an integrated IT-system and clarify the policy on information and documentation process management.
36. To improve the facilities for students with special needs.

Social responsibility

37. To develop more diverse tools to ensure the accountability of YSMU's processes and procedures;
38. To develop formal procedures of getting feedback as well as mechanisms to evaluate the efficiency of these procedures.

External relations and internationalization

39. To set up a clear policy and regulations fostering a structured international relations;
40. To put more emphasis on international benchmarking;
41. To localise and make use of international best practices for research and education;
42. To develop standards and mechanisms to assess the performance effectiveness in regard with foreign relations and internationalization;
43. To enlarge the opportunities for foreign language teaching.

Internal quality assurance system

44. To ensure that formal quality assurance procedures are put into practice;
45. To continue to invest in the actual involvement of especially the teaching staff so as to further develop the quality culture;
46. To enlarge the human, material and financial resources aimed at raising the efficiency of management of internal quality assurance processes, involving more stakeholders;
47. To regularly carry out self-evaluation processes and to ensure the existence and applicability of feedback mechanisms;
48. To strengthen the link between management and quality assurance processes (see also criterion 2).

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

As a result of the peer review according to international standards it is recommended:

- 1) Given the present situation of a rather traditional University and the fact that YSMU has a strategy to modernize and to direct it towards the European Higher Education Area, there is a discrepancy that the University should plan to overcome. Also the University should further discuss and clarify the meaning and consequences of Bologna. The panel recommends defining a **project for change management** including a timetable with clear set aims and objectives for the next 5 years.
- 2) The University should try to make its internal structure less complicated and more effective. A good start might be to reconsider the function of all committees, and to reduce their number. In the end, the University might want to opt for a **lean organisational structure**.
- 3) Wanting to reform the educational process the panel advises to further support a **professional educational office** for modernizing teaching and learning environment. This central office with educational experts well acquainted with the latest international developments can support staff in all educational matters such as curriculum design, assessment and student support. It is essential to have a clear educational concept based on the latest international insights and made fit for purpose. An educational office of professionals can take the lead in developing this concept involving all internal stakeholders. Also good use can be made of good practice present in the University (cf. Public Health).
- 4) A special concern regards the **composition of staff and the policy of recruitment**. The University needs to invest in attracting staff from abroad. Also the number of visiting professors and the exchange of staff members need to be increased. The University should also stimulate and facilitate its Armenian staff members to go abroad and do part of their training outside their own university. And the University needs to invest in professional

educational training of young staff. There are plans to start a centre for training, and that is a positive development.

- 5) Make sure that all teachers and students are actively involved in **research**. In essence, it is necessary to rethink the strategy for research and to give research a more central role in the University and its programs. Leaders in research activities need to adhere to international standards. Research should be an obligation for all students and staff members, and should be structurally integrated in the curriculum meaning that ECTS points needs to be allocated to their research activities. Teachers in a University should also be researchers. It is also necessary to focus on a selected number of areas in alignment with the University's strategy rather than every professor concentrating on his own research subject. Creating centres of excellence is certainly something to consider. Also the role of the present research centre needs to be clarified and as mentioned before, reconsider the budget allocated for research.
- 6) As for the resources, it is necessary to develop an integrated IT-system for students. The University should consider investing in IT-facilities such as an e-library and computers instead of in paper books and journals. Some equipment in the clinics is state-of-the-art. At the same time, some basic equipment is missing or out-dated. Cooperation with other clinics, universities and even commercial enterprises should be considered so that high-technological and therefore expensive machines, devices etc. can be shared. Also the facilities for students with special needs should be improved.

The recommendations presented during the institutional accreditation of YSMU mainly relate to the ambition of the University to carry out changes in line with Bologna process.

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

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

1. The University has taken the commitment to follow the main recommendations on issues presented within the framework of all the 10 accreditation criteria:
 - a) Within the framework of the criterion "Mission and Goals" the University has mainly correctly apprehended the essence of the issue derived from the recommendations however here no steps have been planned to towards ensuring the efficient involvement of stakeholders in the educational process as well as enlarging the opportunities of involvement and impact of external stakeholders. Besides, the time-period of the activities

mentioned in the action plan is too general and it's impossible to figure out their logical sequence.

- b) Within the framework of criteria “Governance and Administration”, “Students”, “Teaching and Support Staffs”, “Research and Development”, “External Relations and Internationalization” and “Internal Quality Assurance System” the University has mainly correctly apprehended the essence of the issues derived from the recommendations and has developed corresponding actions.
- c) Within the framework of the criterion “Academic Programs” the University has mainly correctly apprehended the essence of the issue derived from the recommendations. However the actions directed to the development of the policy on assessing the effectiveness of academic programs are not clear. Besides, the people responsible for the planned actions are not clearly specified.
- d) Within the framework of the criterion “Infrastructure and Resources” the University has mainly correctly apprehended the essence of the issue derived from the recommendations. However the activities directed to the development of IT integrated system and clarification of the policy of managing information and documentation process are not clear. The outcomes and their indicators are not clearly defined.
- e) Within the framework of the criterion “Social Responsibility” the University has to some extent correctly apprehended the essence of the issue derived from the recommendations. However the actions and steps which should ensure the formal process of the University’s feedback as well as the mechanisms evaluating their effectiveness are not clearly mentioned in the action plan.

Having examined the University’s action plan on the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report from the perspective of peer-review for the compliance with international standards, it can be concluded that:

- a) The action plan does not clearly depict the **project for change management** including a timetable with clear set aims and objectives for the next 5 years.
- b) YSMU has reflected upon the issues of **clarifying internal structure of the University** through the improvement of management system.
- c) Concerning the **modernization of teaching and learning environment** the University has planned to carry out modernization of medical educational concept which assumes changes in academic programs based on international benchmarking and external demands. However the University hasn’t paid proper attention to the observation according to which it is necessary to have an educational concept in line with current international developments. Neither the University has reflected on the clear changes which are planned

to make in curricula as well as in the student assessment process. The approach to international benchmarking are not clear in the action plan.

- d) Concerning the **teaching staff** the University has planned to develop program of professional training of teaching staff (including young teachers). The experts also have given importance to the training of teaching staff abroad as well as to the enlargement of opportunities of inviting foreign professors.
 - e) The University has planned activities towards the recommendations of peer-review process concerning **research**. The activities mainly refer to the development of new policy, strategy, research priorities as well as to the assurance of link between research and educational processes, enhancement of funding for science. Some steps are also planned to promote internationalization of research activities.
 - f) Concerning **resources** the University has planned needs assessment and evaluation of the effectiveness of current resources as well as allocation of financial resources. The University has reflected upon the issue of integrated digital system aiming at the improvement of mechanisms evaluating the effectiveness of academic programs and activities of the structural units. However from the perspective of allocating necessary resources for the students it is not clear what opportunities the digitalized system gives to the students. The approach to the replenishment of necessary modern equipment are not clear either.
2. There is a clear action plan for most of the strategies.
 3. The sequence of most of the activities in the time-schedule is logical however in some cases the time-period for the implementation of the activities is very general and their logical sequence can't be found out. Most of the actions have realistic deadlines however in some cases concrete deadlines are missing.
 4. In some cases the people responsible for the activities are not clearly mentioned and in the cases of the separate actions responsible units are mentioned.
 5. For the evaluation of most of the actions one or more measurement points are implemented sometimes impact measurement points are used. Some outcomes and their indicators need to be reformulated.

Conclusion: *The implementation of the main part of the action plan does not contain any risks. The University has planned to launch the implementation of necessary activities in the main spheres in the nearest two years. The documents regulating the processes are in the phase of development now. Those documents will give an opportunity to further evaluate the effectiveness of the activities carried out at the University.*

Based on the aforementioned, ANQA suggests the Accreditation Committee in its decision to promote YSMU to:

- 1) To give urgent solution to the problems existing in the spheres of **Academic Programs, Teaching and Support Staffs, 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) Taking into account the ambitions of internationalization of University’s activities, to review the action plan paying attention to the recommendations and results of the peer-review according to international standards.
- 4) 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 the Expert Panel

ANQA Coordinator

Composition of the expert panel

1. Prof. Dr. **Samvel Pipoyan**. PhD, professor at the Chair of Biology of the Armenian State Pedagogical University, the cofounder of the NGO “Reforms in Professional Education” Board member of Life-Long Learning Armenian League; head of the expert panel
2. Prof. Dr. **Ben Van Camp**, PhD, em. Professor in Haematology, Past Rector Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Former Dean of the Medical School, President of the Board of Governors of the University Hospital (UZ Brussels);
3. Prof. Dr. **Harry Hillen**, PhD, em. professor of Internal Medicine and dean emeritus, Faculty of Health, Medicine and Life Sciences, Maastricht University, Netherlands;
4. Prof. Dr. **Levon Yepiskoposyan**, PhD in Biology, Anthropology, Head of the Laboratory of Ethnogenomics of Institute of Molecular Biology, National Academy of Sciences, Member of European Anthropological Association (EAA), Armenian Association for Molecular and Cellular Biology;
5. Anna Margaryan, graduate student at Armenian State University of Economics, Education Management Department;

International viewers

- **Michèle Wera**- policy advisors from NVAO
- **Frank Wamelink** - policy advisors from NVAO

ANQA support staff

- **Anushavan Makaryan**- PhD in physics and mathematics, associate professor, head of the Department of Institutional and Program Accreditation, senior coordinator of YSMU institutional accreditation
- **Anna Karapetyan**- MA in political science, senior specialist in the Department of Institutional and Program Accreditation, coordinator of the process
- **Anush Mkrtchyan** – Student at Yerevan State Linguistic University after Brusov, translator
- **Arpine Mkrtchyan**- MA 2nd year student at Yerevan State Linguistic University after Brusov, secretary-stenographer

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>	SATISFACTORY
<i>3. Academic programs</i>	SATISFACTORY
<i>4. Students</i>	SATISFACTORY
<i>5. Teaching and Support Staffs</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>	UNSATISFACTORY
<i>10. Internal Quality Assurance System</i>	SATISFACTORY

³While 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