CONCLUSION

On Accreditation of Institutional Capacities of
Gavar State University

General Information about the Institution

Full name of the Institution:	Gavar State University
Acronym:	GSU
Official address:	Hrant Hakobyan 1 str., Gavar, Republic of Armenia
Previous accreditation decree and date:	Not available

LEGAL BASIS

Guided by the regulation on "State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Educational Programs" approved by the RA Government on 30 June, 2011 N 978-Ն decree; by RA Government decree N 959-Ն (30 June, 2011) on "Approval of RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation" as well as by the Procedure on the Formation of Accreditation Committee of "National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance" foundation (ANQA), the Accreditation Committee of "National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance" foundation (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) discussed the ANQA draft conclusion on the institutional capacities of Gavar State University (GSU) on the basis of self-analysis presented by GSPI, Expert Panel report, GSU Action Plan on the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report as well as Expert panel opinion on the GSPI Action Plan with the presence of the ANQA representatives, the Expert Panel, and ANQA coordinator of the accreditation procedure.

As a result of the discussion the following was registered:
The main phases of accreditation procedure were carried out within the following periods:

Submission of application	12 July 2016
Submission of self-evaluation report	29 September 2016
Site-visit	5-8 December 2016
Submission of expert panel report	6 April 2017
Submission of action plan on elimination of shortcomings	20 April 2017
Submission of improved action plan on elimination of shortcomings	4 May 2017

GSU expertise has been carried out by an independent expert panel formed in compliance with the requirements set by the ANQA "Regulation on the Formation of Expert Panel"[1]. The evaluation was carried out according to the 10 criteria of institutional accreditation approved by N 959-Ն (30 June 2011) Decree of the RA Government[2].

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While carrying out the expertise the expert panel took into consideration that "Gavar State University is the only state higher education institution in Gegharkunik region of the Republic of Armenia which has ambitions to efficiently implement professional academic programs, to prepare competitive specialists with Bachelor's and Master's degrees, to carry out educational-methodical, scientific-research, teaching and learning activities, to expand external cooperation as well as to foster socio-cultural development of the region".

The University didn't undergo accreditation according to the state accreditation criteria and respective regulation which functioned until 2011. GSU has undergone the current process of accreditation according to its application.

GSU implements 16 BA full-time and part-time academic programs and 13 full-time MA academic programs. The programs are structured on the credit basis and in accordance with the state educational standards. They were reviewed in 2015. With the aim to improve some of the GSU academic programs, the curricula of National Polytechnic University of Armenia were studied. GSU doesn't implement academic programs in foreign languages but some courses in foreign languages have been developed to ensure internal mobility. Within the framework of RETHINKe in cooperation with University of Coruna (Spain) GSU implements a double diploma program in the profession of "Environmental and Natural Resources Management".

GSU has launched the educational process by applying the outcome-based approach and has developed intended learning outcomes for academic programs and separate courses. However, the expert panel finds that it is necessary to review their formulations and to do mapping in accordance with the descriptors of the respective levels of NQF.

GSU has necessary administrative, teaching and support staffs to fulfill its mission and to implement academic programs. The formation of the staff with qualifications necessary for the implementation of the courses serves as a basis for the selection of the teaching staff, however, the requirements set for the professional qualities of the teaching staff are generic. The University has 145 teaching staff members, 15 of them are Doctors of Sciences, and 60 of them hold PhD. The 31% of teachers are associate professors, and 5,5% of them - professors. There are mechanisms of evaluating teachers' professional qualities and their performance according to which the scientific-pedagogical and educational activities of the teaching staff are being evaluated. However, the application of the current mechanisms needs to be coordinated, and the efficiency of tools and mechanisms isn't evaluated. A number of trainings have been held at GSU, and the processes directed to the

---

[1] **Appendix 1.** Expert panel composition and ANQA support staff
[2] **Appendix 2.** Summative evaluation

professional development of the teaching staff are currently at the stage of investment. The University is quite active in terms of involving young teachers; 43,4% of the teaching staff members are young teachers.

The current resources of GSU are not sufficient for ensuring efficient learning environment and formulating learning outcomes of academic programs. Except for the laboratory of Natural Sciences, the major part of other laboratories, lingaphone cabinets and classrooms is not equipped with necessary material-technical base. GSU needs to ensure availability of international library funds to its libraries, to modernize and digitize its literature resources, and computer rooms need to be equipped with packages of licensed computer programs of research and statistic analyses. The main financial inflows are formed by the tuition fees and state funding. The financial management of the University does not imply resource allocation according to strategic directions and academic programs. The financial resources are distributed in short-term (annual) period and are mainly allocated to the salary fund and some part of them – to other articles.

The data management electronic system is at the stage of investment, and the operation of the system is not full yet which would allow the University to coordinate the amount of the necessary information and the activities relating its acquisition, research, analysis and dissemination.

The recruitment, selection and admission of GSU students are carried out in accordance with the respective regulations. In order to promote efficient learning of students, the University creates opportunities for the organization of facultative classes and provision of consultancy. The expert panel is positive about the fact that students can apply to the administrative staff and to the rector for support and guidance and accordingly to receive feedback, but at the same time the process of identifying students' academic needs to be coordinated. The University isn't active in terms of undertaking activities directed to students' career orientation.

GSU gives importance to the transition from teacher-centered approach to student-centered approach. However, the transition is not clear and complete yet. As the meetings with students stated, students' insight and comprehension about the new approach are not clearly formulated.

In GSU interactive teaching is being organized but the selection of teaching and learning methods is not coordinated yet which is conditioned by the lack of generic approach to the selection of teaching and learning methods. In the University the multifunctional assessment system is being functioned about which students are kept informed by means of guidebooks of academic programs. GSU has developed a regulation on consideration of student appeal and a concept on academic honesty. The expert panel thinks that there is a problem in terms of the weak link of assessment methods with teaching and learning methods and learning outcomes. The University doesn't apply mapping of teaching, learning and assessment methods and learning outcomes yet.

The strategy reflecting the interests and ambitions of the University in research as well as the steps directed to them are not clearly defined yet. The research activity is limited in GSU in terms of both implementation of international research and involvement of students and teachers in research activities. The long-term strategy and mid-term and short-term action plans reflecting the University's' research interests and ambitions are lacking. There are research directions at chair level but they are not clearly formulated as plans, and the research directions of the chairs are not always linked with the strategic priorities of the University.

In spite of the fact that GSU is the only regional education institution, the research directions of the University are not derived from the issues of regional development. There isn't any structural unit or a responsible staff member, except for the Scientific Council, Faculty Councils and Vice-rector on Scientific Affairs, regulating the scientific activity of the University. GSU hasn't yet adopted a united strategic approach

for developing its scientific-research activity, and the achievements in research are mainly reached due to personal initiatives.

The scientific-research activity of the University is not managed in a regulated way, and the lack of inter-chair research and exchange of practice accumulated by chairs does not foster the proportional development and dissemination of best practices. The research, final papers and master theses are viewed as a mechanism interlinking the research activity and educational process, however, as the observation of research papers and theses has shown, the research and innovative components form a little part of the papers.

The top management of the University gives importance to the creation of environment which fosters practice exchange, development and internationalization. GSU has partnership agreements with a number of borh local and international organizations. The University is involved in 22 international projects within the framework of which it cooperates with 75 international organizations. In the scope of international projects some of the staff members have participated in a number of seminars, trainings and workshops. There is a need to disseminate best practices achieved within the framework of international cooperation as well as to evaluate the impact of the projects on GSU's activities.

The expert panel finds it positive that GSU makes efforts to efficiently carry out educational and other activities. Nevertheless, GSU management system needs more clarification and further simplification. The expert panel is also positive about the existence of documentary basis regulating the activities of GSU's structural units, but there is a need to evaluate the efficiency of the management system. Teachers and students have the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes relating them but the efficiency of mechanisms of involving stakeholders isn't evaluated yet. The study of factors having an impact on the activity of the University is not coordinated. The administration of GSU's policies and procedures is partially implemented in accordance with the PDCA cycle of quality management; the main processes are at the stages of planning and implementation.

The expert panel finds it positive that the University makes efforts towards investment and operation of internal QA system. However, steps taken to the efficient operation of the system are not coordinated yet. Although the University has developed a QA manual, the mechanisms which would give the University an opportunity to evaluate the process of continuous improvement of all the processes are not clarified and complete. The imperfection of mechanisms and toolset evaluating the efficiency of different processes as well as the absence of analyses do not give an opportunity to evaluate the impact of QA processes on the improvement of academic programs and the activity of the University. Although GSU has developed a documentary basis and a structural unit has been established respectively, the QA system is not fully integrated in the University's processes.

STRENGTHS

1. GSU has a sound working environment.
2. The academic programs are developed in accordance with GSU's mission and educational standards.
3. The internal stakeholders have the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes relating them.
4. The staff is open and ready for improvements.
5. The teaching staff is motivated and devoted.
6. GSU organizes interactive learning.
7. GSU administrative staff provides necessary guidance and consultancy to students.

8. The protection of GSU students' rights are always in the center of attention which is conditioned by the joint activities taken by the Student Council and consultants attached to student groups.
9. The University is actively involved in international projects.
10. GSU has established a Quality Assurance Division and has developed a QA manual.

WEAKNESSES
1. The strategic goals and objectives of the University are not clear and measurable, and the policy and procedures on the evaluation of their implementation are lacking.
2. Teaching, learning and assessment methods are not linked with learning outcomes.
3. The external stakeholders are passively involved in the development and revision of academic programs in particular, and in academic processes of the University, in general.
4. The university-employer cooperation and the activity of Alumni and Career Center of GSU are not directed to the fulfillment of functions defined by the GSU Charter yet, i.e. assurance of students and alumni's career, increase of their competitiveness in labor market as well as implementation of programs aimed at cooperation between the University and employers.
5. GSU doesn't carry out activities in the direction of professional development of the teaching staff.
6. Few resources are provided to both teachers and students to promote their scientific-research activities.
7. The resource base of GSU needs improvement, particularly in terms of ensuring technically equipped classrooms and laboratories, enriching material-technical base, creating necessary conditions for students with special needs. The resource base for scientific development is poor.
8. The level of foreign language proficiency of both teachers and students is low.
9. The PDCA (plan, do, check, act) cycle of quality management is not fully applied.
10. The internal quality assurance system is not fully integrated in GSU's processes yet, and the quality culture is at the stage of formulation.

RECOMMENDATIONS
Mission and Goals
1. To review and clarify the mission of the University by defining more realistic, measurable and more comprehensible (for stakeholders) ambitions in terms of awarded qualifications and intended outcomes.
2. To amend the Strategic Plan (SP) of the University by defining strategic directions and/or priorities, to develop short-term and mid-term action plans and precise time-schedule for SP implementation.
3. To clarify the steps in the SP monitoring plan, deadlines set for their implementation, responsible staff members as well as mechanisms and sources of data collection.

Governance and Administration
4. To clarify and simplify GSU management structure by ensuring compliance of GSU strategic goals and management system, responsibilities and functions of the staff of all structural units and to ensure their interaction. To clarify the list of necessary documents available in different structural units.

5. To invest mechanisms of evaluating the efficiency of activities of administrative units as well as identifying and disseminating best practices of chairs and faculties.

6. To develop short-term and mid-term action plans and respective mechanisms enabling their implementation, monitoring and evaluation in order to guarantee the fulfillment of the goals set by the SP.

7. To review the current mechanisms and regulations in order to operate the administration of policies and procedures at all levels of the University's management in accordance with the PDCA cycle of quality management.

8. To develop mechanisms and procedures which will enable to scan the factors having an impact on the activity of the University, as well as to collect necessary valid data on the efficiency of current academic programs and ongoing processes of in the University.

Academic Programs

9. To map the learning outcomes of academic programs with NQF by pointing out their compliance.

10. To invest a policy on the selection of teaching-learning-assessment for reaching the outcomes of academic programs and courses by emphasizing their compliance with the outcomes and the student-centered approach.

11. To clarify the policy on credit allocation and calculation by linking it with the learning outcomes.

12. To review syllabi of the courses, aimed at ensuring compliance of the content of part-time courses with the learning outcomes as well as arranging the differences between full-time and part-time syllabi of the courses.

13. To develop clear criteria for the evaluation of master theses, research, final and individual papers by ensuring the link of the criteria with the content-related (research and analytical components) and technical requirements.

14. To carry out benchmarking with the aim to make the academic programs in line with other academic programs having similar content.

15. To enroot processes of monitoring of academic programs, evaluating the efficiency of their implementation and improving them by broadening the scope of identification of stakeholders' needs and their involvement in the processes.

Students

16. To develop mechanisms of evaluating the efficiency of functions which are being fulfilled in the direction of applicants' professional orientation.

17. To improve the mechanisms of identifying and evaluating students' academic needs, to regulate the processes of organization of facultative classes and provision of consultancy.

18. To regulate the processes providing guidance and support to students, to create an opportunity for professional orientation directed to the selection of selective courses.

19. To direct the university-employer cooperation and the activity of Alumni and Career Center to the research of labor market needs and GSU alumni employability as well as to the assurance of their sustainable feedback.

20. To develop mechanisms which will promote the enlargement of students' involvement in research

processes and the formation of students' research skills and abilities.

21. To create an academic environment which will be available for students with special needs by ensuring the accessibility of learning for them.

Faculty and Staff

22. To develop a clear and transparent mechanism of HR management and to involve it in the SP as a strategic direction. To stipulate the process of involving young teachers.
23. To set clear requirements for professional qualities of the teaching staff in accordance with each academic program of the University, taking into consideration the peculiarities of the concrete academic programs.
24. To invest a system of regular identification of teachers' needs and to use it as a basis for teacher trainings.
25. To invest clear and regulated mechanisms of evaluation, promotion and progression of faculty and support staff.

Research and Development

26. To clarify the ambitions, interests and specific directions of research activities of the University. To develop a long-term strategy which will reflect GSU's ambitions and interests in research.
27. To plan the scientific-research activities of chairs in accordance with scientific-research priorities of the University and to monitor them. To foster the implementation of research activities at individual, chair and inter-chair levels.
28. To invest clear mechanisms for ensuring the link between scientific-research activity and learning process. To develop a policy according to which the implementation of scientific research will become a learning method.
29. To make respective financial investment in the direction of scientific-research development and creation of favorable conditions for carrying out scientific activity. To allocate financial means to research development from the budget and to continue searching for external financial sources for research projects.
30. To promote the commercialization of research outcomes by reinforcing the university-research-business link.
31. To develop a strategy on internationalization of research activity, to foster the implementation of joint research projects in cooperation with other universities and international publications.

Infrastructure and Resources

32. To improve the resources of GSU structural units by providing material-technical means to re-equip the classrooms and laboratories and to acquire modern facilities. To consider it as one of the strategic directions of the University's development. To take steps towards ensuring structural resources for students with special needs. To analyze to what extent the existing resources ensure necessary environment for the implementation of academic activity which derives from the goals mentioned in the SP.
33. To coordinate the processes of identifying GSU stakeholders' needs aimed at efficient fulfillment of the University's mission and strategic goals as well as assurance with necessary resources.
34. To make analysis of resources necessary for the assurance of implementation and continuation of each academic program, thus promoting the operation of mechanisms of top-down and bottom-up planning.
35. To develop and invest a policy on financial management which will foster the fulfillment of goals of

academic programs and the assurance with necessary means and equipment. To invest mechanisms of allocation of financial resources, evaluation and analysis of cost-effectiveness in accordance with the strategic directions and priorities of the University.

36. To develop a unified policy on management of information and documentation processes by investing electronic system of documentation circulation and date collection.

37. To develop mechanisms of evaluating the efficiency, applicability and availability of resources provided to students and teachers.

Social Responsibility

38. To improve the mechanisms of ensuring accountability from the perspective of implementation of the goals set by the SP. To regularly evaluate the efficiency of the process by respectively improving the mechanisms and tools which check the validity and efficiency of accountability means.

39. To improve mechanisms of ensuring feedback by the large scope of society with the aim to regularly receive feedback on the quality of carried out activities and education provided by the University.

40. To create a policy on information collocation with respective time-schedule and ensure the availability to target stakeholders.

41. To develop a policy and strategy, procedures and respective mechanisms of transferring knowledge to the society and implementing facultative educational and consultancy services.

External Relations and Internationalization

42. To develop and invest procedures of promoting the establishment of external relations and internationalization.

43. To clarify the operational functions of external relations and international cooperation of the University.

44. To make identification of needs/analysis(es) in order to evaluate the efficiency of activities directed to the internationalization and development of external relations as well as to raise the level of awareness. To evaluate the efficiency of facultative courses which aim to develop language skills.

45. To develop and invest mechanisms of planning financial means for internationalization.

Internal Quality Assurance System

46. To review the policy on internal quality assurance and goals making the activity of the University in line with them. To establish a base of indicators of education quality assurance and to ensure the improvement of the indicators through the implementation of the SP.

47. To evaluate the satisfaction and efficiency of human, material and financial resources provided by the University for the implementation of internal QA processes.

48. To regularly make evaluation on the efficiency of QA Division's activity, to identify needs of the staff and carry out trainings and courses of professional development based on the results in order to guarantee the fulfillment of the goals set by the mentioned Division. To take steps towards increasing the autonomy of the QA Division.

49. To regularly evaluate the efficiency of provided services and implementation of academic programs.

50. To regulate the data management processes and to clarify the mechanisms of information management and dissemination among different structural units of the University. To segregate certain amount of

information and to operate mechanisms of information collection which will provide necessary bases for the internal and external evaluations of quality assurance.

51. To ensure the application of PDCA cycle in all the processes and at all levels of management of the University ensuring the reinforcement of quality culture.

PEER REVIEW ACCORDING TO THE INTERNATIONAL CRITERIA

The activity of GSU, according to its mission, is directed to the internationalization of the University as well. Thus, one of the tasks of the international expert was to assess the degree of the fulfillment of the goal relating the GSU internationalization and the establishment of internal quality assurance system for promoting continuous improvement of all institutional processes. The European Standards and Guidelines (Part One), experts' experience in the sphere of external quality assurance gained in other countries as well as the degree of meeting the quality criteria set by ANQA have formed the basis for the evaluation of the University's progress in the implementation of the Bologna Process declarations. The observations and recommendations formulated herein have been made on the basis of GSU institutional self-evaluation report, on the documents which include the Action Plan and the Five-Year Strategic Plans (the documents are available in English) as well as findings made during the on-site visit.

OBSERVATIONS
- In general, there is a big number of documents (more than 60) which verify the organizational and institutional form of the University. However, there are some processes which are not carried out in a regulated way, and some of the processes are too regulated, and sometimes the processes and regulations are inconsistent. It should be mentioned that there is a certain gap between regulations and their implementation.
- GSU launched its strategic planning in 2006 by the elaboration of the "GSU Five-year Strategic Plan 2006-2011" which was reviewed in 2011 and in 2016 and was renamed "GSU Five-year Strategic Plan (2011-2016)", "Concept (Provisions) on GSU Development and Reforming" and "GSU Five-year Strategic Plan (2016-2021)". Moreover, the Action Plan 2011-2016 is presented. However, the guidelines necessary for the implementation of the mission and goals, for example, are missing. Sometimes it's not clear which objectives the given goal will attain. The formulated objectives are not always tangible and measurable. The time-schedule set for the implementation of the actions mentioned in the action plan of the SP is not presented by years which would give an opportunity to evaluate and analyze the current efficiency of the implementation of the goals and actions.
- The university has given importance to the viewpoints of its internal stakeholders in the process of development of the SP. Their participation is ensured by making individual suggestions and by presenting six-month annual reports at the institutional level. The University also creates favorable conditions for the involvement of external stakeholders. However, the mechanisms of involving external stakeholders in terms of ensuring continuity are not clearly developed. The analysis of labor market needs as such is not carried out; it is limited by the provision of suggestions on the improvement of some courses. Moreover, there is no generic institutional approach to the involvement of external stakeholders; the form of

cooperation with stakeholders differs from chair to chair.

- In GSU 16 BA full-time and part-time academic programs and 13 full-time MA academic programs are being implemented. Although the goals, objectives and intended learning outcomes are defined in the descriptions of the academic programs, the link with differentiated teaching and learning methods for achieving them is missing. The European student-centered approach is at the stage of implementation, but there is still a need to raise the level of awareness on student-centered education which was often mentioned by the students. Although the University has developed a regulation on education based on credit-system, the clear policy on allocation of credits is missing.

- The University strives for the gradual implementation of a three-stage education system which is crucial from the perspective of becoming a full member of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

- There is a developed procedure on monitoring and improvement of development, approval and implementation processes of academic programs taught at GSU. But there still exists a gap between measures for improvements and evaluation of results of the measures.

- The assurance of close relationship between education and scientific research should be one of the key features of any higher education institution. Universities operating in the EHEA actively participate in research projects funded from external sources (including international ones). GSU chairs themselves choose the research directions but they are not formulated as action plans and the research directions of the chairs are not always linked with the strategic priorities of the University. GSU considers itself as a regional university but it hasn't defined the research directions which will derive from the regional issues.

- There isn't any unit the activity of which will be directed to the regulation of the scientific-research activity of the University. Besides, the clearly developed concept on promotion of scientific-research activities of the young teaching staff of GSU is missing.

- The University has defined the establishment of external relations and internationalization as a highly prioritized goal in its mission. GSU participates in 22 international projects, including 11 EU TEMPUS projects and cooperates with over 75 international organizations. The University plans to develop a new program and to submit it. However, the efficiency of the activity directed to the internationalization of the University is not studied yet. Besides, there is no structural unit responsible for external relations and international cooperation. Moreover, the direct interconnection between research outcomes and improvement of education quality is missing.

- The progress of the operating internal QA system is of utmost importance for achieving the declared goal of investing quality culture in the University. GSU's internal QA system has been functioning over 6 years. The approved policy and procedure on revision of internal QA system of the University are missing. The current monitoring and evaluation systems of QA are not properly disseminated yet. Analyses on their efficiency aren't yet present either. Therefore the PDCA cycle isn't fully closed. The different processes of the University are still in the phases of planning and implementation, and the evaluations are only made partially, therefore the improvements do not have analytical basis. Although various processes of the University are frequently being reviewed, the necessity for change is not grounded. The review isn't often substantiated by evaluation results and it isn't conditioned by the analyses of strong and weak points. It's still too early to evaluate the formation of quality culture.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The long-term strategy and strategic action plans of the University should be improved in accordance with professional requirements of strategic management and particularly in alignment with realistic and measurable goals, guidelines, objectives and tasks. There is a need to develop a procedure for the assessment of the mid-term and long-term strategy.
- It is recommended to manage the tension between regional orientation and internationalization: **regional orientation** requires applied sciences, analyses of regional demands, orientation at regional labor market, satisfaction of current needs and facing challenges. **Internationalization** requires distinguished research, foreign language proficiency (writing and oral), publications in highly ranked international journals, qualifications required in European and even international labor markets, facing future challenges.
- The University should develop indicators for the evaluation of implementation of strategic goals and define mechanisms evaluating the progress of improvement.
- The link between the planning, organization, implementation and evaluation of effectiveness of strategic goals and financial resources should be better defined to improve the management of resources allocated to research, internationalization, and quality assurance.
- The existing degree of internationalization should be reflected in the curricula and syllabi of academic programs according to its strategic importance in order to increase the level of internationalization. Moreover, it is recommended to establish a structural unit which will function in the direction of internationalization of the University and which will develop a systemic approach to its management.
- The research activity should be strengthened more by improving the foreign language proficiency of the teaching staff, researchers and students and by fostering publications and master theses in English.
- It is recommended to improve the professional skills of the QA Division staff. Moreover, the QA mechanisms and the strategic goals need to be aligned.
- The involvement of all staff members, internal and external stakeholders of the University in QA processes is crucial from the perspective of investing systemic quality culture, but the scope of the involvement of students and external stakeholders is narrow. Besides, the authors of the self-evaluation report are aware of this problem. It is recommended to establish and operate a promotion system which will keep the majority of stakeholders updated and will involve them in QA processes.
- It is recommended to design strategies to improve the visibility of the University's performance indicators to the society, especially that of Gegharkunik region.

GSU COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS ON DRAFT REPORT OF EXPERT PANEL

On 27 February 2017 GSU presented its comments and suggestions on the draft report of the expert panel. On 15 March 2017 ANQA organized a meeting for the representatives of GSU and expert panel during which the feedback of the expert panel was presented. Taking into consideration the comments and suggestions of the University, the expert panel made some changes in the final report. Respective notes about the changes made by the expert panel are mentioned as a footnote on corresponding pages of the final report.

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

GSU accepts that the recommendations presented by the expert panel are within the scope of the University's strategy, and it has submitted for the action plan and time-schedule on the elimination of shortcomings.

Having examined the University's action plan based on the recommendations presented in the final expert panel report, the expert panel comes to the following **conclusion**: taking into consideration the expert panel's observations and with the aim to eliminate the identified shortcomings, the University has undertaken the commitment to improve all the aspects of its activity, in particular:

- GSU has elaborated an action plan with the aim to implement the strategies defined for all the directions. All the suggestions requiring urgent changes are involved in the action plan, and according to the "Action Plan on the Elimination of Shortcomings Mentioned in the Expert Panel Report on Accreditation of Institutional Capacities of Gavar State University", GSU will allocate financial resources to fulfill them within upcoming 4 years, i.e. up to the end of 2020.

- The comments and recommendations of the peer review from the perspective of integration of professional education institution into the European Higher Education Area presented by the international expert are to some extent taken into account by the University as well.

- The action plan on the elimination of the shortcomings is presented in compliance with the expert panel's requirements. The action plan covers the current situation of the actions which are subject to improvement, logically sequenced steps which are directed to the fulfillment of each action, intended outcomes of the actions and evaluation indicators.

    The University has mainly developed the actions directed to the improvement on the basis of the facts and findings mentioned in the expert panel report. It should be mentioned that not all the recommendations are reflected in the action plan. The study of the action plan serves a basis to state that the University gives more importance to the documentary regulation of processes, i.e. to the development of policies, procedures and mechanisms rather than to the planning, implementation of the activities and to the study of impact in accordance with the implementation of goals.

- Responsible staff members and structural units are jointly mentioned for the implementation of the activities, however, the same responsible staff members and structural units are mentioned for the implementation of a number of activities. A wide scope of responsible people and units are mentioned for each activity, while it is not clear who exactly is responsible for the given step of each activity. Some staff members are mentioned as responsible people in some cases who, however, have no direct relation to the implementation of the given activity and their functions are not related to the given responsibility.

- Although financial resources are mentioned as a solution of the given problems, in some cases they are not proportionally distributed in accordance with the actions /e.g. the new SP envisages 3.720 000 AMD for defining the functions of the staff member or the unit responsible for the scientific-research; for developing and approving legal documents regulating scientific-research activities, however, only 1.000 000 AMD is allocated to the improvement of infrastructural resources/. It should be noted that a great amount of financial resources is allocated to the implementation of some activities mentioned in the SP, while the necessity of allocation is not substantiated /e.g. 2.000 000 is allocated to benchmarking/. The information about what human and material resources will be necessary for the improvement of the

accounted actions is not available. The mentioned circumstance somehow limits the opportunities to evaluate the realistic approach and substantiation.

- The deadlines set for the implementation of the activities mentioned in the action plan on the elimination of shortcomings are mostly realistic except for some cases, taking into consideration the fact that the main actions are supposed to be the development of documents instead of implementation and improvement of the very processes itself, the deadlines are too long-term. It must be mentioned that the deadline set for the majority of the actions is 2017-2022 while no time-schedule is presented for separate steps of the actions.
- Although the outcomes of the actions are specified in the action plan, they are not defined for each step, neither qualitative dynamics which can be obtained due to the implementation of the given step(s) is presented.
- The key performance indicators evaluating the outcomes are defined in the action plan, however, they are not always considered to be indicators evaluating the impact which doesn't allow to evaluate the possible qualitative changes at the end of the given action.

Hence, it can be concluded that the implementation of major part of the actions mentioned in the action plan on the elimination of shortcomings is realistic and contains no risks. The fulfillment of the planned steps can serve as a basis for the improvement of normative framework of the activities carried out by the University. The efficient implementation of the activities can foster the solution of the current problems as well as the assurance of the University's progress and sustainable development.

Based on the aforementioned, ANQA suggests the Accreditation Committee to draw GSU's attention to the implementation of the following activities while making a decision:

1) To give urgent solution to the problems existing in the spheres of **Research & Development, Infrastructure & Resources** and **Internal Quality Assurance System.**
2) According to the requirements of Clause 12 of the Regulation on "State Accreditation of RA Education Institutions and their Educational Programs" or according to the deadlines set by the Accreditation Committee, to regularly present a written report to ANQA on the results of the carried out activities.
3) To review the action plan on the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the expert panel report taking into account the remarks about the action plan mentioned in the conclusion made by the expert panel.

ANQA finds that the suggested reforms will foster the fulfillment of the University's ambitions mentioned in the self-evaluation report and will serve as a basis for the next evaluation.

_____   _____   _____

Head of ANQA Institutional and Program Accreditation Division   **Chair of Expert Panel**   **ANQA coordinator**

EXPERT PANEL COMPOSITION

The external evaluation of GSU institutional capacities was carried out by the expert panel having the following composition:

Angin Martirosyan – Chair of expert panel, PhD in Technical Sciences, Head of Department on Educational-Methodical Affairs and Academic Programs, National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia

Arkadi Papoyan – PhD in Biological Sciences, Senior Lecturer at Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences

Mher Markosyan - Doctor of Technical Sciences, Head of Chair on Informatics, Computer Engineering and Management Systems, National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia

Margret Bülow-Schramm – Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor of University of Hamburg

Sevada Sargsyan – 1st year MA student, Faculty of Law, Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia

ANQA support staff

Ani Mkrtchyan - Specialist of Institutional and Program Accreditation Division, responsible for ANQA Internal Quality Assurance, Coordinator of GSU institutional accreditation process

Gayane Ananyan - Assistant to the ANQA Director, Monitor of expert panel activities

Ani Shahinyan - Translator, Coordinator at Center for Quality Assurance of Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences

SUMMATIVE EVALUATION[3]

The Expert Panel presented its evaluation per accreditation criterion in the following table:

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

---

[3] While carrying out the evaluation the expert panel followed the Regulation on "State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Educational Programs" and the procedure described in the ANQA Accreditation Manual for firstly making an evaluation per standards and then - per criteria. The "**unsatisfactory**" and "**satisfactory**" evaluation scale was applied.

The expert panel followed the following principles while carrying out the evaluation:

-**unsatisfactory:** if the University does not meet the requirements of the criterion and it is not allowed to continue the activities that way and urgent improvements are needed;

-**satisfactory:** if the University meets the requirements of the criterion yet there might be need for improvements.