



ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE

DECREE N 5

21 March 2015

**On Awarding Institutional Accreditation to
«ARMENIAN NATIONAL AGRARIAN UNIVERSITY»
STATE NON-COMMERCIAL ORGANIZATION**

General Information about the Institution

Full name of the Institution: **Armenian National Agrarian University**

Acronym: **ANAU**

Legal Form: **State Non-commercial Organization**

Official Address: **74 Teryan str., 0009, Yerevan, Armenia**

Previous Accreditation decree and date: **Not available**

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, in the open session held on 21 March 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 Armenian National Agrarian University (ANAU) with the presence of the representatives of the RA Ministry of Education and Science, Chair of the Expert Panel, ANQA coordinator of the accreditation procedure as well as ANAU representatives.

Having examined the self-analysis presented by ANAU, the Expert Panel report, ANAU 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 **5 March 2012**

Submission of the self-analysis of the University **2 October 2012**

Site-visit **3-7 December 2012**

Submission of the expert panel report **1 March 2013**

Submission of action plan for the **14 February 2014**
elimination of 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.

While carrying out the evaluation, it has been taken into account that ANAU is the only higher education institution with perennial experience in the agrarian sphere in the Republic which strives to become a “leading center playing significant role in the region, providing education, scientific-research and consultancy services”. Giving importance to the practical aspect of education in the agrarian sphere, the RA Government has defined the 4 years and 8 months duration of education for Bachelor’s degree for all the professions of the University.

Within its activity the University has not undergone accreditation; the education quality assurance was carried out by applying some mechanisms of quality control. The current process of accreditation of institutional capacities is the University’s first experience which is aimed at self-assessment of satisfaction of educational environment, efficiency of academic programs, social responsibility as well as functioning of invested internal quality assurance system. The University has an experience of external evaluation of the “Agribusiness and Marketing” academic program delivered by the Agribusiness teaching Department. The external evaluation was carried out by the international Expert Panel with the initiation of US Department of Agriculture in 2011.

The University is authorized to prepare specialists in 37 professions within the three-level education system, and some of them are exceptional among higher education institutions in the agrarian sphere not only at regional but also at CIS level. According to its mission, the University should provide academic programs that meet “the demands of labor market in the agrarian sphere as well as take into account their dynamic changes”. The majority of the academic programs have been recently reviewed for many times. The course description with respective learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences) is currently in process.

The University strives to meet the requirements of up-to-date programs by interlinking research and education processes. By participating in TEMPUS activities the University makes benchmarking of its academic programs and develops up-to-date programs.

The application of the University’s research outcomes in teaching as well as MA students’ involvement in research activities states that there is an interlinkage between teaching and research.

Currently the University’s infrastructures and resources are partially satisfactory for the provision of professional education. The probability of drastic improvement in the nearest future is not much because of financial scarcity of the University. The University’s financial resources basically generated from the students’ tuition fees are mainly spent for the provision of salaries, and they are not enough to equip educational and scientific structural units with necessary facilities.

No means are provided for the international collaboration either, and in case of termination of external financing the sustainability of the sphere may falter, and the teaching staff mobility which is not at a high level for the current moment may face a risk as well.

Currently the University has competent teaching staff with great experience due to which the main objectives of academic programs are reached. The age average of the teaching staff is 65. The student/teacher average ratio is 16,6/1. The low salaries and lack of motivation hinder the involvement of young and qualified specialists, and this factor put the University's activity under risk. The existing opportunities for the recruitment, improvement of staff, PhD education as well as regular trainings of teaching staff and Interns' Institute are not fully taken by the University.

ANAU teaching staff is involved in research activities but there are few research activities carried out at international level. Only some members of the teaching staff have international experience due to implemented projects within the cooperation with international organizations.

The University is concerned about the students' education and their opinion about student-centered approach and provided education. The current mechanisms of students' recruitment, selection and admission ensure sustainable flow of applicants for this period of time, however, but together with the increase of number of applicants, the number of dismissed students is great. Students mentioned about some steps for improvement (new teaching and assessment methods, infrastructure and library resources). They appreciate the practical education and support which the University provides, but they find that their needs are not always met in terms of factual participation in the University's governance, implementation of research activities as well as provision of opportunities for career development.

The University's management system served well to the aim of the University. However, it currently faces new internal and external challenges which require more substantiated and student-centered approaches, more accountable decision-making processes, additional resources and good information system. The University is in the process of making structural changes, and the effectiveness of the new system can be judged only after the analysis of results gained at one cycle of the processes implemented in accordance with the principle of quality management.

At all levels of the University education quality and quality assurance are given importance to although it is currently more conditioned by external demands. Human, material and financial resources have been provided for the organization of the processes. The internal quality assurance system is under implementation process; although some processes are put into action, the level of stakeholders' participation is low, and the basic mechanisms still need to be developed.

The University 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 University.

Mission and Goals

1. To ensure the factual reflection of all the stakeholders' needs in the mission, goals and objectives of the University as well as stakeholders' participation in processes of evaluation and improvement of results.

Governance and Administration

2. To be led by the principle of quality management (Plan-Do-Check-Act) in the organization of the University's administration and evaluation of results.

3. To regulate the financial management of the University, studies of factors which have an impact of the University's activity, as well as collection, analysis and application of information on the effectiveness of governance related processes.
4. To expand practical involvement of the teaching staff and students at all levels of the University's governance.

Academic Programmes

5. To enlarge the academic programs, to publicize learning outcomes of all the academic programs, to regulate their monitoring, evaluation of effectiveness and periodically review them.
6. To ensure stakeholders' participation in the development of academic programs and their intended learning outcomes, and to make those outcomes as a basis for the selection of methods of teaching, learning and assessment. To develop mechanisms of academic honesty assurance for the assessment of students as well as to regulate the process of assessment appeal.
7. To take steps towards implementation of targeted benchmarking of the academic programs with other known professional academic programs and to ensure their content compliance.

Students

8. To make the process of student recruitment targeted taking into consideration the demands set for the field specialists of the Republic.
9. To take concrete steps towards formation of student-centered environment; to make students' needs assessment
10. To take specific steps towards formation of student-centered environment; to make students' needs assessment, to take into consideration those needs in the organization of education processes, to provide consultancy and organize facultative courses, to review the activities of the body responsible for the protection of student rights.
11. To enlarge the frame of activities of the Career Center directing them to the assurance of sustainable feedback from alumni and their employability.
12. To regulate the process of integrating learners in scientific-research activities and direct them to the development of students' research skills.

Teaching and Support Staffs

13. To take steps towards rejuvenation of the teaching staff.
14. To develop clear requirements set for the professional qualities of the teaching staff in compliance with each academic program.
15. To develop policy and procedures of regular evaluation of the teaching staff, to improve the tools of evaluation of the teaching and support staffs' activities.
16. To develop a system of teaching staff's needs assessment and to carry out more targeted activities aimed at their improvement in accordance with those needs.

Research and Development

17. To clarify the research interests and ambitions of the University, to plan research activities, as well as respective policy and procedures ensuring that vision.
18. To carry out activities which will foster internationalization of research activities.
19. To strengthen the linkage between research activities and education processes carried out at the University.

Infrastructure and Resources

20. To carry out regular assessments on the application, availability and efficiency of resources provided to the teaching staff and students.
21. To develop a financial policy which will foster investments.
22. To improve ANAU educational scientific basis and the equipment of laboratories to improve the academic environment necessary for the implementation of academic programs and to ensure compliance with international standards.
23. To regulate information management and documentation processes.

Social Responsibility

24. To improve forms of accountability and transparency of internal processes for internal and external stakeholders.
25. To develop policy and procedures defining feedback which fosters the formation of public relations (PR). To share PR experience of Agribusiness Teaching Department and its mechanisms among other ANAU structural units.

External Relations and Internationalization

26. To form an environment fostering the experience sharing, internationalization and development of the University, to improve activities of the Unit ensuring PR and internationalization.

Internal Quality Assurance System

27. To develop procedures respective to the policy which ensures education quality at ANAU, to develop QA Manual. To publicize all the documents on the ANAU website.
28. To assess the level of satisfaction with human, material and financial resources provided by the University for internal QA processes, as well as to take the results into account for resource planning.
29. To apply QA mechanisms in processes ensuring implementation of professional academic programs.
30. To enlarge involvement of external and internal stakeholders (especially students) in internal QA processes.
31. To assess the transparency of institutional processes and the objectiveness of the information on their quality which is disseminated among internal and external stakeholders.
32. To separate such an amount of information and to operate such mechanisms of information collection which will form necessary bases for QA internal and external assessments.

Observing the presented package of documents and considering the opinions of head of the Expert Panel and other representatives, the Accreditation Committee finds that ANAU mainly fulfills its goals. YSLU has functional management system. However, the University needs to improve its financial management. The suggested academic programs are in line with state education standards, and the education resources and the teaching staff create sufficient academic environment for the implementation of professional academic programs which are in compliance with the National Qualifications Framework. The shortcomings revealed in the main spheres of the University's activity do not directly put the proper preparation of specialists under danger for this transitional period of the University.

The University should take considerable steps towards the improvement of management system, development of up-to-date programs described with learning outcomes, assurance of fluent generation change of the teaching staff, preparation of young specialists as well as their involvement in research activities. The risk management of these problems should be a priority for the University in the nearest future.

The elimination of the shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report and the implementation of the given recommendations will ensure the student-centered approach and research character of the provided education services, the compliance with international standards, and the precise management of existing resources will upgrade the level of effectiveness.

Taking into consideration the recommendations on all the 10 criteria which is a matter of time, ANAU has developed an "Action plan for the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report". The action plan is realistic and is aimed at the improvement of the University's performance. At the same time, giving importance to the development of documents regulation the processes, the emphases of the given program should necessarily address the impact evaluation of the processes to ensure their effectiveness.

Taking into consideration that ANAU can eliminate the shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report by methodically operating its internal QA mechanisms and fully accomplish vital state goals in a reasonable time period, as a result of open voting the Committee:

DECIDED

- 1. To award institutional accreditation** to Armenian National Agrarian University **for 4 /four/ years.**
- 2. After the publication of the decision on accreditation award, to submit the action plan for the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report and respective time schedule within two months taking into account:**

- the necessity of finding solutions primarily to the problems existing in the fields of “Governance and Administration”, “Professional Academic Programs” and “Research and Development”;
 - b. the remarks on the preliminary action plan for the elimination of shortcomings, mentioned in the “Conclusion on institutional capacities of Armenian National Agrarian University”.
3. In order to improve the activities of the University in line with current demands, to pay special attention to the development of quality assurance system, refreshment of material-technical base necessary for the implementation of academic programs, teaching staff and student mobility, reinforcement of the linkage between learning and research, generation change and training of the teaching staff.
 4. According to the requirements of clause 12 of the Regulation on “State Accreditation of RA Education Institutions providing professional academic programs and their Professions” every 2 /two/ years to submit a written report to ANQA on the results of the carried out activities.

Based on the RA Government Decree N 872 (14 June 2012), to give the Certificate of Accreditation to “Armenian National Agrarian University” Foundation which is the legal successor of “Armenian State Agrarian University” State Non-Commercial Organization.

Chair of ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE

V. Urutyun

26 March 2015
Yerevan