



CONCLUSION

ON ACCREDITATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES OF YEREVAN STATE CONSERVATOIRE AFTER KOMITAS

General Information about the Institution

Full name of the Institution	Yerevan State Conservatoire after Komitas
Acronym	YSC
Official address	1/a Sayat-Nova av., 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” as well as by the Procedure on the Formation and Functioning of Accreditation Committee of “National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance” foundation (ANQA), the Accreditation Committee of “National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance” foundation (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) discussed the ANQA draft conclusion on the institutional capacities Yerevan State Conservatoire after Komitas (hereinafter: YSC) on the basis of self-analysis presented by YSC, Expert Panel report, YSC action plan for the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report as well as Expert panel opinion based on the YSC action plan with the presence of the ANQA representatives, the Expert Panel, and ANQA coordinator of the accreditation procedure.

As a result of discussion the following was registered:

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

Submission of application	12 March 2012
Submission of self-evaluation report	9 July 2013
Site-visit	30 September-4 October 2013
Submission of expert panel report	11 November 2013
Submission of action plan for elimination of shortcomings	17 February 2014

RESULTS OF PEER REVIEW

The expertise has been carried out by an independent expert panel formed in compliance with the requirements set forth by the ANQA Regulation on the Formation of Expert Panel¹. The evaluation has been made according to 10 criteria of institutional accreditation approved by N 959-Ն Decree of the RA Government, 30 June 2011².

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While carrying out the evaluation the Committee has taken into consideration the fact that YSC is a unique institution with 90 years of experience having a national role in educational, scientific and creative spheres of musical culture the primary mission of which is to provide music education at all levels of higher education. Since 2012 YSC is a full member of the Association of European Conservatories (AEC).

Throughout its activity YSC didn't undergo accreditation; the quality assurance was carried out through the application of some mechanisms of quality control. The current piloting of accreditation of institutional capacities is YSC's first experience which is aimed at self-assessment of satisfaction of educational environment, efficiency of academic programs, social responsibility as well as recently invested internal quality assurance system.

YSC professional academic programs (APs) comply with the RA NQ musical and culture needs, foster development of culture as well as preservation, development and sharing of national spiritual culture values. Conservatoire is meant to become a student-centered institution by preparing high-quality artist-specialists who will comply with contemporary needs which derives from the mission and Strategic Plan of YSC.

Conservatory implements professional higher education providing 3 basic levels of education: bachelor's, master's and researcher's degrees, as well as postgraduate education of "Music Arts" profession which has 5 specialties. APs are reliable in terms of content and creativity and they are in

¹ **APPENDIX 1: EXPERT PANEL COMPOSITION AND ANQA SUPPORT STAFF**

² **APPENDIX 2` ` SUMMATIVE EVALUATION**

line with state education standards. Although alumni with specialties in performance and creative spheres are able to continue their education abroad, some discrepancies in contents of APs of other similar institutions hinder free mobility and internationalization of students and teaching staff.

With the aim to modernize and internationalize APs, YSC carries out research of international best practices and benchmarking of similar APs within the frames of the World Bank Grant. The description of courses in line with learning outcomes (LOs) is in process. Based on the peculiarities of Conservatoire, the policy on students' individual learning ensures the compliance between teaching of majors and learning methods. There are some tangible facts which point out the efficiency of teaching methods.

The application of results of research carried out in YSC in teaching process as well as MA students' involvement in research activities points out the existence of linkage between teaching and research.

With limited financial resources, YSC has managed to create efficient educational environment. Existing resources and facilities (which are also set for students with special needs) as well as property foster the fulfillment of set mission and implementation of APs. However, opportunities for development are troublesome.

For the fulfillment of its mission and implementation of APs, YSC has teaching staff with necessary professional qualities which is aimed at the assurance of traditional musical and conservatory education. The teacher/student ratio is too high which is not justified. Having studied the structure of similar foreign higher education institutions, Conservatoire has launched the optimization process of its staff since 2012.

The 98% of teachers are YSC alumni which ensures the stability of the teaching staff. However, being the only one in the republic and having no internal competition, it can become a hindrance for the linkage with external environment, thus forming a close circle.

For further development and improvement of quality, YSC should strive for other similar international institutions and should ensure mobility of students and teaching staff. Teachers to some extent carry out international cooperation but this is neither formal nor coordinated. The number of teachers at retirement age is still big which causes difficulties for the progress of young staff. The problem of regular teacher training, especially when referring to the pedagogical capacity building, still exists at YSC.

YSC teaching staff is involved in research activities, however, those carried out at international level are few.

YSC carries out multibranch research activity. Being one of the most important spheres of YSC, research promotes the realization of YSC mission and goals. The research results are vastly invested in educational process.

YSC is concerned with students' learning process, student-centered environment as well as student's opinion about provided education. The functioning mechanisms of student recruitment, selection and admission currently ensure stable flow of applicants.

The efficiency of students' academic needs assessment is conditioned by the fact that the education provided by YSC is basically being carried out by individual classes. Students are mainly satisfied with the mechanisms putting forward the questions they raise, as well as solutions to the questions. Students are actively involved in research activities especially those being at MA level.

Students have a positive attitude to the provided education services and general quality of education. Although they do not clearly realize the opportunities existing in the sphere of higher music education, still it is clear that they have an active participation in governing bodies and they strive to make some changes.

The governance of YSC served well to its goal before. However, currently it faces new internal and external challenges which require student-centered approaches, more substantiated and more accountable decision-making processes, additional resources and good information system. YSC is in process of making structural changes, and the efficiency of the new system can be judged only after the analysis of the results of one-cycle processes which were carried out in accordance with the quality management principle.

The quality of education and the quality assurance are given importance to at all levels of YSC although this is more conditioned by external requirements at present. Human, material and financial resources have been provided for the organization of respective processes at YSC. The internal quality assurance system is in the formation phase. Though some activities are in process, the participation of stakeholders is poor, and the main mechanisms are still to be developed.

STRENGTHS

1. YSC's involvement in the creation of a musical environment in the republic.
2. Progressive leadership determined towards reforms. The acknowledgement of its own weaknesses and willingness to fix and improve them.
3. Highly qualified teaching staff, involved in the processes of formation of APs and guidance of students.
4. Compliance of outcomes set for the AP with the state education standards, existence of traditional well-structured curricula.
5. Research activity carried out towards preservation and sharing of musicology, Armenian folk music and spiritual values. Wide use of research outcomes education process.
6. Students' involvement at all levels. Students are heard, and they influence decision making processes.
7. Active involvement of YSC students in various international ensembles at different international festivals, contests, and concerts.

WEAKNESSES

1. Aging of the teaching staff leading to conservatism in program implementation and teaching methodology.
2. Non-flexible curricula and the limited opportunity of selection. They do not yet create opportunities for internationalization and mobility of students and teachers.
3. Lack of financing for international activities.
4. Although the infrastructure of the university is sufficient for the moment, it can hinder further development of the institution: the absence of a concert hall, sports hall and hostel; the level of musical instruments should be much higher.

5. The Gyumri branch.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mission and Purpose

1. To formulate a clear and concise mission statement which will reflect YSC's real aspiration of being a bridge between Eastern and Western European cultures, a center of regional importance, a crossroad of different cultures (Islamic, Western, Arabic, Persian), an ambassador of Armenian music and musical tradition in the world, as well as preserving and building upon the best traditions of classical music performance.
2. To develop a separate mission statement for the YSC Gyumri branch.
3. To develop procedures for for evaluating the achievement of mission and goals as well as mechanisms for regular monitoring of the Strategic Plan. To make surveys maximum compliant with the assessment of efficiency of YSC mission and Strategic Plan fulfillment.

Governance and Administration

4. To review the surveys and find ways which will allow to find the discrepancies between the goals and reality, to amend them and to reinforce the institutional strengths.
5. To develop mechanisms evaluating the effectiveness of the University performance.
6. To find effective means for the dissemination of information. For this purpose the website needs to be widely used.

Academic Programs

7. The University should make a research on different contemporary methods of teaching and learning with the aim to modernize curricula and make them in compliance with international standards.
8. The learning outcomes should serve as a basis for the students' knowledge assessment.
9. To increase the role of chairs in the development and enhancement of APs.

Students

10. To develop mecahnisms to evaluate the effectiveness of student recruitment, professional orientation processes.
11. To establish a body of educational consultants.
12. It is desirable to establish a Career Center or any other unit like that.

Teaching and Support Staffs

13. It is necessary to establish procedures ensuring professional development and promotion of teaching staff.
14. It is necessary to develop policy on professional development as well as to organize trainings for the teaching staff especially regarding the development of pedagogical skills.
15. To make the feedback received from teacher surveys more effective.
16. To pay special attention to the organization of activities of beginner-teachers of YSC.

Research and Development

17. To take action in the direction of internationalizing research outputs of the University.

Infrastructure and Resources

18. To support all the efforts towards building a proper concert hall on the YSC premises.

19. To analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of the University resources.

20. To enhance the resources of the Gyumri branch of YSC.

Social Responsibility

21. To complete the activities of rebuilding the website and to ensure its proper maintenance.

22. To formalize the communication with alumni and other respective activities.

23. To analyze the effectiveness of current mechanisms.

External Relations and Internationalization

24. To be seriously concerned with the current situation of YSC in this sphere and to take stable steps towards improvement of the situation.

25. To develop clear internationalization policy promoting experience exchange and enhancement of international relations with an emphasis on the internationalization of the University.

26. To bring professional academic programs closer to the international standards.

27. To ensure appropriate level of foreign language proficiency among internal stakeholders.

Internal Quality Assurance System

28. To assure full applicability of the stipulated procedures.

29. To enlarge human, material and financial resources to increase the effectiveness of quality assurance processes.

30. To ensure the involvement of a wider group of stakeholders, especially faculty, for the establishment of quality culture.

31. To develop a regulation for regular review of internal quality assurance system, as well as feedback mechanisms and ensure their applicability.

32. To strengthen the link between management and quality assurance systems to develop quality assurance procedures on governance and administration.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

A peer review of the University has also been carried out in compliance with the international standards which is aimed at upgrading the level of competitiveness of the University at international level as well as at the integration of the University into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

Observations:

The university is definitely in a phase of transition. It seems that YSC approaches innovations cautiously. The teaching staff is not open enough to take other opportunities for current career(s) for musicians. Curriculum development is comparatively conservative. The teaching staff should adopt

some generic approach (taking into account external experience) while setting the content and methods for the realization of the curricula. There is no any international strategy (especially regarding foreign student recruitment). YSC teaching staff participates in international partnerships to a certain degree, but those activities are informal.

There is an office for quality enhancement with two staff members. This ensures the sustainability of continuous quality enhancement to a certain extent; just sufficient funding should be provided. One of the strongest points of the University is its research activity carried out in the sphere of Armenian traditional and contemporary music. The scientific and creative research is sufficiently developed. The impressive research activity carried out in the “Folklore Cabinet” is worth to be evaluated.

Recommendations

- To identify the key features of each course and to explore ways to develop and promote these specificities.
- The institution is encouraged to formulate its identity and goals more clearly both at the institutional and APs levels.
- It is necessary to develop and apply learning outcomes based on the learning outcomes developed by the AEC, as well as Dublin Descriptors.
- The YSC mission is to create a student-centered learning environment. Therefore, we sincerely recommend the institution to make the curriculum more flexible thus giving students an opportunity to freely choose elective courses out of their main subject area, as well as to participate in different programs/projects and to get credits for them.
- Assessment criteria should be connected with the learning outcomes which students are expected to achieve. Assessment scales should be examined for anomaly: they should ideally map across each other and across other disciplines as well.
- Departments should ensure mechanisms reflecting research outcomes in the curricula.
- To formulate the role of research in the education of students.
- Budget distribution.
- The number of musical instruments is sufficient, but their level should be much higher. There is a scarcity of foreign literature in the Library; probably the University is not a membership of any research database.
- It is necessary to add working hours for the to Library and Phonotheek to ensure open access for students.
- A more coordinated involvement of students, former students and professional bodies in course design and review should be ensured, as their feedback is essential to check the relevance of the course and how it is perceived by different stakeholders.
- Student and staff should be informed of survey results and actions taken based on them.
- Links with the professional field: it is necessary to develop a mechanism through which the cooperation with the representatives of the professional field will be discussed and planned. This is aimed at receiving their feedback on graduates and curricula in order to ensure the quality of teaching and its relevance with the given profession.

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

Yerevan State Conservatoire after Komitas accepts that the recommendations presented by the Expert Panel are within the scope of the University's strategy, and it has submitted for the "Action Plan and Time Schedule on the elimination of shortcomings" (hereinafter: Action Plan) approved by the YSC Scientific Council (13.02.2014).

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

1. According to the Action Plan, the University has perceived, admitted and has taken the commitment to follow all the recommendations provided by the Expert Panel regarding the described issues existing in all the 10 criteria of accreditation. All the recommendations requiring urgent changes are involved in the Action Plan. However, it should be mentioned that the University's feedback on peer reviewed recommendations provided by the international experts is poor, For example:
 - ✓ The University has not planned to take any steps towards development of the strategy of internationalization (especially in the direction of foreign student recruitment);
 - ✓ The University has not either addressed the issue of making curriculum flexible which would give the students an opportunity to freely choose elective courses out of their main subject area, as well as to participate in different programs/projects and to get credits for them.
 - ✓ Although the University has perceived the importance of establishing concert hall on the YSC premises in the "Infrastructure and Resources" section, and the managers of the University has already developed a long-term plan and has respectively taken respective steps, they are not reflected in the Action Plan.Consequently, the University needs to pay special attention to them.
2. In the Action Plan of the University there is a clear Action Plan for each strategy.
3. The sequence of the majority of the activities has been arranged logically.
4. For all the actions respective responsible team, contact point and financial resources are mentioned.
5. It is clear how the majority of the actions should be taken. Most of the steps cover realistic deadlines although no deadlines in the "External Relations and Internationalization" criterion are mentioned.
6. For each step it is mainly planned to apply one measuring indicator to determine the successful implementation; no any indicator is applied for the evaluation of the impact.
7. In the presented Action Plan there are significant amount of technical misprints which should be emended.

Conclusion: The Expert Panel finds that the implementation of the majority of the Action Plan does not contain risks. If the University succeeds in the fulfillment of the Action Plan on the elimination of shortcomings, respective normative documents regulating the actions in the main spheres of the University's activity will be developed, and the main activities towards improvement will be processed in the upcoming two years after which the evaluation of their impact and effectiveness can be discussed.

Taking into consideration the above mentioned, 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 existing in the spheres of “**External Relations and Internationalization**”, as well as follow the recommendations directed to the improvement of the spheres of “Professional Academic Programs”, “Teaching and Support Staff”, “Infrastructure and Resources”, “Internal Quality Assurance System”;
- 2) Taking in consideration YSC ambitions towards internationalization of its activity, to review the Action Plan, taking into account the peer review results which are in accordance with international standards, as well as given recommendations;
- 3) To take into consideration the remarks about the Action Plan mentioned in the current conclusion while reviewing the Action Plan for the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report.

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

Head of Expert Panel
Gurgen Hovhannisyan

ANQA Coordinator
Anahit Utmazyan

EXPERT PANEL COMPOSITION

1. **Gurgen Hovhannisyan** - PHD degree in geography, Associate Professor, Head of bachelor Division of Methodological Department at Yerevan State University (Head of the Expert Group)
2. **Anna Erznkyan** - Professor, Honorary Worker of Art of the Republic of Armenia (RA), Dean of Faculty of Cinema, TV and Animation at Yerevan State Institute of Cinema and Theatre.
3. **Grzegorz Kurzyński** – Member of the AEC Accreditation Committee, former Rector of the Karol Lipiński Academy of Music in Wrocław (Poland)
4. **Mist Thorkelsottir** - Dean of Music, Iceland Academy of the Arts, Chair of AEC Quality Enhancement Committee
5. **Sona Ter-Minasyan** - MA student in the “Art Education” faculty, Music Division at Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan

ANQA support staff

- **Anahit Utmazyan** – Head of staff at ANQA, coordinator of YSC institutional accreditation process
- **Alina Khachikyan** – Senior Specialist of the Department of Institutional and Program Accreditation of ANQA, translator
- **Ani Mkrtchyan** – Master in Education Management, Secretary, Responsible for the internal quality assurance at ANQA

SUMMATIVE EVALUATION³

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

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

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”, “Partially 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
- **partially satisfactory**: if the University does not meet all the demands of the criterion but it is realistic that the University can make necessary improvements within reasonable period of time and meet the demands of the criterion
- satisfactory**: if the University meets the demands of the criterion yet there might be need for improvements as well