C O N C L U S I O N

On Accreditation of Institutional Capacities of
Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia

General Information about the Institution

Full name of the Institution	Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia
Legal form	State Non-Commercial Organization
Acronym	PAARA
Official address	8 Kievyan str., Yerevan, Armenia
Previous accreditation decree and date	Not available

LEGAL BASIS

Guided by the regulation on "State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Educational Programs" approved by the RA Government on 30 June, 2011 N 978-Ն decree; by RA Government decree N 959-Ն (30 June, 2011) on "Approval of RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation"; by the Procedure on the Formation and Functioning of Accreditation Committee of "National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance" foundation (ANQA) as well as by ANQA Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel, the Accreditation Committee of "National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance" foundation (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) discussed the issue of state institutional accreditation of Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia (hereinafter: Academy) with the presence of the Chair of the Expert Panel, ANQA coordinator of the accreditation procedure and Academy representatives.

Having examined the self-analysis presented by Academy, the expert panel report, Academy's action plan for the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report as well as ANQA conclusion, the Committee stated the following:

<div align="center">**As a result of discussion the following was registered:**</div>

<div align="center">The main phases of accreditation procedure were carried out within the following periods:</div>

Submission of application	17 June, 2013
Submission of self-evaluation report	16 December, 2013, 24 January, 2014
Site-visit	12-16 May, 2014
Submission of expert panel report	2 September, 2014
Submission of action plan for elimination of shortcomings	1 October, 2014

<div align="center">**RESULTS OF PEER REVIEW**</div>

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When carrying out the evaluation, it has been taken into account that "Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia" non-commercial organization is the successor of the Management School of the Republic of Armenia established pursuant to the Republic of Armenia Government Decree N 240, dated as of May 24, 1994.

As per Decree N 370-A of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, dated as of April 10, 2003, Academy established Master's program in the following disciplines – Public Management, Law, Economics, Psychology and Political Science.

The Academy has not undergone accreditation since its establishment, hence the process of self-evaluation in accordance with 10 criteria is the first experience of the Academy.

The Academy provides higher professional education, which is in line with the levels 7 and 8 of the Armenian National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The Academy considers the integration to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) as well as the application of respective EHEA procedures in its management system as one of its top priorities. Overall, academic programmes are designed concurrently to the mission and goals of the Academy and are in line with the state education criteria. However, internationalization perspectives require more efficient benchmarking mechanisms to be in place to promote mobility, which is limited at present.

Academy's system of governance, administrative structures and their functioning assume shared decision-making processes, with the involvement of both teching staff and students. Institutional decisions are carried by collegial bodies as set forth in the management structure.

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[1] Appendix 1: Composition of Expert Panel and ANQA Support Staff
[2] Appendix 2: Summative Evaluation

However, there is need for more extensive cooperation with external stakeholders and overall evaluation of the efficiency of the management structure.

Admission of the students is done pursuant to Master Programme Admission Procedure, based on a competition. Consultation meetings with the teaching staff and optional courses are available for students. The level of participation of students in research activities is comparatively low.

Given its specificity in preparing public administration professionals, the Academy employs its best efforts to involve practitioners in the teaching process with a view to transfer to students practical skills and to tailor their knowledge and capacities to the demand of the labor market. Although the activities of the Academy are managed by motivated teaching staff, but there is need for more systematic recruitment, promotion and development procedures of the staff.

The Academy's interests and ambitions in research activities are defined but not clearly formed yet. Few mid-term research projects being carried out in the Academy are not sufficient to assess the successful implementation of the aforementioned interests and ambitions. The linkage between research and education process in the Academy is encouraged, however, there is a lack of clearly defined mechanisms for making research activities, involving students in them as well as investing research outputs in education process.

Efforts have been made in the Academy to improve the infrastructure and to adapt it to the needs of the academic programmes, by making sure there is sufficient equipment and facilities for managing the education process.The Academy implements its activities at the expense of funding which is generated from tuition fees, training cources, sales of its periodical and income from other sources.

The Department of Professional Education Quality Assurance was established in the Academy in August 1, 2010 and since 2012 the Department has been functioning more dynamically. The Concept on Quality Assurance the Academy has been developed that states appropriate general requirements and principles, as well as the organizational structure.Also, the Quality Assurance Manual was compiled. The Academy's internal quality assurance system is still in the process of formation. Currently the development of quality assurance mechanisms and their implementation formats are in progress.

Strengths of the Academy
1) strong and shared vision of PAA's mission and vision: institutional commitment to employability and strong support from public administration sector;
2) a strategic plan with clearly defined mission and goals,
3) regulated decision-making management structure reflecting the needs of internal stakeholders,
4) motivated and focussed management team, teaching staff and support staff,
5) tradition toenroll in the teaching staff officials with hands-on, practical knowledge,
6) academic programs developed in compliance with NQF and based on the judgements/experience of external and internal stakeholders, that comply with the mission of the Academy,
7) a targeted selection procedure for applicants and effective learning process for students,
8) learning programmes and methods favouring the effective acquisition of practical skills,

9) strong student motivation and confidence, student/alumni satisfaction, mature students for whom the Academy is usually their first choice ,
10) proven success with the increase and diversification of financial resources, hence diminishing dependency on governmental subsidies,
11) good existing base for further improvement in coming years (a strategic plan as guiding tool, experience with case study methods, new quality assurance tools, promising international partnerships).

Weaknesses of the Academy
1) dependence on recruiting policy applied bypublic administration entities in Armenia,
2) insufficient experience to streamline activities based on the Strategic Plan,
3) insufficient external stakeholder participation in the decision-making process,
4) vagueness in mechanisms of evaluating learning outcomes,
5) lack of mechanisms for assessing the needs of teaching staff and their training,
6) insufficient financing from the Academy for efficient research programmes; no clear definition of their role and purpose in the teaching process,
7) weak teacher-student partnership in research frameworks, low level of student enrollment in research activities, insufficient international partnership in the field of research,
8) insufficient level of external relations, international cooperation and recognition,
9) inadequate situation with availability of information facilities and the library.

The Academy is given the following recommendations which should be fulfilled out within its strategy and which are aimed at the solution of problems put forward by the Expert Panel during the accreditation as well as at further improvement of the Academy:

MISSION AND PURPOSE
1) To improve the evaluation and improvement mechanisms to reflect mission and purpose and to develop clear procedures for it; to clarify expected impacts as defined in the Strategic Plan and their assessment indicators;
2) To expand the scope of external stakeholders of the Academy and to foster more active participation in defining its needs, strategic goals and objectives, as well as in governance;

GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION
3) To transfer to a tertiary system of planning by developing also medium-term programmes;
4) To clearly define the role of collegial bodies in the process of coordination of activities between various structures of the Academy by increasing participation of students in such structures

ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES
5) To clarify the learning outcomes of the academic programs according to professions, as well as their correspondence with the requirements of labour market;

6) To develop adequate mechanisms to evaluate the impact of publication of quantitative and qualitative information on the quality of academic programmes and granted qualification; to apply clearly measurable indicators for overall quality assessment;

7) To diversify teaching methods and to direct them to the objective of obtaining defined competences through improving appropriate resources;

8) To review the grading system, to clarify grading criteria;

9) To apply effective measures to increase international mobility of the teaching staff and students.

STUDENTS

10) To improve the indicators applied by the Academy's to evaluate educational, consultancy and other services for students (especially external students) and quality assurance mechanisms, and to considerthe results in the development or strategic plans of the Academy;

11) To improve the mechanisms identifying learning needs of the students;

12) To draft and implement clearly articulated procedures for additional classes of consultancy. In particular, it is advisable to develop supervision mechanisms for additional classes underacademic programmes;

13) To expand professional orientation directed activities;

14) To define a procedure and schedule for students for their communication with the administrative staff;

15) With a view to promote career of students, to acquaint them to relevant procedures (especially to civil service competitions) for applying to specific positions;

16) To form a Student Scientific Union, Student Council; to focus more on scientific activities performed jointly by professors and students; to have more joint efforts in research activities;

17) To pay more attention to advocating the rights of students by extending such functions to certain structural units of theAcademy; to create a legal structure to consult and to provide other services.

TEACHING AND SUPPORT STAFF

18) To review the policy of recruitment, improvement and promotion of the teaching and other staff; to draft mechanisms for evaluation of procedures;

19) To organize trainings on lecturing for invited and newly-selected teaching staff;

20) To set clearly qualification requirements for the teaching staff as per course and to make improvements in the competition system for selecting teaching staff.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

21) To develop a clearly defined policy on research activities and appropriate procedures to make it possible to evaluate the quality of a research activity;

22) To draft effective mechanisms to relate research to teaching, to involve students in scientific activities and to introduce research results in the teaching process; to develop tools to promote research activities among teaching staff and students;

23) To attach strong importance to development, planning and implementation of medium and short-term plans to underpin the Academy's aspirations and ambitions concerning research;

24) To pay due attention to improving language skills among taching staff and publishing more articles in foreign renowned periodicals;

25) To pay greater attention to publishing up-to-date articles in "Public Administration" newspaper and scientific proof-readingof the articles;

26) To develop a policy for distributing of facilities and financial resources.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

27) To develop a comprehensive policy on distribution of funds; to define effectiveness criteria and tools for the policy evaluation;

28) To undertake serious activities to furnish the library fund, to have partnerships with other libraries in place, to improve professional skills of librarians, to keep in digital format the books used in educational process and to adapt it to the needs of students and the teaching staff;

29) To develop tools to evaluate the applicability, availability and efficiency of resources used by students and the teaching staff;

30) To regularly monitor the applicability of acquired inventory against the mission and goals of the Academy and to develop indicators for measuring effectiveness of updating the resources to support implementation of academic programmes and the Strategic Plan;

31) To set up a medical room and to provide appropriate facilities for the disabled;,

32) To have a lingophonic cabinet for improving foreign languageskills of students and the teaching staff; to have in place tools to evaluate the effectiveness of language classes.

SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY

33) To expand transparency of procedures, processes and public outreach mechanisms, by planning and employing new and strong tools for enforcing feedback and evaluating stakeholder needs;

34) To create a single alumni information center;

35) To have more active participation in identifying educational needs of various target groups.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

36) To improve cooperation between the Academy, public administration entities and other organizations and to develop new methods, by expanding the scope of external stakeholders;

37) To have more targeted exchange of international experience to serve basic needs of the Academy and to have better interaction with local institutions;

38) To review the ambitions of the Academy reinternationalization, by adapting it to its mission and strategic objectives;

39) To develop tools to reinforce the linkage between inter-institutional Agreements and educational processes of the Academy, thus promoting development, exchange of experience and internationalization of educational activity;
40) To introduce effective mechanisms for evaluating cooperation with other organizations and external relations;
41) To develop a regulated format for the implementation of benchmarking.

INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

42) To review the quality assurance procedures, their evaluation mechanisms, distinctly measurable indicators of education quality enhancement and effectiveness measuring tools;
43) To develop more efficient feedback mechanisms and to ensure their effective implementation; to review the content of surveys and questionnaires; to improve the format and methods of conducting surveys;
44) To have incentives for the internal quality assurance staff;
45) To have regular trainings for the staff working in quality assurance structures;
46) To make participation of internal and external stakeholders in quality assurance more proportional;
47) To develop compliance and effectiveness evaluation tools of human, material and financial resources;
48) To clarify the principles and purposes underlying monitoring and surveys conducted in the Academy; to develop a policy for analysis of the monitoring and survey results.

PEER REVIEW ACCORDING TO THE INTERNATIONAL CRITERIA

The expert panel has carried out peer review in accordance with the international criteria which is aimed at raising the level of competitiveness of the Academy at international level as well as the Academy's integration into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

Observations

The Academy is a young institution with a successful itinerary since its creation in 1994 and in particular since it was placed under the purview of the President's Services of the Republic of Armenia. It is a comparatively small institution specialising in Public Administration programmes for the education of students and the training of civil servants in Armenia. It offers graduate programmes (mainly at the Master level, with small research programmes of the PhD type) and a broad range of training programmes for active civil servants. For its Master programmes, the Academy is directly dependent on the quality of its intake coming from other Armenian higher education institutions offering bachelor-level education.

The Academy enjoys a unique position and a solid reputation in Armenia among the public administration and governmental circles, with some recent inroads into the spheres of private management.

The Academy's programmes are seen internally and externally (by potential students and employers) as attractive, mainly because they are oriented towards the acquisition of practical skills

and competencies needed on the Armenian labor market (mainly public administrations, but also private companies) and hence offer better employment opportunities than traditional university degrees from other Armenian universities.

This success builds on a series of positive features that the Academy has been able to develop:

- a targeted and effective procedure on selection of applicants that has gradually been sharpened and focused on the profile sought for graduates;
- the recruitment of dedicated teaching team equipped with practical knowledge of public administration in Armenia;
- the gradual development of new support services underpinning these efforts (quality assurance unit, research-based programmes, internship unit, international liaison and PR department, career unit, etc.);
- with satisfied graduates and employers, the Academy has been able to attract more/better applicants and teachers and thus increase the competitive advantage of its graduates on the labor market, and has thus activated a virtuous circle benefitting the Academy.

Recommendations

Academic Programmes

1) As a core dimension of its strategic planning the Academy should evaluate in detail its overall offering of degree courses and training activities in terms of their pertinence to social needs, their role in the Academy's strategy (established and new programmes, national and international programmes, initial and continuing programmes, programmes of high prestige and less appealing ones, programmes contributing to level and diversification of funding and programmes in need of financial support, programmes answering to current needs and programmes anticipating future needs, etc.). This should guide the Academy in the strategic planning of its medium term "product policy".

2) The academy should not consider developing bachelor degrees of its own and should remain exclusively focused on post-bachelor education and training.

3) The Academy should develop a small number of strong PhD programmes focused on Public Administration themes in the national, European and international context, in order to strengthen its research capabilities, its academic credibility and its national and international visibility.

Internationalisation

The Academy should include in its strategic objectives the aim to become a full and recognised member of the European and international Public Administration education community; this means in particular:

1) Acknowledging that real and sustainable prestige and recognition needs to built on a basis reaching well beyond national boundaries;

2) Acknowledging that in this era of globalisation and interdependency, the Academy will only be better serving the needs of Armenian society if it educates and train civil servants able to cooperate, negotiate and compete with their peers in other countries;

3) Enhancing the contacts, exchanges and benchmarking with leading foreign Public Administration HEIs;

4) Seeking in due time (some three years from now) the international accreditation seal of EAPAA.

This also means that while there is a minimal level of mobility without which true internationalisation is unlikely to happen, the internationalisation strategy of the Academy should focus mainly on the use of international references and benchmarking rather than on large-scale teacher and student mobility.

Staff and Quality Development

1) The Academy should develop a formal, medium term staff development plan encompassing permanent teaching staff and support staff as well as academic and institutional managers. PAA should plan for a gradual strengthening of its permanent teaching staff – even though the importance of part time lecturers providing hands-on experience is not challenged. There should be a formal procedure for the development of study programmes, with special attention to interdisciplinarity, foreign languages and international references.

2) PAA needs to build up its internal QA unit, providing at least one more member of staff and investing in training aimed at development effective evaluation methods in line with international best practice; it should be very clear that while the development of regulations and manuals is useful it does not by itself guarantee that the procedures described in them are applied and effective.

Name and Public Relations Policy

1) The name of the "academy" may be misleading internationally, even though the Armenian law may define clearly what is required from institutions called "academy", and there are other examples of HEIs offering professional education/training calling themselves "academies" (e.g. Germany's "professional academies"). This also means that the Academy should decide whether it should build up its reputation mainly as a centre for professional qualification or on its aspiration should be recognised as an "academic" institution.

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

The Academy admits that the recommendations presented by the Expert Panel are within the framework of its strategy and the Academy has presented action plan approved by the Scientific Council and time schedule for the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report.

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

The Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia has taken into consideration the Expert Panel's main recommendations on problems described within the scope of all the 10 criteria of accreditation, and it plans to implement them during 2015-2016.

The expert panel also points out that the observations and recommendations on peer review in accordance with international standards have been partially omitted by the Academy.

The Expert Panel finds that the Academy's Action Plan and respective activities directed to the elimination of shortcomings identified within the scope of the 10 criteria of accreditation are mainly clearly mentioned. The Academy has clearly defined action plans for almost all the fields of activity (Criteria 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9). The Academy clearly reflects only some of the actions within the criterion 2, and within the criterion 10 – most of the actions.

In the activities mentioned in the Action Plan on the elimination of shortcoming the majority of the steps have logical sequence. The criteria 5 and 7 are pointed out within the scope of which the suggested steps are fully presented in logical sequence.

According to the Action Plan, all the responsible parties are defined for the implementation of all the steps. Respective resources are also mentioned for the same purpose but the resources necessary for the elimination of the identified shortcomings are mainly presented in the form of "RA State Budget, other means not prohibited by law" which does not allow to have a real depiction on sufficiency and correspondence of resources necessary for the implementation of the planned activities. In this respect the correspondence of provided resources to the planned activities is not presented.

The deadlines mentioned for the implementation of activities are realistic for most of those activities. The same deadlines are mainly set for the implementation of activities to be carried out in separate fields (criterion 5) which can have an influence on effectiveness of achivement of outcomes.

The combination of outcomes of separate activities brings to the conclusion that the goal of the activity is available for the criterion 7, and most of the outcomes of the activities presented in the Action Plan are directly aimed at the fulfillment of the goal of the given activity (criteria 1-6, 8-10).

One or more indicators of evaluation enable to decide the implementation of each activity as well as the impact for the criteria 1, 2, 5, 7, 9, and in case of criteria 3, 4, 6, 8, 10 a number of indicators are applied for each activity.

Conclusion.The Academy has planned to initiate the implementation of activities in main fields. The deadlines set for those activities are mainly realistic, they are linked with the strategies selected for the criteria and they have logical sequence and responsible parties, and the indicators of evaluation will enable to decide the implementation of each activity as well as the impact. Currently some documents regulating the procedures are in the process of development which will enable to assess the effectiveness of processes operated in the Academy. The issue on sufficiency of resources necessary for the implementation of the planned activities which is presented very generally in the plan, contains some risks.

Based on the aforementioned, ANQA suggests the Accreditation Committee to pay special attention to the implementation of the following activities while making decision:

1) to give urgent solution to the problems existent in the following fields: **Research and Development, Academic Programs, Teaching and Support Staff, Infrastructure and Resources, Expernal Relations and Internationalization, Internal Quality Assurance System;**

2) According to the requirements of clause 12 of the Regulation on "State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Educational Programs" or according to the deadlines set by the Accreditation Committee, regularly present a written report to ANQA on the results of the carried out activities;

3) To review the action plan for the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report taking into account the remarks about the action plan mentioned in the current conclusion.

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

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Head of Expert Panel   **ANQA Coordinator**

EXPERT PANEL COMPOSITION

— **Samvel Pipoyan**—Professor at Chair of Biology of Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan, Ph.D. in Bology.
— **Guy Haug** - Advisor to the Rector of the University of Technology of Valencia, one of thefounders of the European Higher Education Area with hands-on experience with QA, PhD in Political Science.
— **Tigran Mnatsakanyan** - Assistant professor at the ASUE Chair of Management, Ph.D. in Economics.
— **Gohar Iskandaryan**– LeadResearch Assistant at Oriental Sciences, Department of Iran of RA National Academy of Sciences, ՀՀ ԳԱԱ. Scientific Secretary to Division of Diaspora, RA NAS Presidium. Lecturer at Yerevan Statae University, holds a Doctor degree in History
— **Arous Haroutiunyan** – Fourth-year student at the Faculty of Management, Department of Enterprise Economics and Management of Yerevan State University. Head of the Educational Reforms Commission to National Association of Students of Armenia.

ANQA support staff:

Anna Karapetyan - Coordinator of activities of the expert panel, Senior Specialist at Institutional and Academic Programme Accreditation Department of ANQA
Mariam Movsisyan – Translator of PAARA Institutional Accreditation Procedure

SUMMATIVE EVALUATION[3]

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

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

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[3] While carrying out the evaluation the expert panel followed the Regulation on "State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Educational Programs" and the procedure described in the ANQA Accreditation Manual carrying out firstly evaluation per standards and then per criteria. "Satisfactory" and "Unsatisfactory" evaluation scale was applied

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

-**unsatisfactory:** if the University does not meet the demands of the criterion and it is not allowed to continue the activities that way and urgent improvements are needed

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