

NATIONAL CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE,
FOUNDATION



EXPERT PANEL REPORT
ON INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION CARRIED OUT AT
ARMENIAN STATE PEDAGOGICAL UNIVERSITY AFTER KH. ABOVYAN

Yerevan– 2015

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of Armenian State Pedagogical University (ASPU) is carried out based on the application presented by the University. The process of institutional accreditation is organized and coordinated by the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA).

ANQA is guided by the regulation on “State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Educational Programs” set by the RA Government on 30 June, 2011 N978 decree as well as by N959-Ն (30 June, 2011) decree on approving RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation.

The expertise was carried out by the expert panel formed according to the demands of ANQA Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel. The expert panel consisted of 4 local experts and 1 international expert from UK.

Institutional accreditation aims not only to the external evaluation of quality assurance but also to the continuous improvement of the institution’s management and quality of educational programs. Hence, there were two important issues for the expert panel members:

1. To carry out an expertise of institutional capacities in line with the RA standards for state accreditation
2. To carry out an evaluation for the improvement of university’s quality and for its integration to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The report refers to the expertise of institutional capacities of ASPU according to the state criteria and standards for accreditation as well as to the peer review according to the ESG.

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

The expertise at ASPU was carried out by the expert panel formed according to the demands of ANQA Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel. The evaluation was carried out according to the 10 criteria set by the RA Government on 30 June, 2011 N 959-Ն decree.

While carrying out the evaluation the expert panel took into consideration that preparing and training professionally compatible pedagogs with deep knowledge is the strategic priority of the University.

In 2011-2015 Strategic Plan of the University the mission and goals of the University are clearly defined and they are mostly consistent with the activities of the University. Though the current situation, challenges, expected outcomes and indicators of progress assessment are described for each goal they are not measurable and do not reflect the achievement of strategic goals and they need further clarification.

Now the University is authorized to perform educational activities in 10 faculties with 71 professions 35 of which are in the bachelor, 36 master and 7 PhD levels. The professions are grouped in three main spheres: pedagogy, sociology and culture which is derived from the University's mission. It should be mentioned that the University's academic programs are mainly in line with the University's mission. The academic programs are in the process of modernization now to make the requirements for students, defined learning outcomes and student centered approach more transparent.

However the reforms which are being carried out now are not in the institutional level, they were piloted in terms of a few academic programs without needs assessment and analysis of stakeholders. It should also be mentioned that the level of involvement and role of employers in the development and review processes of academic programs is very low.

The University has adopted student-centered approach which is still in the transition period. The experience in student-centered learning from the perspective of organization of more independent education activities of the students needs to be improved. Though the University has developed procedure on preventing plagiarism and promoting academic honesty the mechanism preventing plagiarism are not operating and the awareness of academic honesty is not fully implemented.

University administration gives much importance to the creation of environment promoting the exchange of practice, development and internationalization. During the recent years the University implements active policy on the establishment and development of international relations being involved in a number of international projects fostering the mobility of staff and students and implementing joint projects, etc. However the mechanisms promoting the mobility of teaching staff and students are weak. The mobility is mainly ensured within the framework of some projects and the number of students is not sufficient.

ASPU's research activities are rather limited in terms of both the implementation of international research and the level of involvement of teaching staff and students in research activities. Clear mechanisms of linking research activities with education process are not developed at ASPU yet. Some steps are taken in this respect and they are mainly expressed in the choice of topics

for master and PhD thesis papers and in the selective courses of master level where the results of scientific works of the teachers are directly expressed.

Though the research directions of the University are mainly in pedagogical and psychological spheres the research carried out on the problems at schools are not systematic, are limited and the results of the research are not applied in the education process.

Thus the University has some success in terms of internationalization of research but because of the absence of unified and comprehensive policy it is fragmented. The funding for research is limited.

The University has recourses for the creation of learning environment and effective accomplishment of strategic goals and objectives. The main problems concerning recourses are the lack of modern equipment and materials in laboratories and scientific research centers. The University needs to obtain modern equipment and materials as it will improve education process as well as will foster increase in motivation of the teaching staff to be engaged in research activities. It should be mentioned that though the University allocates sufficient financial recourses for the accomplishment of its mission and goals financial management system does not imply allocation of recourses according to strategic priorities. The allocation of main budget is carried out according to the salaries and infrastructure recourses and improvement of education technical base.

ASPU has necessary teaching and support staffs for the accomplishment of the University's mission and the goals of academic programs. Though the University has clear requirements and procedures for the selection of the staff there are no such regulations for separate academic programs. Works directed to the enhancement of qualifications of teaching and support staffs are implemented at ASPU but the lack of clear mechanisms of needs assessment as well as not formal nature of teaching staff's needs assessment can be a danger for the identification and solution of main problems. Analysis of the effectiveness of trainings has not been conducted.

The recruitment, selection and admission of students at ASPU are carried out based on relevant regulations on admission according to the set list of professions and allocated places. ASPU students get appropriate support from the University. The system of organizing additional lessons and providing consultancy operates at the University as well as different events and seminars are organized for the students.

The expert panel positively assesses the fact that students can directly turn to the administrative staff for support and guidance and they get appropriate feedback. But from the perspective of elective courses professional orientation is lacking. Sufficient attention is not paid to the students' needs assessment and the imperfection of existing mechanisms lowers the opportunities of evaluating the University's activities.

The organizational structure of the University is not flexible; there is a lack of cooperation among structural units in different levels. Standard hierarchic links are obvious but the horizontal links are fragmented.

Though in 2011-2014 ASPU has made structural changes and new departments were established the functions are not clearly differentiated and often some functions are repeated in different departments/units. The absence of mechanisms ensuring transparency and effectiveness of decision making procedures as well as the lack of qualitative and quantitative data evaluating the effectiveness undermines the efficiency of management system and the targeted accomplishment of strategic goals.

Currently the main mechanism applied for the identification of factors affecting the general and educational activities of ASPU is survey but the aim, frequency, methodology as well as the scope of respondents do not allow considering these surveys as effective tools for needs assessment. The whole governance of management system is not carried out based on the principles of quality management. Though planning is in place in different levels of the University no reference was made to the evaluation of its effectiveness.

The expert panel positively evaluates the steps that ASPU have taken with the aim to invest internal QA system, however, the latter is not systematic, and there is no general approach and understanding to it. Though ASPU has developed internal QA policy and procedures, there is a need to clarify them from the perspective of planning the activities. The lack of evaluation of the effectiveness of mechanisms and tools coordinating different activities does not give an opportunity to evaluate the impact of QA processes on the improvement processes of academic programs and the University's activities.

Strengths of the Institution:

1. Strategic plans per faculty and chair has been developed in line with the University mission and goals.
2. Internal stakeholders are involved in the strategic planning processes and much importance was given to their comments and suggestions and the latter are reflected in the new Strategic plan of the University.
3. Within the framework of cooperation with Oulu University a number of academic programs were reviewed with the aim of modernizing them.
4. In order to integrate freshmen in education processes informative meetings are organized with the Rector, deans and heads of chairs.
5. The establishment of University-employer cooperation center is an important step in terms of preparing students for labor market and conducting market analysis.
6. ASPU has necessary teaching and support staffs for the accomplishment of the University's mission and the goals of academic programs.
7. Recently teaching staff has been replenished by members of RA National Academy of Sciences and associate members, certain increase for the last three years has been recorded in percentage indicators of doctors and candidates of science among the teaching staff at the University.
8. The University has recourses for the creation of learning environment and effective accomplishment of strategic goals and objectives.
9. The University has official web-site, radio and official newspaper ensuring the accountability and transparency of implemented activities.

Weaknesses of the Institution:

1. The mechanisms of needs assessment of external stakeholders are not effective and the involvement of external stakeholders in the process of strategic planning is in a low level.
2. The functions of newly established structural units are not clearly differentiated and often some functions are repeated in different departments/units.

3. There are no clear policy and common mechanisms for implementing reforms of academic programs and it was noticed that stakeholders' needs assessment and analysis was not given much importance to.
4. The involvement of external stakeholders in the development or revision processes of academic programs is not sufficient.
5. University does not have clearly set and general approach to carrying out benchmarking, methodology on the policy of benchmarking as well as the mechanisms and goals are not clearly defined.
6. ASPU's research activities are rather limited in terms of implementation of international research as well as the level of involvement of teaching staff and students in research activities.
7. Equipment and materials in laboratories and scientific research centers are old.
8. The level of knowing a foreign language among ASPU teaching staff and students is very low.
9. ASPU's internal QA system is not fully integrated in the University's activities.
10. PCDA cycle is not fully implemented.

RECOMMENDATIONS

MISSION AND GOALS

1. develop and invest clear mechanisms for qualitative and quantitative evaluation and improvement of strategic plan ensuring the latter's tangibility, the evaluation of achieved results and opportunities for further development
2. to clarify University's scientific research directions, emphasize their strategic advantage in national and regional levels demarcating the development of the key competences for University's graduates and ensure their continuous improvement.
3. enlarge the involvement of stakeholders (especially external) in the processes of development and implementation of strategic plan and regularly analyze the effectiveness of the mechanisms of stakeholders' involvement
4. Improve needs assessment mechanisms of external and internal stakeholders
5. Make the indicators of assessment more tangible and reliable.

GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

1. To review the organizational structure of the University ensuring the consistency of strategic goals and management system
2. To clarify and coordinate the distribution of functions of all structural units and ensure their effective cooperation /horizontal links/
3. Invest mechanisms of disseminating interchair and interfaculty best practices
4. Develop and apply clear mechanisms and tools of monitoring short term, mid term and long term plans
5. Regularly study and analyse the external factors affecting the activities of the University, including statistics and other data,

6. Improve the mechanisms of involvement of internal and external stakeholders in decision making procedures,
7. Create transparent system of internal documentation,
8. Improve the system of data collection, analysis and application,
9. Clarify the policy of financial resource allocation according to strategic priorities.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

1. Enlarge the involvement of external stakeholders in the development and review processes of academic programs
2. Ensure systematic monitoring and evaluation of academic programs, improve the mechanisms of evaluating the effectiveness
3. Review credit calculation, allocation and accumulation processes
4. Develop general methodology of carrying out (national and international) benchmarking and mechanisms of effectively applying the results
5. Carry out stakeholders' needs assessment and analysis to enhance the effectiveness of revision of academic programs
6. Clearly define learning outcomes on the academic program level (for the Bachelor and Master qualifications) and ensure their alignment to NQF
7. Develop mechanisms through which learning outcomes of separate courses will be matched with the learning outcomes of the whole academic program
8. Ensure the logical sequence of providing academic program (interconnection of courses)
9. Ensure the relations of teaching methods with learning outcomes and assessment
10. Disseminate the University's best practice of developing, modernizing and improving academic programs.

STUDENTS

1. Improve procedures and mechanisms of students' needs assessment (ensure the frequency, evaluate their effectiveness)
2. Regulate the processes of students' guidance and support
3. Enlarge students' involvement in scientific research activities of the University creating necessary conditions and environment
4. Develop students handbook where students rights and duties and all the information about their education will be provided
5. Fully integrate University-employer cooperation center in the education processes making the processes of students' learning and career guidance more purposeful and directed
6. Create learning environment for the students with special needs ensuring availability of education

TEACHING AND SUPPORT STAFFS

1. Develop plan and regulation on the professional development of the teaching staff revealing the qualification which are necessary for the implementation of strategic plan

2. Develop requirement for the teaching staff per academic program taking into account the peculiarities of certain academic programs, carry out needs assessment of the teaching staff, plan capacity building and trainings
3. Promote professional development of young teaching staff drawing on the potential of the teaching staff, create system and mechanisms of transferring leading educational practice
4. Support and provide the teaching staff with the opportunities of professional development. Encourage the development of professional and pedagogical skills to prevent staff turnover.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

1. State ASPU's research priorities in the strategic plan
2. Enlarge and coordinate the scope of scientific research related to the problems of secondary school
3. Create preconditions and promoting mechanisms to increase the volume of research and enlarge the enrollment of teaching staff and students in research activities
4. Plan scientific research activities of chairs according to research priorities and carry out monitoring and discussions
5. Develop and apply tools evaluating the effectiveness and relevance of research works as well as mechanisms of measuring progress
6. Create precise mechanisms ensuring the link between research activities and education process, develop policy on research-oriented education /make scientific research activities an inseparable part of education process/
7. Allocate sufficient financial resources to develop research activities at ASPU and create necessary conditions for doing scientific research works
8. Develop clear policy on the internationalization of research activities, promote interdisciplinary observations enlarging the opportunities of internationalization
9. Develop and apply clear mechanisms for commercialization of innovations and research analyzing the results annually
10. Diversify research works within the frames of cooperation with employers

INFRASTRUCTURE AND RECOURSES

1. Improve the infrastructure of the University directing funds to the laboratory equipment, purchase of new equipment and related materials
2. Carry out needs assessment per academic program for ensuring their sustainability as well as effective allocation of financial recourses
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of the use of financial recourses carrying out monitoring of the allocation and usage of financial recourses
4. Apply fully electronic system of internal documentation which will correspond to the policy and procedures of data management at the University
5. Improve the infrastructure of the University providing students with special needs with necessary conditions for their education.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

1. Improve the mechanisms of ensuring accountability and regularly evaluate the effectiveness of processes
2. Improve the mechanisms of feedback from a wider scope of society
3. Ensure the continuity and accountability of the communication with society
4. Enhance the influence of the University on the implementation and problem solving processes concerning school reforms, to use the potential of the University for developing and implementing policy on the improvement of education processes at schools.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

1. Carry out needs assessment/analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of the activities directed to the internationalization and development of external relations of the University and to raise the awareness
2. Review the mechanisms of mobility of students and teaching staff enlarging the number of participants in different projects
3. Promote the enhancement of foreign language proficiency among the internal stakeholders /students, teaching and administrative staffs/ for raising the effectiveness of internationalization
4. Analyze the impact of international cooperation on the implementation of University's strategic goals
5. Promote the mobility of students and teaching staff.

INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

1. Improve QA mechanisms with the help of which the University will be able to evaluate and continuously review internal QA system
2. Ensure the operation of PDCA cycle in all levels
3. Enlarge the involvement of stakeholders (especially external stakeholders) in QA processes and evaluate its effectiveness
4. Ensure the independence of QA centre
5. Regulate data management processes and clarify the mechanisms of data dissemination and management among the structural units
6. Carry out needs assessment, evaluation of performance of QA staff and QA responsible people and based on the results enlarge the opportunities of their professional development.

PEER REVIEW FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF EDUCATION INSTITUTION'S INTEGRATED INTO EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

The following comments and recommendations are presented related to the ambition of the University to be integrated into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

Observations:

1. The University is in the phase of continuous development. The expert panel noticed some shortcomings between the strategic plan and the activities directed to its implementation. Though it is acknowledged that staff are working tirelessly to achieve the University's mission.
2. Generally the academic programs are in the process of modernization to make the requirements for students, defined learning outcomes and student centered approach more transparent based on the valuable research carried out within the framework of cooperation with Oulu University as well as other international projects. Steps should be taken at the University to develop criteria of academic honesty yet this does not mean that cases of academic dishonesty have been noticed. Faculties and chairs take the notion of academic honesty seriously however the University does not yet ensure that there is such an experience in all faculties and on the level of all academic programs. Due to the operation of set criteria and a number of summative and formative assessment strategy assessment procedures are becoming more transparent. The students are satisfied with feedback mechanisms but the awareness of the appealing procedure should be enhanced.
3. ASPU's research activities are rather limited in terms of implementation of international research as well as the level of involvement of teaching staff and students in research activities. However it is praiseworthy that relevant units of the University realize the ways due to which they can support the staff to record continuous improvement in terms of international research. It is clear that finding funding is difficult however the University should be able to allocate additional financial resources to promote research activities.
4. The Department of international cooperations operates at ASPU and it has relevant staff. The students are mainly aware of chances of international mobility and the international value of the University. Indeed, senior students welcome this procedure and see considerable development during the last five years. Teaching staff and students positively speak about the importance of cultural change, recognition of other cultural values, and integration in international and global systems. They understand that such processes are important for all students in terms of enhancing competitive advantage of ASPU alumni. Of course more can be done to motivate the whole staff, to integrate them in international collaborations and to bring curriculum of each chair/academic program into international platform.
5. There are agreements with some international partners for the exchange of data and experience. The expert panel didn't see any evidence of comprehensive and systematic international benchmarking. Some chairs carry out benchmarking but it is not systematically carried out on the institutional level. The University has potential to draw on experience and knowledge of the staff to continue this process.
6. There are mechanisms of data collection but they are not fully developed and integrated in the process of quality control yet. The internal unit providing information on the quality of academic programs works fragmentedly. More systematic approach could be more useful.

7. The expert panel noticed sufficient evidence of the involvement of internal stakeholders in different committees/boards but the representativeness of external stakeholders seems to be limited. Internship department has established strong and effective cooperation with local stakeholders and employers /some of which are ASPU alumni/. If this department cooperates more closely with University-employer cooperation center in terms of involvement of stakeholders and students' employability the results will be more effective.

Recommendations

1. In order that University planning is consistent with its mission and purpose, and with reference to the University's goal (GOAL 3) to introduce the provisions of inclusive education organization to the academic process, the university further should develop its reputation as a fully inclusive institution. It should ensure that the rights and needs all students, irrespective of ability or disability, should be upheld. The University should consider ways in which it can better meet the needs of disabled students and enable more disabled students to access tertiary education. There is expertise within the Chair of Special Education that may be able to contribute to this goal.
2. The University needs to ensure key performance indicators that are quantified and measurable, are identified through a process of inter-departmental collaboration so that all internal and external stakeholders both contribute to and take responsibility for their realization.
3. The University should begin to develop a virtual learning environment (VLE) to complement its physical resources. A VLE that provides students with online access to course materials, programme information and university regulations will create efficient and effective channels of communication with students and enhance the student experience. ASPU is in a good position to develop a pilot VLE project, drawing on the considerable pedagogic expertise of staff and the information technology skills of staff and students to create a new 'blended' learning approach that is usually found in European universities nowadays.
4. The panel wants to urge the University to extend its research activities in a systematic and targeted way.
5. This could be done by focusing its efforts primarily on a limited number of carefully chosen centres of excellence, such as the Chess Research Centre. ASPU is ideally positioned to develop research centres in the field of tertiary education andragogy alongside pedagogical research. These centres can stimulate innovation and generate new knowledge and inform teaching and learning within the University. This approach has the potential to stimulate more interdisciplinary research. The University should also consider implementing mechanisms for a systematic appraisal of staffs' potential and actual research output so that defined quantitative targets can be set, including those related to research of international quality.
6. In order to deepen the already existing quality culture the panel emphasises that staff and students should profit from the quality assurance rather than considering it a burden. QA has a significant role in ensuring the rights of both staff and students are protected. In particular, the University should develop clear guidelines for assessment practices to ensure academic integrity and honesty. These might include a handbook for students explaining academic honesty and unfair practice; how it is to be avoided; the likely sanctions for transgressing agreed regulations. Regulated and consistent processes of cross checking or peer-to-peer moderation of assessment

practices will ensure there is protection for staff against their academic judgements being questioned by students.

7. The university has a significant human resource and it is recommended that it seeks ways to further invest in the development of staff through systematic and target professional development. Targets may include the improved language skills of staff (so that they can fully participate in international activities) and the improved knowledge and skills of administrative staff in educational management and quality assurance so that they build a sustainable workforce which has the capacity to achieve the long term plans of internationalisation.

08 September, 2015

Yelena Yerznkyan

Signature of the Head of expert panel

COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

The external evaluation of ASPU's self-evaluation and implementation of quality assurance processes was carried out by the expert panel with the following members /see appendix 1-CVs of experts/:

- **Yelena Yerznkyan**- Doctor of philology, professor, Head of the Chair of English language at the Faculty of Romance-Germanic philology at Yerevan State University
- **Alan Howe**- Head of Department and Programme Leader for Education and Childhood Studies, Bath Spa University
- **Robert Khachatryan**- PhD, Head of the Center for Quality Assurance, Head of the Chair on Education Management and Planning at Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences
- **Sargis Galoyan**- PhD, Head of the Scientific Research Department of Pedagogy at National Institute of Education, MoES
- **Mariam Hovhannisyan**- MA student at the Chair on Education Management and Planning at Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences

The works of the expert panel were coordinated by Ani Mkrtchyan- responsible for internal quality assurance at ANQA and Varduhi Gyulazyan -specialists at ANQA institutional and program accreditation department.

The translation was provided by Ani Mazmanyanyan -coordinator at the Center for Quality Assurance at Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences.

The composition of expert panel was agreed upon with the University and was appointed by ANQA director.

All the members of expert panel including the coordinators and the translator have signed independence and confidentiality agreements.

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

Application for state accreditation

ASPU applied for institutional accreditation by submitting the application form, the copies of the license and respective appendices to ANQA.

The ANQA Secretariat checked the application package, the data presented in the application form, the appendices and the ANQA electronic questionnaire completed by the University. According to the decision on accepting the application request a tripartite agreement was signed. The timetable of activities was prepared and approved.

Within the deadline set in the schedule ASPU presented the Armenian and English versions of its self-evaluation report according to form set by ANQA and also the package of attached documents. The self evaluation was carried out by a team formed according to the order of ASPU Rector.

Preparatory phase

ANQA coordinators observed the report- its correspondence to the technical requirements of ANQA. Then ANQA secretariat sent the self-evaluation report to the expert panel the members of which were agreed upon with the university and was confirmed by the director of ANQA.

Five trainings on the following topics were organized for the expert panel members by R. Topchyan and A. Makaryan to prepare the expert panel and to ensure the effectiveness of the activities:

1. RA regulation of accreditation, criteria and standards
2. Main functions of expert panel
3. Preliminary evaluation as preparatory phase of developing expert panel report, the main requirements of writing the report
4. Methodology of observation of documents and resources
5. Techniques and ethics of meetings and questions

Having observed the self-evaluation and documents of the University the expert panel conducted the initial evaluation according to the format preparing the list of questions for different target groups and also list of additional documents needed for observation. Within the scheduled time the expert panel summarized the results of the initial evaluation and formed a time schedule of the site-visit¹. According to the ANQA manual on the conduction of expertise the intended meetings with all the target groups, close and open meetings, document and resource review were included in the time schedule.

Preliminary visit

¹ Appendix 2. Schedule of site visit at ASPU

The preliminary visit of the head of expert panel, ANQA director, Head of the department of institutional and program accreditations and coordinator of expert evaluation took place a week before the site visit. During the preliminary visit the schedule of site visit was agreed upon with the University, the list of additional documents for observation was presented, organizational and technical issues as well as norms of ethics during the site visit were discussed and mutually agreed decisions were made. The rooms prepared for focus groups and expert panel discussions were observed, the issues related to the equipment and facilities were clarified.

Site-visit

Site visit of the expert panel took place from 25 to 29 May, 2015. According to the schedule the works of the expert panel launched with a close meeting of the panel the aim of which was to discuss and agree about the assessment cycle, strong and weak points of the University per criteria and procedure of focus groups with the international expert Alan Howe as well as to clarify further steps.

All the members of the panel, ANQA coordinators as well as the translator were present at the site visit.

The site visit started and was closed with the meeting with the Rector. The teaching staff, students, deans, heads of chairs, employers and alumni for focus groups to clarify some problems were selected randomly from the list provided beforehand. All the meetings were organized according to the schedule. During the site visit the expert panel conducted observation of documents², resource observation³ and focus groups in different structural units of the University.

During the close meetings of the panel at the end of each working day the interim results of peer review were discussed and at the end of the site visit the main outcomes of the site visit were summarized during the close discussion.

Peer review was carried out within the framework of state accreditation criteria and standards and ANQA procedures where two level scale is applied: satisfactory and unsatisfactory.

Besides, the self-evaluation of the University was evaluated according to that scale per standard and the expert panel report –per criteria.

Expert panel report

The expert panel has conducted preliminary evaluation according to the self-evaluation report of the University, the documents attached to it and the observations during the site-visit as a result of regularly organized discussions. Based on the observations after the discussions the head of the panel and ANQA coordinators prepared the draft of expert panel report which was agreed upon with the panel members. The expert panel finalized the report based on the comments got from the University.

The international expert prepared his conclusion and separate opinion on the peer-review. The documents were translated and provided to the head of the expert panel. The head of the expert panel and coordinators bear the responsibility for the involvement of the opinion and approaches of the international expert panel in the expert panel report. The opinion on the peer-review was fully involved in the report. The draft report which was approved by the panel members was translated

²Appendix 3. List of observed documents

³ Appendix 4. Resources observed by the panel

and sent to the international expert. The draft report was edited based on his comments and it presents main results, considerations and recommendations of the peer-review process. The draft report was presented to the University on 29.06.2015.

Its primary comments and remarks about the expert panel report, the University sent to ANQA on 17.07.2015.

The University presented its comments and remarks in Armenian which was provided to the experts. On September 1, 2015 ANQA organized a meeting of the University with the experts during which the reply of the expert panel was presented. Taking into consideration the University's comments and remarks the expert panel prepared the final version of the expert panel report which was approved by the panel on 07.09.2015. Respective notes about the changes in the draft report made by the expert panel members are made in the footnotes of relevant pages.

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT THE EDUCATION INSTITUTION

HISTORY: ASPU is a university in RA which prepares pedagogues. The University was established in 1922 and since 1948 it was named after illuminator and pedagogue Khachatur Abovyan. The University has 11.000 students. The University has nearly 400 doctors and candidates of science /PhD/. The main structural units of the University are 10 faculties, 52 chairs, 7 general chairs, departments, scientific-educational centers and institutes, services, college /high school/, A. Bakunts College, #57 school, scientific library and three-dimensional museum.

EDUCATION: ASPU has set a goal to align the education provided at the University to the main principles of EHEA at the same time addressing the main issues and peculiar pedagogical approaches of new generation.

Based on the list of pedagogical professions set by RA Government and a number of cultural professions ASPU provides a wide range of academic programs in all levels. Since 2004-2005 academic years ASPU provides three-level education (bachelor, master and PhD) with around 70 academic programs with part-time and full-time modes. In 10 faculties of the University 71 academic programs are provided 35 of which are in the bachelor, 36 master and 7 PhD levels. The professions are grouped in three main spheres: pedagogy, sociology and culture which is derived from the University's mission.

RESEARCH- with the aim of forming competitive and innovative potential ASPU plans:

- To ensure the effectiveness of the process of applying research in education processes
- To enlarge the participation in state and international competitions and projects
- Develop modes of cooperation with educational and research institutions and international organizations and to promote activeness of publications in leading journals
- Create conditions for the protection of intellectual property and copyright of the staff to ensure the legal protection of research works

INTERNATIONALIZATION- ASPU's main and the most important goal in internationalization is to improve the quality of education services and research, to enhance the University's compatibility in national and international levels, to create necessary environment for an intercultural dialogue and to ensure the compatibility of ASPU alumni in national and international levels. The main strategic directions for internationalization of ASPU are:

- To review the management system of international relations, to develop the strategy of the department dealing with the issues of international relations
- Develop new projects of cooperation
- Develop mechanisms of promoting the engagement of PhD and master students in international projects
- Ensure the mobility of teaching staff, students and administrative staff

- Enlarge the cooperation with leading international universities.

QUALITY ASSURANCE –QA system was established at the University in 2011. The main purposes were defined:

- ensure the independence of ASPU internal QA infrastructure
- coordinate and improve the activities of ASPU internal QA infrastructure
- ensure the development, approval and monitoring of ASPU academic programs
- review and improve the current students' assessment system
- prepare and publish the manual on ASPU internal QA procedures.

During the peer-review the expert panel was lead by the principle of “correspondence to the goals” and the information above was viewed as the main ambitions and goals of the University.

CRITERION I MISSION AND GOALS

Criterion 1: The policies and procedures of the institution are in accordance with the institution's mission which is in line with ANQF.

FINDINGS

1.1. The institution has a clear, well-articulated mission that represents the institution's purposes and goals and is in accordance with National Qualifications Framework (hereafter NQF).

In November 2012 ASPU Governing Board approved the reviewed Strategic Plan of the University where the University's mission, values, strategic goals, objectives and aspects of implementation are defined. For each goal the current situation, challenges, objectives, main strategic priorities, expected outcomes as well as indicators of progress assessment are described. The University considers preparing and training professionally compatible pedagogues with deep knowledge is its strategic priority.

ASPU's mission is directed into:

- preparation of specialists meeting the modern educational and cultural demands
- the preparation of specialists in the sphere of education and culture consistent to the modern demands.
- development of research opportunities of the University supporting scientific-research and scientific –methodological activities
- formation of pedagogical thinking and dissemination of leading education practice
- enhancement of competitiveness of alumni in education and scientific labor market due to the enhancement of effectiveness of education processes and quality assurance
- assurance of leading role base center for teachers' trainings

In accordance with University's mission and goals strategic plans of faculties and chairs were developed. In order to achieve ASPU goals short-term and mid-term action plans were developed, however it is not mentioned what resources and funds are allocated to realize each goal.

1.2. The mission statement reflects the needs of the internal and external stakeholders.

Giving much importance to the identification and examination of needs of internal and external stakeholders the University has formed groups who were involved in the reviewing process of the strategic plan. The expert panel has seen sufficient evidence about the active involvement of internal stakeholders in the review processes of the strategic plan. The latter were trained to develop necessary skills. Before the approval, feedback on the revised strategic plan was provided by the experts of Oulu University. Yet, there is a lack of sufficient grounds and deep analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of mechanisms of involving internal stakeholders. The involvement of external stakeholders, *especially employers and alumni* in the development and revision of the mission was weak and was not systematic⁴.

⁴ Has been changed based on the remarks got from the University. The previous text was "...The involvement and participation of external stakeholders..."

The only mechanisms of needs assessment and involvement of external stakeholders in different activities are surveys. Still there is no sufficient ground to state that these surveys ensured *representativeness, were respectively* analyzed and served as a basis for defining and clarifying the mission, goals and objectives⁵.

1.3. The institution has set mechanisms and procedures to evaluate the achievement of its mission and goals and further improve them.

23 KPIs for the evaluation of the accomplishment of University's mission and goals are in the process of development. Yet the formulation of KPIs is not clear, they have not been used yet and the version that was presented did not include clear mechanisms of effective qualitative and quantitative evaluation. In the faculty level the evaluation of achieved strategic goals is carried out through annual reports. However, there is no general approach to evaluation and improvement, there are no clear and effective mechanisms for evaluation.

The *procedure* for the development and monitoring of strategic plans of educational units was developed⁶: *However* the value of applying the procedure of evaluating strategic goals is not measurable.

CONSIDERATIONS:

The mission and goals of the University which are mainly in line with the University's activities are clearly defined in 2011-2015 strategic plan. Though the current situation, challenges, expected outcomes and indicators of progress assessment are described for each goal they are not measurable and do not reflect the achievement of strategic goals and they need further clarification.

The expert panel is positive about the involvement of internal stakeholders in the strategic planning processes. It's obvious that much importance was given to the comments and suggestions of internal stakeholders and these comments and suggestions were reflected in the new Strategic plan of the University. The panel also welcomes the fact that before being involved in the process capacity building trainings were organized to build up general approach and to develop necessary skills. However non perfection of mechanisms of needs assessment of external stakeholders, passive involvement of external stakeholders in the development process of strategic plan as well as the lack of market analysis puts the implementation of strategic goals at a risk taking into consideration the commitment of the University to prepare specialists who meet the demands of labor market.

Though the University carried out needs assessment of internal stakeholders the mechanisms of involvement of external stakeholders need further improvement or else the employability of ASPU alumni will decrease.

The absence of clear and reliable mechanisms of evaluating the effectiveness of mission and goals sets at a risk the transparent activities of the University, evaluation of achievements and shortcomings as well as effective planning of further activities.

The expert panel positively assesses the fact that University has initiated the development of KPIs and finds it necessary to make them more clear and measurable. In this way the achievement of strategic goals will be more clear and effective and the activities carried out for the implementation of the goals will be feasible and visible for the pedagogical community.

⁵ Has been changed based on the remarks got from the University. The previous text was "...The involvement of external stakeholders and their involvement.....these surveys have been analyzed"

⁶ Has been changed based on the remarks got from the University. The previous text was ".... procedure on monitoring however the latter has not been approved yet, as well as...":

CONCLUSION: The expert panel finds that ASPU meets the demands of criterion 1. The University has clearly defined mission, strategic goals and objectives though they need to be made more measurable. The expert panel noticed sufficient evidence of involvement of internal stakeholders but the involvement of external stakeholders is limited. Though the KPIs are in the process of development the University needs to clarify and apply mechanisms of evaluation and improvement of the implementation of the mission and goals.

The expert panel evaluates the correspondence of University's institutional capacities to the demands of criterion 1 as satisfactory.

CRITERION II. GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

The institution's system of governance, administrative structures and their activities are efficient and are aimed at the accomplishment of mission and goals of the institution preserving ethical norms of governance.

FINDINGS

2.1. The Institution's system of governance ensures structured decision-making process, in accordance with defined ethical rules and has efficient provision of human, material and financial resources to accomplish its educational and other purposes.

The University has an allocation map of the bodies included in the organizational structure of the University as well as documents regulating the activities of such bodies. ASPU's governance is based on "RA Law on Education", "RA Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education", "RA Law on State Non Commercial Organizations" and other related legal acts as well as on ASPU's Charter (approved by RA Government) with the implementation of the functions of the University Board, Scientific Council and Rector. University's governance is carried out by the combination of autonomy, sole and collegial governance principles. Though in 2011-2014 ASPU has made structural changes and new departments were established the functions are not clearly differentiated and often some functions are repeated in different departments/units. The functions of department-unit-center-group are not clearly set and differentiated, their workload is not clear either. In the administrative level the practice of running a few positions simultaneously by the same person *can be met*⁷. The mechanisms of evaluating the effectiveness of ASPU's governance/management system as well as qualitative and quantitative data of assessment are lacking. Decrees are implemented according to the Rector's orders. The decision making procedure is carried out based on the following principles of ethics: legitimacy of decisions, fairness and effectiveness. Yet there are no mechanisms of ensuring the transparency and effectiveness of decision making procedures, particularly there is no operating system of controlling the implementation of Rector's orders.

The governance and administration of educational processes of the University as well as scientific, financial and economic activities are carried out through departments, units and other structures of

⁷ Has been changed based on the remarks by the University. The previous text was: "...is spread on the administrative level".

the University. For the accomplishment of various functions of the University the system of governance has sufficient human and financial recourses.

Financial resources of the University are formed from state budget, tuition fees of the students and from other incoming resources. Though in the self-evaluation report it is mentioned that financial planning is done according to the strategic priorities of the University, during the site visit it was found out that financial resources are firstly directed to salaries and then to the purchase and renewing of logistics.

Though there is a system of financial management it is not implemented according to strategic goals. Factual materials on the analysis of the sustainability and continuity of financial resources *have not been presented*⁸.

2.2. The institution's system of governance gives an opportunity to student and the teaching staff to take part in decision making procedures.

ASPU's management/governance system, acting charter and regulations give opportunities to the teaching staff and students to be involved in governing bodies of different levels and directly or indirectly take part in the governance of the University and in decision making procedures.

In addition to the formal mechanisms at the University, the informal mechanisms are operating effectively enough giving opportunity to the University administration provide clarification and get feedback on the issues relating to the teaching staff and students. From the perspective of ensuring transparency the fact that the University posts the formal documents concerning its activities on the official web-site as well as disseminates those documents among the structural units is of much importance. Yet it should be mentioned that not all the official documents are available on the web-site. The mechanisms of involvement of teaching staff and students are not clear and the effectiveness of involvement is not evaluated.

2.3. The institution formulates and carries out short-term, mid-term and long term planning consistent with its mission and goals as well as has appropriate mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of those plans.

For the implementation of goals derived from the mission the University has developed short term (for one calendar year), mid-term (action plan for the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the pilot accreditation report) and long term (strategic plans of the University and other departments) plans.

Nevertheless the results of the accomplishment of those plans are not evaluated and no analysis in this respect is available. Though in the self-evaluation report it is stated that the implementation and monitoring of the strategic plan is carried out with KPIs, during the site visit it was found out that the KPIs have not been applied yet. The mechanisms and tools of implementation and monitoring of short term and mid-term plans of the University are not clearly defined.

2.4. The institution conducts environmental scanning and draws on reliable findings during the decision-making process.

⁸ Has been changed based on the remarks by the University. The previous text was: "...analysis of the sustainability and continuity of financial resources is not carried out..".

The study /scanning/ of the factors affecting the activities of the University is carried out not systematically. The main mechanisms applied for identifying the factors affecting the University's general and educational activities are surveys which are not systematic and regular. Surveys, ***however, are not regularly conducted***, they are conducted upon need and they need to be improved in terms of reliability⁹.

Surveys conducted for the self-evaluation and the analysis of the results of those surveys can be considered as such examples. Yet the methodology of conducted surveys is not clear and the reliability and accuracy of mechanisms and tools are not recorded and tested. Though in the self-evaluation report it was stated that the tools for studying internal and external factors were improved and a number of qualitative and quantitative electronic tools of study were invested /SPSS, Atlas.ti/ yet reliable data about their usage is not presented.

2.5. The management of the policies and the processes draws on the quality management principle (plan-do-check-act /PDCA/).

The management of policies and procedures in ASPU is accomplished partially based on quality management principles. The governance is mainly placed at the planning and implementation /do/ phases of PDCA cycle. Partially also evaluation procedures /check/ are carried out. Improvements /act/ generally are not linked to the results of evaluation and ***analysis of effectiveness***¹⁰:

ASPU's planning is carried out in two levels: strategic planning /5 year/ and annual planning. However, needs assessment of the stakeholders does not serve as a basis for the planning. Activities are carried out according to the allocations of annual budget. Regular and systematic evaluation and improvement of further steps is not available. PDCA cycle is not fully completed.

2.6. The institution has evaluation mechanisms in place ensuring data collection, analyses and application of the data on the effectiveness of the academic programs and other processes

The data collection about the effectiveness of academic programs and other processes is mainly carried out through surveys aimed at evaluating the satisfaction of stakeholders. ***However the methodology and frequency of those surveys is not clear*** and not always is the representativeness of stakeholders ensured besides the effectiveness of mechanisms and tools is not evaluated.

The planned class observations by the chairs also serve as a means data collection. The results of class observations are discussed during the sessions of the chairs.

The following are also considered as mechanisms of the evaluation of effectiveness:

- the process of discussion and approval of procedures on review and monitoring of University's regulations and other regulatory documents
- the discussion of current issues related to academic programs
- Rector's annual reports on the accomplishment of strategic plan
- annual reports of faculties and chairs.

However the analysis on the reliability of data collection and decisions made based on those data are not sufficient. Decision making is not mainly based on reliable empiric data. The electronic system

⁹ Has been changed based on the remarks by the University. The previous text was : "...surveys however are conducted upon need..."

¹⁰ Has been changed based on the remarks by the University. The previous text was : "...are not linked to the evaluation results".

for the data collection, dissemination and management of internal documentation is developed but is not applied yet.

2.7. There are objective mechanisms in place evaluating the quality of quantitative and qualitative information on the academic programs and qualification awarded.

The University applies a number of mechanisms for the dissemination of information about academic programs.

- ASPU's official web-site /www.aspu.am/
- promotional brochures
- visits to schools in Yerevan and regions
- pages of all faculties and main structural units in social sites
- education quality assurance system information portal /qa.aspu.am/
- University radio-fama,
- participation and organization of various education fairs
- regularly organized fairs on "Education in Armenia" and "Education and Career".

The provided information is directed to the professional orientation of potential applicants. Though the University has data about the academic programs and awarded qualifications the quantitative and qualitative publications about the quality are limited and the mechanisms evaluating them are not available.

CONSIDERATIONS:

The expert panel positively assesses the existence of hierarchy of governing bodies. At the same time the organizational structure of the University is not flexible, there is a lack of cooperation among structural units in different levels. Standard hierarchic links are obvious but the horizontal links are fragmented.

In the decentralized levels of separate faculties and chairs the management system is mainly efficient. The expert panel finds it necessary to clarify the structure of the University coming from the importance of strategic goals. Though there are norms of ethic set for the decision making the absence of mechanisms ensuring transparency and effectiveness of decision making procedures as well as the lack of qualitative and quantitative data evaluating the effectiveness undermines the efficiency of management system and the targeted accomplishment of strategic goals. The expert panel welcomes the fact that the University involves the teaching staff and students in nearly all governing bodies and gives them an opportunity to freely express their opinion and take part in decision making procedures.

However the absence of evaluating the effectiveness of mechanisms of involvement can result in the involvement of non competent staff which can put in danger the reliability of decision making. Currently the only mechanism applied for the identification of factors affecting the general and educational activities of ASPU is survey but the aim, frequency, methodology as well as the scope of respondents do not allow considering these surveys as effective tools for needs assessment. In general, the imperfection of mechanisms for the evaluation and monitoring of different procedures puts the effectiveness of management system at a risk. Though the University previously conducted self-evaluation of internal processes the culture of conducting analysis/evaluation has not been formed yet. ***The more descriptive rather than analytical nature of*** the self-evaluation speaks for that. The whole governance of management system is not carried out based on the principles of quality

management. Though planning is in place in different levels of the University no reference was made to the evaluation of its effectiveness. The steps aimed at the evaluation and improvement of carried out activities are not available either. PDCA cycle supposes an entire system which includes all the activities of the University starting from planning up to improvement /act/ with the sequence of separately described steps. Such a holistic cycle has not been invested at the University yet, the expert panel didn't see enough evidence. Though not all the phases of the PDCA cycle are fully implemented, the importance of quality management principles highlighted by the University management gives hope that the appropriate activities for the full investment of that principle will not be delayed.

The lack of examples on data collection, analysis and decision making on the effectiveness of academic programs and other processes as well as the imperfection and unclearness of mechanisms undermines the effectiveness of management system because without having such kind of information it is difficult to evaluate the educational activities, achievement of learning outcomes of academic programs, the efficiency of teaching methods and justification of management decisions. The lack of the updated, objective and impartial mechanisms evaluating qualitative and quantitative information about the quality of academic programs and awarded qualifications states about the imperfection of the process of quality control at the University as far as the issue of evaluating the effectiveness of the process is not considered, while the University itself should be interested in organizing that process.

CONCLUSION: The expert panel finds that ASPU does not meet the demands of the criterion 2 taking into consideration the fact that the organizational structure of the University is not flexible, horizontal links of management are not functional, the functions of different units are repeated, the transparency and effectiveness of decision making procedure are not evaluated, the governance of management system is not implemented according to the principle of PDCA, the main mechanism applied for the identification of factors affecting the educational activities of the University, i.e. surveys are not regularly conducted, do not have representativeness, and their purposefulness is not evaluated.

The correspondence of University's institutional capacities to the demands of criterion 2 as unsatisfactory.

CRITERION III. ADACEMIC PROGRAMS

The programmes are in concord with the Institution's mission, form part of institutional planning and promote mobility and internationalization.

FINDINGS

3.1 The academic programs are in line with Institution's mission, they correspond to the state academic standards and are thoroughly described according to the intended learning outcomes of the qualification awarded.

The University provides academic programs which are mainly described in terms of learning outcomes differentiating knowledge, skills and competences. However the analysis showed that there

are no evidences of the alignment of learning outcomes of the academic programs to NQF, *studied about that alignment have not been presented to the expert panel. Though there is a positive practice. 8 academic programs have been developed together with Oulu university however it should be mentioned that they form little part of the 71 academic programs provided by the University*¹¹.

*External stakeholders' involvement in the development or elaboration processes of academic programs is limited*¹². *The effectiveness of the revision of the academic programs in cooperation with Oulu University has not been evaluated and this procedure has not yet become the policy of the University. There is no general approach to calculation and allocation of credits according to academic activities at the University*¹³.

Though the University has the regulation on the organization of academic process with credit system, during the site-visit it became obvious that there is no general understanding by the respective departments about the provisions and mechanisms of credit calculation of that regulation.

Learning outcomes correspondingly expressed in terms of knowledge, skills and competences are not correlated with the workload of the students and the process of credit calculation. During the meetings organized with stakeholders during the site visit it became clear that credit allocation and workload are not correlated.

The analysis of selected academic programs showed that in some cases the proportions of main and elective courses partially fosters the accomplishment of the goals set for the particular profession. Besides, not proportional allocation of theoretical and practical parts is also noticed. Study of academic programs, student surveys *as well as meetings organized during the site visit* state that. There is a problem of ensuring succession of coherence of the courses. *The studies on the analysis of the effectiveness of mechanisms evaluating these processes are missing.*

3.2 The Institution has a policy that promotes alignment between teaching and learning approaches and the intended learning outcomes of academic programs, which ensures student-centered learning.

The University has a clearly defined mapping of the teaching and learning methods and expected learning outcomes. Teaching and learning methods have been reviewed taking into account the practice of Oulu University. The regulation on “Checking and assessing students’ knowledge” in ASPU which defines application of the mechanisms of formative and summative assessment and fosters student-centered learning has also been reviewed. However the practice of planning student – centered learning in terms of the opportunities of organizing education process more individually needs to be improved.

3.3 The TLI has policy on students assessment according to the learning outcomes and promotes academic integrity.

¹¹ Has been added based on the remarks got from the University.

¹² Has been changed based on the remarks got from the University. The previous text was: “...External stakeholders’ involvement in the development and elaboration processes of academic programs is limited”.

¹³ Has been changed based on the remarks got from the University. The previous text was: “...credit allocation is not outcome based. The credit allocation and workload are not correlated”.

The University has a policy on students' assessment which is more clearly carried out on the course level.

Though the University has developed procedure on preventing plagiarism and promoting academic honesty the mechanisms of preventing plagiarism do not operate and the study of thesis papers are evidence for that. The criteria of thesis assessment not often take into account the demands of ensuring academic honesty. Only the opinion/feedback of the reviewer is not a sufficient ground for academic honesty. These problems are not clearly reflected in academic programs. In general the awareness of the academic honesty is not fully implemented and the general understanding of academic honesty at the University is not clear.

3.4 The programmes of the Institution are contextually coherent with other relevant programmes and promote mobility of students and staff as well as internationalization.

The University carried out systematic practices of benchmarking with partner foreign universities. For conducting benchmarking the University studies international approaches to the modernization of academic programs, then the approaches of different universities are analyzed and adapted.

However the conduction of benchmarking does not have general nature and mechanisms and goals are not clearly defined¹⁴.

The University fosters the enhancement of student mobility through the correspondence of academic programs but in terms of quantity the examples are limited. *The mechanisms of transferring best practice are limited at the University¹⁵.*

3.5 The TLI adopts policies in place ensuring academic programme monitoring, evaluation of effectiveness and enhancement.

The University has policy on monitoring and improving academic programs but this policy is not implemented on the institutional level and is not included in the culture of activities of the University. The involvement of external stakeholders in the monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of academic programs is *not sufficient. Effective mechanisms of involving stakeholders or needs assessment of external stakeholders including employers, have not been presented.*

CONSIDERATIONS:

In general University's academic programs are consistent with the University's mission. The academic programs are in the process of modernization. However the reforms which are being carried out now are partial and not on the institutional level. There is no clear policy and general mechanisms for the implementation of reforms of academic programs. It is noticeable that while carrying out reforms needs assessment of *employers* and its analysis were not paid much attention to¹⁶.

¹⁴Has been changed based on the remarks got from the University. The previous text was: "...However the University does not have general approach to carrying out benchmarking, methodology of benchmarking as well as the mechanisms and goals are not clearly defined".

¹⁵ Has been changed based on the remarks got from the University. The previous text was: "...The mechanisms of transferring best practice are not available at the University".

¹⁶ Has been changed based on the remarks got from the University. The previous text was: "...of chairs has not been paid attention to".

The expected learning outcomes of the academic programs stress the development of creative qualities of the learners but this is possible if the student is actively involved in continuous research activities during the education process.

A positive step was taken within the framework of cooperation with Oulu University in terms of modernization of academic programs. However the studied practice was not adapted sufficiently and the local requirements as well as the needs of internal stakeholders were not taken into account.

A general approach to benchmarking to academic programs is missing which can result in different effects as well as can be an obstacle for the enhancement of mobility of students and teaching staff.

In fact the benchmarking should have given the opportunity of identifying strong and weak points of academic programs, competitive advantage and shortcomings otherwise benchmarking can become an obstacle for the effective implementation of activities. The University should develop criteria of academic honesty. Faculties and chairs pay much attention to academic honesty however the University has yet to ensure that there is such an experience in all faculties and on the level of all academic programs.

The University does not take steps to inform students about the nature of academic honesty and its insurance. The transparency of assessment procedures is ensured by the set criteria and application of summative and formative assessment strategy.

CONCLUSION. Taking into consideration that ASPU academic programs correspond to the University's mission and are developed based on the learning outcomes as well as an experiment was made to align teaching and learning methods and assessment system to the learning outcomes the expert panel finds that ASPU meets the demands of criterion 3. However the whole process is not institutionalized yet and there are still works to do in terms of internationalization and promotion of student mobility.

The correspondence of University's institutional capacities to the demands of criterion 3 is satisfactory.

CRITERION IV. STUDENTS

The Institution provides support services to students ensuring productive learning environment

FINDINGS

4.1. The Institution has set mechanisms for promoting students' recruitment, selection and admission procedures.

The recruitment, selection and admission of students at ASPU are carried out based on relevant regulations on admission according to the set list of professions and allocated places. The selection and admission of bachelor full-time students is implemented based on the results of unified entrance exams and the admission of part-time students is carried out according to the rules of part-time students' admission at RA higher education institutions.

On master level the students' selection process is organized and carried out by the admission committee of the University. According to the set time schedule different staff members of the

University regularly visit schools in Yerevan and regions to inform about the education opportunities at ASPU and for professional consultancy. It should be noted that as a result of these activities/events an increase in the number of applicants is recorded.

In order to integrate freshmen in education processes informative meetings are organized with the Rector, deans and heads of chairs. Senior students support freshmen introducing the recourses of the University to them. In order to increase the awareness of students' of the University's activities and to introduce the ethic norms and their duties to them ASPU QA handbook touches upon the mentioned issues. But during the meeting of expert panel with students it was found out that the not all the students are familiar with the handbook.

4.2. The Institution has policies and procedures for assessing student educational needs.

Needs assessment of students at ASPU is carried out informally and issues raised by the students and Student Board are discussed with University administration but without any clear time-schedule. From time to time the University conducts surveys as a result of which an attempt was made to reveal the needs of students. Recently surveys have been developed at ASPU through which the level of satisfaction of students with academic programs and the effectiveness and availability of logistics was revealed.

As a result of students' needs assessment in some cases improvement of courses was carried out. It should also be noted that as a result of students' suggestion the hours dedicated to pedagogical internship were reviewed. However the effectiveness of students' needs assessment mechanisms was not evaluated; there is no holistic and systematic approach in this respect.

Needs assessment of students with special needs is not carried out though in ASPU museum as well as in the faculty of special education there are special conditions for students with visual problems. This practice may also be applied in other units of the University.

4.3. The Institution provides opportunities for extra-curricular activities and advising services aimed at supporting student effective learning.

To foster efficient learning of students the University gives the opportunity of organizing additional lessons and consultancy. Additional lessons and consultancy are carried out according to the plans and schedules set by the appropriate chairs. Consultancy is usually organized during the accomplishment of individual and final papers. To get consultancy and support the students can any time turn to the relevant bodies. In a number of faculties the institute of consultant is operating. Relevant systematic instructions are provided also during the pedagogical internship.

4.4. There are precise regulation and schedule set for students to turn to the administrative staff for additional support and guidance.

Though there is no precise regulation and schedule for students to turn to the administrative staff for support and consultancy it is carried out not formally. ASPU gives the students an opportunity to communicate with their teachers and administrative staff after classes and every Thursday they have the opportunity to meet the Rector. In general students are satisfied with the fact that they can just turn to the relevant bodies for support and consultancy and as a rule the raised issues are processed. Yet the effectiveness of the process is changing from faculty to faculty. The University also realizes

that there is no unified system of the managing this process and the University views it as a direction which needs to be improved.

4.5. The Institution has student career support services.

University-employer cooperation center at ASPU is mainly responsible for the provision of services fostering students' career. The center regularly organizes seminars, different courses for the formation of certain competences and skills (writing CV, cover letter, etc.) for students. But the most of the students whom the expert panel met were either not aware of the services provided by the center or haven't used their services yet. The center does not yet have contribution in directing and supporting students. *It should be mentioned that University-employer cooperation center has been operating at the University for already 3 years however evaluation of the effectiveness of its activities has not been carried out yet.* Though as a result of the activities of this center memorandums/agreements were signed with a number of organizations study of the labor market has not been carried out yet, there are no analyses about the employment of graduates.

Within the framework of TEMPUS ARARAT project a survey for revealing needs of employers was developed but there is no respective analysis per academic programs yet. The database of students and graduates is still in the formation phase. University-employer cooperation center is not fully integrated in education processes and in University's life yet.

4.6. The Institution promotes student involvement in its research activities.

The University has Student Scientific Union which regularly organizes conferences, seminars, scientific lectures, and debates with the involvement of students. Though recently there is a rise in the number of students involved in research activities the representativeness of students as compared to the overall number of students at the University is low. In some faculties there are cases of published joint articles by the teaching staff and students but they neither are nor proportionally distributed according to all faculties and professions.

In 2014 an increase in the number of published works by the students was recorded. But qualitative evaluation of those works is missing. Some percent of students are involved in projects financed by RA State Scientific Committee which is an obligatory demand for the projects implemented by state funding. Yet there is no regulation on involving students in scientific research grant projects. Actually the University does not have clear mechanism fostering the involvement of students in research works.

4.7. The Institution has a special body, which is responsible for the protection of students' rights.

The rights and duties of the students at ASPU are fixed in RA law and in internal rules. Students' Board is a body at ASPU which deals with the issues related to the protection of students' rights. Students' Board is functioning according to its charter and is aimed at protecting students' rights, carrying out students' needs assessment, presenting students' opinions in different governing bodies, protecting internal rules of the University as well as organizing pastime and rest of the students.

As a result of expert panel observation it became clear that the activities of Students' board are mostly directed to the organization of events rather than revealing education needs and protecting students' rights.

Rector, governing bodies: Scientific Council and Governing Board where student representatives are involved also deal with the issues of students' rights and duties. Relevant attention is not paid to the ethnic minorities and to the students with special needs.

The University does not provide student handbook with comprehensive information about education services and other processes at the University. The rights and duties of the students are fixed in the agreements that they sign.

The appeal process at the University is regulated through a special regulation stated in the QA handbook. But most of the students are not aware that information about appeal procedure is provided in QA handbook. The University also realizes that the procedure needs to be improved as there is no quantitative analysis about the data of solving problems based on students' appeals.

4.8. The Institution has set mechanisms for the evaluating and ensuring the quality of educational, consultancy and other services provided to students.

Surveys conducted among students are considered to be QA mechanisms of evaluating the educational, consultancy and other services provided to students. Particularly academic programs were evaluated through surveys. But the surveys are not conducted systematically. There are no clear mechanisms of students' needs assessment yet and there is no precise policy on the evaluation of provided services either.

CONSIDERATIONS:

ASPU students get appropriate support from the University. But the absence of analysis on the effectiveness of respective policy and procedures is an obstacle in the process of making education environment at ASPU more efficient. Those analyses would give an opportunity to oversee processes, evaluate current situation and make appropriate improvements.

The transparency of student recruitment processes is ensured through the unified exams in the case of full- time students while there are no analysis about the transparency and effectiveness of recruitment processes of part-time students.

Involvement of newly admitted students and their adaptation to education environment is carried out in a due manner.

The effectiveness of education environment depends also on the satisfaction of students' needs while the University rarely studies it. The imperfection of the mechanisms of needs assessment lessens the opportunities of evaluating the University's activities. Not purposeful surveys and issues informally raised by the Student Board can not reveal students' needs sufficiently. The expert panel finds that the University should pay enough attention to the protection of the rights of students of ethnic minority and students with special needs fostering their involvement in students' life. The expert panel positively assesses the organization of additional lessons and consultancy as well as different seminars and events for students. The expert panel positively assesses the fact that students can directly turn to the administrative staff for support and guidance and they get appropriate feedback. But this process still needs to be regulated.

The establishment of University-employer cooperation center is an important step in terms of preparing students for labor market and conducting market analysis. It provides a nice opportunity to

the University to evaluate the effectiveness of internships as well as to examine to what extent the internships foster the achievement of intended learning outcomes. Though the center has been functioning for already a long time at the University processes aimed at supporting the students terms of their employment has not been carried out efficiently. The professional guidance of students in terms of choosing elective courses is not sufficient either.

The expert panel finds that the lack of research component in education process as well as the involvement of mainly master and PhD students in research activities limits the opportunities of developing critical thinking and research skills among students.

The activities of Students' Board as the main body for protecting students' rights are very important. However as the panel noticed the functions of the Students' Board is limited in organizing events.

The expert panel finds that the imperfection of mechanisms evaluating and ensuring educational, consultancy and other services provided to students can be a serious obstacle in terms of the effectiveness of student-university cooperation.

CONCLUSION. The expert panel finds that ASPU meets the demands of criterion 4 as for the creation of effective learning environment students are provided with necessary support and consultancy. The policies of students' recruitment and admission are clear enough and are regulated. Several bodies of the University deal with the issues of protection of students' rights.

The expert panel assesses the correspondence of University's institutional capacities to the demands of criterion 4 as satisfactory.

CRITERION V. TEACHING AND SUPPORT STAFFS

The Institution provides for a highly qualified teaching and supporting staff to achieve the set goals for academic programmes and institution's mission.

FINDINGS

5.1 The Institution has policies and procedures promoting recruitment of a highly qualified teaching and supporting staff capable of ensuring programme provisions

The recruitment of teaching staff in ASPU is carried out on a contractual basis which is preceded by the election of the candidate through open competition/ interview. Recruitment of the teaching staff is implemented based on the regulation on teaching staff recruitment where criteria of promotion, the rules and conditions of selection and appointment are defined. Regulations are approved by the Scientific Council of the University.

The observations of the expert panel showed that the proportion of support staff to students is not calculated. And the observations showed that despite the existence of the documents the effectiveness of the policy on selection and disposal of teaching and support staffs is not evaluated. The University does not carry out planning of human resources.

5.2 The requirement for teaching staff qualifications for each program are comprehensively stated.

ASPU has a regulation on teaching staff recruitment where the requirements for the teaching staff are stated. The expert panel observations showed that the requirements set for separate academic

programs are not clearly defined though it was mentioned in the self-evaluation report that during the selection procedure of the teaching staff the University takes into account their basic education, expertise (teaching practice) and other criteria. The University has developed also job descriptions where the functions of the teaching staff are defined however they are generic.

5.3 The Institution has well established policies and procedures for the periodic evaluation of the teaching staff.

The University has a regulation on teaching staff evaluation. Mechanisms of the evaluation of teaching staff are self-evaluation, surveys, peer-review by head of the chair and colleagues. Teacher's portfolio is applied in all chairs the aim of which is to carry out regular evaluation of professional qualities of the teaching staff. The portfolio includes detailed information about the teacher: his degree, title, workload, description of courses taught by the teacher, scientific publications, methodical works, results of class observations and internships, etc.

It should be mentioned that the analysis of evaluation results are not widespread yet they are discussed in the chair sessions. Class observations are also used as evaluation tools but often they have a formal nature and not always serve to purpose. The effectiveness of evaluation tools and mechanisms is not evaluated.

5.4 The Institution promotes teacher professional development in accordance to the needs outlined during regular evaluations (both internal and external).

The University carries out activities aimed at professional development of teaching staff /in the self-evaluation report it is mentioned that 32% of the teaching staff had trainings and in general 133 trainings within the frames of different professions were organized/ but they *are not correlated* to the needs¹⁷. But as the expert panel was informed during the site visit, the organized trainings were mainly directed to novelties and methodical skills. Trainings of foreign languages, IT, pedagogy and methodology, inclusive education are organized and the number of professional trainings is limited, they have started recently and are not coordinated. It is not clear whether the trainings are organized as a result of periodic internal and external evaluation, *no analysis about it was provided to the expert panel*. It should also be mentioned that the effectiveness of the trainings is not evaluated.

5.5 The Institution ensures that there is a permanent staff to provide for the coverage of qualifications adequately.

The University is implementing its activities with appropriate teaching staff per academic programs. Recently teaching staff has been replenished by members of RA National Academy of Sciences and associate members. Certain increase for the last three years has been recorded in percentage indicators of doctors and candidates of science among the teaching staff at the University. But the sustainability is not guaranteed. The University does not analyze turnover of the teaching staff. No unit/department conducts analysis of demands for the specialists and does not reveal the reasons of turnover.

5.6 There are set policies and procedures for the staff promotion

¹⁷ Has been changed based on the remarks got from the University. The previous text was: "...they were not systematic and correlated...".

The University has certain procedures of ensuring professional progress of teaching staff /e.g. for associate professor, professor/. Different means, certificates, awards, financial rewards and medals are applied as methods of appraisals for the staff who has demonstrated high working performance. Policy on staff promotion and strategic plan on the development of research activities which are aimed at solving the problems of professional development of the teaching staff were developed at ASPU.

5.7 There is necessary technical and administrative staff to achieve the strategic goals

The University has necessary administrative and support staffs for the accomplishment of strategic goals but evaluation of their activities is not carried out as well as no trainings are organized directed to the capacity building of the administrative staff. *It should be mentioned that trainings were organized for all the administrative staff for the introduction of Mulberry internal documentation system*, as well as trainings with the staff of accounting department for the application and effective use of Armenian Accounting program applied by the University in 2013. Manuals on the trainings of administrative, teaching and support staffs have been developed based on the recommendations of international experts.

CONSIDERATIONS

ASPU has necessary teaching and support staffs for the accomplishment of the University's mission and the goals of academic programs. Though the University has clear requirements and procedures for the selection of the staff there are no such regulations for separate academic programs. Much importance is given to the correspondence of the qualifications of the teaching staff to the courses taught because very often assurance of learning outcomes of the course depends on the fact whether they succeed to recruit specialists with appropriate qualifications.

Works directed to the enhancement of qualifications of teaching and support staffs are implemented at ASPU but the lack of clear mechanisms of needs assessment as well as not formal nature of teaching staff's needs assessment can be a danger for the identification and solution of main problems. The recourses provided by the University for the professional development of the teaching staff are limited, professional development is usually possible by individual initiative.

ASPU has not conducted needs assessment among the teaching staff. Surveys evaluating the effectiveness of trainings have not been conducted. It is necessary to reveal the needs of the teaching staff, to plan and organize regular trainings. The approaches of the trainings of the teaching staff should be reviewed developing clear policy and procedures. It is necessary to do needs assessment to identify the possible threats for ensuring stability. This function can be applied to the Educational Methodological Department.

Not regular professional trainings of the teaching staff can become a problem in terms of accomplishing the goals of academic programs.

CONCLUSION. Taking into consideration that ASPU currently has necessary teaching and support staffs for the accomplishment of ASPU's mission the expert panel finds that ASPU meets the demands of criterion 5. In general it should be mentioned that the University has policy and procedures on the selection of necessary teaching staff for the implementation of academic programs but the satisfaction in terms of separate academic programs is not clear.

The correspondence of University's institutional capacities to the demands of criterion 5 is satisfactory.

CRITERION VI. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

The Institutions ensures the implementation of research activity and the link of the research with teaching and learning.

FINDINGS

6.1 The Institution has a clear strategy promoting its research interests and ambitions

The issues of the development of University's scientific activities are presented in 2010-2015 strategic plan. However during the observation of documents as well as the site visit it turned out that there is no precise strategy with scientific directions expressing ASPU's interests and in research field according to which the scientific activities of chairs and scientific-educational centers are planned and implemented. Though the University tends to become a university with innovative research and scientific pedagogical directions proper mechanisms and concepts have not been developed to ensure such transition. It should also be mentioned that as a pedagogical institution coordinated research revealing the problems in secondary schools is limited.

6.2 The Institution has a long-term strategy and medium and short-term programs that address its research interests and ambitions.

The University has mid- term and short- term plans reflected in the individual plans of the teaching staff as well as in the strategic plans of the chairs which express University's interests and ambitions in research sphere. During the meetings with different target groups it became clear that the main scientific directions of the University are pedagogy and psychology. Mid-term and short-term research projects are implemented also within the framework of cooperation with RA State Scientific Committee (base and thematic funding) which also mainly include the spheres of pedagogy and psychology. However teaching staff mainly conducts individual research within the framework of their interests and the number of scientific works corresponding to the general scientific directions of the chair is not much. Such "fragmented" approach does not foster the development and implementation of long term strategic plan.

6.3 The Institution ensures the implementation of research and its development through sound policies and procedures

ASPU ensures the implementation of research activities through certain policy and procedures but the University does not have such procedures which would define the interrelation of research priorities of the University with resource planning, effective allocation of the workload of the teaching staff and the indicators of evaluation of scientific research activities. To solve scientific and educational problems infrastructural changes have been implemented due to which the field has been filled up with new specialists, the involvement of teaching staff in scientific activities comparatively increased, certain financial recourses have been allocated for the establishment of new scientific laboratories and scientific educational centers, financial support was provided to young scientists to be published in peer-reviewed journals. But these means are not enough for the accomplishment of

University's scientific and innovative ambitions as they are not systematic, are fragmented, don't cover the entire range and different scientific directions as a result of which the link between the research activities and education processes is broken.

The planning of scientific and research activities as well as accountability of the chairs are poor, regular monitoring is not conducted. Tools for the evaluation of effectiveness of scientific research activities are not developed.

Financial resources directed to the research are limited. The number of laboratories has increased however the observations showed that laboratory equipment and the materials used are not new and do not provide an opportunity of carrying out research meeting the modern demands. It should be mentioned that though the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific activities has increased and there is also an increase in the number of publications by the teaching staff including also in international journals the involvement of teaching staff in research activities is still low as compared to the percentage of the whole teaching staff of the University. Planning and accountability of chairs in terms of research activities is poor.

6.4 The Institution emphasizes internationalization of its research.

The observations showed that joint research projects implemented recently are limited. Though the strategic plan of the University highlights the importance of internationalization of scientific research activities this process is not coordinated and regulated.

The involvement of the University staff in joint projects with European scientific structures is low. During the meetings with different target groups it turned out that international publications are encouraged on the level of the chair, each teacher should publish 2 articles every year.

It should be mentioned that the requirements for the scientific research works, the mechanisms of knowledge management and indicators of qualitative and quantitative evaluation are not clear. The University does not fully operate its policy on encouraging international research activities of young scientists. There is no commercialization of research outputs, unique cases of patents exist in the chair of technology. The commercialization of research output is missing in the level of planning but its importance is realized.

6.5 The TLI has well established mechanisms for linking research with teaching

Clear tools for interconnecting research activities and education process at the University have not been developed yet. Some steps are taken in this respect. They are more clearly expressed in the choice of topics for master and PhD thesis papers and in the selective courses of master level where the results of scientific works of the teachers are directly expressed. But the regular and continuous mechanisms ensuring the interconnection of science and education are missing the effectiveness of the interrelation of the results of implemented research with the education process is not evaluated.

During the meeting with different target groups it was mentioned that the research carried out by the teaching staff are applied in the forms of study books for secondary schools. However the results of research are not reflected in education process. The interconnection is mainly limited in the research component within the frames of academic program.

CONSIDERATIONS

ASPU's research activities are rather limited in terms of implementation of international research as well as the level of involvement of teaching staff and students in research activities. The observations show that funding for the research provided by the University is limited which is an obstacle for the implementation of joint international research activities.

Though the research directions of the University are mainly in pedagogical and psychological spheres the research carried out on the problems at schools are not systematic, are limited and the results of the research are not applied in the education process.

It should be noted that the involvement of students in research activities within the frames of academic programs is implemented as a research component of education process. Very few students participate in the implementation of joint research with teaching staff. The University carries out some activities in terms of internationalization of research activities, particularly publication of articles of the teaching staff in internationally peer-reviewed journals, participation in international conferences, organization of joint conferences but it can't be definitely stated that sufficient recourses are invested in terms of internationalization of research activities. The number of publications in internationally peer-reviewed journals is limited. Most part of research activities at the University are carried out within the framework of grant projects while there are some crucial factors: what steps the University takes, how much funding it spends and how it encourages its teaching staff to be actively involved in research activities.

Thus the University has some success in terms of internationalization of research but because of the absence of unified and comprehensive policy it is fragmented.

CONCLUSION. Taking into consideration that ASPU does not conduct sufficient research which will reveal the problems at schools and the results of which will be applied in education process and will foster the development of knowledge based economy and ASPU's research activities the expert panel finds that ASPU does not meet the requirements of criterion 6.

The correspondence of University's institutional capacities to the demands of criterion 6 is unsatisfactory.

CRITERION VII. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RECOURSES

The Institution has necessary resources to create learning environment and to effectively support the implementation of its stated mission and goals.

FINDINGS

7.1 The Institution has an appropriate learning environment for the implementation of academic programmes offered.

The University has five educational and one administrative building, classrooms, computer centers, laboratories, studios, library, reading halls, sports hall, canteens, etc. During the last four years the number of classrooms, reading halls and computer rooms has increased. The buildings and classrooms are mainly sufficient and great work is being done for the improvement of learning environment at

the University. However not all the academic programs are supplied with necessary recourses. In some laboratories and scientific research centers the equipment and materials need to be renewed, they are not useful. There is a need for new computer rooms and classrooms for interactive learning.

7.2 The Institution provides appropriate financial resources with necessary equipment and facilities as needed to achieve its mission and goals.

Management of the financial resources of the University is carried out annually. Sufficient recourses are provided however the financial management system does not imply allocation of recourses according to strategic priorities.

The University provides appropriate recourses for the provision of necessary facilities and equipment. The allocation of main budget is carried out according to the salaries and infrastructure recourses and improvement of education technical base.

7.3 The Institution has sound financial distribution policy and capacity to sustain and ensure the integrity and continuity of the programmes offered at the institution.

Financial planning on the level of academic program is not carried out though there is a mechanism of financial management. The effectiveness of policy on allocation of financial recourses is not presented. However informal procedures for the accomplishment of the goals of academic programs operate at the University but they are not coordinated yet.

The criteria and indicators showing the effectiveness of the policy on allocation of financial resources ensuring the implementation and continuous development of academic programs are not defined, moreover, there is no mechanism directly dealing with the analysis of the above mentioned.

Though the procedures and mechanisms ensuring the accomplishment of the goals of academic programs and their continuity are not formally regulated, factually they operate at the University.

7.4 The Institution's resource base supports the implementation of institution's academic programmes and its strategic plans, which promotes for sustainability and continuous quality enhancement.

Every year the University improves its recourse base and does not limit itself in the current achievements which is a precondition of sustainability. The recourse base of the University fosters the implementation of activities derived from the strategic plan.

The resource observation by the expert panel showed that the resource base of the University is mainly sufficient at this stage for the implementation of academic programs and strategic plan. Scientific research centers and laboratories need to be improved.

7.5 The Institution has a sound policy and procedure to manage information and documentation.

The observations of expert panel showed that there is no clear system of data collection, dissemination and management at ASPU. It turned out that the link among the faculties is weak. There is no mechanism uniting decentralized databases. There are no mechanisms of transferring information with the aim of quality assurance. It is not obvious what kind of information is needed during the implementation of activities in different stages. There is no electronic system of internal documentation. The University tries to apply "Mulberry" system of internal documentation which is currently used only for the coordination and management of external documentation.

7.6 The Institution creates safe and secure environment through health and safety mechanisms that also consider special needs of students.

The University has infrastructure for ensuring health and safety: there is a security service and two medical centers. Food service operates effectively. The University pays much attention to the issues related to physical training of the students and takes several steps in this respect. The students are given the opportunity to attend

AQUATEK swimming pool. The observations showed that in the laboratories there is no air condition system and there is also a problem of technical operation awareness.

The faculty of special education has taken some steps to ensure equal conditions for the students and teaching staff with special needs and to organize inclusive education but this issue has not been put into action yet. From the perspective of adaptation to education process and availability of infrastructure and resources the University does not yet ensure necessary conditions for the students with special needs.

7.7 The Institution has special mechanisms in place for the evaluation of the effectiveness, applicability and availability of resources given to the teaching staff and learners.

A new procedure of evaluating the effectiveness, application and availability of resources has been developed but it is not approved yet and evaluation has not been carried out accordingly review processes have not been conducted and it is impossible to evaluate the effectiveness.

During the discussions with different focus groups it became clear that ASPU's staff is satisfied with current resources /surveys on the evaluation of satisfaction of students with resources also speak about that/ but they mentioned that there is a need to equip the laboratories and scientific research centers with new equipment and the library needs to be enriched with modern literature.

CONSIDERATIONS

For the accomplishment of its mission and goals the University allocates financial resources to provide necessary resources.

The University has resources for the creation of learning environment and effective accomplishment of strategic goals and objectives. The main problems concerning resources are the lack of modern equipment and materials in laboratories and scientific research centers. The University needs to obtain modern equipment and materials as it will improve education process as well as will foster increase in motivation of the teaching staff to be engaged in research activities. The libraries of the University also need to be enriched in modern literature and digitalization. The infrastructure of library management is poor and the resources of the faculty of Library Studies are not applied. The University has access to international libraries but the literature is not yet available in the reading halls.

Financial management system does not imply resource allocation according to strategic priorities. Main budget allocation is carried out according to salaries and the improvement of infrastructure, resources and educational base. Allocation of financial resources according to the strategic goals and priorities will give an opportunity to understand what spheres the University highlights and the dynamics of allocations will be obvious.

The analysis of the effectiveness of allocation and usage of financial resources would give an opportunity to evaluate and analyze the indicators of University's financial sustainability and chances of improvement.

The University has created a safe environment for the organization of education process but the conditions for the students with special needs are not ensured yet.

CONCLUSION. Taking into consideration that within limited budget the University was able to create learning environment and sufficient recourse base for the implementation of main strategic activities the expert panel finds that ASPU basically meets the demands of criterion 7.

The correspondence of University's institutional capacities to the demands of criterion 7 is satisfactory.

CRITERION VIII. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Institution is accountable to the government and society for the education it offers and the resources it uses as well as for the research it conducts.

FINDINGS

8.1. The Institution has clear policy on institutional accountability

The system of accountability at ASPU is implemented in the following ways:

- Rectors annual report
- annual reports of the heads of different units/departments
- reports submitted to RA Ministry of Education and Science, State Committee of Science, State Revenue Committee, Statistic Department and to other state bodies
- annual hearings in the ASPU Scientific Council about the implementation process of strategic plan
- publication of agenda and decisions made during the University Governing Board and Scientific Councils in the web-site of the University, broadcast on the radio and publication in the official newsletter

Nevertheless indicators of assessing the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms are not available at the University.

8.2. The Institution ensures transparency of its procedures and processes and makes them publicly available

The University has Press and Public Relations Department which holds the main responsibility of ensuring the transparency of procedures and processes. ASPU assures the transparency and availability of its procedures and processes for the public through the following mechanisms:

- "Pedagogical University" official newspaper which is published with 1800 copies and is sent to the state governing bodies, to embassies, founders, libraries, to other universities and to high and secondary schools. It is also distributed among the faculties and other structural units of the University as well as to the Students' Board

- www.aspu.am official web-site of the University which operates in three languages and provides information not only about the events organized within the University but also information about the education processes
- University radio-fama and radio site /www.radiofama.am/
- education quality assurance system information portal /www.qa.aspu.am/
- dissemination of information through University-employer cooperation center
- films and videos about the University
- active collaboration with press, organization and participation in TV programs

For the recruitment of applicants the University organizes students' visits to schools, organizes different events for the professional orientation of the applicants, distributes brochures.

The activities of the University in this respect are mainly aimed at the formation and strengthening of public relations.

8.3. The Institution has sustainable feedback mechanisms for establishing contacts with society.

The university considers the following as feedback mechanisms fostering the formation of public relations:

- Rector's annual report during the University Governing Board
- The involvement of external stakeholders in internship procedures
- Collaboration with press
- Press analysis
- Official pages in social sites

Particularly active feedback is ensured through social sites. The applicants, students and alumni address different questions, get answers as well as express opinions about the educational activities of the University. ASPU gives much importance to the public relations and conducts different discussions with employers to evaluate the effectiveness of internship. Yet the external stakeholders are not fully involved in all the procedures of the University, particularly in the evaluation of the effectiveness of academic programs. The feedback mechanisms of external stakeholders are incomplete and the process is not carried out systematically.

8.4. The Institution has mechanisms that ensure knowledge /value/ transfer to the society.

ASPU applies the following mechanisms for the transfer of knowledge to the society

- Regular trainings of the school teachers and University teaching staff organized by its own teaching staff or invited lecturers
- Development of strategic plan of the school as an educational center (the development of the concept of upbringing is in process)
- Chess education research center, the aim of which is to improve the quality of teaching chess at schools
- Presentation of the role of the University in RA higher education system through the museum
- formation of library web-site /www.mankavarzh.do.am/
- regular organization of different conferences per different professions
- existence of professional degree awarding committees aimed at the ratification, approval and transfer of scientific knowledge.

The University also conducts works with secondary school pupils and applicants providing consultancy in terms of their professional orientation. Though research is carried out at schools the results of that research are not provided to schools. The University does not have much influence in reforms in the level of secondary education.

CONSIDERATIONS

The system of accountability at ASPU is limited to the level of annual reports: Rector's annual reports and reports of different structural units. But the analysis of education processes is limited in the reports of different structural units. Moreover, the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms is not studied yet.

The expert panel finds that the transparency and availability of University procedures and processes is ensured by a number of mechanisms. But the listed mechanisms are more directed to strengthening public relations rather than ensuring the transparency and reliability of the processes. The expert panel finds that the University should develop new mechanisms ensuring the transparency and accountability of the implemented processes.

From the perspective of social responsibility one of the important functions of the University is the feedback mechanism which is possible to implement through the systems of accountability and transfer of values. Though the University has established close links with society the imperfection of sustainable mechanisms ensuring feedback (especially concerning the opinion of stakeholders about the education processes) can be a serious obstacle from the perspective of improvement of education processes.

Regular analysis about the effectiveness of that mechanisms is not carried out neither it is studied to what extent they foster the improvement of education process. The fact that the database of external stakeholders is being created is an evidence of a weak link with external stakeholders, the cooperation with them is often just formal.

The expert panel positively assesses the activities of the University concerning the transfer of knowledge to society. The expert panel welcomes the trainings organized by the University for the school teachers as well as research initiated in that field. However the influence of the University in the development and reforms procedures is not tangible. Active participation and initiative from the University is not seen.

CONCLUSION. The expert panel assesses criterion 8 as satisfactory taking into account the University's efforts directed to the investment of the system of accountability and ensuring the transparency of the University's activities. It is praiseworthy that the University has official web-site, radio and official newspaper ensuring the accountability of implemented activities. The expert panel hopes that the newly created University-employer cooperation center will foster the establishment of closer links society.

The correspondence of University's institutional capacities to the demands of criterion 8 is satisfactory.

CRITERION IX. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

The Institution promotes experience exchange and enhancement through its sound external relations practices, thus promoting internationalization of the institution.

FINDINGS

9.1 The Institution promotes its external relations through sound policies and procedures aimed at creating an environment conducive to experience exchange and enhancement and internationalization

During the recent years ASPU applies active policy in terms of strengthening external relations. In 2011-2015 strategic priorities of the University external relations and international collaborations are stressed. Main directions and objective for reaching the goal are stated in the strategic plan.

The University has developed 2015-2020 strategy of internationalization where the University's ambitions and strategic goals in terms of external relations and dissemination of practice are clearly defined. However the strategic plan has not yet created sufficient basis for the development of tangible indicators evaluating the effectiveness of the activities of the University as well as for the development of external relations on the national level.

9.2 The institution's external relations infrastructure ensures regulated process.

The process of internationalization at the University is mainly coordinated and directed but the Department of international cooperations which performs several functions including promotion of international activities, establishment of external relations as well as development and guidance. The Department carried out joint international projects as well as promotes the participation of the University in different international events, summer schools. It is obvious that works directed to internationalization have begun but at the same time they need to be improved in terms of participation of both students and teaching staff.

9.3 The Institution effectively collaborates with local and international counterparts.

In recent years ASPU has taken some steps in terms of enlarging external relations and has recorded some tangible results. The University is a member of international associations, actively collaborates with a number of international universities and organizations. Joint research and exchange programs are organized. The University puts many efforts in establishing and maintaining cooperation with foreign universities /Oulu University in Finland, Aarhus University in Denmark, University of Ghent, University of St. Petersburg, etc. /. The University cooperates with a number of international organizations: British Councils, UNICEF, UNDP, ABA CELLI, UNESCO etc.

However the cases of cooperation with local organizations are not many. It should be mentioned that the University has signed a number of memorandums the text of which is repeated and does not reflect the peculiarities of each cooperation. Good examples of local cooperation can be considered the active works with RA schools in terms of organizing internships. Agreements of cooperation were signed with 18 schools.

9.4 The Institution ensures internal stakeholders' appropriate level of a foreign language to enhance productivity of internationalization.

The problem of knowing a foreign language is a problem also in terms of internationalization. According to the self-evaluation 9% of the administrative staff and 12% of teaching staff do not know any foreign language including Russian. Although it is already 3 years the requirement of knowing of foreign language for employment has been applied according to the data provided in the self-

evaluation the tendency for the enhancement of general knowledge of a foreign language is not noticed.

The University tries to promote teaching a foreign language at the University. Currently foreign language courses are taught during 8 semesters/previously it was during 4 semesters/ accordingly instead of 200 lecture hours 400 hours. The University aims at enhancing the knowledge of University graduates up to B2 level according to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – CEFR. It is planned to establish a Center for teaching English within the framework of cooperation of ASPU and British Councils.

CONSIDERATIONS

The expert panel positively assesses the fact that the University administration gives much importance to the creation of environment promoting the exchange of practice, development and internationalization. In this respect the University has posed issues: to be involved in a number of international projects fostering the mobility of staff and students and implementing joint projects, etc. However financial resources allocated by the University for the creation of relevant environment fostering internationalization is very important in terms of enhancing the knowledge of a foreign language, activating the mobility of staff and students as well as strengthening the environment for internationalization of the University. It should be mentioned that the University demands a certificate of knowing a foreign language / IELTS, TOEFL certificates/ from all the teaching staff members who are teaching a foreign language but it is not clear which level knowledge is required.

There is a need to improve the cooperation with local organizations which will promote the raise of the University's role and exchange of practice.

However it should be mentioned that the expert panel noticed that the evaluation of the effectiveness of the activities carried out in terms of internationalization and development of external relations as well as dissemination of information has not been carried out. The mechanisms of mobility of teaching staff and students are poor and mainly the mobility is implemented within the framework of some projects and the number of student participant is low. The students' exchange is mainly carried in the profession of Education Management within the framework of some TEMPUS projects. There are few cases of other mobility.

CONCLUSION. Taking into consideration that the works on internationalization of the University have launched based on best practice as well as the fact that there is a systematic approach to the international development of the University the expert panel finds that the University meets the demands of criterion 9.

The correspondence of University's institutional capacities to the demands of criterion 9 is satisfactory.

CRITERION X. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

The Institution has an internal quality assurance system, which promotes establishment of a quality culture and continual improvement of all the processes of the Institution.

FINDINGS

10.1. The Institution has internal quality assurance policies and procedures.

The internal QA system was invested in ASPU in 2011. In the same year the department of Education Reforms and Quality was established. To regulate QA processes on the level of structural units' faculty committees were established. The University also has QA committee in Scientific Council which is coordinating/assuring the cooperation among QA internal structures and groups. ***To regulate QA processes at the University a number of concept papers/documents*** were developed (Policy on internal QA, concept of internal QA, etc.)¹⁸. QA manual was developed which touches upon the issues of quality assurance and quality management. But "quality assurance" and "quality management" are not differentiated in terms of functions. Documents regulating QA processes are provided to different structural units of the University and are posted in the education quality assurance system information portal. Currently surveys are considered as QA mechanisms but they are not conducted systematically and regularly. The improvement of academic programs was mainly carried out together with Oulu University. QA department takes part in these processes informally through the discussions with the heads of chairs. The revision of academic programs was not conducted based on the needs assessment. The effectiveness of QA mechanisms is not evaluated yet. The University has developed an action plan for the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the pilot accreditation report /2011/. The activities already carried out based on the recommendations of pilot accreditation are presented in the plan however there is no analysis about the achieved results. Data collection and examination is carried out by two different structural units: Education Reforms and Quality Assurance Department and Department of Development Planning and Monitoring. ***In spite of the fact that there are two structural units at the University operating the similar functions of data collection, Education Reforms and Quality Assurance Department implements the collection of data related to the internal quality assurance and coordinates that process.***

10.2. The Institution allocates sufficient material, human and financial resources to manage internal quality assurance processes.

ASPU allocates human, material and financial resources for the management of internal quality assurance processes. Since 2011 ASPU has been implementing the grant project "Investment of internal quality assurance system and its further development" financed by World Bank which is directed to the establishment of internal QA unit at ASPU. To coordinate QA processes the University has Vice-Rector on Education quality and part-time learning, Education Reforms and Quality Assurance Department with 4 staff members and appropriate equipment. Steering committees of QA were formed at faculties and chairs. The deputy deans on ***education*** or scientific affairs bear the responsibilities of QA at the faculties. During the site visit it turned out that the latter are very busy as they perform several functions simultaneously /lecturer, deputy dean on scientific affairs as well as QA responsible person at the faculty/. QA committee was established also in the Students' Board.

¹⁸ Has been changed based on the remarks got from the University. The previous text was: «...to regulate the processes recently.. have been developed”.

During the site visit it turned out that clearly defined requirements in terms of professional quality in the process of staff recruitment do not include professional skills and competences gained during work experience, the emphasis is out only on the knowledge of foreign language and IT skills¹⁹.

It should be mentioned that needs assessment and evaluation of the performance of QA department staff and QA responsible people in the faculties is not carried and accordingly trainings are not organized either. It should be mentioned that the distribution of functions of QA department staff in terms of QA processes is not clarified. However the University finds it necessary and important to invest internal QA system and institutional self-evaluation processes according to the requirements of European standards²⁰. Financial support in terms of the development of QA system is insufficient²¹.

It should be mentioned that Education Reforms department has two staff members, which is stipulated in the orders related to their employment and the QA department has only one staff member who deals with QA issues together with faculties and other units. Taking into account the great number of students at the University as well as commitment of implementing QA functions in different activities Education Reforms and Quality Assurance Departments has deficient recruitment of staff.

10.3. The internal and external stakeholders are involved in quality assurance processes

The University highlights the importance of involvement of students and stakeholders in QA processes. Internal stakeholders are involved in QA processes. The main mechanisms of *feedback* and involving internal stakeholders are surveys which are conducted once a year. However, they are not systematic and there isn't any analysis about their effectiveness, continuous evaluation of the role and benefit of the achieved results on the improvement processes of University's QA system is missing. The involvement of external stakeholders in QA processes is not systematic.

10.4. The internal quality assurance system is periodically reviewed.

The QA system of the University is newly invested and is in the formation process. Current monitoring and evaluation of QA system have not been fully implemented yet. The mechanisms are not holistic in some cases they are general and are not targeted according to the priorities. Data collection has mainly been conditioned by the surveys organized within the framework of self-evaluation. Revision processes in the University are mainly conditioned by the recommendations provided within the frames of pilot accreditation carried out in 2011 *as well as by the results of carried out joint activities carried out together with Oulu University within the framework of grant project Quality and relevance*. The review mechanisms are not clear and holistic either, the effectiveness of the latter is not studied. The PDCA cycle is not fully functioning yet. The benchmarking of QA policy and processes has been carried out with a number of international institutions.

¹⁹ Has been changed based on the remarks got from the University. The previous text was: "...There are no clearly defined requirements in terms of professional quality in the process of staff recruitment except for the knowledge of foreign language and IT skills".

²⁰ Has been changed based on the remarks got from the University. The previous text was: «...it should be mentioned that work distribution related to QA processes of the staff at the center is not clear, however...»

²¹ Has been changed based on the remarks got from the University. The previous text was: "...financial allocations are limited".

10.5. The internal quality assurance system provides valid and sufficient background for the success of the external quality assurance processes.

The processes of data collection, dissemination and management are not systematically implemented. There is not holistic institutional approach. The process inside the separate units is coordinated but the mechanisms of dissemination and management of information among different structural units are not clear. ASPU has conducted institutional evaluation for a couple of times, however, the presented self-evaluation is descriptive and analytical approach is missing²². As a result of pilot accreditation, the University got appropriate recommendations and accordingly developed an action plan for the improvement. But the effectiveness of implementation of pilot accreditation is not analyzed.

10.6. The internal quality assurance system ensures the transparency of the processes in the Institution providing valid and up to date information on their quality to the internal and external stakeholders.

The transparency of QA system is ensured through the reports presented to QA Council and Scientific Council. ASPU official website provides information on the activity of the University, structural units, current professions and academic programs, decisions, news, etc.

An education quality assurance system information portal has been created with the aim to improve respective processes at ASPU. A number of manuals have been published. However, the reports on academic programs and QA processes of the University are not available to the public yet.

CONSIDERATIONS

The expert panel positively evaluates the steps that ASPU have taken with the aim to invest internal QA system. However, the activities of ASPU towards the investment of internal QA system are not systematic yet and the functional cooperation among different units and the vice rectors coordinating different spheres is weak²³.

Though ASPU has developed internal QA policy and procedures, there is a need to clarify them from the perspective of planning the activities. The lack of evaluation of the effectiveness of mechanisms and tools coordinating different activities does not give an opportunity to evaluate the impact of QA processes on the improvement processes of academic programs and the University's activities.

Though the document package has been developed and relevant units have been established, internal QA system is not fully integrated in the University's processes yet. The expert panel noticed that though the University provides human resources for the management of QA processes, *the functions and responsibilities of the Vice rector on Education quality and part time study and the Education Reform and Quality Assurance Department* are not clearly defined and are not distributed according to the necessity which can be a serious obstacle from the perspective of management and further development of QA processes. Four staff members are involved in the department and according to the expert panel, this number is not enough for the organization and coordination of QA processes at the institutional level. The workload and professionalism of *staff of QA department* need improvement to ensure the implementation of QA processes in all the faculties and structural unit²⁴.

²² Has been changed based on the remarks got from the University. The previous text was: "...critical approach is missing"

²³ Has been changed based on the remarks got from the University. The previous text was: "...however they are not systematic and there is no general approach yet".

²⁴ Has been changed based on the remarks got from the University. The previous text was: "...QA department".

The fact that the professional requirements in terms of the recruitment process are not presented and after the selection professional trainings are not organized puts the effective organization and implementation of QA processes in danger.

According to the organizational structure Education Reforms and Quality Assurance Department is under the supervision of Vice-rector which in its turn limits the autonomy of the Department. The functional repetitions of Education Reforms and Quality Assurance Department and the Department of Development Planning and Monitoring are also troublesome. The expert panel finds it necessary to systematically evaluate the effectiveness of internal QA system. Though some tools for assuring quality are applied and respective data for the evaluation have been collected (mostly within the frames of preparing self-evaluation report) they don't provide sufficient basis for external evaluations. Regarding to the presented self-evaluation report the latter mostly contains descriptive information which is not substantiated by analysed data. The self-evaluation report was not self-critical enough, the results of internal self-evaluation processes were not often presented and the stakeholders' role and the level of their involvement could not be clearly seen. Highlighting QA processes by the University, the coordination of some processes, the involvement of internal stakeholders encourages in terms of formation of QA system. The involvement of external stakeholders in QA processes of ASPU will foster the improvement of functions of QA department. The University has taken steps in this respect.

However not regular nature of QA processes with PDCA cycle, passive involvement of external stakeholders in those processes, imperfection of data management system (including *the processes of collecting and analysing* qualitative and quantitative data about the academic programs etc.) can become an obstacle for the continuous improvement of the University's activities. *Education Reforms and Quality Assurance Department* started operating since 2011. Though obvious progress has been recorded in a short period the *University* does not have enough information about the activities to review the system. It is obvious that quality culture has not been fully formed yet and PDCA cycle is not closed/completed yet. It is mainly in the phases of planning and implementation/do/, partially check and improvement /act/ is carried out in unique cases. Internal QA system is in the phase of development. *The implementation of phases plan, do, check and even partial implementation of actare proofs of creating and operating quality culture which because of objective time restriction.* The expert panel encourages the University's wish to create QA system however the applied tools need to be improved (surveys are not systematic, outcomes are not clearly defined, the representativeness of the respondents is not sufficient taking into account the number of students, the format of conducting surveys should be changed).

CONCLUSION. **Taking into account that** despite having the experience in undergoing accreditation procedure, the works carried out at the University directed to the development of internal QA system are not regulated, the quality culture is slowly spread within the University, PDCA cycle is not sufficiently implemented at the University procedures, the management system of qualitative and quantitative information should be improved, the involvement of internal and external stakeholders in the QA processes needs to be enhances and trainings for the staff involved in QA procedures should be conducted the expert panel finds that ASPU does not meet the demands of Criterion 10.

The correspondence of University's institutional capacities to the demands of criterion 10 is unsatisfactory.

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

CRITERION	CONCLUSION
I. Mission and Goals	Satisfactory
II. Governance and Administration	Unsatisfactory
III. Academic Programs	Satisfactory
IV. Students	Satisfactory
V. Teaching and Support Staffs	Satisfactory
VI. Research and Development	Unsatisfactory
VII. Infrastructure and Resources	Satisfactory
VIII. Social Responsibility	Satisfactory
IX. External Relations and Internationalization	Satisfactory
X. Internal Quality Assurance System	Unsatisfactory

08 September, 2015

Yelena Yerznkyan

Head of Expert Panel

APPENDIX 1. CVS OF EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS

Yelena Yerznkyan- graduated from Yerevan State University (YSU) in 1975 getting diploma of philology and teacher of English language and literature. In 1979 graduated from Moscow State Linguistic University and defencing PhD thesis got the degree of a candidate of philological science. She is a doctor of philological sciences, professor. Since 1979 has been working at YSU first as a senior lecturer, since 1984 as an associate professor and since 1993 as a head of the chair of English language. Since 1995 has been the chief editor of “Foreign Languages in Higher Education” scientific journal and since 2007 has also been the chief editor of “Foreign Languages in Armenia” scientific journal. She has participated in a number of trainings organized by ANQA. Is the author of more than 140 scientific works including monographs, dictionaries and manuals for HEIs.

Alan Howe –graduated from Bath Spa University in 1982 with the profession of applied biology. In 1985 got the qualification of an expert in education. In 1994 he got masters degree at Bath Spa University college. Since 2014 has been Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. Currently he is the Head of Department and Programme Leader for Education and Childhood Studies, Bath Spa University. Since 2006 he has been program leader and since 2003- tutor. He has carried out a number of external expertise /review/. Currently he is the Vice Chair of the British Education Studies Association. He has had speeches in different interational seminars and conferences. He has a number of publications.

Robert Khachatryan- graduated from Yerevan State Linguistic University in 2005 with the profession of English Language and Area Studies. In 2010 graduated from the University of Kansas with the profession of Public Administration. In 2005-2008 studied at YSU, he is a PhD /Candidate of Philological Sciences/. Since 2011has been working at Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences (YSULS) as a head of the Chair on Education Management and Planning and since 2012 as the Head of QA center. He has a number of published articles and manuals. He has participated in a number of seminars and conferences. He is a member of a number of professional organizations.

Sargis Galoyan- graduated from Yerevan State University (YSU) in 1979 the faculty of radiophysics. He is a candidate of physics-mathematics sciences. From 1990 to 2003 he worked in a number of secondary schools as a teacher. Since 2003 has been working as Head of the scientific research department of pedagogy at National Institute of Education, MoES. He is the author of a number of articles, manuals and has 3 inventive works.

Mariam Hovhannisyan- MA 1st year student of Education Management at YSULS. She got the bachelor’s degree in English language pedagogy at YSULS. She has participated in a number of trainings, she has an experience in translations.

APPENDIX 2. SCHEDULE OF SITE VISIT

SITE-VISIT OF EXPERT PANEL CONDUCTING INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION AT ARMENIAN STATE PEDAGOGICAL UNIVERSITY

25.05.2015-29.05.2015

	25.05.2015	<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1	Meeting with the Rector	9:00	9:15	15 minutes
2	Meeting with the self-evaluation working group representatives	9:20	10:50	90 minutes
3	Meeting with Vice-Rectors	10:55	11:40	45 minutes
4	Meeting with Deans	11:45	12:45	60 minutes
5	Break, close discussions of the expert panel	12:50	13:50	60 minutes
6	Meeting with ASPU teaching staff representatives (10-12 people)	13:55	14:40	45 minutes
7	Meeting with the invited teaching staff representatives (10-12 people)	14:45	15:30	45 minutes
8	Meeting with the staff of the Department on development and monitoring of strategic plans	15:35	16:15	40 minutes
9	Observation of documents, close discussions of the panel	16:20	18:20	120 minutes

	26.05.2015	<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1	Meeting with the heads of respective chairs providing the 3 education programs included in self-evaluation	10:00	10:50	50 minutes
2	Meeting with heads of chairs	10:55	11:45	50 minutes
3	Meeting with the staff of Educational department	11:50	12:40	50 minutes
4	Break, close discussions of the expert panel	12:45	13:45	60 minutes
5	Meeting with students	13:50	14:50	60 minutes
6	Meeting with the staff of university-employer cooperation center	14:55	15:25	30 minutes
7	Meeting with alumni	15:30	16:30	60 minutes
8	Meeting with employers	16:35	17:35	60 minutes
9	Close discussions of the panel	17:40	18:40	60 minutes

	27.05.2015	<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1	Meeting with the staff selected by the expert panel	9:00	10:00	60 minutes
2	Meeting with the staff selected by the expert panel	10:05	10:50	45 minutes
3	Observation of resources (classrooms, laboratories, library, սարքաւորւի, բնօրէն...)	10:50	13:15	145 minutes
4	Break, close discussions of the expert panel	13:15	14:15	60 minutes
5	Visit to the chairs, observation of resources and documents	14:20	15:50	90 minutes
6	Meeting with the staff of the Department of foreign	15:50	16:35	45 minutes

	relations			
7	Meeting with the representatives of Student Board and Student Scientific Organization	16:40	17:30	50 minutes
8	Meeting with the Vice-Rector on Science and with the representatives of scientific research center	17:35	18:15	40 minutes

	29.05.2015	<i>Launch</i>	<i>End</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1	Meeting with the staff of Internship department	9:00	9:45	45 minutes
2	Meeting with the staff of Education Development and QA Department	9:50	10:50	60 minutes
3	Meeting with the responsible people for quality assurance per faculty	10:55	11:40	45 minutes
4	Meeting with staff of different units /Press and Public Relations Department, Human Resource Department /	11:45	12:30	45 minutes
5	Break, close discussions of the expert panel	12:35	13:35	60 minutes
6	Open meeting	13:40	14:20	40 minutes
7	Close discussions of the expert panel	14:25	16:25	120 minutes
8	Meeting with the Rector	16:30	17:00	30 minutes

APPENDIX 3. LIST OF DOCUMENTS OBSERVED

N	Name of the document		
1.	Approved organizational structure of ASPU		
2.	ASPU Governing Board structure/composition		
3.	Structure of ASPU Scientific Council		
4.	Strategic plans of the 3 faculties (according to the mentioned education programs)		
5.	Grounds of the involvement of administrative units in the strategic plans		
6.	Annual faculty reports of the Deans, system of progress evaluation indicators, document		
7.	Key performance indicators		
8.	Regulation on the election of Governing bodies		
9.	Annual reports of the Student Council for the last 3 years		
10	Mid-term and short-term plans of the strategic plan per faculties (for the last 3 years)		
11	Philosophy of Pedagogical Education		
12	Procedure on evaluating the effectiveness and availability of education resources		
13	Functions of Vice-Rectors, Functions of Methodical department and the Department of Development and Monitoring		
14	Functions of Education Development and QA Department		
15	Number of students per faculty		
16	Descriptions of 3 education programs		
17	Analysis of benchmarking in the level of education programs as well as modules and courses		
18	Methodical guidelines of developing and implementing education programs		
19	Topics of thesis papers for the last 3 years according to 3 education programs, thesis papers of bachelor and master (marked 3 excellence, 3 unsatisfied per each). Include also list of thesis from Education Management education program		
20	Assessment criteria of thesis papers		
21	Indicator of students graduation		
22	New regulation on assessment		
23	Regulation on appeals		
24	Procedures of preventing plagiarism and academic honesty		
25	Analysis of 8 education programs, and point out whether the 3 education programs are in that list		
26	Regulation of awarding joint diplomas and its practice, a few examples		
27	Regulation on credit allocation		
28	What partnership agreements are there according to the directions		
29	Examples of lifelong education		
30	Agreements signed with employers, the number		

31	Percentage of students using the services of university-employer cooperation center as compared to the whole number of students		
32	Data of appeals for the last 3 years, what changes and decisions were made		
33	Examples of teaching staff portfolio (according to 3 education programs)		
34	Form of class observation/recordings		
35	Program and schedule of teaching staff training		
36	List of research/scientific topics approved during the last 3 years		
37	Research areas		
38	List of people responsible for science at the chairs, number of deputy deans and their functions		
39	Number of viewers of the official web-site for the last 3 years		
40	Rector's reports for the last 3 years		
41	Performances of incomes and expenses for the last 3 years		
42	Philosophy of continuous education		
43	Regulation on mobility		
44	Position descriptions of the staff of Foreign Relations Department		
45	To look through position descriptions of the teaching staff		
46	Functions of the international department		
47	Sources of external funding		
48	Questionnaire was developed by the Department of Foreign Relations, the results of survey		
49	Reports of the head of the Department of Foreign Relations for the last 3 years		
50	List of partnership agreements with local universities		
51	List of courses provided by foreign lecturers		

APPENDIX 4. RESOURCES OBSERVED

1. **Classrooms**
2. **Studios**
3. **Deans' offices** (Faculty of Special Education, Faculty of Education psychology and sociology)
4. **Chairs** (TV journalism, Library Sciency and Bibliography, Museology, Dance, Design and Decorative Applied Art, Art History, Theory and Culture, Professional Education and Applied Pedagogy, Theory and Practice of Psychology, Age and Pedagogical Psychology, Philosophy and logic, Chemistry, General Physics)
5. **Departments** (Artistic Photography, Folk and Brass Orchestra, TV Journalism, Directing)
6. **Cabinet-classrooms** (named after Karlen Mirzakhanyan, Museology)
7. **Laboratories** (Laboratory of "Nari" architecture, Laboratory of Optics, Laboratory of Mechanics and Molecular Physics, Laboratory of new materials of Quantum Electronics and Integral Optics, Laboratory of Organic Chemistry)
8. **Teaching Centers** (General and non organic Chemistry, Physical and Colid Chemistry)
9. **Dance halls**
10. **Concert and conference halls**
11. **Computer classrooms**
12. **Dressing rooms**
13. **Canteens**
14. **Library**
15. **Reading halls**