



ACCREDITATION

DECREE № 4

COMMITTEE

21 March 2015

**On Awarding Institutional Accreditation to
NORTHERN UNIVERSITY**

General Information on the Institution

Full name of the institution: **Northern University**

Acronym: **Not available**

Legal form: **LTD**

Official address: **15a Alek Manukyan Str., Yerevan, 0025, RA**

Decree and date of previous **Certificate N 13, 2001, without validity period**

Accreditation:

Guided by the regulation on “State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Educational Programs” approved by the RA Government on 30 June, 2011 N 978-Ն decree; by RA Government decree N 959-Ն (30 June, 2011) on “Approval of RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation”; by the Procedure on the Formation and Functioning of Accreditation Committee of “National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance” foundation (ANQA) as well as by ANQA Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel, in the open session held on 21 March 2015, the Accreditation Committee of “National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance” foundation (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) discussed the issue of state institutional accreditation of Yerevan Northern University (YNU) with the presence of the representatives of the RA Ministry of Education and Science, Chair of the Expert Panel, ANQA coordinator of the accreditation procedure as well as YNU representatives.

Having examined the self-analysis presented by YNU, the Expert Panel report, YNU action plan for the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report as well as ANQA conclusion, the Committee stated the following:

The main phases of the accreditation process were carried out following the below-given time-frame:

Submission of the Application	27 February 2012
Submission of the self-assessment report	29 September 2012
Site-visit	3-7 December 2012
Submission of the Expert panel report	1 March 2013
Submission of the Follow-up plan	19 February 2014

The expertise was carried out by an Expert Panel formed in compliance with the requirements set forth by the ANQA regulation on the composition of expert panel. The assessment was carried out based in line with 10 criteria of institutional accreditation established by N959-Ն (30 June, 2011) decree on approving RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation.

When carrying out the evaluation, it has been taken into account that Northern University is a state licensed private higher education institution which was established in 1996 and it provides professional education in accordance with the 6th and 7th levels of the Armenian National Qualification Frameworks and their descriptors.

The activity the University has planned and currently implements is in line with both its mission and RA NQF requirements. The University provides education services available to the large scope of society in line with the state educational standards. The 6 professions among 8 professions of the University are accredited in line with the regulation on accreditation (which was valid until 2011) and requirements of the criteria, and in 2001 the University was awarded with the status of accredited University. The accreditation certificates do not carry any expiry date.

Following the requirements of the previous system of external quality assurance, the University made control over the processes and followed the compliance with only state educational standards. Giving importance to the new approaches of quality assurance and the necessity of continuous improvement, the University took part in the piloting processes of accreditation (initiated by ANQA) in 2010 on a voluntary basis. Making self-analysis in accordance with the new criteria of accreditation, the University self-initiatedly identified a number of shortcomings, in particular, the necessity of operating internal QA mechanisms and having programs defined by learning outcomes.

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

The University has a governance system peculiar to RA higher education institutions. In the beginning of 2012 the new mission of the University was developed and approved by the YNU Scientific Council after which the process of developing a new Strategic Plan consisting of

10 criteria succeeded and which is currently in process. Moreover, the chairs and departments have also developed their strategic plans and have posted them on the website of the University.

The University has a policy and respective procedure on organization of student admission. Besides, it combines a set of mechanisms of student recruitment such as campaigns being regularly carried out in regional schools, discourses on career orientation, open days, olympiads, dissemination and broadcasting of promotional videos. The active student life as well as many nominal scholarships are additional means to attract potential applicants. The University is specific in terms of availability of tuition fees which gives an opportunity to provide educational services to large scope of society. Facultative courses are organized for students with low level of academic progress. The University has Student Council which functions actively.

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

The University has carried out trainings of the teaching staff on teaching methods, and, generally taken, students are satisfied with them. The University works towards modernization of teaching and learning methods, teaching materials as well as resources, however, clearly developed policy and respective procedures are in the formation process.

The University offers MA programs the successful implementation of which requires innovative and scientific research activities. Meanwhile the University does not give importance to the research activity. The chairs of the University have short-term plans and practice of presenting annual reports. However, the research directions are not clarified; they are carried out by personal initiative and within the narrow field of the subject. Students are also partially involved in applied research activities, and the results are presented during conferences which are held by the University every year. As it is mentioned in the strategic plan, the University plans to expand its scientific-research activity.

The University provides sufficient resources which allow to ensure the regular activity of the University. There are a number of academic laboratories at the University which allow to properly implement the APs of the University. Although during 16 years of its activity the University has made significant investment and has ensured the process of fulfilling the declared objectives, the University still needs to invest new resources to fully realize its mission.

Separate mechanisms of regular accountability are traditionally accepted and applied at the University which do not form a system, for example, in terms of external stakeholders, there is not any special strategy and policy developed for providing services to the society.

Although the Department on External Relations was established at the University in 2011, the policy and procedures promoting external relations are in the phase of development

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

The University has quality assurance policy and procedures. At all levels of the University education quality and quality assurance are given much importance to. Human, material and financial resources have been provided for the organization of the processes. Teaching staff, students and other stakeholders are aware of QA processes and take part in them. The invested mechanisms mainly allow to make students' academic needs assessment and to give feedback.

Northern University is given the following recommendations which should be fulfilled out within its strategy and which are aimed at the solution of problems put forward by the Expert Panel during the accreditation as well as at further improvement of the University.

Mission and purpose

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

Governance and Administration

4. It is necessary to make more investments in the direction of professional development of the teaching staff, enrichment of library fund, enhancement of international cooperation of the University and other necessary spheres fostering student-centered education.
5. It is necessary to have developed standards on the basis of which the regular evaluations will allow to give a clear picture of viability and sustainability of the currently functioning process.
6. It is also recommended to develop short-term, mid-term and long-term action plans with clearly set deadlines, which will be derived from the strategic plans of the University and the

structural units. Their existence will serve as a basis for planning and implementing monitoring which will regularly fix the dynamics of the planning and implementation of the carried out activities as well as their compliance with the University's mission and goals.

7. The improvement of accountability of governing bodies needs to be seriously taken into account. In the formation of culture of accountability not only the existence of bottom-up accountability tradition is important but also the up-bottom accountability which is not a less efficient tool of management. Moreover, the accountability mechanisms will function more effectively if the dynamics of development of the University's structural units are taken into consideration.

Academic Programs

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

Students

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

Teaching and Support Staffs

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

Research and Development

13. It is necessary to develop long-term strategy on research. Moreover, it will be proper to organize the research activities through planned policy and respective procedures.
14. The successful research activity of the University is to some extent conditioned by the regular organization of scientific-research seminars by the chairs, and both staff of the chairs and students will be involved in them.

15. As far as the main research direction of the University is armenological, it is necessary to try to establish scientific networking with armenologists from diaspora and, why not, with foreign armenologists whose scientific interests comprise, for example, literary heritage of Tumanyan.
16. The issue on establishment and investment of policy and procedures preventing plagiarism and ensuring academic honesty at the University also needs urgent solution.

Infrastructure and Resources

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

Social Responsibility

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

External Relations and Internationalization

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

Internal Quality Assurance

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

Observing the presented package of documents and considering the opinions of head of the Expert Panel and other representatives, the Accreditation Committee finds that YNU generally fulfills its goals by ensuring higher education available to the large scope of society.

The professional academic programs implemented by the University are in line with the set state standards, however, the list of professions being carried out at the University, the policy on admission, the research character of the programs ensuring student mobility need to be seriously reviewed.

The issues on competitiveness of APs and assurance of attractiveness need to be taken into serious consideration. The continuity of negative tendencies in the sphere of admission can be risky for the University.

In order to efficiently follow the intended learning outcomes and to modernize the APs, it is necessary to apply mechanisms of monitoring and evaluating APs.

The University should ensure sufficient participation of students into research activities with the MA program by providing respective material and human resources. After the end of the first cycle of the MA program it is necessary to carry out a full expertise and review of the program.

In the sphere of "External Relations and Internationalization" the University has started to pay attention to the student mobility and finding means to ensure teachers' participation in international projects. However, the University does not yet have resources to advance in internationalization and to operate a regulated and active process. The signed agreements function poorly and the cooperation with international institutions is fictive.

Taking into consideration the identified shortcomings and provided recommendations the implementation of which is a matter of time, YNU has developed an "Action Plan for the elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report". The Action Plan is aimed at further improvement of the University's performance as well as at the investment of mechanisms of giving operational solution to the emerged problems, which will ensure compliance of the University's goals with the educational needs of selected social sector. Nevertheless, the University has not sufficiently given importance to a number of problems requiring urgent solution,

particularly those in the spheres of "Professional Academic Programs" and "Research and Development".

Taking into consideration that YNU can eliminate the shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report and implement the recommendations by reinforcing, methodically developing and applying its internal QA mechanisms in a reasonable time period, as a result of open voting the Committee:

DECIDED

1. To award Northern University a **Conditional Institutional Accreditation with a 2 /two/ year period.**
2. Within two months after the publication of the Decree on Awarding Institutional Accreditation to submit an action plan on elimination of shortcomings mentioned in the Expert Panel report and corresponding time-schedule to ANQA taking into account:
 - a. the necessity of finding solutions primarily to the problems existing in the fields of "**Academic Programs**", "**Research and Development**" and "**External Relations and Internationalization**";
 - b. the remarks on the preliminary action plan for the elimination of shortcomings, mentioned in the "**Conclusion on institutional capacities of Northern University**".
3. In order to improve the activities of the University in line with current demands it is necessary to pay special attention to the development of quality assurance system, refreshment of material-technical base necessary for the implementation of academic programs, teaching staff and student mobility, reinforcement of the linkage between learning and research, and training of the teaching staff.
4. According to the requirements of clause 12.3 of the Regulation on "State Accreditation of RA Institutions and their Educational Programs" every 6 /six/ months to submit a written report to ANQA on the results of the carried out activities.

Chair of Accreditation Committee

V. Urutyan

26 March 2015
Yerevan