



National Center For Professional
Education Quality Assurance
Foundation

**EXPERT PANEL REPORT
ON INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF
GAVAR STATE UNIVERSITY**

Yerevan 2017

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of Gavar State University (hereinafter GSU) is carried out based on the application presented by the University. The process of institutional accreditation is organized and coordinated by the “National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance” Foundation (ANQA), funded by the TEMPUS Govern Project.

ANQA is guided by the Regulation on “State Accreditation of RA Education Institutions and their Academic Programs” set by the RA Government Decree N978 (30 June 2011) as well as by the Decree N959-Ն on “Approval of RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation”.

The expertise was carried out by the expert panel formed in accordance with the demands set by the ANQA Regulation on “Formation of the Expert Panel”. The expert panel consisted of 4 local experts and 1 international expert. The site-visit was observed by one international observer.

The institutional accreditation is aimed at not only the external evaluation of quality assurance but also the continuous improvement of quality of the University’s management and academic programs. Hence, two issues were put forward to the European and local experts:

- 1) to carry out an expertise of institutional capacities in accordance with the RA standards for state accreditation;
- 2) to carry out an evaluation from the perspective of compliance with international developments and integration into European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

This report comprises the results of the evaluation of GSU institutional capacities, i.e. the observations according to the RA accreditation criteria for professional education and peer-review of the international expert from the perspective of GSU’s integration into EHEA.

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SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

The GSU expertise was carried out by the independent expert panel¹ which was compiled according to the demands set by the ANQA Regulation on the “Formation of the Expert Panel. The evaluation was carried out according to the 10 criteria for state accreditation, approved by the RA Government Decree N 959–Ն (30 June 2011).

While carrying out the expertise the expert panel took into consideration that “Gavar State University is the only state higher education institution in Gegharkunik region of the Republic of Armenia which has ambitions to efficiently implement professional academic programs, to prepare competitive specialists with Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees, to carry out educational-methodical, scientific-research, teaching and learning activities, to expand external cooperation as well as to foster socio-cultural development of the region”.

The University didn't undergo accreditation according to the state accreditation criteria and respective regulation which functioned till 2011. GSU has undergone the current process of accreditation according to its application.

GSU implements 16 BA full-time and part-time academic programs and 13 full-time MA academic programs. The programs are structured on the credit basis and in accordance with the state educational standards. They were reviewed in 2015. With the aim to improve some of the GSU academic programs, the curricula of National Polytechnic University of Armenia were studied. GSU doesn't implement academic programs in foreign languages but some courses in foreign languages have been developed to ensure internal mobility. Within the framework of RETHINKE in cooperation with University of Coruna (Spain) GSU implements a double diploma program in the profession of “Environmental and Natural Resources Management”. GSU has launched the educational process by applying the outcome-based approach and has developed intended learning outcomes of academic programs and separate courses. However, the expert panel finds that it is necessary to review their formulations and to do mapping in accordance with the descriptors of the respective levels of NQF.

The current resources of GSU are not sufficient for ensuring efficient learning environment and formulating learning outcomes of academic programs. Except for the laboratory of Natural Sciences, the major part of other laboratories, lingaphone cabinets and classrooms is not equipped with necessary material-technical base. GSU needs to ensure availability of international library funds to its libraries, to modernize and digitize its literature resources, and to ensure packages of licensed computer programs of research and statistic analyses in the computer rooms. The main financial inflows are formed by the tuition fees and state funding. The financial management of the University does not imply resource allocation according to strategic directions and academic programs. The financial resources are distributed in short-term (annual) period and are mainly allocated to the salary fund and some part of them – to other articles. GSU has necessary administrative, teaching and support staffs to fulfill its mission and to implement academic programs. The formation of the staff with qualifications necessary for the implementation of the courses serves as a basis for the selection of the teaching staff, however, the requirements set for the professional qualities of the teaching staff are generic. The University has 145 teaching staff members, 15 of them are Doctors of sciences, and 60 of them hold PhD. The 31% of teachers are associate professors, and 5,5% of them professors. There are mechanisms of evaluating teachers' professional qualities and their performance according to which the scientific-pedagogical and educational activities of the teaching staff are being evaluated. However, the application of the current mechanisms needs to be coordinated, and the efficiency of tools and mechanisms isn't evaluated. A number of trainings have been held at GSU, and the processes directed to the professional development of the teaching staff are currently at the stage of investment. The University is quite active in terms of involving young teachers; 43,4% of the teaching staff

¹ Appendix 1. CVs of expert panel members

members are young teachers.

The recruitment, selection and admission of GSU students are carried out in accordance with the respective regulations. In order to promote efficient learning of students, the University creates opportunities for the organization of facultative classes and provision of consultancy. The expert panel is positive about the fact that students can apply to the administrative staff and the rector for support and guidance and accordingly to receive feedback, but at the same time the process of identifying students' academic needs to be coordinated. The University isn't active in terms of undertaking activities directed to students' career orientation.

GSU gives importance to the transition from teacher-centered approach to student-centered approach. However, the transition is not clear and complete yet. As the meetings with students stated, students' insight and comprehension about the new approach are not clearly formulated.

In GSU interactive teaching is being organized but the selection of teaching and learning methods is not coordinated yet which is conditioned by the lack of generic approach to the selection of teaching and learning methods. In the University the multifunctional assessment system is being functioned about which students are kept informed through guidebooks of academic programs. GSU has developed a regulation on consideration of student appeal and a concept on academic honesty. The expert panel thinks that there is a problem in terms of the weak link of assessment methods with teaching and learning methods and learning outcomes. The University doesn't do mapping of teaching and learning methods, assessment methods and learning outcomes yet.

The strategy reflecting the interests and ambitions of the University in research and the steps directed to them are not clearly defined yet. The research activity is limited in GSU in terms of both implementation of international research activities and involvement of students and teachers in research activities. The long-term strategy and mid-term and short-term action plans reflecting the University's research interests and ambitions are lacking. There are research directions at chair level but they are not clearly formulated as plans, and the research directions of the chairs are not always linked with the strategic priorities of the University. In spite of the fact that GSU is the only regional education institution, the research directions of the University are not derived from the issues of regional development. **There isn't any structural unit or a responsible staff member, except for the Scientific Council, Faculty Councils and Vice-rector on Scientific Affairs, regulating the scientific activity of the University**². With the aim to develop its scientific-research activity, GSU hasn't yet adopted a united strategic approach, and the achievements in research are mainly reached due to personal initiatives.

The scientific-research activity of the University is not managed in a regulated way, and the lack of inter-chair research and exchange of practice accumulated by chairs does not foster the proportional development and dissemination of achievements.

The research, final papers and master theses are viewed as a mechanism interlinking the research activity and educational process, however, as the observation of research papers and theses has shown, the research and innovative components form a little part of the papers.

The top management of the University gives importance to the creation of environment which fosters practice exchange, development and internationalization. GSU has partnership agreements with a number of local and international organizations. The University is involved in 22 international projects within the framework of which it cooperates with 75 international organizations. In the scope of international projects some of the staff members have participated in a number of seminars, trainings and workshops. There is a need to evaluate the impact of the projects on GSU's activities and the best practice obtained within the framework of international activity of the University.

The expert panel finds it positive that GSU makes efforts to efficiently carry out educational and other activities. Nevertheless, GSU management system needs more clarification and further simplification. The

² This statement has been changed on the basis of the remarks provided by the University. In the previous version it was formulated in the following way: "... ***There isn't any structural unit or a staff member responsible for the regulation of the scientific activity of the University...***".

expert panel is also positive about the existence of documentary basis regulating the activities of GSU's structural units, but there is a need to evaluate the efficiency of the management system. Teachers and students have the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes relating them but the efficiency of mechanisms of involving stakeholders isn't evaluated yet. The scanning of factors having an impact on the activity of the University is not coordinated. The administration of GSU's policies and procedures is partially implemented in accordance with the PDCA cycle of quality management; the main processes are at the stages of planning and implementation.

The expert panel finds it positive that the University makes efforts towards investment and operation of internal QA system. However, steps taken to the efficient operation of the system are not coordinated yet. Although the University has developed a QA manual, the mechanisms which would give the University an opportunity to evaluate the process of continuous improvement of all the processes are not clarified and complete. The imperfection of mechanisms and toolset evaluating the efficiency of different processes as well as the absence of analyses do not give an opportunity to evaluate the impact of QA processes on the improvement of academic programs and the activity of the University. Although GSU has developed a documentary basis and a structural unit has been respectively established, the QA system is not fully integrated in the University's processes.

STRENGTHS OF THE INSTITUTION

1. GSU has a sound working environment.
2. The academic programs are developed in accordance with GSU's mission and educational standards.
3. The internal stakeholders have the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes relating them.
4. The staff is open and ready for improvements.
5. The teaching staff is motivated and devoted.
6. GSU organizes interactive learning.
7. GSU administrative staff provides necessary guidance and consultancy to students.
8. The protection of GSU students' rights are always in the center of attention which is conditioned by the joint activities taken by the Student Council and consultants attached to student groups.
9. The University is actively involved in international projects.
10. GSU has established a Quality Assurance Division and has developed a QA manual.

WEAKNESSES OF THE INSTITUTION

1. The strategic goals and objectives of the University are not clear and measurable, and the policy and procedures on the evaluation of their implementation are lacking.
2. Teaching, learning and assessment methods are not interlinked with learning outcomes.
3. The external stakeholders are passively involved in the development and revision of academic programs in particular and in academic processes of the University, in general.
4. The university-employer cooperation and the activity of Alumni and Career Center of GSU are not directed to the fulfillment of functions defined by the Charter yet, i.e. assurance of students and alumni's career, increase of their competitiveness in labor market as well as implementation of programs aimed at cooperation between the University and employers.
5. GSU doesn't carry out activities in the direction of professional development of the teaching staff.
6. Few resources are provided to both teachers and students to promote their scientific-research activities.
7. The resource base of GSU needs improvement, in particular, in terms of ensuring technically equipped classrooms and laboratories, enriching material-technical base, creating necessary conditions for students with special needs. The resource base for scientific development is poor.
8. The level of foreign language proficiency of both teachers and students is low.
9. The PDCA (plan, do, check, act) cycle of quality management is not fully applied.
10. The internal quality assurance system is not fully integrated into GSU's processes yet, and the quality

culture is at the stage of formulation.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

Mission and Purpose

1. To review and clarify the mission of the University by defining more realistic, measurable and more comprehensible (for stakeholders) ambitions in terms of awarded qualifications and intended outcomes.
2. To amend the Strategic Plan (SP) of the University by defining strategic directions and/or priorities, to develop short-term and mid-term action plans and the precise time-schedule of SP implementation.
3. To clarify the steps in the SP monitoring plan, deadlines set for their implementation and responsible people as well as mechanisms and sources of data collection.

Governance and Administration

4. To clarify and simplify GSU management structure by ensuring compliance of GSU strategic goals and management system, responsibilities and functions of the staff of all structural units and to ensure their interaction. To clarify the list of necessary documents available in different structural units.
5. To invest mechanisms of evaluating the efficiency of activities of administrative units as well as identifying and disseminating best practices of chairs and faculties.
6. To develop short-term and mid-term action plans and respective mechanisms enabling their implementation, monitoring and evaluation in order to guarantee the fulfillment of the goals set by the SP.
7. To review the current mechanisms and regulations in order to operate the administration of the policies and procedures at all levels of the University's management in accordance with the PDCA cycle of quality management.
8. To develop mechanisms and procedures which will enable to scan the factors having an impact on the activity of the University, as well as to collect necessary valid data on the efficiency of academic programs and the processes being carried out in the University.

Academic Programs

9. To map the learning outcomes of academic programs with NQF by pointing out their compliance.
10. To invest policy on the selection of teaching-learning-assessment for reaching the outcomes of academic programs and courses by emphasizing their compliance with the outcomes and the student-centered approach.
11. To clarify the policy on credit allocation and calculation by linking it with the learning outcomes.
12. To review syllabi of the courses, aimed at ensuring compliance of the content of part-time courses with the learning outcomes as well as adjusting the differences existent in the syllabi of full-time and part-time courses.
13. To develop clear criteria for the evaluation of master theses, research, final and individual papers by ensuring the link of the criteria with the content-related (research and analytic components) and technical requirements.
14. To carry out benchmarking with the aim to make the academic programs in line with suchlike academic programs in terms of their content.
15. To enroot processes of monitoring of academic programs, evaluating the efficiency of their implementation and improving them by broadening the identification of stakeholders' needs and their involvement in the processes.

Students

16. To develop mechanisms of evaluating the efficiency of functions which are fulfilled in the direction of applicants' professional orientation.

17. To improve the mechanisms of identifying and evaluating students' academic needs, to regulate the processes of organization of facultative classes and provision of consultancy.
18. To regulate processes of providing guidance and support to students, to create an opportunity for professional orientation directed to the selection of selective courses.
19. To direct the university-employer cooperation and the activity of Alumni and Career Center to the research of labor market needs, GSU alumni employability and assurance of their sustainable feedback.
20. To develop mechanisms which will promote the enlargement of students' involvement in research processes and the formation of students' research skills and abilities.
21. To create an academic environment which will be available for students with special needs by ensuring the accessibility of learning for them.

Faculty and Staff

22. To develop a clear and transparent mechanism of HR management and to involve it in the SP as a strategic direction. To stipulate the process of involving young teachers.
23. To set clear requirements for professional qualities of the teaching staff in accordance with each academic program of the University, taking into consideration the peculiarities of the concrete academic programs.
24. To invest a system of regular identification of teachers' needs and to serve it as a basis for teacher trainings.
25. To invest clear and regulated mechanisms of evaluation, promotion and progression of teaching and support staff.

Research and Development

26. To clarify the specific directions of research ambitions, interests and activities of the University. To develop a long-term strategy which will reflect GSU's ambitions and interests in research.
27. To plan the scientific-research activities of chairs according to scientific-research priorities of the University and to monitor them. To foster the implementation of research activities at individual, chair and inter-chair levels.
28. To invest clear mechanisms which will ensure the link of scientific-research activity with the learning process. To develop a policy according to which the implementation of scientific research will become a learning method.
29. To make respective financial investment in the direction of scientific-research development and creation of favorable conditions for carrying out scientific activity. To allocate financial means from the budget for research development and to continue searching for external financial sources for research projects.
30. To promote the commercialization of research outcomes by reinforcing the university-research-business link.
31. To develop a strategy on internationalization of research activity, to foster the implementation of joint research projects in cooperation with other universities and international publications.

Infrastructure and Resources

32. To improve the resources of GSU structural units by providing material-technical means to re-equip the classrooms and laboratories and to acquire modern facilities. To consider it as one of the strategic directions of the University's development. To take steps towards ensuring structural resources for students with special needs. To analyze to what extent the existing resources ensure necessary environment for the implementation of academic activity which derives from the goals mentioned in the SP.
33. To coordinate the processes of identifying GSU stakeholders' needs aimed at efficient fulfillment of the University's mission and strategic goals as well as assurance with necessary resources.
34. To make analysis of resources necessary for the assurance of implementation and continuation of each academic program, thus promoting the operation of mechanisms of top-down and bottom-up planning.

35. To develop and invest a policy on financial management which will foster the fulfillment of aims of academic programs and the assurance with necessary means and equipment. To invest mechanisms of allocation of financial resources, evaluation and analysis of cost-effectiveness in accordance with the strategic directions and priorities of the University.
36. To develop a unified policy on management of information and documentation processes by investing electronic system of documentation circulation and date collection.
37. To develop mechanisms of evaluating the efficiency, applicability and availability of resources provided to students and teachers.

Social Responsibility

38. To improve the mechanisms of ensuring accountability from the perspective of implementation of the goals set by the SP. To regularly evaluate the efficiency of the process by respectively improving the mechanisms and tools which check the validity and efficiency of accountability means.
39. To improve mechanisms of ensuring feedback by the large scope of society with the aim to regularly receive feedback on the quality of carried out activities and education provided by the University.
40. To create a policy on information collocation with respective time-schedule and ensure the availability to target stakeholders.
41. To develop a policy and strategy, procedures and respective mechanisms of transferring knowledge to the society and implementing facultative educational and consultancy services.

External Relations and Internationalization

42. To develop and invest procedures of promoting the establishment of external relations and internationalization.
43. To clarify the operational functions of external relations and international cooperation of the University.
44. To make identification of needs/analysis(es) in order to evaluate the efficiency of activities directed to the internationalization and development of external relations as well as to raise the level of awareness. To evaluate the efficiency of facultative courses which aim to develop language skills.
45. To develop and invest mechanisms of planning financial means for internationalization.

Internal Quality Assurance

46. To review the policy on internal quality assurance and goals making the activity of the University in line with them. To establish a base of indicators of education quality assurance and to ensure the improvement of the indicators through the implementation of the SP.
47. To evaluate the satisfaction and efficiency of human, material and financial resources provided by the University for the implementation of internal QA processes.
48. To regularly make evaluation on the efficiency of QA Division's activity, to identify needs of the staff and carry out trainings and courses of professional development based on the results in order to guarantee the fulfillment of the goals set by the mentioned Division. To take steps towards increasing the autonomy of the QA Division.
49. To regularly evaluate the efficiency of provided services and implementation of academic programs.
50. To regulate the data management processes and to clarify the mechanisms of information management and dissemination among different structural units of the University. To segregate certain amount of information and to operate mechanisms of information collection which will provide necessary bases for the internal and external evaluations of quality assurance.
51. To ensure the application of PDCA cycle in all the processes and at all levels of management of the University ensuring the reinforcement of quality culture.

PEER REVIEW FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF EDUCATION INSTITUTION'S INTEGRATION INTO EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

The activity of GSU, according to its mission, is directed to the internationalization of the University as well. Thus, one of the tasks of the international expert was to assess the degree of the fulfillment of the goal relating the GSU internationalization and the establishment of internal quality assurance system for promoting continuous improvement of all institutional processes. The European Standards and Guidelines (Part One), experts' experience in the sphere of external quality assurance gained in other countries as well as the degree of meeting the quality criteria set by ANQA have formed the basis for the evaluation of the University's progress in the implementation of the Bologna Process declarations. The observations and recommendations formulated herein have been made based on the GSU institutional self-evaluation report, the documents which include the Action Plan and the Five Year Strategic Plans (the documents available in English) as well as findings made during the on-site visit.

Observations

- In general, there is a big number of documents (more than 60) which verify the organizational and institutional shape of the University. However, there are some processes which are not carried out in a regulated way, and some of the processes are too regulated, and sometimes the processes and regulations are inconsistent. It should be mentioned that there is a certain gap between regulations and their implementation.
- GSU launched its strategic planning in 2011 by the elaboration of the "Concept (Provisions) on GSU Development and Reforming" and the "GSU Five-year Strategic Plan (2011-2016)" which was reviewed in 2016 and was renamed "GSU Five-year Strategic Plan (2016-2021)". In spite of the mid-term action plans, e.g. the guidelines for the implementation of the mission and goals are missing. GSU launched its strategic planning in **2006 by the elaboration of the "GSU Five-year Strategic Plan 2006-2011" which was reviewed in 2011 and 2016 and was renamed "GSU Five-year Strategic Plan (2011-2016)", "Concept (Provisions) on GSU Development and Reforming" and "GSU Five-year Strategic Plan (2016-2021)"**³. Moreover, the Action Plan 2011-2016 is existent. In spite of the action plan, e.g. the guidelines for the implementation of the mission and goals are missing.
- Sometimes it's not clear which objectives the given goal will attain. The articulated objectives are not always tangible and measurable. The time-schedule of the implementation of the actions mentioned in the action plan of the Strategic Plan is not presented by years which would give an opportunity to evaluate and analyze the current efficiency of the implementation of the goals and actions.
- The university has given importance to the viewpoints of its internal stakeholders in the process of development of the SP. Their participation is ensured by making individual suggestions and by presenting **six-month**⁴ annual reports at the institutional level. The University also creates favorable conditions for the involvement of external stakeholders. However, the mechanisms of involving external stakeholders in terms of ensuring continuity are not clearly developed. The analysis of labor market needs as such is not carried out. It is limited by the provision of suggestions on the improvement of some courses. Moreover, there is no generic institutional approach to the involvement of external stakeholders; the form of cooperation with stakeholders differs from chair to chair.
- In GSU 16 BA full-time and part-time academic programs and 13 full-time MA academic programs are being implemented. Although the goals, objectives and intended learning outcomes are defined in

³ This statement has been changed on the basis of the remarks provided by the University. In the previous version it was formulated in the following way: "...*in 2011*...".

⁴ This statement has been changed on the basis of the remarks provided by the University. In the previous version it was formulated in the following way: "...*six-year*...".

the descriptions of the academic programs, the link with differentiated teaching and learning methods for achieving them is missing. The European student-centered approach is at the stage of implementation, but there is still a need to raise the level of awareness on student-centered education which was often mentioned by the students. Although the University has developed a regulation on education based on credit-system, the clear policy on allocation of credits is missing.

- The University strives for the gradual implementation of a three-stage education system which is crucial from the perspective of becoming a full member of the EHEA.
- There is a developed procedure on monitoring and improvement of development, approval and implementation processes of academic programs taught at GSU. But there still exists a gap between measures for improvements and evaluation of results of the measures.
- The assurance of close relationship between education and scientific research should be one of the key features of any higher education institution. Universities operating in the EHEA actively participate in research projects funded from external sources, including international ones. GSU chairs themselves choose the research directions but they are not formulated as action plans and the research directions of the chairs are not always linked with the strategic priorities of the University. GSU considers itself as a regional university but it hasn't defined the research directions which will derive from the regional issues.
- There isn't any unit the activity of which will be directed to the regulation of the scientific-research activity of the University. Besides, the clearly developed concept on promotion of scientific-research activities of the young teaching staff of GSU is missing.
- The University has defined the establishment of external relations and internationalization as a highly prioritized goal in its mission. GSU participates in 22 international projects, including 11 EU TEMPUS projects and cooperates with over 75 international organizations. The University plans to develop a new program and to submit it. Besides, there is no structural unit responsible for external relations and international cooperation. Moreover, the direct interconnection between research outcomes and improvement of education quality is missing.
- The progress of the operating internal QA system is of utmost importance for achieving the declared goal of investing quality culture in the University. GSU internal QA system has been functioning over 6 years. The approved policy and procedure on revision of internal QA system of the University are missing. The current monitoring and evaluation systems of QA are not properly disseminated yet. Analyses on their efficiency aren't yet present either. Therefore the PDCA cycle isn't fully closed. The different processes of the University are still in the phases of planning and implementation, and the evaluations are only made partially, therefore the improvements do not have analytical basis. Although various processes of the University are frequently being reviewed, the necessity for change is not grounded. The review isn't often substantiated by evaluation results and it isn't conditioned by the analyses of strong and weak points. It's still too early to evaluate the formulation of quality culture.

Recommendations

- The long-term strategy of the University and strategic action plans should be improved in accordance with professional requirements of strategic management and particularly in alignment with realistic and measurable aims, guidelines, objectives and tasks. There is a need to develop a procedure for the assessment of the mid-term and long-term strategy.
- It is recommended to manage the tension between regional orientation and internationalization: **regional orientation** requires applied sciences, analyses of regional demands, orientation at regional labor market, satisfying the contemporary requirements/challenges. **Internationalization** requires distinguished research, foreign language proficiency (writing and oral), publications in highly ranked international journals, qualifications required in European and even international labor markets, facing future challenges.
- The University should develop indicators for the evaluation of implementation of strategic goals and define mechanisms evaluating the progress of improvement.

- The link between the planning, organization, implementation and evaluation of effectiveness of financial resources and strategic goals should be defined better to improve the management of resources allocated to research, internationalization, and quality assurance.
- The existing degree of internationalization should be reflected in the curricula and syllabi of academic programs according to its strategic importance in order to increase the level of internationalization. Moreover, it is recommended to establish a structural unit which will function in the direction of internationalization of the University and which will develop a systematic approach to its management.
- The research activity should be strengthened more by improving the foreign language proficiency of the teaching staff, researchers and students and by fostering publications and master theses in English.
- It is recommended to improve the professional skills of the QA Division staff. Moreover, the QA mechanisms and the strategic goals need to be aligned.
- The involvement of all staff members, internal and external stakeholders of the University in QA processes is crucial from the perspective of investing systemic quality culture, but the scope of the involvement of students and external stakeholders is narrow. Besides, the authors of the self-evaluation report are aware of this problem. It is recommended to establish and operate a system of promotion which will keep the majority of stakeholders updated and will involve them in QA processes.
- It is recommended to design strategies to improve the visibility of the University's performance indicators to the society, especially that of Gegharkunik region.

06 April 2017

Angin Martirosyan

Signature of the Chair of the Expert Panel

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

The external evaluation of institutional capacities of Gavar State University was carried out by the expert panel having the following composition (find attached the Appendix 1. CVs of Expert Panel Members):

1. **Angin Martirosyan** – Chair of expert panel, PhD in Technical Sciences, Head of Department on Educational-Methodical Affairs and Academic Programs, National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia
2. **Arkadi Papoyan** – PhD in Biological Sciences, Senior Lecturer at Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences
3. **Mher Markosyan** - Doctor of Technical Sciences, Head of Chair on Informatics, Computer Engineering and Management Systems, National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia
4. **Margret Bülow-Schramm** – Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor of University of Hamburg
5. **Sevada Sargsyan** – First-year MA student, Faculty of Law of Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia

The activities of the expert panel were coordinated by Ani Mkrtchyan, specialist of Institutional and Program Accreditation Division, responsible for ANQA Internal Quality Assurance.

The translation was provided by Ani Shahinyan, Coordinator at Center for Quality Assurance of Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences.

The activities of the expert panel were monitored by Gayane Ananyan, assistant to the ANQA Director.

The composition of the expert panel was agreed upon with the University and was appointed by the ANQA Director.

All the members of the expert panel, including the translator and the coordinator, signed agreements of confidentiality and independence.

PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

Application for State Accreditation

GSU applied to ANQA for institutional accreditation in 12.07.2016 by submitting the application form, the copies of the license and respective appendices.

The ANQA Secretariat examined the data presented in the application form, the attached documents and the ANQA electronic questionnaire completed by the University.

After the decision made on the acceptance of the application request (15.07.2016), a tripartite agreement among ANQA, Coordinating University of TEMPUS Govern project and GSU was signed (23.07.2016). The time-schedule of activities was prepared and approved.

Within the deadline set by the time-schedule, GSU presented the Armenian and English versions of its self-evaluation report according to the form set by ANQA and the package of attached documents.

The self-evaluation was carried out by the team formed according to the order of GSU rector.

Preparatory Phase

The ANQA coordinator observed the report with the aim to check its correspondence with the technical requirements of ANQA. Afterwards, the ANQA Secretariat sent the self-evaluation report to the expert panel the composition of which was agreed upon with the University and was approved by the ANQA Director.

In order to prepare expert panel activities and to ensure the efficiency of the processes, the responsible people (R. Topchyan, A. Makaryan) conducted five trainings on the following topics:

1. RA accreditation procedure, criteria and standards,
2. Main functions of expert panel members,
3. Preliminary evaluation as a preparatory phase of preparing expert panel report,
4. Methodology of observation of documents and resources,
5. Techniques and ethics of meetings and questions.

Having observed the self-evaluation and the attached documents of the University, the expert panel made a preliminary evaluation according to the form and prepared the list of additional documents for further observation as well as questions and issues to be discussed with different structural units and target groups.

Within the scheduled time the expert panel summarized the results of the preliminary evaluation and formed a time-schedule of the site-visit⁵. In accordance with the ANQA manual on expertise, the time-schedule comprised the planned meetings with all the target groups, close and open meetings, review of documents, visits to different structural units of the University.

Preparatory Visit

Taking into consideration the distance between the University and Yerevan, it was decided to discuss the issues on the preliminary site-visit at a distance. During 21-25 November 2016, GSU had an online discussion and agreed upon the agenda of the expert panel site-visit, the list of additional documents for further observation was presented, discussions and mutually agreed decisions on organizational, technical, informative issues as well as those relating ethical norms and behavior of participants of the meetings were made.

The Site-visit

The expert panel site-visit took place from 15 to 19 November 2016. According to the time-schedule, the activities of the site-visit were launched with a close meeting to discuss and agree upon the evaluation frame, the issues to be observed during the site-visit, the strong and weak points of the University according to criteria, the procedure of focus groups with the international expert, as well as to clarify further steps.

Afterwards, the members of the expert panel discussed the evaluation scale which has two levels: 1)

⁵ Appendix 2. Agenda of expert panel site-visit for GSU institutional accreditation

meets/corresponds with the requirements of the criterion, 2) **does not meet/does not correspond** with the requirements of the criterion.

The expert panel, the ANQA coordinator, the observer and the translator were present at the site-visit.

The site-visit started and was closed with the meetings with the rector. In order to clarify some issues, the representatives of the teaching staff, students, deans, heads of chairs, employers and alumni were selected randomly from the list provided beforehand by the University. All the meetings were organized according to the schedule.

The coordinator of the accreditation process clarified that according to the Manual on the conduction of RA professional education expertise and with the aim to ensure the objectivity and substantiation of the expert panel evaluation, the members of the expert panel are authorized to require necessary documents and to give questions for the clarification of the given issue.

During the site-visit the expert panel conducted the observation of documents⁶ and resources⁷ and had meetings in different structural units of the University.

The information received during different meetings as well as the main outcomes of observations, including observation of documents, were summed up at the end of each day and during the summative meeting, organized at the end of the site-visit. The expert panel discussed the main results and came into an agreement on the accreditation standards and afterwards - on the issue of meeting the requirements of the criteria. The final conclusions on the satisfaction of the criteria requirements were made by all members of the expert panel through open discussion based on consensus.

Expert Panel Report

The expert panel prepared the draft report based on the self-evaluation report presented by the University, the observed package of attached documents and the observations made during the site-visit as a result of regularly organized discussions. Based on the observations extracted after the discussions, the Chair of the expert panel and the ANQA coordinator prepared the draft of the expert panel report which was agreed upon with the panel members. The international expert prepared her conclusion and a separate document of peer review which were translated and handed over to the Chair of the expert panel.

The Chair of the expert panel and the ANQA coordinator were responsible for including the opinion and approach of the international expert into the report. The document of peer review was fully included in the report. The summed up preliminary report which had been agreed upon among all the local experts of the panel was translated and sent to the international expert. Based on the remarks of the international expert, the preliminary report has been re-edited and it reflects the main outcomes of the evaluation, considerations and recommendations.

The preliminary report was presented to the University on 10 February 2017.

The University provided the remarks and comments on the report to ANQA on 27 February 2017.

The University provided the remarks and comments on the report in Armenian which was provided to the local experts and was translated and sent to the international expert. On 15 March 2017 ANQA organized a meeting for the University and the representatives of the expert panel during which the panel's feedback was presented. Taking into consideration the remarks and comments of the University, the expert panel prepared the final version of the report which was approved by the expert panel on 6 April 2017. The changes made in the draft version of the report by the expert panel are mentioned as footnotes on the respective pages.

Ani Mkrtchyan

Signature of the Coordinator

06 April 2017

⁶ Appendix 3. List of reviewed documents

⁷ Appendix 4. Resources observed by the expert panel

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

HISTORY. Gavar State University is the only state higher education institution in RA Gegharkunik region, established in 1993. In the beginning, the University prepared specialists in 6 professions, afterwards it broadened the scope of its activity by providing 16 academic programs for Bachelor's degree and 13 - for Master's degree. In 2016, according to the order of the RA Ministry of Education and Science, the University was given permission to organize third-level higher education in "Շ.00.03- Finances, Accounting" specialty.

GSU's mission is to efficiently implement professional academic programs in different directions of Natural and Social Sciences, to prepare competitive specialists with Bachelor's and Master's qualifications taking into account the requirements of the labor market, to carry out educational-methodical, scientific-research, teaching and learning activities and projects through international cooperation as well as to fulfill socio-cultural functions in RA Gegharkunik region.

GSU carries out its activities being led by the Strategic Plan 2011-2016 and its action plan. The interests and ambitions of the University are defined in the self-evaluation and SP.

EDUCATION. Gavar State University implements professional academic programs for Bachelor's and Master's degrees of higher education. Currently the 11 chairs of the University implement BA full-time and part-time and MA full-time education in different directions of Human, Natural and Social Sciences.

In its mission the University also emphasizes:

"...- efficient implementation of professional academic programs for higher education,
- preparation of competitive specialists with Bachelor's and Master's degrees taking into account the requirements of labor market."

GSU gives importance to:

- development of learners' knowledge, skills and competences in line with the constantly changing requirements of labor market,
- localization of modern teaching methods and technologies,
- continuous improvement of knowledge assessment system in accordance with the credit system principles and measurements,
- development of services promoting career of students and alumni,
- modernization of academic environment.

RESEARCH. GSU gives importance to the assurance of link between educational process and scientific-research activity. The scientific-research activity is formulated under the following goals:

- integration of science, education and production,
- promotion of investment of scientific and technological achievements in educational process,
- highlighting the research component in MA academic programs,
- assurance of practical direction of master theses (MA research papers),
- increase of efficiency of scientific-research internship and scientific seminars,
- establishment of efficient system of preparing specialists engaged in research activities,
- assurance of practical direction in research papers,
- investment of the third level of education, clarification of prioritized scientific directions of chairs,
- consideration of scientific publications of the teaching staff in the ranking process,
- fostering the improvement of regional environment,
- fundraising for the implementation of scientific and research projects.

INTERNATIONALIZATION. The defined strategic directions of GSU internationalization are as follows:

- research and application of best practices of worldwide leading universities,
- reproduction of international best mechanisms of organizing educational processes,
- activation of the University's external relations,

- broadening the scope of international cooperation year by year,
- membership of EU educational-academic programs aimed at assurance of the University's development and progress and the implementation of academic mobility programs for students and teachers,
- integration of international scientific-technical system.

QUALITY ASSURANCE. The system of quality assurance was invested in GSU in 2010. The University has set the following priorities in the given sphere:

- increase of education quality in all spheres,
- assurance of quality of educational, teaching and learning environment.
- formulation of quality culture.

While making evaluation, the expert panel was led by the "compliance with goals" principle and the above mentioned information was viewed as the main ambitions and goals of the University.

I. MISSION AND PURPOSE

CRITERION: The Tertiary Level Institutions' (TLI) policy and practices are in accordance with its mission, which is in accordance with the Armenian National Qualifications Framework (ANQF).

FINDINGS

1.1. The TLI has a clear, well-articulated mission that represents the institution's purposes and goals as well as is in accordance with the ANQF.

GSU launched its strategic planning in 2006 by the elaboration of the document on "GSU Five-year Strategic Plan 2006-2011" which was reviewed in 2011 and 2016 and was renamed "GSU Five-year Strategic Plan (2011-2016)", "Concept (Provisions) on GSU Development and Reforming"⁸. The University developed a new Strategic Plan for 2016-2021 which, as compared with the previous one, didn't undergo significant changes.

The University implements BA and MA academic programs the qualifications of which, according to the document of "Comprehensive Framework of GSU Higher Education Qualifications", are in accordance with the 6th and 7th levels of the NQF. GSU was given permission to implement postgraduate education in one profession in February 2016.

Although GSU Charter defines that according to the organizational structure of the University, GSU implements different academic programs in the spheres of Humanities, Natural and Social Sciences, only the directions of Natural and Social Sciences are defined in the mission of the University. In the GSU SP 2016-2021 which includes 13 chapters, the University's mission, vision, goals and principles of its activity as well as a row of activities in 7 major areas are formulated, which have been reshaped as goals in the action plan of the SP. In the SP of the University strategic goals as such are not formulated. In the Concept on GSU Development and Reforming 2011-2016 the goal of the University is defined the formulation of which has remained unchanged in the new SP. In the GSU SP the main strategic directions and/or priorities for the given period are not defined, particularly it is not mentioned what approaches or principles will be applied for the implementation of the presented steps to be taken in the direction of the 7 major areas.

In the action plan of the GSU SP 2016-2021 the defined goals correspond to the steps presented in the 7 areas of the SP. The same points presented in the two documents have different positions. The goal of the University defined in the SP is divided into 90 steps, which are reshaped into 89 "goals", 190 actions together with "85 intended indicators of efficiency evaluation" in the action plan. No indicators of evaluation, resources and potential threats are defined for the goal of "Re-equipment of the University's technical base, creation of modern technological environment". At the same time, the presented indicators refer only to the goals presented in the action plan, and the intended outcomes and indicators for their evaluation are not defined within the frame of actions. The time-schedule for the implementation of the activities mentioned in the action plan of the SP is not presented by years.

1.2. The TLI's mission, goals and objectives reflect the needs of the internal and external stakeholders.

The considerations/comments of internal stakeholders were given importance to in the process of development of the GSU SP. The internal stakeholders of the University participated in the development process of the SP by making suggestions. The GSU structural units participated in the development of the SP by presenting their six-month or annual reports the results of which were summed up in each annual report of the rector. Afterwards the new SP was developed and as a result of one-year discussions it was approved.

The University takes steps towards involving external stakeholders, however, their involvement is poor because of the lack of respective mechanisms.

⁸ This statement has been changed on the basis of the remarks provided by the University. In the previous version it was formulated in the following way: "...in 2011 by the elaboration of the "Concept (Provisions) on GSU Development and Reforming" and the "GSU Five-year Strategic Plan (2011-2016). The University developed a new Strategic Plan for 2016-2021...".

The identification of external stakeholders' needs is carried out at institutional level in case of the feedback obtained within the framework of internships. As such, the analysis of labor market requirements for involving external stakeholders is not carried out. The employers of the University brought an example of cooperation with GSU by mentioning about the suggestions they made on the improvement of courses which the University took into account. Although the University gives importance to the satisfaction of external and internal stakeholders' needs, the targeted and coordinated activities of cooperation are missing.

1.3. The institution has approved mechanisms and procedures to evaluate the achievement of its mission and purpose and to further improve them.

The evaluation of the implementation of the GSU mission and the steps involved in the strategic areas are carried out through the rector's annual reports. The annual reports which are considered to be the only mechanism evaluating the achievements of the University are not directly linked with the GSU strategic goals and are not grouped according to the differentiated areas of the SP.

Parallel with the SP, GSU has developed a plan of monitoring of actions which in fact repeats the formulations of the actions defined in the SP. There are evaluation indicators presented in the monitoring plan of the SP which are mainly quantitative, and the principles of monitoring, data collection and analysis as well as mechanisms of risk management are not defined in the SP.

CONSIDERATIONS

In the sphere of provision of RA professional educational services GSU is a separate unit which has its own mission and strategy. The GSU activity is mainly in line with its mission. The expert panel is positive about the fact the GSU mission is formulated in the SP 2016-2021 but the mission is too generic and it doesn't reflect the peculiarities of the University. It also needs to be amended from the perspective of educational degrees GSU provides and its professional spheres. The expert panel finds that in the GSU mission the regional development needs should be highlighted as far as it is one of the crucial institutions having the role of solving regional problems in line with the requirements of the labor market.

The expert panel finds it worrisome that the goals, priorities and objectives as such are not formulated in the SP. It cannot be clearly seen what objectives should be attained for the fulfillment of the goal of the University's activity and to what extent they are directed to the implementation of the mission. The goal of the new SP, likewise that of the the SP 2011-2016, is defined as a goal of the University by the implementation of which it isn't possible to evaluate the efficiency of the implemented strategy in the given period. From this perspective the goal of the strategy will be continuous and repetitive and won't ensure the sustainable development of the University. The strategy should clearly reflect the opportunities and ways of development for the upcoming years.

As far as the time-schedule of the action plan of the SP isn't presented by years, the current efficiency of the implementation of the goals and actions cannot be evaluated and analyzed. Such approach can give rise to problems for the efficient fulfillment of the goal or "goals" defined in the SP. The expert panel finds that the University needs to develop methodology for setting deadlines for the implementation of each goal of the SP, for defining and measuring intended outcomes as well as for financial planning. The expert panel is positive about the fact that the University gives importance to the involvement of external and internal stakeholders.

GSU finds it necessary to improve the activities or actions in the strategic areas, however the SWOT and/or suchlike analyses and intended outcomes which are necessary for planning actions are missing. The non-clearly developed qualitative and quantitative indicators of the intended outcomes as well as the incomplete operation of the evaluation system and mechanisms will bring to the wrong depiction of the situation which will in its turn result in wrong or non-targeted decision-making by the University.

In the new SP the analysis of the implementation of the SP 2011-2016 isn't included either. The analysis would give an opportunity to clarify the main achievements and the reasons of unsolved problems which have also been included in the new SP -the core document of ensuring the development of the University.

The expert panel is positive about the efforts GSU makes towards development of indicators evaluating the efficiency of the strategic goals as far as the rector's annual reports shouldn't be the only means of evaluating the effectiveness of the implementation of GSU mission and goals. The absence of a generic approach to evaluation and improvement and reliable mechanisms makes the identification of the University's achievements and shortcomings, as well as the processes of further efficient planning risky.

Although the University has developed a monitoring plan, the actions defined in the GSU SP have the same formulations as in the monitoring plan which doesn't allow to observe the efficient implementation of the defined actions and if necessary, to guide their improvement.

SUMMARY. Taking into consideration the fact that the University has a formulated mission and the activity of the University is mainly carried out in compliance with it (in spite of the necessity to clarify the mission, goals and objectives and to make them more measurable), and internal stakeholders are involved in the process of development and review of the SP (external stakeholders are partially involved as well), the expert panel concludes that GSU meets the requirements of the Criterion 1.

CONCLUSION. The correspondence of GSU institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 1 is *satisfactory*.

II. GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

CRITERION: The TLI's system of governance, administrative structures and their practices are effective and intend to the accomplishment of its mission and purposes by keeping the governance code of ethics.

FINDINGS

2.1. The TLI's system of governance ensures regulated decision-making process in accordance with defined code of ethics and has efficient provision of human, material and financial resources to accomplish its educational and other purposes.

GSU governance is executed in accordance with the RA Legislation and GSU Charter in combination with the principles of unilateral and collegial management of autonomy. The University has developed an organizational structure as well as a documentation base regulating the activities of the bodies mentioned in the structure. As the study of the regulations of the structural units, employment contracts and the functions presented by the staff has shown, the responsibilities and functions of the staff are not clearly differentiated and defined. The University plans to develop job descriptions.

According to the organizational structure, the University has a Vice-rector on Educational and Scientific Affairs but there isn't any unit or body regulating the scientific activity of the University. Besides, there isn't any body dealing with internationalization related processes, in particular, the staff member of the QA Division carries out the document circulation system /while in the functions of the QA Division the given staff member was presented as an employee responsible for the quality assurance of internationalization/, and the projects are coordinated by separate responsible people. The QA Division is under supervision of the Department of Academic Policy which in its turn acts upon supervision of the Vice-Rector on Education Affairs. The University also accepts this as a problem and plans to give solution to it in the near future.

In accordance with GSU organizational structure, the Trade Union, Student Council (SC), Scientific Association of Students (SAS), PR and Information Division, Legal Clinic, Archive, museum, HR and Special Division, Medical Service and library are at the same time under supervision of the rector **and the Rectorate, and the Scientific Council – under the supervision of the rector⁹.**

⁹ This statement has been changed on the basis of the remarks provided by the University. In the previous version it was formulated in the following way: "... **are under supervision of the rector and two vice-rectors...**".

The levels of hierarchy and independence as well as responsibilities are not clearly differentiated. The horizontal lines and the scope of interaction among different structural units are not defined either. The existence of the Faculty of Part-time Education is not substantiated and analyzed, i.e. why to have a separate faculty if it prepares specialists in the same professions /the only difference is the form of study/ which are carried out in full-time study in respective faculties. The laboratories are missing in the organigram of the University.

The system of GSU governance mainly ensures a regulated decision-making process. The main stakeholders are involved in decision-making processes. The University has developed and gives importance to the norms of ethics for the regulated organization of decision-making processes.

The analytic data on evaluation of transparency and efficiency of the governance system are missing.

The University provides human and material resources for the organization and implementation of the educational process. Human resources are being planned based on the workload of the chairs, financial resources are planned by the budget, and the allocation of material resources is mainly made based on petitions. The University doesn't make analyses on satisfaction with existing human, material and financial resources for the fulfillment of the University's goals.

According to the presented annual budget of GSU, the financial planning is not clearly made in accordance with the strategic priorities or strategic goals of the SP; the financial resources are first of all allocated to the salary fund and some proportions - to other articles of the budget. However, the University has developed bases of policy on financial resource management which define methods of financial management. The financial management is presented only by the financial inflows and outflows as well as processes of organizing purchases. So far the University hasn't made analyses on the cost-effectiveness of financial inflows and outflows.

2.2. The TLI's system of governance provides students and teachers opportunity to participate in decision-making processes directed to them.

The regulations and charters of the GSU Council, Scientific and Faculty Councils give the teaching staff and students an opportunity to be involved in different governing bodies.

The Student Council which is the self-governing student body and protects students' interests, ensures students' participation in the governance of the University by putting forward student related issues for discussion in respective bodies. However, as the meetings with students have shown, their initiative and interest to decision-making processes of governing bodies is not at high level.

In addition to current formal mechanisms, the informal meetings work quite actively which enable to raise issues relating teaching staff and students to the top management of the University and accordingly to receive feedback.

The decisions made by the governing bodies of the University are available to stakeholders on the website of the University (section on "Documents"). The University doesn't study the satisfaction of teachers and students with their involvement in decision-making processes.

2.3. The TLI develops and implements short, mid, and long term planning consistent with its mission and purposes and has clear monitoring and implementation mechanisms.

There are two levels of strategic planning in GSU: five-year and short-term (annual and semester work plans of chairs and faculties). The University doesn't make mid-term planning.

Currently the University is guided by the action plan of the GSU five-year Strategic Plan 2016-2021, but the action plan is not divided into mid-term and short-term plans. As a long-term plan, the University also points out the Anti-corruption Strategic Plan 2016-2021¹⁰.

The action plan of the SP is annually monitored at GSU. GSU annual reports are viewed as a mechanism of monitoring which are not compiled according to the SP goals. The implementation of the

¹⁰ This statement has been changed on the basis of the remarks provided by the University. In the previous version it was formulated in the following way: "...*the Anti-corruption Strategic Plan 2016-2021 but the deadlines, responsible units and performance indicators of the mentioned plan are missing...*".

presented short-term plans is evaluated by mid-term reports.

The efficiency of the planning process is not evaluated.

The University hasn't yet made evaluation to determine to what extent the planning process promotes the efficient fulfillment of the University's mission.

2.4. The TLI conducts environmental scanning and draws on reliable data during the decision-making process.

The currently used main mechanism of identifying the factors having an impact on general and educational activities of the University is the conduction of surveys among stakeholders and the study of the legislative framework. However, the reliability of the conducted surveys is not always examined. The analyses of demographic data of the region and needs of employers and labor market are missing. With the aim to clarify the number of potential applicants, the University regularly organizes visits to secondary schools.

The process of collecting data is not always interlinked with the development and review of the strategic plans. The review of different processes often lacks analytical basis. The efficiency of data collection process is not evaluated.

The process of studying external factors and information collection is predominantly situational and is not regulated by the preliminary developed procedure.

2.5. The management of the policies and the processes draws on the quality management principle (plan-do-check-act).

The administration of GSU policies and procedures is partially operated based on the PDCA cycle of quality management. The PDCA cycle is not closed. The main processes of the University are in the phase of planning and implementation but the phase improvement is still missing. The planning has been made at two levels: strategic five-year planning and current/annual planning. However, they are not based on the preliminary identification of needs, and the efficiency of the planning process is not evaluated. Besides, the activities directed to the improvement of GSU plans and processes mainly do not derive from the evaluation results.

2.6. There are mechanisms in place ensuring data collection on the effectiveness of the academic programmes and other processes, analyses and application of the data in decision-making.

The information on the efficiency of GSU academic programs and other processes is collected by means of conducting surveys among internal stakeholders. The University hasn't established internal documentation flow system of information collection, dissemination and management. The University lacks functional mechanisms of ensuring external stakeholders' feedback and considering their opinions on the evaluation of efficiency of academic programs.

Another mechanism of collecting information is considered to be the class observations and annual reports of the heads of chairs the results of which are discussed during chair sessions. However, the observations have stated that they are not always being analyzed and the results are not always applied in a purposeful way. The methodology of survey conduction and data analysis is not developed. There aren't analytic data on reliability of the data collection process either. The analyses on decisions made on the basis of the collected data are missing.

2.7. There are impartial mechanisms evaluating the quality of quantitative and qualitative information on the academic programmes and qualification awards.

The publicity of GSU activity is mainly ensured by the official website which provides materials about the University, its educational and scientific processes, some documents and cooperation as well as information for applicants. The quantitative and qualitative data on the efficient implementation of academic programs and other educational processes are missing.

The tools and respective analyses on evaluation of publications as well as policy and procedures of dissemination of public information are missing. The mechanisms of evaluating the availability and

objectiveness of the published information are missing either. The provision of information either for publication or forbidden as well as internal (confidential) information is not regulated.

CONSIDERATIONS

The expert panel is positive about the fact that the University makes efforts to efficiently implement educational and other processes. Nevertheless, the management **structure**¹¹ of GSU needs to be more clarified and further simplified. The expert panel evaluates it positive that there is a documentary basis regulating the activities of GSU's structural units, but the staff responsibilities and functions are not clearly differentiated and defined which would allow to evaluate the staff performance. The existence of the clearly defined functions of each staff member enables to exclude the repetition of functions and to centralize the services provided by the given structural unit of the University, thus increasing the cost effectiveness and efficiency of HR management.

The GSU governance system is generally in compliance with the strategic goals but there are some problems in terms of ensuring efficient collaboration among structural units. The horizontal lines of management are not clear, neither the subordination is divided which can have a negative impact on the efficiency of the University management. The fact that the QA Division is under supervision of the Department of Academic Policy which in its turn acts upon supervision of the Vice-Rector on Education Affairs, puts the autonomy of the QA processes under risk.

The lack of a structural unit or a staff member responsible for the management of two spheres of strategic priority, namely scientific-research activity (sphere 1) and broadening external relations and cooperation (sphere 6), makes the full and efficient implementation of GSU mission risky. The existence of a responsible unit/staff member is crucial from the perspective of being integrated in education and science and regarding the efficient management of current scientific potential of the University.

It is encouraging that teachers and students have an opportunity to participate in decision making but the absence of efficiency evaluation of mechanisms which ensure stakeholders' involvement can bring to the involvement of people who are not competent, thus endangering the reliability of the decision-making processes. And the limited involvement of external stakeholders can result in decrease of awareness about external requirements and developments.

It is impossible to evaluate the efficiency of management system as far as the analyses on satisfaction with and efficiency of human, material and financial resources of the University are missing. Thus, the further clarification and simplification of GSU management system, examination of factors influencing the efficiency of administrative units, their activities and processes, elaboration of procedures on data collection as well as development of mechanisms of evaluation will give an opportunity to raise the level of awareness among structural units of the University as well as to ensure the decision making based on valid data.

The currently used main mechanism of identifying the factors having an impact on general and educational activities of the University is the conduction of surveys the purposefulness, regularity, methodology of which as well as the frame of respondents' representativeness do not allow to consider the surveys as an efficient tool of identifying needs of internal and external stakeholders. In general, the incompleteness of evaluations of different processes and monitoring mechanisms puts the efficiency of the governance system under risk.

GSU SP is viewed as a long-term plan but its division into mid-term and short-term action plans is missing. The existence of the mentioned actions will give an opportunity to more efficiently organize all the processes, to ensure their monitoring and precise management of resources, acquiring clear and measurable indicators for each phase. Thus, the division and consistent implementation of mid-term and short-term action plans of the University, as well as the development of clear mechanisms and toolset of monitoring will enable to reinforce the link between the mission and goals, to reduce the risks of impact of external factors and to clarify the expectations of the University's stakeholders.

¹¹ This statement has been changed by the expert panel. In the previous version it was formulated in the following way: "*....system...*".

The full administration of GSU isn't carried out in accordance with the PDCA cycle of quality management. The elements of the cycle are applied but to different extents. In particular, the processes are mainly in the phases of planning and implementation, evaluations with no analytical base are partially made, and the improvements are fragmental. The absence of regular and coordinated feedback mechanisms and regular evaluations is one of the weak points of the University.

The development of mechanisms which collect, analyze, coordinate and evaluate information will foster further increase of efficiency of professional education and assurance of public accountability.

The absence of mechanisms evaluating the published objective, qualitative and quantitative information on quality of academic programs and awarded qualifications states about the imperfection of the process of quality control as far as the University doesn't discuss the issue relating the evaluation of their efficiency. While the University should first of all be interested in organizing that process.

SUMMARY. Taking into consideration the fact that the University has an organizational structure which is mainly in compliance with the strategic goals, a documentary base regulating the activities of the structural units, acting regulations which enable teachers and students to participate in decision-making processes relating them, administration of policies and procedures which is partially operated by the PDCA principle of quality management, the expert panel concludes that GSU meets the requirements of the Criterion 2.

CONCLUSION. The correspondence of GSU institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 2 is *satisfactory*.

III. ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

CRITERION: The programmes are in concord with the institution's mission, form part of institutional planning and promote mobility and internationalization.

FINDINGS

3.1. The academic programs are thoroughly formulated according to the intended learning outcomes, which correspond to an academic qualification and are in line with the institution's mission and the state academic standards.

In GSU 16 BA full-time and part-time academic programs and 13 full-time MA academic programs are being implemented. However, in the mission of the University the academic programs in the directions of Natural and Social Sciences are only highlighted.

The educational process of the University is structured on the basis of the state educational standards based on which the descriptions of professions, curricula and syllabi are formed from the components of academic programs. There are developed concepts and packages of current academic programs of GSU which comprise guidelines and guidebooks on the organization of education based on credit system.

In the descriptions of the observed academic programs the goals, objectives and intended learning outcomes are defined, and the differentiated teaching and learning methods for achieving them are missing in some academic programs. GSU generic approaches to assessment are formulated but approaches and principles of assessment for separate courses based on generic approaches are missing. The mapping of learning outcomes of academic programs for verifying or specifying the compliance with the NQF is missing.

The observation of the syllabi has shown that there are developed intended learning outcomes, and there is a mapping of outcomes of academic programs and courses. No calendar plans are applied.

In the course descriptions the aim, distribution according to topics are presented but the assessment methods and requirements for course admission which are also necessary conditions for the formation of learning outcomes are missing. The observation of the same syllabi for full-time and part-time studies has

shown that they differ from each other; e.g. 12 topics are provided for full-time study, while in case of the part-time study 6 topics are presented. The other 6 topics which are covered within out-of-class hours and the ways of covering the topics are not clearly presented. While the difference between part-time and full-time studies is manifested by the distribution of in-class and out-of-class hours. The credits allocated to the same course are different in full-time and part-time studies; in part-time study course papers are intended, in case of full-time - they are not. The forms of presenting syllabi differ from faculty to faculty (even in the same chair the descriptions of different courses are presented in different ways, e.g. in some cases full-time and part-time are jointly observed, in some cases they are presented separately) and accordingly, the clear generic institutional requirements set for the development of syllabi are missing. In some syllabi there are inconsistencies among curricula, particularly in terms of credit allocation.

In the curricula there are selective courses but the level of awareness of students on them was low. Students who participated in the meetings stated that they didn't factually select any course. It was also mentioned that the organization of selective courses is carried out in accordance with the number of students.

3.2. The TLI has a policy that ensures alignment between teaching and learning approaches and the intended learning outcomes of academic programs promoting student-centered learning.

Not in all the descriptions of the observed academic programs the differentiated teaching and learning methods for the achievement of intended learning outcomes are existent. The teaching and learning methods aren't clearly described in the syllabi either. Moreover, the mapping of outcomes and teaching, learning and assessment methods are missing. The credits mentioned in the syllabi are expressed by the in-class component only; there is no reflection on out-of-class hours.

Although in some academic programs the following methods are described: lectures, practical activities, seminars, discussions, debates, individual works the application of which was also stated during class observations made by the expert panel, the meeting with teachers showed that the clear approach to the selection of methods of learning outcomes by courses is missing.

GSU gives importance to the transition of the previously used teacher-centered approach to student-centered approach. Nevertheless, the transition isn't complete yet. As the meetings with students showed, there is still a need to raise the level of awareness on student-centered education among students as far as their apprehension of the new approach is not clearly formulated.

There is a developed procedure on evaluation and improvement of learning methods, however, no analyses of efficiency of the applied methods were presented.

Students informally (in some cases directly addressing the teacher) take part in the processes of modernization of teaching and learning methods.

3.3. The TLI has policy on students' assessment according to the learning outcomes and ensures academic integrity.

In GSU student assessment is carried out according to the "GSU Regulation on the Organization of Educational Process at BA and MA levels for Full-time Study based on Credit System and Assessment of Student Knowledge", "GSU Regulation on the Organization of Educational Process at BA level for Part-time Study based on Credit System and Assessment of Student Knowledge", as well as guidelines on education based on credit system and guidebooks of courses.

The assessment of courses /pass-fail courses/ is based on such factors as participation in classes, current activeness, individual work and final check, and in case of exams – participation in classes, current activeness, individual work, two mid-term exams and one final exam. The summative assessment of students is carried out according to the 100-point grading system - orally, in written form or by computer testing system. But at course level the clear assessment standards (rubrics) dependent on outcomes are missing. The interlink between assessment methods and teaching and learning methods is not substantiated either. The assessment system is mainly aimed at the assessment of theoretical knowledge of students.

Although the University has developed a regulation on education based on credit system, the clear policy on allocation of credits is missing. This is also stated by the observation of curricula and syllabi, e.g.

the same credits are allocated to different courses but the substantiation of distribution of in-class and out-of-class hours is missing, and it's not clear either what principle is being applied for the allocation of credits for certain courses.

GSU has developed and invested a regulation on discussion of student appeals and a concept of academic honesty.

There is a developed regulation on implementation of master theses, final and course papers which mostly includes technical requirements set for the preparation of final papers and theses; the content related components such as novelty, research and creativity are not emphasized. Respectively, the assessment requirements are not in compliance with the requirements set for the preparation of the papers. This is stated by the observed theses, in particular, some of the observed theses were good enough and some of them didn't have an in-depth content. Mostly Armenian literature is used in theses and final papers, and in some cases different works belonging to the same author and few literature works are used.

Although the University has developed a concept on academic honesty, no references could be found in the papers. In some papers the highlights of peer-review and the marked grades were inconsistent. In some cases the peer-reviewer substantiated the significant shortcomings identified in the given paper but in the end he/she guaranteed the paper to be marked excellent.

3.4. The academic programmes of the TLI are contextually coherent with other relevant programmes and promote internationalization and mobility of students and staff.

The University has a regulation on benchmarking, but some curricula of RA and those of Russian higher education institutions were presented as bases for benchmarking. No comparative analyses were presented. It is not clear which components were adopted and what methodology was used. The selection of the given higher education institutions was not substantiated. Besides, while choosing the benchmark/object for benchmarking, the objectives and challenges of the given higher education institution were not studied. As a base for benchmarking carried out at national level, the curricula of National Polytechnic University of Armenia were presented.

The ECTS and diploma supplement of European sample are observed as a tool of internationalization. Student mobility is regulated by the regulation on academic mobility of learners of higher education institutions. There is an opportunity of mobility at institutional and national levels. Students and teachers have the opportunity of mobility within the framework of international projects as well.

It should be mentioned that there are no academic programs taught in foreign languages **except for the “Russian Language and Literature” and “Foreign Language and Literature” academic programs**¹². But with the aim to ensure internal mobility, some courses in foreign languages have been developed.

3.5. The TLI has policy ensuring academic programme monitoring, effectiveness assessment and improvement.

There is a developed procedure on development, approval, monitoring of the implementation process and improvement of academic programs taught at GSU. The reviews are mainly carried out at course level. No grounds for the regularity of reviews of academic programs have been presented. The substantiations relating the review of academic programs and the necessity to review them for the given period (e.g. the experience gained as a result of international cooperation could serve as a basis, etc.) aren't provided either.

Employers are informally involved in the process of improvement of academic programs (without clearly specified procedure and time-schedule), and surveys are conducted among alumni. There isn't any generic institutional approach to the involvement of external stakeholders; the form of cooperating with stakeholders differs from chair to chair. **The process is not carried out in a coordinated way**¹³. Employers also

¹² This statement has been changed on the basis of the remarks provided by the University. In the previous version it was formulated in the following way: “...*It should be mentioned that there are no academic programs taught in foreign languages*”.

¹³ This statement has been changed on the bases of the discussion among the University and the experts. It was not mentioned in the previous version.

make suggestions on investment of courses, and they give their feedback on students' knowledge and skills by filling in the questionnaires presented at the end of internships. It should be noted that the mechanisms of involving external and internal stakeholders need to be improved and respective processes should be carried out in a coordinated way.

Students are involved in the process of improvement of courses by filling in the questionnaires, and teachers are involved in the process by participating in discussions organized at chairs.

CONSIDERATIONS

In general, the educational activity of the University is in compliance with the defined mission. The University has developed intended learning outcomes of academic courses for the awarded qualifications, still the absence of mapping of those outcomes and the NQF as well as lack of analyses on their compliance do not give an opportunity to evaluate their compliance with the NQF. The academic programs of GSU are mainly developed based on the state educational standards which were developed some years ago and they do not always reflect the requirements of labor market and recent tendencies of education. The University has started implementing the education process by applying the outcome-based approach, however, the outcomes described in academic programs are not always measurable. Besides, the University hasn't yet evaluated to what extent the teaching is directed to the formation of skills and competences defined by the learning outcomes of academic programs.

The differences in curricula and syllabi of the same academic program for full-time and part-time studies (credit allocation, materials provided for the given course) are more disturbing. The expert panel finds it of urgent necessity to review the syllabi aimed at ensuring compliance of the content of courses for part-time study with the outcomes of the course and the given academic program, as well as to adjust the structural differences in syllabi.

The different discussions during the expert panel site-visit as well the observation of the documents serve as a basis to state that the general approach to credit allocation and calculation is missing at the University, thus limiting the opportunities for students' mobility. The expert panel finds that the perception of selective courses is basically not clear.

The University gives importance to the establishment of student-centered learning environment, however, the transition is not complete yet. The class observations have shown that **although interactive learning is organized at the University, the selection of teaching and learning methods which are interconnected with the learning outcomes, as well as the lack of generic approach can belittle the role of students and teachers in the process of establishing student-centered learning environment**¹⁴. From the perspective of student-centered learning, according to learning outcomes, the investment of policy on the selection of teaching methods will set new requirements to teachers which should be involved in the regulation on teaching staff recruitment and teacher training packages. The full investment of student-centered learning will also promote students' self-learning, thus promoting their life-long learning. The fact that the direction of teaching and learning methods towards acquisition of outcomes is not clear, and the link with the assessment methods is not visible, the educational process may fail to be implemented in a purposeful way.

The current policy on student assessment of the University is not sufficiently directed to the assessment of the outcomes. The interlink between the assessment methods mentioned in the academic programs and syllabi and the teaching/learning methods and outcomes is weak. Taking into consideration the fact that the provision of theoretical knowledge is still predominant at GSU, the assessment methods are respectively targeted to the assessment of theoretical knowledge. As far as the interlink of assessment

¹⁴ This statement has been changed on the basis of the remarks provided by the University. In the previous version it was formulated in the following way: ***"The class observations have shown that interactive learning is carried out at the University but the selection of teaching and learning methods is not coordinated yet which is conditioned by the lack of generic approach to the selection of teaching and learning methods. Unfortunately, this belittles the role of students and teachers in the process of establishing student-centered learning environment"***.

methods and teaching /learning methods and outcomes is weak at course level, the acquisition of outcomes defined by the academic programs is under risk. The components and weights of assessment system are generic for all the courses which does not enable to take into consideration the peculiarities of the courses.

The requirements set for the final theses basically refer to the technical requirements for the organization of students' current work and preparation of theses. The lack of clarity and interlink between content related requirements of theses and grading scale states that the University doesn't pay much attention to them. And the content observations bring to conclusion the fact that assessment criteria are not sufficiently directed to the assessment of outcomes which are necessary for academic programs or for awarded qualifications.

Although the University made comparisons between academic programs of GSU and those of National Polytechnic University of Armenia, no analyses on their compliance was provided to the expert panel. The University hasn't made international benchmarking, and it isn't either observed as a mechanism of modernization of academic programs. The benchmarking/comparative analysis of the provided academic programs will enable the University to more clearly visualize its strong and weak points, to have modern and flexible programs, to be in a beneficial position in the field of educational services as well as to foster the mobility of students and teachers and the internationalization of the University. Although GSU doesn't provide academic programs in foreign languages, some courses in foreign languages have been developed to ensure internal mobility. In this respect the University needs to clarify its strategic approach as far as it determines the further development and opportunities for improvement.

Although the University gives importance to the preparation of specialists in compliance with the requirements of labor market, no analyses of labor market have been made. The expert panel finds it worrisome that the level of involvement of external stakeholders in the development of academic programs and assessment is low as far as it endangers the efficient implementation of the goals set by the University. GSU accepts the fact that the improper reflection of labor market requirements in academic programs is one of the weak points of the University. The mechanisms of involving external and internal stakeholders need to be improved. The expert panel finds that there is a need for coordinated approach to monitoring, evaluation of efficiency and improvement of academic programs.

SUMMARY. Taking into consideration the fact that the academic programs are in compliance with the mission of the University, GSU has started to implement the educational process by applying outcome-based approach, has formulated intended learning outcomes of academic programs for awarded qualifications, has developed guidebooks of academic programs, interactive learning is being organized, academic honesty is given importance to, and the University partially carries out monitoring and evaluation of efficiency of academic programs, the expert panel concludes that GSU meets the requirements of the Criterion 3.

CONCLUSION. The correspondence of GSU institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 3 is *satisfactory*.

IV. STUDENTS

CRITERION: The TLI provides relevant student support services ensuring the effectiveness of the learning environment.

FINDINGS

4.1 The TLI has set mechanisms for promoting equitable recruitment, selection, and admission procedures.

With the aim to provide professional orientation, to introduce GSU professions and to involve applicants, GSU organizes different activities such as visits to regional schools, informing the society about the professions and study forms by different means, particularly, by regional Mass Media, official website, days of "Open Door", open lectures. However, the mechanisms of evaluating their efficiency and their

impact and respective analyses are missing.

The recruitment, selection and admission of students are carried out based on respective regulations on admission to higher education institutions stipulated by the law. The admission of students for BA full-time study is carried out based on the results of the unified exams. The admission of students for part-time study and MA education is organized according to the regulations approved by the RA Government.

The admission for MA degree education at GSU is also based on the GSU internal regulation and it is implemented on the basis of interviews by the committees of admission and course examination.

4.2 The TLI has policies and procedures for revealing student educational needs.

There is a regulation on "Student Survey on Teaching Quality and Efficiency of Organization of Educational Process at GSU" according to which at the end of each term an evaluation of the course/teacher as well as a survey evaluating students' satisfaction with the process of implementation of academic programs are conducted. With the aim to identify students' academic needs, "Box of Trust", "Hotline" tools are used in the University. Both written surveys and informal meetings are organized.

The identification of students' needs is partially made by the Student Council. However, the clearly developed policy on identification of students' needs is missing.

As the meetings with students stated, in separate cases the University made improvements by investing some courses, in particular, courses of foreign languages, computer skills, fine arts, bases of decorative and applied design, etc. On the basis of students' feedback, some teachers were substituted or dismissed. However, the efficiency of current mechanisms of identifying students' needs hasn't been evaluated yet.

There is a significant difference in terms of activities taken for full-time and part-time students. Part-time students are less informed about different processes of the University. Respectively, the identification of needs is more emphasized in case of full-time study. The identification of problems for part-time study is mostly carried out on students' own initiative.

4.3 The TLI provides advising services, opportunities for extra-curricular activities supporting students' effective learning.

In order to promote efficient learning of students, the University provides opportunities for the organization of extracurricular activities and provision of consultancy. The extracurricular activities and consultancy are mainly organized on the eve of the exam periods, during summative attestation and preparation of individual and course papers. If necessary, once or twice a week facultative classes are also held for students from different groups with low level of academic progress based on the results of the previous exam period. The mentioned classes are carried out according to the time-schedules which are formed beforehand.

The laboratory assistant of each chair is considered to be the consultant on student affairs in the given profession. Additional activities of consultancy for students are carried out via internet, in distance. However, the efficiency and purposfulness of provided consultancies are not studied.

4.4 The TLI has set regulation and schedule for students to receive additional support and guidance from the administrative staff of the faculty.

There are many ways to address the administrative staff of GSU: immediate applications, emailing, indirect ways such as through the monitor of the group, the Student Council. However, there isn't any clearly defined regulation and time-schedule of meetings with GSU administrative staff. Nevertheless, the University gives students an opportunity to communicate with the administrative staff. Students receive support and guidance through consultants. Generally taken, students are satisfied with the process.

4.5 The TLI has student career support services.

GSU Alumni and Career Center is responsible for the university-employer cooperation and career support services provided to GSU students. Although according to its Charter, the Center is meant to ensure career of students and alumni, to raise their competitiveness in labor market, to reinforce the link between

alumni and the University as well as to implement programs directed to the cooperation between the University and employers, meetings with both students, employers and alumni have stated that the mentioned functions aren't fully performed yet. It's not clear what activities are undertaken with students, alumni and employers. The base of alumni isn't yet fully complemented. The Center was established in 2013, and the documentary base regulating the activity of the Center was developed. The Center carries out some activities directed to career orientation, in particular, it organizes meetings and discussions with students. Although there is a developed Career Guide, the formulations are not clear, nor guiding or available to students.

There is a webpage of GSU Alumni Association and Career Center which contains registered data on alumni who have graduated from the University in different years and have been employed at different organizations. **The database on the employment of students and alumni is not replenished with data on career tracking¹⁵:**

It's not yet clear what activities the Center carries out for studying the labor market demand of recruiting specialists, what partnership agreements with employment agencies it has signed, and what results it has achieved.

4.6 The TLI promotes student involvement in its research activities.

In GSU there are Scientific Association of Students (SAS), university and faculty SAS-es which aim to foster professional development of students. The objectives of the mentioned associations are to support students with scientific interests, to organize student conferences, seminars, discussions and other scientific activities.

According to the GSU self-evaluation, the University gives importance to students' participation in scientific-research activities, and respectively the research component in the curricula of MA academic programs is 40%. Only students with high academic progress write final papers which limits the opportunity to develop research skills of some students.

At GSU the practical component of research activities is ensured through scientific-research and scientific-pedagogical internships which last eight weeks.

The programs which are implemented with the involvement and participation of students in prioritized scientific-research activities of GSU during 2011-2015 are few: in 2011 – 1 student, in 2012 – 4 students, in 2013 – 9, in 2014 – 3 and in 2015 – 1.

The data on authored or co-authored articles of students published in 2013, as compared with those published in 2014, state about the drastic decline. It is not clearly studied what kind of mechanisms of involving students in scientific-research activities have been developed in the last 7 years and since the SAS' establishment and what tangible achievements have been reached.

4.7 The TLI has responsible body for the students' rights protection.

The University has a regulation on student appeals and solution of raised problems. For discussions on appeals, institutional and faculty committees and respective time-schedules are compiled. Students can freely address their complaints to the rector, vice-rectors, deans, heads of chairs, consultants. The Student Council and the consultants attached to student groups are responsible bodies for the protection of students' rights. Students' rights are stipulated both in agreements and guidebooks of academic programs as well as in the Student Guide.

4.8 The TLI has evaluation and quality assurance mechanisms of student educational, advisory and other services.

The mechanisms evaluating the educational, consultancy and other support services and their quality are considered to be surveys, but data on reliability and validity of the applied toolset are not presented. The data on the efficiency of the applied mechanisms are missing.

¹⁵ This statement has been changed on the basis of the remarks provided by the University. In the previous version it was formulated in the following way: “*The full data on employment of students and alumni are missing*”.

The results of the surveys conducted among students for evaluating the given teacher and the course are discussed at chairs, and respective conclusions are made.

CONSIDERATIONS

The expert panel evaluates it positive that the University takes coordinated steps for recruitment, selection and admission of students. However, the lack of grounds and analysis reflecting the efficiency of admission can hinder the recruitment with new students. The evaluation of efficiency of activities taken towards guidance and professional orientation of potential applicants would allow to make the processes of students' involvement and recruitment more controllable, to evaluate the current situation and to make improvements, thus fostering the increase the student flow.

The efficiency of educational environment depends on to what extent the various needs of students are met. GSU students' needs are identified in a non-coordinated way, and the imperfection of mechanisms of identifying students' needs endangers the satisfaction of students' needs and limits the probability of bringing out the objective depiction of the University's productive activity, based on quantitative and qualitative methods. The non-targeted questionnaires and issues informally raised by the Student Council cannot sufficiently identify all the needs of students. The lack of coordinated approach to identification of students' needs can be considered to be one of the weak points of the University.

GSU students are given support by the University. The expert panel is positive about the facultative courses, support given to students, however, the processes need to be regulated. The existence of programs of consultancy and clear time-schedules will give the University an opportunity to make the process controllable, and the provided consultancy – targeted.

The expert panel finds that the University's approach to organizing current facultative courses for students with low academic progress needs to be clarified. The University needs to make respective analyses in order to identify the reasons of low academic progress the solution of which should be made within the framework of the educational processes. The organization of facultative courses should also assume the allocation of additional financial means.

The expert panel is also positive about the fact that students can directly address to the rector, administrative staff members to receive support and guidance and to respectively get feedback. Nevertheless, the processes still need to be regulated. It is more disturbing that the professional orientation in terms of selection of selective courses by students is not properly carried out.

The establishment of university-employer cooperation, Alumni and Career Center is an important step from the perspective of preparing students to enter labor market, making analysis of labor market and establishing the student-labor market link. However, in this regard, the Center doesn't have a significant role yet while it can create a favorable opportunity for the University to study labor market requirements, to improve its academic programs, to evaluate the efficiency of organizing internships as well as to explore to what extent they foster the acquisition of the intended outcomes. Although the Center has been functioning for many years at the University, processes of student support are hardly being carried out, and the Center isn't integrated in educational processes of the University which may become an obstacle for providing guidance to students for their further work activity. The passive cooperation of students and alumni may hinder the identification of their needs as well as the preparation of specialists in line with the requirements of labor market and stakeholders.

It is worthy to be praised that in GSU the protection of students' rights are paid special attention to.

SUMMARY. Taking into consideration the fact that the University has a rather clear and regulated mechanisms of student recruitment and admission, some mechanisms of identifying students' academic needs, students have the opportunity to participate in facultative courses and receive consultancy which ensures efficient educational environment, there are some bodies which deal with the issue on protection of students' rights, the expert panel concludes that GSU meets the requirements of the Criterion 4.

CONCLUSION. The correspondence of HEI GSU institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 4 is *satisfactory*.

V. FACULTY AND STAFF

CRITERION: The TLI has a highly qualified teaching and supporting staff to accomplish the institution's mission and to implement the goals set for academic programmes.

FINDINGS

5.1. The TLI has policies and procedures promoting recruitment of a highly qualified teaching and supporting staff capable of ensuring programme provisions.

The selection of teaching staff is made according to the "GSU Regulation on the Formation and Promotion of Teaching Staff" and "GSU Regulation on Recruitment of Teaching staff by Contract, Double Jobbing and Hourly Rate" where the procedure of hiring on contractual, double jobbing and hourly rate bases, standards set for positioning and progression of teaching staff, regulation of formation of teaching staff as well as grounds for termination and alteration of teaching staff contracts are defined.

The labor relations of the GSU teaching staff are regulated on the main/contract, double jobbing (internal and external) and hourly rate bases, based on the compiled employment contracts. After the termination of the deadline the employment contract may be re-signed. The recruitment of the teaching staff is mainly carried out by invitation and competition.

The functions of GSU teaching staff are defined in the document "Job Description of GSU Teaching Staff". Although there are documents which define the functions of the teaching staff and the procedure of formation, the efficiency of the policy on the selection of teaching staff is not evaluated.

GSU has defined the bases of HR and capacity management but it does carry out the clear process of resource planning.

As it is mentioned in the self-evaluation report (SER), the support staff such as laboratory assistants, secretaries, methodists, librarians, are employed according to the II clause of the "GSU Internal Disciplinary Rules" and the "Regulation on Employment, Substitution and Dismissal of GSU Staff". The dismissal of the GSU staff is also operated in accordance with the mentioned rules and regulation.

It should be mentioned that the functions of the support staff are not clearly defined.

5.2. The teaching staff qualifications for each programme are comprehensively stated.

The general requirements set for the assurance of the staff necessary for the implementation of the educational process mentioned in the concepts of separate academic programs of GSU are as follows: basic education in the respective professional field (at least qualification degree of diploma specialist), implementation of scientific-research and scientific-methodical activities. At least 30% of teachers ensuring the educational process of major/professional courses must have a scientific degree and/or title, including that in the given professional field of study. Teachers from secondary schools which conduct internships as well as staff members from profiled organizations can also be involved in GSU educational processes.

However, there aren't clearly defined requirements set for the teachers' professional qualities within the framework of the given academic program.

5.3. The TLI has well established policies and procedures for the periodic evaluation of the teaching staff.

In GSU some processes are carried out to evaluate the compliance of qualifications awarded within the frames of the academic programs with the competences of the teaching staff. Particularly, there are some questions involved in student surveys which clarify students' opinions about the professional qualities of teachers and the efficiency of selection of teaching methods; a survey for the evaluation of the qualities of the teachers is filled in according to which teachers' activities in the last 3 years are being evaluated; and teachers are being evaluated through peer-review. The evaluation of the teaching staff is regularly carried out through class observations in accordance with the set time-schedules. However, in-depth analyses on the conducted evaluations are not carried out.

The results of the above mentioned evaluations, i.e. class observations and surveys, are discussed in the sessions of the chairs, faculties, Council, Rectorate and Scientific Council. There were some cases when teachers were substituted, the teaching methodology was changed, etc. Nevertheless, no evaluations on the

reliability and validity of the applied toolset and their efficiency have been carried out.

5.4. The TLI implements teacher professional development in accordance to the needs outlined during regular evaluations (both internal and external).

As it is mentioned in the SER, in GSU some plans directed to the improvement of the teaching staff are developed and fulfilled particularly by means of trainings, seminars, consultancies, organization of class observations, involvement of invited teachers specialized in the respective fields of study, participation in international and republic conferences.

Short-term courses for developing foreign language skills and computer literacy (also one course - on modernization of teaching methods) are organized for teachers. However, it isn't substantiated to what extent the organization of the courses is based on the needs identified as a result of internal and external evaluations. There are no evaluations of efficiency of other mechanisms directed to the improvement of conducted trainings and teaching staff. Some of the teaching staff members have been given an opportunity to participate in trainings held abroad within international programs. The teachers who have participated in activities directed to improvement, share their experience with other teachign staff members of the University. However, the impact of the trainings hasn't been analyzed.

There are no clear mechanisms of identifying and analyzing professional needs of the teaching staff. It is mainly carried out through informal discussions. Nevertheless, as the meetings showed, the professional trainings which are based on the identified needs are limited and the trainings are mostly carried out on teachers' own initiative.

5.5. The TLI ensures the sustainability of the teaching staff according to academic programmes.

There are 145 teaching staff members working at the University. 66.2% of them are main teaching staff members, and 51.7% have a scientific degree or a title approved by the RA Supreme Certifying Commission. 43.4% of them are young teachers. The policy and procedures ensuring the sustainability of the teaching staff are missing. The average number of the courses taught by one teacher is 5, in some cases it increases up to 8. GSU finds that the gradual increase of the salary as well as the mechanisms of moral and material promotion such as awards and certificates of appreciation foster the assurance of sustainability of the teaching staff who are in line with the GSU academic programs.

The mentoring system is missing at the University. There isn't any clear policy on recruitment, learning and promotion of young teachers. As young teachers, the best students are mainly involved in educational processes.

5.6. There are set policies and procedures for the staff promotion.

With the aim to promote GSU staff, the means stipulated by the "GSU Internal Disciplinary Rules" and the VI point of the "Means of Promotion Applied to the GSU Staff" are being applied. As promotion mechanisms, rewards, bonuses, certificates of appreciation and awarding of titles are observed.

In order to ensure professional development of the teaching staff, GSU has taken the initiative and got permission to implement an academic program at the 3rd level of higher education. Another way of teacher promotion is to support young teachers to defend dissertations. Some teachers have an opportunity to make research abroad within the framework of international programs. However, there aren't analyses on the efficiency of promotion mechanisms.

5.7. There is necessary technical and administrative staff to achieve the strategic goals.

GSU has administrative and support staff whose rights and responsibilities, according to the self-evaluation, are defined in the regulations and charters of respective units. But as the study of the mentioned documents has stated, the functions of the staff are not separated and formulated in them.

The mechanisms of identifying the needs of the administrative and support staffs and respective analyses are missing. In case of necessity some solutions were proposed but their efficiency is not evaluated.

With the aim to ensure quality of the staff activity, surveys are conducted among students at GSU. However, the surveys are merely quantitative; they do not include qualitative evaluation and are not being

analyzed. The feedback of survey results isn't ensured either. Surveys are conducted at the end of each academic year.

CONSIDERATIONS

The University gives importance to the formation of the teaching staff with necessary qualifications but the requirements set for professional qualities of the teaching staff necessary for the implementation of each academic program are missing the development of which would enable the University to evaluate the compliance of the teaching staff with the current academic programs and would also foster the assurance of outcomes of academic programs.

In case there are clear functions set for the support staff of the University, it will be possible to more efficiently organize the educational processes as well as to identify the realistic needs of the staff for fulfilling the functions and in this respect to organize targeted trainings.

Although there are some mechanisms of promoting GSU teaching staff, the lack of the policy and procedure on staff (teachers, support staff) promotion as well as the imperfection of clear mechanisms identifying needs do not allow to evaluate the efficiency of the applied mechanisms and to create fundamental conditions for capacity building and performance advancement of the staff.

The current mechanism of student surveys evaluating the activity of the teaching staff, class observations, evaluations of the leader of the academic program and peer-reviews generally foster the increase of quality and efficiency of staff performance. But the above mentioned separate processes should be functioned in a coordinated way, their regularity should be clarified, and in case of surveys the representativeness of the participants and the purposefulness of using extracted data should be taken into consideration. In-depth analyses of conducted evaluations are not carried out the existence of which would enable to clarify the main achievements and casual relationships of the emerged problems. At the same time, the ways of best solutions and achievements can serve as a basis for broadening and ensuring sustainable development and the application of which will enable to more efficiently and within a short period of time solve the problems of strategic HR management

GSU gives importance to the necessity to organize professional trainings but the resources allocated to the professional development of the teaching staff by the University are very limited and so far no achievements have been registered, and the professional development is mainly realized on teachers' own initiative. The expert panel found out that the University hasn't paid much attention to the identification of professional needs of the teaching staff so far. While the identification of needs is important for chairs to visualize the potential threats for the efficient implementation of academic programs and to ensure sustainability of the teaching staff. The sustainability of the teaching staff is more disturbing which is conditioned by some circumstances such as teaching of several courses by one and the same teacher, the absence of substituting teacher in case of the teacher's absence. This means that in case the teacher is dismissed, the educational process is put in danger. Besides, the policy and mechanisms ensuring the sustainability of the teaching staff are missing which endangers the educational process.

The expert panel finds it positive that the University makes efforts towards involving young teachers but it is not clearly defined what mechanisms are applied for sharing experience with young teachers and how they are being promoted and advanced.

SUMMARY. Taking into consideration the fact that in order to fulfill its mission, the University mainly ensures teaching, support and administrative staffs with respective professional qualities, policy and procedures of selecting teaching staff, some mechanisms for their evaluation, organization of different trainings and processes currently being at the phase of investment which are directed to the improvement of the teaching staff as well as active involvement of young teachers, the expert panel concludes that GSU meets the requirements of the Criterion 5.

CONCLUSION. The correspondence of GSU institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 5 is *satisfactory*.

VI. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

CRITERION: The TLI ensures the implementation of research activity and the link of the research with teaching and learning.

FINDINGS

6.1. The TLI has a clear strategy for promoting its research interests and ambitions.

Based on its mission and goals, GSU has expressed its research ambitions in the documents “Concept (Provisions) of GSU Development and Reforming” and the current “GSU Five-year Strategic Plan (2016-2021)”. The scientific-research activity of the University is one of the important strategic directions which is formulated by some goals: highlighting the research component in MA academic programs, assurance of practical direction in research activities of MA students, increase of efficiency of scientific-research internships and scientific seminars, investment of the 3rd level of higher education, clarification of prioritized scientific directions of the chairs, consideration of scientific publications of teachers in the process of their ranking, fundraising aimed at the implementation of research activities.

The research goals are defined but the research directions as well as research priorities are not clearly differentiated.

There is a research component in the strategy of the University but there isn’t any reflection on the development and reinforcement of scientific-research activity. The research component in MA theses is poor. According to the development concept, the reinforcement of the practical direction of MA theses is important, however, the observation of MA theses showed that the practical direction wasn’t emphasized. No steps are taken towards raising the efficiency of scientific-research internships and scientific seminars. The University doesn’t take significant steps towards fundraising for research.

In spite of the goal defined in the SP 2011-2016 which refers to the “...publication of research outcomes in international peer-reviewed journals and their investment in educational processes”, the publications in the mentioned journals are limited.

In spite of the defined strategic priorities, the implemented activities do not comprehensively reflect the strategic ambitions of the University.

There is a Scientific Association of Students (SAS) operating at GSU but the level of students’ awareness and interest to the activity of the SAS is low.

Although the University prepares specialists for secondary schools, it hasn’t made any research in this sphere so far.

6.2. The TLI has a long-term strategy as well as mid and short-term programmes that address its research interests and ambitions.

GSU SP is viewed as a long-term strategy in the sphere of research. The mid-term programs reflecting the research interests and ambitions of the University are missing. And the research activities conducted by the chairs are viewed as short-term programs. Although there are research directions of the chairs, they aren't clearly formulated, and the research directions of the chairs are not always linked with the strategic priorities of the University. GSU considers itself as a regional university but the research directions do not derive from the regional problems.

6.3. The TLI ensures the implementation of research and development through sound policies and procedures.

There isn't any unit regulating the scientific-research activity of the University, and the Vice-rector on Educational and Scientific Affairs **as well as the Scientific Council and Faculty Councils**¹⁶ are responsible

¹⁶ This statement has been changed on the basis of the remarks provided by the University. In the previous version it was formulated in the following way: “...***and the Vice-rector on Educational and Scientific Affairs is responsible for this direction***”.

for this direction. The clear policies and procedures aimed at the implementation and development of research activities of the University are missing. The link between research and development of the University is missing as far as the commercialization or investment of research outcomes is not carried out. There isn't any concrete developed concept on promotion of scientific-research activities of the young staff of GSU.

GSU annually publishes a collection of scientific articles which is approved by the RA Supreme Certifying Commission.

Every year the University organizes a conference at institutional level and the best works presented during the conference are being published.

GSU has a developed a concept on academic honesty.

The opportunity of free publication of articles in the GSU journal of articles is viewed as a mechanism promoting the involvement of students and teachers in research activities. No financial means from the budget of the University are planned to allocate to the development of scientific-research activities.

Although there is a lab of Natural Sciences, the lab conditions and necessary equipments for carrying out scientific activities are not sufficient. The labs urgently need to be equipped.

The clearly set processes of planning and organization of chairs' research activities are missing.

6.4. The TLI emphasizes the internationalization of its research.

The institutionalized implementation of research activity is missing at the University. The joint research projects and jointly carried out research activities are missing.

The indicator of scientific articles published by teachers in international journals is low: in 2015 – 1 teacher. The University also mentions that the number of works published in journals with high ranking is not big.

Within the framework of “ERASMUS MUNDUS” and “ERASMUS+” some exchange programs for teachers and students are implemented but teachers and students are not involved in international research projects.

According to the SER, the participation of young teachers and students in research projects is given importance to. Students and teachers often have business trips to participate in republic conferences. However, the University doesn't have a policy and mechanisms of promoting beginners among staff to be involved in research activities.

6.5. The TLI has well established mechanisms for linking research with teaching.

Individual, course and final papers are intended to be a research component of BA curricula, and in MA curricula there is a research block with 36 credits and 12 credits are allocated to the defence of MA theses.

In the process of preparing MA theses in case supervisors are selected from other higher education and research institutions, the student is given an opportunity to use the laboratories, technical bases and scientific products of the given higher education institution or research institution. The MA theses do not contain scientific value and innovation yet or no sufficient grounds are ensured for them.

As a promotion, the articles prepared on the basis of the best MA theses are published in the GSU journal of scientific articles. However, the level of students' involvement in scientific activities is low although they expressed their willingness to participate in scientific-research activities.

There aren't clearly defined mechanisms of interlinking research activity and educational process but the individual research outcomes of teachers are informally inserted into the educational process and are reflected in the syllabi.

CONSIDERATIONS

The research activity of the University is limited from the perspectives of both implementation of international research activities and the level of involvement of students and teachers in research. The establishment of a center coordinating the research activity can foster the coordinated implementation of research activity and strategic goals of the University. With the aim to develop scientific-research activity,

the University hasn't yet adopted a unified strategic approach. The fact that no financial planning for research is done, and no financial means are allocated from the budget to the development of scientific-research activity of the University, is worrisome as far as it limits the scope of the research activity and respectively hinders the promotion of research activity of the University.

The expert panel finds that the development of mid-term and short-term plans of the long-term strategy which reflects the University's interests and ambitions in research, will give an opportunity to establish research links among chairs and to pay attention to the assurance of research component in MA academic programs.

Although there is a laboratory of Natural Sciences, the lab conditions and necessary equipments for making scientific-research activities are not sufficient. The laboratories urgently need to be equipped. Only in case of creating those conditions it will be possible to ensure high quality of research, to reinforce the university-research-science link as well as to create fundamental conditions for even more efficient implementation of policy on investment.

The non-regularity of management of scientific-research activities, the absence of clear policy and procedures hinder the targeted and successful implementation of the University's scientific-research activities. The absence of exchange of experience accumulated in inter-chair research activities and chairs doesn't foster the proportional development and sharing of achievements.

It is impossible to speak about the recognition of internationalization of research and research outcomes as far as the institutionalized implementation of research activity is missing.

The support directed to the processes of internationalizing science and the allocation of financial resources for the internationalization of science will foster the efficient solution of problems relating the integration of the University into international research area, will promote the mobility of students and teachers and the integration of international practice in educational processes.

It is worrisome that the existing achievements obtained in the research field so far are mainly conditioned by individual initiatives. The steps taken towards internationalization of the University's research activity are passive which is also conditioned by the fact that no policy in this direction is developed. The University doesn't make the international relations beneficial for the implementation of joint research projects and research activity. As a result, such projects and processes are missing. Another troublesome issue is the absence of mechanisms promoting the mobility of students and teachers which limits their participation in international conferences and publications in international peer-reviewed journals. All the mentioned speaks about the fact that the University doesn't give importance to the internationalization of research activity.

It should be mentioned that the involvement of students in research activities within the framework of academic programs is mainly ensured by course, final papers and master theses. The absence of joint research activities taken as a result of collaboration of students and teachers makes the interlink between research and educational process risky. The processes of interlinking research activity and educational processes are still missing and they do not significantly influence the quality and efficiency of education and don't foster the formulation of **respective**¹⁷ research skills among students. The fact that the clear mechanisms of interlinking the research activity and educational process are not defined, doesn't enable to directly and obligatorily invest the new research component in educational process, and the courses are not being improved based on research outcomes. While from the perspective of integrating the outcomes of scientific-research activities in MA academic processes, the review of curricula and syllabi can change the quality of academic programs by making it more competitive and attractive to stakeholders.

SUMMARY. Taking into consideration the fact that the University hasn't developed policies, procedures and mechanisms regulating the research activity, the research directions are not clearly differentiated, the strategic priorities are not separated, students' involvement in research processes is very limited, and the research and educational process are not implemented in interlinked and coordinated ways, the expert

¹⁷ This statement has been changed on the basis of the remarks provided by the University. In the previous version it was formulated in the following way: "*«...comprehensive...»*".

panel concludes that GSU doesn't meet the requirements of the Criterion 6.

CONCLUSION. The correspondence of GSU institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 6 is *unsatisfactory*.

VII. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

CRITERION: The TLI has necessary resources to create learning environment and to effectively support the implementation of its stated mission and objectives.

FINDINGS

7.1. The TLI has an appropriate learning environment for the implementation of academic programmes.

For the implementation of academic programs, the University carries out its activity in the 3 buildings. The University has classrooms, laboratories, computer rooms, libraries, "E-learning.gsu" system, reading halls, medical service, sports halls, sports grounds, dormitory, canteens, official website, etc.

The University is mainly ensured with classrooms, however it needs to improve its learning environment.

There is a laboratory of Natural Sciences equipped with modern technologies and facilities, but the majority of classrooms and laboratories are not sufficiently equipped with material-technical base, and the conditions are partially not adjusted for the implementation of interactive learning. There are computer rooms in GSU which are available to students only for in-class activities. There are computer lab classrooms in the Faculty of Natural Sciences which are equipped with necessary facilities, but the Faculty of Humanities needs to be equipped.

In the central building there is a computer classroom which is open to students and teachers if no classes are held there. In terms of ensuring computer software, only Microsoft Office package is available, the research packages, licensed software packages for statistical analyses are missing. The level of students' awareness about them is low. The University doesn't have any precise approach to the assurance of necessary software packages. Although GSU prepares specialists in languages, the language classroom is not equipped with necessary facilities. It only has conditions for video watching.

The existing libraries in GSU need to be modernized and refreshed with new literature. **About 500 books among 43700 are digitized¹⁸**, and students don't have the possibility to loan online. The international library funds aren't available to the University yet.

There is a WiFi zone.

7.2. The TLI provides appropriate financial resources with necessary equipment and facilities as needed to achieve its mission and objectives.

The financial management of the University is carried out on an annual basis. The major part of financial resources is generated from the tuition fees of students. The budget distribution isn't described according to the strategic directions, the main allocation of financial means is directed to the salary fund, some other part of the budget – to the acquisition of materials and product items, means of transportation, publication services, subscription to journals and magazines, educational reforms and Career Center, marketing and PR, business trips, self-governing student bodies, scholarships, etc.

Although GSU has developed bases of financial management policy, the financial management system does not reflect the expenditure of resources in accordance with strategic directions /enlargement of research activities, assurance of sustainability of internationalization process/. In the bases of financial management policy the methods of evaluating the efficiency and management of financial resources are

¹⁸ This statement has been changed on the basis of the remarks provided by the University. In the previous version it was formulated in the following way: "*The books aren't digitized...*".

defined, but the application of the methods is not clearly ensured. The analyses on cost-effectiveness are missing. It can be observed that the University takes initiative towards fundraising for extra financial resources, particularly, towards provision of student scholarships.

In the action plan of the GSU SP 2016-2021 there aren't clearly set deadlines for the implementation of the mentioned actions by years and in combination with budget allocation.

In order to ensure regular activities of the University's structural units, financial and material-technical resources are provided. Nevertheless, there aren't any evaluations of cost-effectiveness of equipment with financial and material-technical resources as a result of which the alternative ways of solution to the problems are not sufficiently paid attention to.

7.3. The TLI has sound financial distribution policy and capacity to sustain and ensure the integrity and continuity of the academic programmes offered at the institution.

The allocation of financial resources is set in the document "GSU Estimate of Incomes and Expenditures". The financial management is carried out in accordance with the GSU Charter. The allocation of financial resources is made on the short-term (annual) basis. No financial planning is made at the level of academic programs. The financial allocations at program level are factually made through the calculation of chair workload which is generated on the basis of the programs. The factual grounds for the allocation of financial resources are missing.

At institutional level the standards and indicators which evaluate the efficiency of the policy on distribution of financial means ensuring the implementation of current academic programs are not defined, no analysis directly relating them is presented.

The regulation on the formation of the budget, the distribution of financial resources and the report on expenditures are carried out according to the spheres of the University's activities.

7.4. The TLI's resource base supports the implementation of institution's academic programmes and TLI strategic plan, which promotes for sustainability and continuous quality enhancement.

According to the SER, once a year the University makes an inventory of the current condition of resources and educational-methodical materials the results of which are evaluated and taken into account in the improvement of the educational environment.

GSU has developed a procedure on assurance of resources and improvement of educational-methodical base necessary for the implementation of academic programs. It has also developed questionnaires for the evaluation of satisfaction of teachers and students with the educational environment. But the formulations of the questions involved in the questionnaires and the application of 1-5 grades or "yes", "no" answers allow to evaluate the satisfaction only; they do not give a picture of the needs of teachers and students. In the questionnaires the problem on equipment of resource base has been put forward which is still an actual problem.

The University doesn't plan the development of its material-technical base which is important from the perspectives of continuous improvement and assurance of sustainability of education quality. The efficiency of GSU resource base aimed at continuous improvement and assurance of sustainability of quality isn't analyzed either.

7.5. The TLI has a sound policy and procedure to manage information and documentation.

The information and documentation processes are regulated by the "Regulation on GSU Correspondence" which defines the acceptance, registration and flow of correspondence. The University also has a Regulation of Archive.

The data management electronic system of the University is in the phase of installation but, as the University mentions as a weak point, the operation of the system is not complete.

The availability of information is ensured by means of the official website of GSU which involves windows of documents, decrees of councils, purchases and EU international programs.

The communication with chairs is organized through group emailing.

GSU operates an "Office.365" multifunctional system.

7.6. The TLI creates safe and secure environment through health and safety mechanisms that also consider special needs of students.

In GSU there are structural units meant for health protection and security – security service, medical service and canteen. The entrance of the University is open with entry permit, and there are evacuation schemes in the buildings of the University. There are two staff members in the medical service: one doctor and two nurses. Although the meetings with students showed that they are satisfied with the above mentioned services, the level of their awareness on some services, such as evacuation schemes and the ways of calling alert, is low. The classes of physical training are organized at two sports halls the conditions of which are unsatisfactory, particularly, the equipments and proper bathrooms are missing. The University accepts this problem and takes steps to improve the conditions. In particular, GSU has submitted an application of the project on reconstruction of the sports hall to the RA Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs.

The building facilities of GSU are not adjusted to students with special needs.

7.7. The TLI has mechanisms in place for the evaluation of the effectiveness, applicability and availability of resources given to the teaching staff and learners.

The University doesn't have a policy and procedures on application, availability and evaluation of efficiency of resources provided to students and teaching staff. The conduction of surveys is the only mechanism. Surveys are conducted among teachers to evaluate their satisfaction with educational environment. During the expert panel site-visit a number of stakeholders also mentioned that the resource base of the University needs to be enriched and modernized. However, analyses as such aren't presented; some percentages in front of the questions are mentioned, there isn't any methodology of survey conduction, substantiation of options/sampling, and the frequency of conducting surveys is not clear either. In the grading scale of the survey the maximum and minimum grades aren't specified. Moreover, in 2012 some problems were put forward which are actual for the present. No data on reliability and validity of the tools are presented, data and analyses on efficiency are missing.

CONSIDERATIONS

The University provides material-technical and financial resources for the provision of educational services and the implementation of its mission and goals. The University mainly ensures classrooms but the major part of the classrooms and laboratories are not sufficiently equipped with material-technical base, and they are partially not adjusted to the implementation of interactive learning.

The expert panel finds that the establishment of clear mechanisms of identifying needs will promote the evaluation of the learning environment necessary for the implementation of academic programs as well as the identification of existing problems and increase of efficiency. Although the building facilities of the University are currently sufficient, they are risky in terms of long-term period. The University needs to obtain modern technologies as it will improve the educational process, will motivate students and teaching staff and will promote their research activities. The libraries of the University also need to be enriched with new literature and to be digitized.

The budget of the University is mainly generated from the tuition fees of students. Because of the lack of clear system of financial resource management and clear mechanisms ensuring financial sustainability, the expert panel finds that the continuity of current programs and other services are at risk. Only in case of right allocation of financial means and precise planning the University can have visible progress, thus having an opportunity to ensure the efficient implementation of academic programs. The fact that the financial resource management doesn't assume clear distribution of resources according to strategic prioritized directions, can result in additional difficulties for the fulfillment of strategic goals and objectives, thus failing to implement the strategy. The expenditure of financial resources according to the goals and directions of the strategic development plan will give an opportunity to understand the volume and dynamics of allocations and the extent of importance the University gives to the given sphere. And the analysis of efficiency of allocation and use of financial means would enable to evaluate and analyze the indicators of financial sustainability and tendencies of the University's development. The University strives

to enlarge and develop its resource base but because of the limited financial resources the full implementation of the objectives intended by the strategic plan can bring to problems. The existence of strategy of financial management will not only ensure the cost-effectiveness but will also foster the efficient implementation of the policy of investment by involving partner organizations, as well as the productive and successful fulfillment of goals and objectives defined by the SP.

The regulations on information and documentation circulation spheres let the expert panel conclude that the functioning bodies (correspondence, archive) ensuring the activity of the mentioned spheres in GSU have respective documents based on which they can fulfill their functions. But the adoption of unified approach to managing information and documentation circulation processes as well as full operation of electronic system of information management will give an opportunity to coordinate the amount of necessary information and processes of information receipt, scanning, analysis and dissemination.

The University has established a secure environment for the organization of educational process. However, the expert panel finds that the University should also continuously pay attention to the protection of rights of students with special needs and ethnic minorities as well as to the identification of needs, thus creating favorable conditions for their involvement, integration and adaptation to student life. The absence of initiatives taken towards ensuring students with special needs with infrastructural resources hinders the increase of the number of potential applicants. The creation of secure and safe environment for students with special needs can foster the inflow of applicants with suchlike needs.

The coordinated application of mechanisms evaluating the efficiency and the application and availability of resources provided to students and teachers will give the latter an opportunity to speak about their needs and express their viewpoints about different aspects of resources. The obtained information can be directed to the creation and further improvement of necessary educational environment.

SUMMARY. Taking into consideration the fact that the existing resources are not sufficient for the efficient fulfillment of the mission set by the University, limited means are provided for the establishment of learning environment, the respective material-technical base is not always existent for the application of teaching and learning methods of academic programs, the mechanisms evaluating the application, availability and efficiency of resources provided to internal stakeholders are not coordinated, there isn't any clear system of financial resource management, the electronic system of information management is not fully operated, the expert panel concludes that GSU doesn't meet the requirements of the Criterion 7.

CONCLUSION. The correspondence of GSU institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 7 is *unsatisfactory*.

VIII. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

CRITERION: The TLI is accountable to the government and society for the education it offers and the resources it uses as well as for the research it conducts.

FINDINGS

8.1. The TLI has clear policy on institutional accountability.

GSU doesn't have a regulation on accountability expressed by a separate document which would define the responsible person/unit to which the University or its structural units should submit their reports, as well as the frequency of submitting reports. But factually there is a system on accountability functioning at the University. The accountability on almost all the spheres and issues relating the activity of the University is ensured by means of annual reports of the rector and those presented by all the structural units which (the reports) are discussed in the GSU Council.

Rector's annual reports are available on the website but analytic data on the efficiency of the educational process, strategic goals as well as cost-effectiveness of financial resources can hardly be found in the reports. Besides, mechanisms and tools checking the efficiency of means ensuring the accountability are

missing. It is difficult to evaluate to what extent the reports are interlinked with the actions mentioned in the time-schedule of the SP.

8.2. The TLI ensures transparency of its procedures and processes and makes them publicly available.

The main mechanisms ensuring the transparency, publicity and public availability of the GSU procedures and processes are the GSU newspaper, *Qyavar* TV channel, album collection of Press about GSU, GSU official website, student and teacher guides, etc. GSU gives importance to the public awareness viewing it as a means to involve applicants and to raise the rating of the University.

To ensure transparency, GSU historical outline, rector's annual reports, information on GSU educational and scientific activities, cooperation, student life and news can be found on the GSU website. However, the survey results and their analyses as well as information on the quality of academic programs cannot be found there. The mechanisms of updating the GSU website are missing either (in particular, how frequent the information posted on the website is updated, what approach is applied, etc.).

Since its establishment (2010) the PR and Information Division of GSU has been functioning in the direction of establishment and reinforcement of public relations. However, the efficiency of the mechanisms ensuring the transparency and availability of respective processes is not analyzed. There isn't any clear policy ensuring the transparency of processes and procedures. The principles of policy on dissemination of information are missing either.

8.3. The TLI has sustainable feedback mechanisms for establishing relations with society.

To ensure public feedback, to coordinate public relations and to make the activity of the University more open and transparent, the University carries out a number of activities for illustrating its activity to the society. In particular, it organizes press release and interviews, uses the possibilities of its website and the webpage of GSU Alumni and Career Center, etc. Among non-official feedback mechanisms the University uses the contacts posted on the GSU official website, GSU Box of Trust, Anti-corruption blog. The admission of external and internal stakeholders by the rector, vice-rectors, faculty deans, and heads of chairs are considered to be an informal mechanism. However, the University hasn't yet developed any clear policy on establishment of feedback fostering public relations with the University, and the analyses of results of the applied mechanisms can hardly be found. Within the framework of ARARAT Project a survey was conducted among employers and alumni but their feedback cannot be considered to be sustainable.

8.4. The TLI has mechanisms that ensure knowledge transfer to the society.

GSU provides legal counseling to the public, implements one-year course about the bases of printed and electronic periodicals, prepares and broadcasts shows with the support of the University's professors, delivers journals of GSU scientific articles to regional schools, organizes different literary-fiction programs for Gavar orphanage, provides methodical assistance to pedagogues of the region, creates an opportunity to publish works in the GSU periodical. Nevertheless, there is no policy, strategy and procedures on transmitting knowledge and delivering additional educational and consultancy services to the society.

CONSIDERATIONS

GSU accountability assurance system is mainly limited by the rector's annual reports compiled from the reports of structural units. Rector's annual reports are also posted on the University's official website for external stakeholders, thus ensuring the public awareness on the activity of the University. Rector's annual reports are mainly compiled according to the spheres of activity and not in accordance with strategic goals and objectives which would give an opportunity to evaluate the efficient implementation of the objectives defined in the SP as well as achievements and shortcomings of the University's activity by respectively pointing out the areas for improvement. The University doesn't make analyses on the efficiency of the applied accountability mechanism which would enable to evaluate to what extent the University's accountability fosters the achievement of its strategic goals and improvement of the management system. It's difficult to evaluate to what extent the reports are linked with the actions of the time-schedule for the implementation of the SP. There are some mechanisms ensuring the transparency and availability of

procedures and processes to the society, but they are more directed to the provision of information.

Although the University has established public relations, the absence of policy of feedback assurance and the incompleteness of stable mechanisms (especially external stakeholders' opinions on educational processes) can seriously hinder the processes directed to the improvement of academic programs and endanger the reputation of the University as an academic institution preparing highly qualified specialists in the sphere of education throughout the Republic. The data base of alumni is at the phase of formation but the fact that no analyses **on regional labor market**¹⁹ are carried out and the feedback with employers is weak, endangers the efficient organization of educational process and preparation of specialists in line with the requirements of labor market. Taking into consideration the fact that the University prepares specialists for secondary schools as well, the absence of research in the given sphere is worrisome; the influence of the University on the processes of development and improvement of secondary school sector isn't visible.

The expert panel is positive about the fact that the University actively undertakes activities for transmitting knowledge to the society and delivering additional educational and consultancy services but at the same time the panel finds that GSU needs to specify the strategy, procedures as far as their efficient and coordinated conduction will promote the increase of the University's rating and the number of applicants.

SUMMARY. Taking into consideration the fact that GSU ensures the transparency and availability of procedures and processes, has developed mechanisms of transmitting values to the society, makes efforts to invest accountability system and reinforce the feedback with the public, the expert panel concludes that GSU meets the requirements of the Criterion 8.

CONCLUSION. The correspondence of HEI GSU institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 8 is *satisfactory*.

IX. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

CRITERION: The TLI promotes experience exchange and enhancement through its sound external relations practices, thus promoting internationalization of the institution.

FINDINGS

9.1 The TLI promotes its external relations through sound policies and procedures aimed at creating an environment conducive to experience exchange and enhancement as well as internationalization.

The University has defined the proper implementation of external cooperation programs as a part of its mission. It is also reflected in the SP, in particular, the promotion of academic mobility of students and teachers, partnership of international projects, implementation of joint and double diploma academic programs, participation of scientific-teaching staff members in international conferences and fostering of publication of research outcomes in international peer-reviewed scientific journals are given importance to.

There are no developed procedures of promoting the establishment of external relations aimed at the development of the environment fostering experience exchange and internationalization but the University has defined a policy fostering the external relations and internationalization. The allocation of financial means in the direction of development of the University's internationalization is carried out exceptionally within the framework of international projects. GSU doesn't allocate financial means to foster international collaboration. They aren't reflected in the University's annual financial planning and expenditures either.

The enlargement of external relations and partnership to European projects are among important

¹⁹ This statement has been changed on the basis of the remarks provided by the University. In the previous version it was formulated in the following way: "...but the fact that no **comprehensive analyses on labor market**...".

goals of the University. However, in the GSU action plan from which the SP derives, only two performance indicators of internationalization process are defined – “number of publications in international journals with high ranking” and “number of teachers who participated in international conferences, increase of number of publications”. There is no reflection to external relations.

GSU gives importance to the processes of studying and adapting leading universities of the Republic of Armenia and developed countries, but they aren't clearly reflected in the SP and action plan either.

In a number of GSU documents the University highlights the importance of the goal on broadening external relations and internationalization but in the same documents the principles of broadening external relations and internationalization, the steps and mechanisms which will ensure their implementation and content and/or structural reforms of higher education being implemented at the University, the process of GSU internationalization process, the development of institutional capacities and the material-technical equipment aren't defined

The activation of external relations and the implementation of internationalization directed projects at faculty and chair levels are encouraged. Some students and teachers are involved in exchange programs.

According to the self-evaluation, GSU regularly makes benchmarking of policy and procedures of external relations and internationalization but respective studies and analyses are missing.

9.2 The institution's external relations infrastructure ensures regulated process.

There isn't any unit in the University which functions are directed to the establishment and development of external relations and international cooperation.

There is one staff member of the Quality Assurance Division who is responsible for it. The University coordinates the international programs by decentralized networking. Such a coordination is sufficient for the present but the establishment of a unit is important for broadening the scope of the activity. Currently the activities directed to the cooperation with local institutions are carried out by the GSU PR and Media Division, the implementation of activities directed to the implementation of international projects is decentralized, and the correspondence is ensured by the staff member of the QA Division. However, the QA Division staff member, according to the given position and job description, is responsible for quality assurance of internationalization processes.

The activities directed to the internationalization of the University's educational activity aren't clearly coordinated and basically they aren't documented either from the perspective of the impact and significant outcomes of the projects and their further localization in the context of the University.

9.3 The TLI promotes fruitful and effective collaboration with local and international counterparts.

The University has partnership agreements with a number of both local and international organizations. GSU participates in 22 international projects, including 11 EU TEMPUS projects (ARARAT, ATHENA, ARMENQA, GOVERN, HEN.GEAR, LAMANICHE, LeAGUe, PACT, PICASA, RETHINK, VERITAS), 3 ERASMUS MUNDUS projects (EURO-EAST, HERMES, TEMPO), 1 ERASMUS+DOC MEN project and 1 BLACK SEA Regional project (TOURISM PATHS OF THE BLACK SEA REGION). Within the framework of the mentioned international projects the University cooperates with over 75 international organizations. The University has established cooperation with a number of education institutions and organizations in Armenia. GSU is quite active in cooperating with different organizations functioning in RA Gegharkunik region, particularly aimed at organization of internships.

Within the framework of the RETHINK project GSU carries out double diploma program in the profession of “Environmental and Natural Resource Management” in cooperation with the University of A Coruna (Spain). In the scope of international projects some staff members have participated in seminars, trainings and workshops.

The University carries out benchmarking of academic programs of RA and Russian education institutions only. There are some formulations on the implementation of benchmarking but the methodology is not clear as far as the adoptions aren't clearly reflected.

In spite of the fact that the University gives much importance to the processes of broadening of external relations and internationalization, the achievements obtained within the framework of

cooperation aren't clearly formulated, and the factual or at least possible impact of cooperation on the quality of GSU academic programs and other services isn't evaluated yet.

The efficiency of the activity directed to the internationalization isn't studied at the University yet, and respective analyses are missing.

The University hasn't taken concrete steps towards disseminating best practices obtained within the activity of the University.

9.4 The TLI ensures internal stakeholders' appropriate level of a foreign language to enhance productivity of internationalization.

In order to foster the internationalization process, the University gives importance to the foreign language proficiency of students and teachers. To increase the level of foreign language proficiency among students and teacher, GSU has been organizing free training courses for teachers and students since 2007. Due to the cooperation with the American University of Armenia English training courses are being organized since 2014. The University has been organizing foreign language training courses for students and teachers since 2006 but the 12% of students dominates a foreign language and 2% of them is not interested in foreign languages at all. The efficiency of the implemented trainings is not evaluated.

In spite of the fact that the University highlights the importance of developing capacities which is also stated by the participation in international projects, the level of foreign language proficiency among students and teachers of the University is not high which is also mentioned in the SER. It should be noted that although no academic programs in foreign languages are implemented, some courses in foreign languages have been developed to ensure internal mobility.

CONSIDERATIONS

GSU gives importance to the proper implementation of external partnership projects. The expert panel finds it positive that the University strives to create an environment which fosters internationalization. However, the absence of strategic approaches, objectives and respective steps for their solution aimed at the development of the environment, clearly set deadlines, mechanisms and principles of involving students and teachers in international projects limits the efficient and coordinated implementation of the current processes. The implementation of the mentioned processes can also support the University to clarify the actions, to increase the level of activeness in cooperation with education institutions, international organizations and scientific centers, thus fostering the mobility of students and teachers. The absence of separately documented procedures promoting the establishment of external relations hinders the targeted fulfillment of practice exchange and internationalization directed activities.

The expert panel finds that the current coordination of activities directed to the external relations and international cooperation is sufficient but the establishment of a unit is important for broadening and developing the mentioned spheres. The absence of the unit dealing with external relations and internationalization decreases the possibility to reinforce external relations and to ensure full, coordinated and consistent processes of internationalization. The existence of the respective structural unit the objectives of which will be clearly formulated in the charter and the staff of which will have clear descriptions of their responsibilities and processes, will ensure the processes of developing and efficiently implementing international projects as well as managing grant projects. This will promote to the clarification of the policy on ensuring the processes of external relations and internationalization.

The absence of financial resources aimed at fostering international cooperation hinder the efficient cooperation with local and international institutions and organizations, respectively limiting the activity of the University and endangering the continuity of the project. The initiatives to be taken towards new financial sources can contribute to the increase of mobility of teachers and learners of the University.

It should be mentioned that throughout its activity GSU strives to invest best international practice and respectively improve its educational activity. However, the steps taken towards internationalization are not coordinated and they are mainly not documented, particularly, what impact the participation in international projects can and should have and how and when the results should be adapted to the context of the University.

The assurance of feedback on the efficiency of international cooperation will also give an opportunity to apply new approaches in the educational processes of the University, thus improving the quality of academic programs. The processes directed to the establishment of external relations and internationalization aren't linked with the needs and requirements of internal stakeholders.

The expert panel finds that the active involvement of the University in international grant projects is commendable as far as the projects enable GSU to broaden the scope of its cooperation, to contribute to the continuous improvement of its academic programs and other services.

GSU cooperates with local and international institutions but the tangible impact of cooperation is not analyzed and as a result, it's not possible to substantiate to what extent they have promoted the improvement of educational environment, academic programs, teaching and learning methods. The absence of mechanisms evaluating the efficiency of cooperation makes it difficult to make a clear and realistic planning and to act efficiently.

Although the University has given permission to award a double diploma in the direction of one profession, the University conducts benchmarking only within the scope of education institutions functioning in Armenia and Russia. The fact that GSU doesn't make international benchmarking, limits the possibility to prepare competitive specialists and doesn't promote the improvement of content of academic programs from the perspective of ensuring their compliance with other suchlike academic programs.

In spite of the fact that GSU highlights the importance of capacity building processes which is also stated by the participation in international projects, the level of foreign language proficiency of students and teachers is low. The University realizes the necessity to ensure proper level of foreign language proficiency and it organizes courses, however, the level of foreign language skills of teachers and students is still low. Taking into consideration the recent tendencies of development in education, the insufficient knowledge in foreign languages among teachers, administrative staff and students will hinder the University's internationalization and its development.

GSU doesn't yet take clear steps directed to the dissemination of best practice obtained within the framework of international projects, while they should be among important components of the University's strategic directions.

SUMMARY. Taking into consideration the activity directed to the internationalization of the University, the active participation in international projects, as well as steps taken towards improving foreign language proficiency of students and teachers, the expert panel concludes that GSU meets the requirements of the Criterion 9.

CONCLUSION. The correspondence of GSU institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion 9 is *satisfactory*.

X. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

CRITERION: The TLI has an internal quality assurance system for promoting establishment of a quality culture and continuous improvement of all the processes of TLI.

FINDINGS

10.1. The TLI has internal quality assurance policies and procedures

The "Manual of Quality Assurance" (QA Manual) approved by the GSU Scientific Council in 2015 is a methodical basis for the GSU internal quality assurance (IQA) system. The QA Manual reflects the general QA provisions, the current situation of QA system at GSU, QA bases of education, bodies involved in QA system and their functions, QA bases of activities of GSU structural units and the structural figure of the main structural units involved in IQA system. The IQA goal, QA mechanisms and toolset are not clearly defined in the QA Manual. In the Manual it isn't clearly defined how the University perceives QA. The link between QA mechanisms and goals defined in the SP isn't reflected in the QA Manual. As such, there aren't

any developed QA procedures either. There are developed procedures on conduction of surveys on some processes.

Performance evaluation indicators of different QA processes are missing. The surveys are currently viewed as the QA main mechanism which are not conducted in a coordinated way and with the feedback assurance, and the reliability and efficiency of their toolset aren't evaluated either. There are no comprehensive analyses on the conducted surveys.

The analyses of cause and effect as well as results are missing. The impact of surveys directed to the problems of QA of education isn't evaluated and analyzed. The methodology of the surveys isn't described either. There are no grounds to show how the problem is being processed. Analytic data not always serve as a basis for the reforms being made by the University. QA mechanisms relating other services aren't invested yet.

10.2. The TLI allocates sufficient time, material, human and financial resources to manage internal quality assurance processes.

In 2010 the Quality Assurance Division was established as a structural unit of the GSU Department of Academic Policy which is directly supervised by the Vice-Rector on Educational and Scientific Affairs. The QA Division is equipped with human, material and financial resources. The QA Division has an office which has been furnished and equipped with material-technical resources within the framework of the World Bank grant project. Currently the QA Division has 4 staff members and one of them is responsible for quality assurance of internationalization. As the study of the staff member's functions has shown, the functions are directed to the organization and implementation of internationalization rather than to the quality assurance of those processes. As for the functions and responsibilities of the other staff members, they aren't clearly differentiated.

The faculties have staff members responsible for QA. According to the SER, with the aim to make annual self-evaluation of GSU, institutional and faculty working groups are being formed for the organization of the self-analysis process. The working groups involve students, teachers, heads of chairs, deans, vice-deans, and support staff members. According to the structural figure of the main structural units involved in the IQA system, there are also QA faculty councils but their roles aren't defined, and the job descriptions are missing.

There aren't clear requirements set for professional qualities in the process of staff recruitment for the QA Division. It should be mentioned that performance evaluation and identification of needs of QA Division staff are not carried out and respectively no special professional trainings deriving from those processes are held /except for the previous staff members who were trained by ANQA but they are no more involved in QA processes/. The University provides material and financial resources (staff salaries) necessary for the implementation of the processes. However, the analyses on the efficiency of QA processes are missing.

10.3. The internal and external stakeholders are involved in quality assurance processes.

GSU tries to involve its stakeholders in QA processes in different ways. The University gives the main stakeholders an opportunity to participate in the activity of the QA Division. The main mechanism ensuring the participation of internal stakeholders in internal QA processes is the conduction of surveys. However, the surveys are not always conducted in a coordinated way and they do not reflect all the spheres of the University's activity. As respondents, both internal and external stakeholders are mainly involved in survey conduction, but there are no grounds for their involvement in the processes of formation, organization, conduction and analyses of QA related surveys. The involvement of stakeholders /especially external stakeholders/ in QA processes is poor. The external stakeholders mainly participate in QA processes by making proposals regarding the academic programs or separate courses. While the feedback assurance is not made in an official and coordinated way.

10.4. The internal quality assurance system is periodically reviewed.

The QA system of the University has been functioning over 6 years. But the approved policy and

procedure on revision of IQA system of the University aren't developed yet. The system of current monitoring and evaluation of QA system isn't invested yet, respectively analyses on efficiency are missing. The PDCA cycle isn't fully closed. The different processes of the University are in the phases of planning and implementation, evaluations are partially made, and the improvements do not have analytical basis. Although various processes of the University are often being reviewed, the necessity for change is not grounded. The review is often not substantiated by evaluation results and it isn't conditioned by the analyses of strong and weak points. No benchmarking of QA has been carried out. It's still early to evaluate the formulation of quality culture.

10.5. The internal quality assurance system provides valid and sufficient background for the success of the external quality assurance processes.

The GSU working group which is formed by the rector's order with the aim to ensure sufficient grounds for external evaluation processes, annually makes GSU self-analysis. In spite of that, the identified problems aren't reflected in annual plans, and no plans of improvement for overcoming the identified problems have been presented.

GSU carries out activities towards the investment of the complex and multifunctional system-Registrar within the framework of TEMPUS Govern project. The Registrar is an electronic system due to which the main processes of the University are organized and managed, and the information is collected and kept.

10.6. The internal quality assurance system ensures the transparency of the processes unfolding in the TLI through providing information on the quality of the processes to the internal and external stakeholders.

GSU tries to ensure information about the quality of its processes to internal and external stakeholders. For this purpose the University applies the following mechanisms: representativeness in collegial governing bodies, availability of respective information in the given section of the GSU website, rector's annual reports, booklets, published guides, manuals. The University views the website as a mechanism of ensuring transparency, while analyses on the quality of different spheres of processes aren't publicized. The efficiency of mechanisms ensuring the transparency is not evaluated.

Moreover, in the action plan of the SP 2011-2016 the performance evaluation indicator is defined as the existence of new ways of accountability of new mechanisms for education quality control, i.e. increase of the level of internal and external stakeholders' satisfaction but there are no grounds stating its implementation.

CONSIDERATIONS

The expert panel evaluates it positive that the University makes efforts to invest and operate IQA system. The IQA system and quality culture are still at the stage of realization. However, the steps taken towards efficient operation of the system haven't given necessary results yet. Although the University has developed a QA Manual, the mechanisms of evaluating the continuous process of improvement of all the activities aren't clarified and complete. The imperfection of mechanisms and tools evaluating the efficiency of different processes of the University doesn't enable to evaluate the impact of QA processes on the improvement of the GSU performance. Although the documentary base has been developed and a respective unit has been established, the QA system isn't fully integrated in the University's processes yet. The formation of quality culture is at the stage of realization and the University's activity is not fully directed to the formation of quality culture. The PDCA cycle is not fully invested. The main processes are in the phases of planning, implementation and partially – at the stage of evaluation, and the improvement is carried out in rare cases.

The expert panel could notice that although the University provides financial and human resources to manage IQA processes, the responsibilities and functions of the QA responsible staff members need to be clarified. This is worrisome in a sense that it can become a serious obstacle for the management and further development of QA processes.

The fact that the QA Division is a structural unit of the GSU Department of Academic Policy which

in its turn under supervision of the Vice-Rector on Educational and Scientific Affairs, endangers the autonomy of processes of quality control and assurance.

The fact that no requirements clearly set for professional qualities of the QA Division staff members have been defined, neither professional trainings have been organized for them, makes the efficient organization of QA processes risky and the implementation of the set goals – unrealistic. The University provides material resources for managing IQA processes but it doesn't make analyses on how effective the provided resources are managed.

In regard to the SER, it mostly includes descriptive information and is not substantiated by analytic data. The SER is not sufficiently self-critical and the results of evaluation processes are often omitted. Hence, it is expected that the University should develop mechanisms and tools by means of which it will ensure necessary grounds for internal analyses and external evaluation of quality assurance.

Some attempts are made to broaden the scope of the external stakeholders' involvement as well which will strengthen their trust towards the University's activity. GSU can make use of the experience of stakeholders who are engaged in QA processes in the organizations they work.

The expert panel points out the necessity to regularly make evaluation of efficiency of IQA system. The absence of the coordinated process of reviewing IQA system can probably be the reason that the IQA system is still at the stage of realization.

The non-regularity of QA processes, the passive involvement of external stakeholders in the mentioned processes, the incompleteness of information management system (including the processes of collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data on academic programs etc.) can hinder the continuous improvement of the University's activity.

SUMMARY. Taking into consideration that although the University has a documentary base regulating QA processes, the steps which are currently being taken towards formation of internal quality assurance system are not coordinated, the QA system is still at the stage of formation, the invested PDCA cycle of quality management is not sufficiently applied in processes, the internal and external stakeholders are passively involved in QA processes, and the professional competences of the staff involved in QA processes aren't sufficiently paid attention to, the expert panel concludes that GSU doesn't meet the requirements of the Criterion 10.

CONCLUSION. The correspondence of GSU institutional capacities to the requirements of criterion **10** is *unsatisfactory*.

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

CRITERION	CONCLUSION
I. Mission and Purpose	Satisfactory
II. Governance and Administration	Satisfactory
III. Academic Programs	Satisfactory
IV. Students	Satisfactory
V. Faculty and Staff	Satisfactory
VI. Research and Development	Unsatisfactory
VII. Infrastructure and Resources	Unsatisfactory
VIII. Social Responsibility	Satisfactory
IX. External Relations and Internationalization	Satisfactory
X. Internal Quality Assurance	Unsatisfactory

06 April 2017

Angin Martirosyan

Expert Panel Chair

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. CVs OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

Angin Martirosyan - In 2006 she graduated from National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia (NUACA) and was awarded a qualification of diploma specialist in architecture and construction. Afterwards she was a PhD applicant of Institute of Hydroengineering and Water Problems after Academician I. V. Eghiazarov. In 2013 she defended the dissertation and received PhD in Technical Sciences. Starting from 2013 A. Martirosyan was the assistant of Department of “Strength of Materials” at NUACA, since 2015 - Head of Department on Educational-Methodical Affairs and Academic Programs. Since 2005 she has been working at NUACA as a senior scientific-researcher, specialist of Department of Educational Reforms, specialist of Division of Education Quality Assessment and Monitoring, Head of Department of Educational Reforms Assurance. Starting from 2009 A. Martirosyan was a member of the working group of Development of State Educational Standards for Professional Education, National Institute of Education. A. Martirosyan is an author of 15 articles published in scientific-technical journals, 14 methodical instructions, 1 educational manual and 1 educational-methodical manual. A. Martirosyan was ANQA expert many times as well as quality consultant within the framework of the World Bank Grant Project “Education Quality and Compliance”.

Arkadi Papoyan - In 1996 he graduated from Yerevan State University (YSU) and was awarded a qualification of diploma specialist in Biochemistry. In 1993-1994 he was a student-researcher in Institute of Biochemistry and Biophysics of Polish Academy of Sciences (Poland). In 1996-1999 was the assistant of Chair of Biochemistry at Faculty of Biology, YSU, and since 1999 – PhD in Biological Sciences. In 1998-2002 A. Papoyan was the lecturer of Chair of Biochemistry of Faculty of Biology at YSU, in 1999-2007 – scientific-researcher of the same chair. In 2002-2003 A. Papoyan was the coordinator of “Children’s Initiative in Armenia” SIDA pilot project, and in 2002-2008 – senior specialist of Department of Staff Development Programs of RA Ministry of Education and Science (MoES). Since 2008 up to now A. Papoyan is a deputy head of MoES Department of Staff Development Programs and Monitoring, coordinator of RA MoES TAIEX programs. Since 2009 he is a senior lecturer of Chair on Education Management and Planning at Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences. In 2013-2014 A. Papoyan was a member of Bologna follow-up working group of “Structural Reforms”.

Mher Markosyan - In 1976 he graduated from the Faculty of Cybernetics of Yerevan Polytechnic Institute (YPI). In 1976-1978 he was the assistant of Chair of Computer Engineering in the same university. In 1978-1981 he was a PhD student at Bauman Moscow State Technical University and in 1981 was awarded PhD in Technical Sciences at Bauman Moscow State Technical University. In 1981-1984 M. Markosyan was the assistant of Chair of Computer Engineering of YPI. In 1984-1990 he was the associate professor of the same chair as well as head of Laboratory on Scientific Issues of Computer Networks. In 1990-1992 M. Markosyan was the director of the “LOCOS MARVOL” Soviet-German Enterprise (IT Center of Yerevan). Since 1992 up to now M. Markosyan is the director and chief constructor of Yerevan Telecommunications Research Institute. In 2007-2012 he was the head of Chair of “Telecommunications” at Russian-Armenian (Slavonic) University. Since 2008 he is the head of chair of Informatics, Computer Engineering and Management Systems of National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia. Since 2010 M. Markosyan is a Doctor of Technical Sciences.

Margret Bülow-Schramm – In 1970 she graduated from the Goethe University of Frankfurt. In 1986-1996 she studied at Leibniz University of Hanover and graduated in 2009. M. Bülow-Schramm is a professor of the University of Hamburg and she is a Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences. Since 2014 prof. Bülow-Schramm has been the president of the Scientific-research Organization of Higher Education and up to now she is the vice-president of the same organization. She is a member of Scientific-Research Center of German Education and Science and a member of the advisory body of University of Ruhr West University of Applied Sciences. She is also a member of Supervisory Council and Trade Union of Hamburg Education and Science. Prof. Bülow-Schramm is a member of a number of German scientific-research bodies. She has qualifications in a number of spheres: quality assurance, higher education teaching, application of innovative teaching methods as well as

management.

Sevada Sargsyan - In 2016 he graduated from the Faculty of History and Law at Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan. Up to now he is a MA student of the Faculty of Law at Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia. S. Sargsyan participated in the three-month course of “Training of Student-Experts” within the framework of “Student Voice” project, organized by ANQA, in the three-day conference on “Intellectual Property as a Means of Developing Knowledge-based Theory” and in many other seminars and trainings.

APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE OF SITE-VISIT

05.12.2016-08.12.2016

05.12.2016		<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1	Meeting with Rector of University	9:00	9:25	25 minutes
2	Closed session of Expert Panel	9:30	10:30	60 minutes
3	Meeting with members of self-evaluation team	10:30	11:30	60 minutes
4	Meeting with vice-rectors and staff members responsible for the review of Strategic Plan	11:45	12:45	60 minutes
5	Break, closed sessions of Expert Panel	12:45	13:45	60 minutes
6	Meeting with Deans and Head of Department of Academic Policy	14:00	15:00	60 minutes
7	Meeting with heads of structural units (HR and Special Division, Alumni and Career Center, Accounting Department, PR and Information Division)	15:15	16:00	45 minutes
8	Observation of resources (library, IT center, computer classrooms, structural units, sports hall, Medical Service)	16:00	16:45	45 minutes
9	Review of documents and closed sessions of Expert Panel	17:00	18:00	60 minutes
06.12.2016		<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1	Closed session of Expert Panel	9:00	9:15	15 minutes
2	Meeting with heads of chairs	9:30	10:30	60 minutes
3	Meeting with staff members responsible for three professional academic programs (APs) presented in the self-evaluation, heads of professional chairs implementing APs, and group responsible for the development of APs	10:45	11:30	45 minutes
4	Meeting with main teaching staff (8 members)	11:45	12:30	45 minutes
5	Meeting with double jobbing teaching staff (8 members)	12:45	13:30	45 minutes
6	Break, closed sessions of Expert Panel	13:30	14:30	60 minutes
7	Meeting with representatives of Student Council and Scientific Association of Students (8 representatives)	14:30	15:15	45 minutes
8	Meeting with students (BA full-time, MA; 8-10 representatives)	15:30	16:15	45 minutes
9	Meeting with students (BA part-time, MA; 8-10 representatives)	16:30	17:15	45 minutes
10	Review of documents and closed sessions of Expert Panel	17:15	18:00	45 minutes
07.12.2016		<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1	Meeting with staff members responsible for quality assurance	9:00	10:00	60 minutes
2	Class observations	10:20	11:30	70 minutes
3	Meeting with representatives of alumni	11:45	12:30	45 minutes
4	Break, closed sessions of Expert Panel	12:30	13:30	60 minutes
5	Meeting with representatives of employers	13:45	14:30	45 minutes
6	Open meeting	14:45	15:15	30 minutes
7	Observation of resources (Deans' offices, chairs, laboratories, offices)	15:15	16:15	60 minutes
8	Review of documents	16:15	17:00	45 minutes
9	Closed sessions of Expert Panel	17:00	18:00	60 minutes
08.12.2016		<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1	Closed sessions of Expert Panel	10:00	12:00	120 minutes
2	Meeting with members selected by Expert Panel	12:00	13:00	60 minutes

3	Break, closed sessions of Expert Panel	13:00	14:00	60 minutes
4	Meeting with members selected by Expert Panel	14:00	15:00	60 minutes
5	Closed sessions of Expert Panel	15:00	17:30	150 minutes
6	Meeting with Rector	17:30	18:00	30 minutes

APPENDIX 3. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

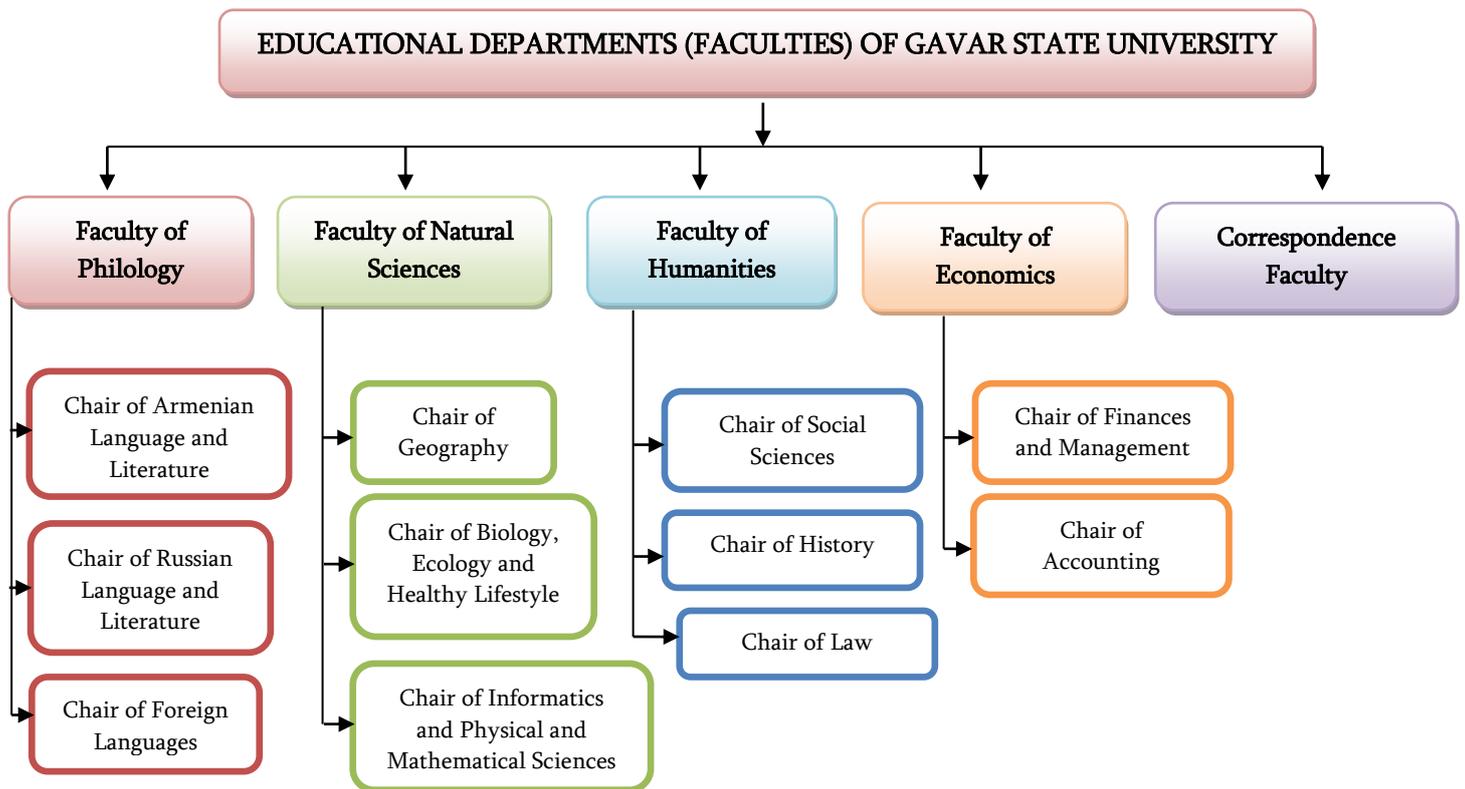
N	Name of Document	C/S
1.	Composition of GSU Council	2.1
2.	Documents stipulating the staff functions of structural units	2.1
3.	Regulatory documentation base/Charters - Trade Union, Legal Clinic, museum, Medical Service, Maintenance Division, Warehouse, hostel	2.1
4.	Composition of Scientific Council	2.1
5.	Time-schedules of implementation of Anti-corruption Strategic Plan 2016-2021- responsible units, performance indicators	2.3
6.	Basis of policy on financial resource management	2.3
7.	Employers' opinions on some processes	2.4
8.	Analysis of legal and sublegal acts, grounds of improvements of internal legal acts	2.4
9.	Samples of work plans of structural units, chairs and faculties	2.5
10.	Samples of reports of structural units, including reports by heads of chairs	2.5
11.	List of documents available at chairs	3.1
12.	Curricula of 3 academic programs for part-time study	3.1
13.	Syllabi of 3 academic programs, including those for part-time study	3.1
14.	Analyses on sustainability and risk of academic programs /Elementary education, Informatics SWOT/	3.5
15.	Diploma Supplement developed in accordance with UNESCO CEPES	3.1
16.	Sample of internship diary, program and report Sample of internship contract	3.2
17.	Summary statement, register of attendance/class register	3.2
18.	Form of class observations by teachers	3.2
19.	Annual faculty report by deans	3.2
20.	Students' individual works: essays, research papers (2 per specialization - marked as excellent and unsatisfactory), materials of group work	3.3
21.	Students' graduation papers: theses, diploma works (3 per specialization- excellent, satisfactory and unsatisfactory).	3.3
22.	Exam questionnaires, tickets	3.3
23.	Samples of exam tests	3.3
24.	Requirements set for theses	3.3
25.	Indices of admission-graduation of students in the last 3 years	3.3
26.	Document regulating the mobility of students and teachers	3.4
27.	Documentary bases/analyses of benchmarking of academic programs	3.4
28.	Regulation on evaluation of efficiency of teaching and learning	3.5
29.	Grounds of meetings and discussions held by Alumni and Career Center /attendance sheet for one year/	3.5
30.	Transfer of students from full-time to part-time study and vice versa /in the last 5 years/	4.1
31.	Sample of agreements signed with students	4.7
32.	Student Guide	4.7
33.	Samples of teacher portfolio of 3 academic programs	5.1
34.	Functions of support staff /assistants, secretaries, methodists, librarians/	5.1
35.	Analysis results of class observations and surveys	5.3
36.	Protocols of sessions held by chairs, faculty councils, Rectorate, Scientific Council	5.3
37.	Program and time-schedule of professional teacher trainings	5.4
38.	Indices of mobility and flow of teachers in the last 5 years	5.5
39.	Topics and time-schedule of seminars, meetings	5.5

40.	International agreements and memoranda	5.6
41.	Research directions/research directions of chairs, including research plans of chairs	6.1
42.	Questionnaire on evaluation of teachers' satisfaction with academic environment of the University /2012-2013 and 2013-2014 academic years/	6.2
43.	Questionnaire on evaluation of students' satisfaction with the education provided by the University /2010-2014 academic year/	6.3
44.	Questionnaire on evaluation of teacher's satisfaction with academic environment of the University /2012-2013 and 2013-2014 academic years/	6.4
45.	List of articles published by teachers with the support of the University	6.4
46.	Reports presented by students and teachers in international conferences	6.4
47.	Questionnaire on evaluation of satisfaction of students/graduates, parents with the education provided by the University /appendix 5/	6.5
48.	The involvement of students and teachers in research activities	6.5
49.	Topics of master theses in 3 academic programs in the last 3 years	6.5
50.	Self-analysis form of the GSU academic program	6.7
51.	Survey on professional performance of the graduate of the given academic program, filled in by the employer	6.8
52.	Benchmarking package: specialization- Informatics and Computer Engineering 2015	6.9
53.	Work plan of educational-scientific activities of 2011-2012, 2015-2016, 2013-2014 academic years	7.1
54.	Sample of report of the internship supervisor of the GSU student	7.3
55.	List of partnership agreements with local and international higher education institutions/organizations/sample of agreement	9.3
56.	Plan for the implementation of QA processes	10.1
57.	Description of activities of the QA Division staff	10.1

APPENDIX 4. RESOURCES OBSERVED

1. Classrooms
2. Deans' Offices
3. Chairs
4. Cabinet-classrooms
5. Laboratories
6. Structural Units
7. Libraries
8. Medical Service
9. Sports hall

APPENDIX 5. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION



APPENDIX 6. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. **ANQA** - “National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance” Foundation
2. **AP** - Academic Program
3. **ECTS** - European Credit Transfer System
4. **EHEA** - European Higher Education Area
5. **EQA** - External Quality Assurance
6. **ESGQA** - European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance
7. **GSU** - Gavar State University
8. **IQA** - Internal Quality Assurance
9. **IQAS** - Internal Quality Assurance System
10. **IT** - Information Technologies
11. **KPIs** - Key Performance Indicators
12. **MoES** - Ministry of Education and Science
13. **NQF** - National Qualifications Framework
14. **PDCA** - Plan-Do-Check-Act
15. **QA** - Quality Assurance
16. **QAC** - Quality Assurance Center
17. **RA** - Republic of Armenia
18. **SAS** - Scientific Association of Students
19. **SC** - Student Council
20. **SP** - Strategic Plan
21. **TLI** - Tertiary Level Institution