



ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE

DECREE

21 May 2015, № 11

ON AWARDING INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION TO
“PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION ACADEMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA”
STATE NON-COMMERCIAL ORGANIZATION

General Information about the Institution

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

Guided by the regulation on “State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Educational Programmes” 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, in the open session held on 21 May, 2015, 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 the Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia (hereinafter: Academy) with the presence of MoES representatives, the Head of the Expert Panel, and ANQA coordinator of the accreditation procedure.

Having examined the self-analysis presented by the Academy, the expert panel report, the 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:

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

Submission of the application **17 June 2013**

Submission of the self-analysis of the University **16 December 2013, 24 January 2014**

Site-visit **12-16 May 2014**

Submission of the expert panel report **2 September 2014**

Submission of action plan for the elimination of **1 October 2014**
shortcomings

The expertise was carried out by an expert panel formed according to the requirements of the regulation on “The Formation of expert panel at “National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance” Foundation”. The evaluation was carried out based on the 10 criteria of institutional accreditation approved by RA Government decree N 959-Ն as of June 30, 2011.

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 programme 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 teaching staff and students. Institutional decisions are carried by collegial bodies as set forth in the management structure. 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 programme 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 courses, 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.

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

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 programmes 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 consider the 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 under academic 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 the Academy; 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 teaching 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-reading of 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.

Observing the presented package of documents and considering the opinions of Head of the Expert Panel and other representatives, the Accreditation Committee finds that the Academy sufficiently fulfils the primary objective - to provide professionals in the administrative, political, social, legal and economic fields of the RA pursuant to the civil service requirements. Taking into consideration the fact that the Academy provides Master programmes only, the shortcomings identified in the sphere of “**Research and Development**” put the preparation of respective specialists in accordance with the 7th level of the RA NQF under, reflecting on the formation of their research skills and competences as far as the content of the programmes are not fully in line with the NQF.

Activating its cooperation with internal and external stakeholders, the Academy should take serious steps to modernize the academic programmes and to make them more research oriented, as well as to improve education resources. The Academy should maintain its policy on inviting professionals from the management sphere emphasizing the importance of research component in processes of their recruitment, motivation and promotion. It is necessary to clarify the Academy’s research interests and priorities, to undertake the creation of basic research laboratories, to implement grants and research papers towards those directions, to involve students in scientific research activities, as well as to reinforce the link between teaching and research. Otherwise the mentioned issues can be risky in terms of preparing qualified specialists.

The elimination of the shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report as well as the implementation of the recommendations will ensure the student-centered and research nature of provided education services as well as the comparability with international standards which is in line with the Academy’s ambitions.

Taking into account the recommendations in all the 10 criteria, the Academy has developed an “Action plan on elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report” in which the implementation of necessary activities during 2015-2016 are planned. The deadlines set for the implementation of those activities are mainly realistic, the activities are linked with the selected strategies and they have logical sequence and responsible parties. It is necessary to ensure respective and sufficient resources for the implementation of those activities to avoid potential risks, as well as to take into account the peer review observations and respective recommendations.

Taking into consideration that the Academy can eliminate the shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report by using its internal QA mechanisms of its internal quality assurance as well as implement the recommendations in reasonable time period, as a result of voting the Committee:

DECIDED

1. To award Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia an **Institutional Accreditation with a 4 /four/ year period.**
2. Within two months after the publication of the Decree on Awarding Institutional Accreditation to submit an action plan on elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report and corresponding time-schedule to ANQA taking into account:
 - a. the necessity of finding solutions primarily to the problems existing in the fields of **“Research and Development”**;
 - b. the results and recommendations of the peer review according to international standards;
 - c. the necessity to activate the development of external relations and internationalization related activities.
3. In order to improve the activities of the Academy in line with current demands it is necessary to pay special attention to the reinforcement quality assurance system, modernization of academic programmes and necessary logistics, mobility of teaching staff and students, reinforcement of the link between learning and research, training of teaching staff.
4. According to the requirements of clause 12 of the Regulation on “State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Educational Programmes” every 2 /two/ years to submit a written report to ANQA on the results of the carried out activities.

Chairman of the Accreditation Committee

May 29, 2015

Yerevan

V. Urutyan