



## CONCLUSION

### On Accreditation of Institutional Capacities of Northern University

#### General Information about the Institution

Full name of the Institution	<b>Yerevan Northern University</b>
Acronym	<b>Not available</b>
Official address	<b>15a Alek Manukyan Str., Yerevan, 0025, RA</b>
Previous accreditation decree and date	<b>Certificate N 13, 2001, without validity period</b>

#### 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 of Yerevan Northern University (hereinafter: YNU) on the basis of self-analysis presented by YNU, Expert Panel report, YNU action plan for the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report as well as Expert panel opinion based on the YNU 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	<b>27 February 2012</b>
Submission of self-evaluation report	<b>29 September 2012</b>
Site-visit	<b>3-7 December 2012</b>
Submission of expert panel report	<b>1 March 2013</b>
Submission of action plan for elimination of shortcomings	<b>19 February 2014</b>

## RESULTS OF PEER REVIEW

The expertise of YNU 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 Panel<sup>1</sup>. 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<sup>2</sup>.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While carrying out the evaluation the Committee has taken into consideration the fact that Yerevan Northern University is a state licensed private higher education institution which was established in 1996 and it provides professional education in accordance with the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> levels of the Armenian National Qualification Frameworks and their descriptors. The University provides both full-time and part-time education. Northern University has 6 professions which have state accreditation certificate: “Law”, “Pedagogy and Methodology”, “Foreign Language and Literature”, “Journalism”, “Enterprise Economics and Management”, “Computer Science and Engineering”. Two professions - “Armenian Language and Literature” and “Psychology” are not accredited yet.

After the previous accreditation Northern University has undertaken several changes – building facilities have been enhanced, resources have been expanded, academic programs have been reviewed, individual work with students has been emphasized, the regulations have been revised.

The activity the University has planned and currently implements is in line with both its mission and RA NQF requirements. However, mechanisms of specific evaluation and review for ensuring compliance do not clearly function yet. For example, the conviction according to which the previous Strategic Plan is imperfect and the in-use Strategic Plan is a better one, is not substantiated by any results of control, evaluation and analysis.

The University governance comprises governing bodies of administrative subsystem /Rector, Vice-rector, Head of Department on Education, Deans, Heads of Chairs/ as well as collegial governing bodies /Scientific Council, Educational-Methodical Council, Faculty Councils, Chairs/. The governing bodies are accountable to the collegial governing bodies. However, the accountability mechanisms have not been functioned well so far, the accountability has not been mandatory and has been partially applied. Particularly, the tradition of rector’s annual reports has not been established so far. In the beginning of 2012 the new mission of the University was developed and approved by the YNU Scientific Council after which the process of developing a new Strategic Plan consisting of 10 criteria succeeded and which is currently in process. Moreover, the chairs and departments have also developed their strategic plans and have posted them on the website of the University.

The process of developing professional academic programs provided by the University is still in the initial phase. The University plans to take active steps towards that within the framework of the World Bank Grant.

The University organized and implemented a training of the teaching staff on teaching methods. As the meetings with the students showed, the students are satisfied with them. It is worth to mention that the University has regularly carried out and still does evaluation and review of the effectiveness of curricula and

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<sup>1</sup> APPENDIX 1: EXPERT PANEL COMPOSITION AND ANQA SUPPORT STAFF

<sup>2</sup> APPENDIX 2` SUMMATIVE EVALUATION

courses, and this is periodically being discussed among the Scientific Council, Educational-methodical Council and students during joint meetings.

The University has not yet developed policy and procedures on modernization of teaching and learning methods, teaching materials and resources.

The University has a policy and respective procedure on organization of student admission. Besides, it combines a set of mechanisms of student recruitment such as campaigns being regularly carried out in regional schools, discourses on career orientation, open days, olympiads, dissemination and broadcasting of promotional videos. The active student life as well as many nominal scholarships are additional means to attract potential applicants. The University is specific in terms of availability of tuition fees which gives an opportunity to provide educational services to those with lower living standards. There are flexible mechanisms of retaking academic debts, up to the organization of facultative courses, scheduling individual graphics for retaking. There are traditional ways of student need assessment, i.e. the student needs assessment is carried out via Student Council. There are some facts which state that the Student Council has raised a number of questions which have found their solutions.

The policy on teaching staff recruitment is in line with the requirements of licensing regulation of higher professional academic programs. The University also has a developed regulation of attestation. A number of best alumni are involved in the teaching staff of the University. The University has developed a policy and respective procedure on teaching staff promotion, and various means of moral and material support are applied at the University. The University also applies the practice of publishing research works of the teaching staff by financial means of the University.

Although the Strategic Plan is fixed, Northern University does not have a scientific-research profile. Nevertheless, there are short-term and visionary scientific-research plans developed by the chairs, besides, there is a practice of presenting annual reports. The University organizes conferences every year. The published collections of 2007, 2009 and 2010 conference materials are available. The representatives of the University have participated in a number of conferences held both in and outside Armenia. Students who develop research skills with the support of their supervisors, also take part in research activities of the University. Many monographs have been published by the teaching staff; a number of teaching staff members have defended PhD and Doctorate papers, and some of them have got the title of Associate Professor. In the Strategic Plan the scientific-research activity of the University is planned to expand.

Northern University provides sufficient resources which allow to ensure the regular activity of the University. There are 4 computer laboratories at the University which give the students an opportunity to gain computer knowledge and use information technologies. About 80% of the computers of the University are connected to the Internet. The laboratory of Forensic Science also plays an important role in the proper implementation of PAPs. Although during 16 years of its activity Northern University has made significant investment and has ensured the process of fulfilling the declared objectives, the University still needs to invest new resources to fully realize its mission.

Separate mechanisms of regular accountability are traditionally accepted and applied at the University which do not form a system, for example, in terms of external stakeholders, there is not any special strategy and policy developed for providing services to the society. The University participates in lawmaking in education sphere. The rector of the University is the Chair of the private university association. In recent 8 years Northern University has been among the RA largest taxpayers in the list of 7 state higher education institutions.

The University does not have any policy and procedures promoting external relations. The policy fostering internationalization is in the phase of development. In spite of that, in 2011 the Department on External Relations was established, and the draft of the regulation on external relations was written down.

The University has signed partnership agreements with the Adam Mickiewicz University of Poland and with the University of Management and Economy, St. Petersburg.

The University has quality assurance policy and procedures. At all levels of the University education quality and quality assurance are given much importance to. Human, material and financial resources have been provided for the organization of the processes. The University has Quality Assurance Department (QAD) with permanent staff, the formation of network system of quality assurance is in the process. The University has published quality assurance guidebook which aims to raise the awareness of internal stakeholders. Some trainings for some members of the QAD Committees have been held. To assure the internal alternative audit, student movement has been developed. The Student Committee has gained relative autonomy and has contributed to the processes and procedures of developing QA mechanisms. The regulation on “student survey and teaching staff evaluation aimed at quality enhancement and assurance of higher education quality at Northern University” functions efficiently and it gives students an opportunity to assess their teachers, thus raising the University’s needs relating teaching and teacher training. The activities carried out among focus groups have a special place in the activities aimed at quality enhancement and assurance of higher education quality at the Northern University.

### **STRENGTHS**

The University has a clear mission accepted by its staff which involves the points relating the needs of the University’s internal and external stakeholders. The University has normative documents which form basis for the identification of the needs of the University’s internal stakeholders. The activity which is planned and is being carried out by the University is in line with both its mission and RA NQF requirements.

The University has a regulated process of making managerial decisions; from this perspective the University has formed corporative culture which is based on the combination of subordination and democracy. The awareness of students on their own rights is at high level. The required number of students involved in the University’s Scientific Council is ensured.

The University has launched the development and benchmarking processes of PAPs, and it carries out activities towards revision and improvement and tries to eliminate the shortcomings found in them.

The University has an active student brigade which is in cooperative relations with the governing bodies of the University. There is a policy on raising students' academic needs. Specific framework of issues relating the protection of student rights is regulated by respective documents at the University.

The University has a developed policy for regular assessment of teaching staff. The University has highly qualified and proficient teaching staff, and students are satisfied with their quality.

1. The University has established the tradition of current and annual accountability of faculty deans, as well as that of education quality and committee chairmen of final /state/ exams. As a large taxpayer, the University acts as an institution carrying social responsibility.
2. The existence of QA policy, procedures and guidebook as well as the training of members of QAD committees are factors which foster effectiveness. Students’ involvement in QA processes is favorable from the perspective of meeting the criterion. The QA policy is realistic for this transitional period.

### **WEAKNESSES**

1. Not all the normative documents of the University include opportunities for implementation mechanisms because of which they have weak operational outputs. The concrete mechanisms of assessment and review directed to the compliance of the University's mission and the requirements of RA NQF do not clearly function yet.
2. The activities of the University have been planned and carried out, however, no effective mechanisms of their evaluation and improvement have been developed.

3. There isn't and precise and clearly developed policy on monitoring, evaluation of effectiveness and improvement of PAPs at the University yet.
4. Students' involvement in scientific-research activities of the University is partial which is caused by personal initiative taken by some chairs and some teachers.
5. The University does not have any policy reflecting the research interests and ambitions of the University, but a number of scientific conferences have been organized at republic and international levels.
6. The University has not yet developed mechanisms evaluating the applicability, availability and effectiveness of resources provided to students and teachers.
7. The University has not applied the practice of rector's annual reports.
8. The newly established infrastructure ensuring external relations and internationalization does not yet have resources which could serve as a basis for the University to advance in internationalization and to enter the regulated and active process.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Mission and purpose*

1. The University's ambition is the assurance of sufficient "output" in case of "entrance" of representatives of the society having few socio-economic opportunities in the sphere of higher professional education in our country, hence it is recommended to the University to fix this idea in its strategic documents.
2. It is necessary to pay more attention to the identification of external stakeholders' needs and activities directed towards that, taking into consideration the logic of University's mission and goals. Moreover, it is desirable to view parents as external stakeholders as well and to take into account their needs too.
3. It is necessary to pay more attention to the QA control and to activate the activities of the monitoring group, putting emphasis on the issues relating the measurability of the results and assurance of feedback.

### *Governance and Administration*

1. It is necessary to make more investments in the direction of professional development of the teaching staff, enrichment of library fund, enhancement of international cooperation of the University and other necessary spheres fostering student-centered education.
2. It is necessary to have developed standards on the basis of which the regular evaluations will allow to give a clear picture of viability and sustainability of the currently functioning process.
3. It is also recommended to develop short-term, mid-term and long-term action plans with clearly set deadlines, which will be derived from the strategic plans of the University and the structural units. Their existence will serve as a basis for planning and implementing monitoring which will regularly fix the dynamics of the planning and implementation of the carried out activities as well as their compliance with the University's mission and goals.
4. The improvement of accountability of governing bodies needs to be seriously taken into account. In the formation of culture of accountability not only the existence of bottom-up accountability tradition is important but also the up-bottom accountability which is not a less efficient tool of management. Moreover, the accountability mechanisms will function more effectively if the dynamics of development of the University's structural units are taken into consideration.

### ***Academic Programs***

1. It is important and necessary to form own PAPs taking into account the intended learning outcomes. The PAPs developed by the University need to undergo external expertise by the employers of the given field.
2. In the system of education quality assurance the organization of mutual discussions among chairs will be a very important investment. It is necessary to regularly organize educational-methodical seminars for the discussion of PAPs during which both the results of class observations will be presented and the current PAP will be analyzed, besides, the efficient mechanisms of monitoring will be developed and the ways towards improvement will be discussed.

### ***Students***

1. It is necessary to carry out assessment on effectiveness of facultative activities and consultancy both by students and teaching staff. The identification of strong and weak points of the carried out activity will allow to make necessary corrections and to ensure the efficiency and continuity of this activity.
2. It is necessary to organize seminars for students which will be devoted to the issues about human rights in general, and protection of student rights, in particular. This will foster the increase of students' consciousness about this issue.

### ***Teaching and Support Staffs***

1. It is necessary to develop and invest policy and respective procedures ensuring professional progression of the teaching staff.

### ***Research and Development***

1. It is necessary to develop long-term strategy on research. Moreover, it will be proper to organize the research activities through planned policy and respective procedures.
2. The successful research activity of the University is to some extent conditioned by the regular organization of scientific-research seminars by the chairs, and both staff of the chairs and students will be involved in them.
3. As far as the main research direction of the University is armenological, it is necessary to try to establish scientific networking with armenologists from diaspora and, why not, with foreign armenologists whose scientific interests comprise, for example, literary heritage of Tumanyan.
4. The issue on establishment and investment of policy and procedures preventing plagiarism and ensuring academic honesty at the University also needs urgent solution.

### ***Infrastructure and Resources***

1. It is necessary to develop a set of procedures which will foster the improvement the management of processes.
9. It is necessary to develop mechanisms evaluating the applicability, availability and effectiveness of resources provided to students and teachers.
2. The owner is recommended to involve the senior and mid-level governing bodies into the planning and implementation of financial policy related issues as well as into monitoring and improvement processes.

### ***Social Responsibility***

1. It is necessary to conduct survey among society to clarify the level of their awareness about the University's activity, the match of existing perceptions with current facts, etc. Such data can also be collected by actively acting through the internet, by conducting surveys in social networks, etc.
2. The comprehensive activities which were and will be carried out in the direction of the respective criterion need to be classified according to their significance and to be coordinated; the intended goals should be defined and clear mechanisms should be put as a basis for them as well as the level of effectiveness needs to be checked. All these activities will foster the University to make the current activities visible and to involve them in the University's activity, making them an indivisible part of it.

### ***External Relations and Internationalization***

1. It is necessary to take steps towards reinforcement of external relations as well as establishment of the policy and respective procedures on internationalization of the University.
2. The activity of the Department of External Relations will be more efficient if it is combined with the activities of Career and Alumni Center, staff members responsible for the website and facebook, as well as editorial staff of the newspaper and journal.
3. To develop this sphere which requires tangible financial investments, it is necessary to activate the activities directed to the search of local and foreign sponsors as well as to actively participate in grants. To succeed this, it is recommended to the staff member of the Department of External Relation to participate in trainings on fundraising.

### ***Internal Quality Assurance***

1. The collection of data on the level of stakeholders' awareness should be based on the regular application of feedback mechanisms. This will contribute to the objective, realistic, efficient and continuous functioning of the internal quality assurance system.
2. Within the framework of the benchmarking agreements the self-analysis of the University's quality assurance needs to undergo external expertise either completely or fragmentally.

## **YNU ACTION PLAN ON THE ELIMINATION OF SHORTCOMINGS MENTIONED IN EXPERT PANEL REPORT**

Yerevan Northern University admits that the recommendations presented by the Expert Panel are within the framework of its strategy and the Yerevan Northern University has presented action plan and time schedule for the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report, approved by the Scientific Council (19.02.2014).

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

1. According to the action plan, the University takes the responsibility to implement the Expert Panel's recommendations on a number of issues. It should also be mentioned that there are some actions mentioned in the action plan that are already fulfilled, and there are some which are in the planning or implementation process. The University has carried out activities which were planned and invested after the site-visit. The Expert Panel finds that all the recommendations requiring urgent changes are involved in the action plan,

and necessary resources will be provided for their implementation in the coming two years, up to the end of 2015.

However, a number of problems requiring urgent solution have not been sufficiently given importance to, in particular:

- a) in the criterion on “Academic Programs” the Expert Panel wants to see what steps the University takes towards assurance of competitiveness and attractiveness of PAPs;
  - b) in the criterion “Teaching and Support Staffs” it would be desirable to first of all see the evaluation and analysis of the teachers’ competences aimed at identification of needs; this would allow to make further developments in a right direction.
  - c) in the criterion on “Research and Development” it is not clear what steps the University takes and what outcomes it will reach towards establishment of research-based education system. It would be desirable to present the “research-based” education system (which the University plans to establish) in a clearer way.
  - d) Other recommendations requiring urgent implementation refer to the improvement of educational environment necessary for the implementation of PAPs, in particular, to the development of educational-material base and enriching equipment of research laboratories.
  - e) in the criterion on “Social Responsibility” the publication of reports of the rector and heads of the departments is still viewed as the only mechanism ensuring transparency, while it was expected that they would be diversified and that the need for publicity would be expanded across all the processes.
  - f) The outcomes described in the criterion on “Students” only check the satisfaction and it is not clear how the study on the level of effectiveness of consultancies provided to the students is carried out.
2. For all the steps the responsible people and working group as well as provided resources are clearly mentioned. Realistic deadlines are set for most of the steps.
  3. There is not any indicator of evaluation of efficiency and impact of the steps in the action plan. Meanwhile, as a strategic action plan, the action plan should also comprise (besides monitoring) planned indicators on the extent of reaching the outcomes.
  4. In the time schedule the outcomes mostly do not point out the qualitative results of the improvements and what kind of changes can be expected at the end of the given activity.

**Conclusion:** Most part of the action plan does not contain risks. As a result of its successful implementation, in the coming two years, the normative documents regulating the activities in the main spheres of the University will be developed, and the main processes will be launched after which the evaluation of their effectiveness and their impact can be addressed.

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 **Professional Academic Programs, Research and Development, External Relations and Internationalization;**
- 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 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 the University's ambitions mentioned in the SER and will serve as a basis for the next evaluation.

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**Head of Expert Panel**

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**ANQA Coordinator**

## EXPERT PANEL COMPOSITION

- Karine Nalchajyan – PhD in Psychology, Head of Psychology and Pedagogy Cycle of European Regional Educational Academy, supervisor of “Meknutyun” Center of Psychological Research, NGO>
- Dr. Janannath Patil – President of Asia Pacific Quality Network, India
- Arevik Sargsyan – Associate Professor, State Engineering University of Armenia, Director of ARLIAN Consulting and Training Company, LTD
- Arevik Hovhannisyan – Associate Professor, State Economic University of Armenia
- Hripsime Markosyan – 4<sup>th</sup> year student, Yerevan State Linguistic University, RA

## ANQA support staff

- Luiza Militosyan – PhD in Pedagogy, Associate Professor, senior specialist of ANQA policy development and implementation, coordinator of expert panel activities
- Varduhi Gyulazyan – MA in Education Management, Specialist of the Department of Institutional and Program Expertise Department of ANQA, translator
- Tsovinar Kechechyan – 4<sup>th</sup> year BA student of YSLU, Secretary-Stenographer
- Lilit Pipoyan – PhD student in Education Management, observer

SUMMATIVE EVALUATION<sup>3</sup>

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>	UNSATISFACTORY
<i>4. Students</i>	SATISFACTORY
<i>5. Teaching and Support Staffs</i>	SATISFACTORY
<i>6. Research and Development</i>	UNSATISFACTORY
<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

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<sup>3</sup> 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